

from the desk of
Denver Snuffer

VOLUME 1

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PREFACE

These volumes have been assembled, laid out, and made print-ready by the work of volunteers. I've said that only about 30% of the effort to create a book is in the writing, and the other 70% is in the labor to bring it into print. The conscientious way the voluntary work has been done is appreciated most of all by the one who wrote this material. That deserves first mention in this Preface.

These volumes were written over years, and were posts on a website when first written. Over time the website became an easy forum to deal with some important issues that perhaps deserved to be treated in a more formal way. The voluntary effort to compile the writings into a published set accomplishes that objective.

The contents have been divided into chapters and individual posts were given titles. These divisions appear in the Table of Contents to help readers navigate through the volumes.

Although the Internet today is widely available, there are increasingly loud social and political voices urging widespread censorship of content. Ideas that threaten a singular viewpoint are increasingly under attack. The time may come when any website devoted to religious and moral values will be censored and unavailable.

In addition to censorship, there are malicious characters that use ransom-ware to capture websites, and other computer viruses that corrupt or delete material. Given the uncertainty of any electronic database, it is prudent to make a printed copy of anything valuable to preserve it from corruption or loss.

The original content of the website has been preserved with no material changes. Despite best efforts, however, there were typographical errors and errant dates that have been caught and corrected in this publication. Also, some of the spontaneous spo-

ken materials that were transcribed in the way they were originally said have been edited to make them more readable. Their content was left unchanged, but run-on sentences were reworked to make them suitable for a reader.

The website continues to have material added to it, and therefore this set cuts off at the time of publication. If time and resources permit it, another volume capturing on-going content may be added in the future.

October 30, 2021

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

Sandy, Utah

INTRODUCTION

So long as the original, smoldering, light of the Restoration remains, all that is required to ignite a new fire is the breath of the Spirit blowing on the spark. That breath of life comes from the word of the Lord. To the extent these volumes reflect the Lord's word, the credit for stirring the reader to remember Him and His Gospel belongs to Him.

A Note to the Reader:

This multi-volume series covers blog entries beginning in 2010. Scripture references in the text refer to the LDS versions of scripture found in the King James Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. Beginning about March 2018 the scripture cites change to the Restoration Edition of the scriptures. Cites of the Restoration Edition scriptures are typically denoted with OC, NC and T&C references e.g., (NC Matt. 8:10), or alternately (1 Ne. 1:22 RE) setting them apart from the former LDS scripture version references. For those interested, a scripture reference conversion tool that allows navigation between the various scripture references and versions can be accessed at: <https://scriptures.info/Scriptures/ReferenceTranslator>

CHAPTER 1

Peculiar Indeed

FEBRUARY 2010

FEBRUARY 1, 2010

This Blog

I'm trying to put into a blog what would require many hours of individual emails and conversations. Hopefully this will both answer the many questions I keep receiving and allow me to stay productive with my family, job and Church responsibilities.

COMMENTS:

Kelly Brad Cox · JUNE 19, 2010 AT 1:06 AM

Denver,

Do you think parents should allow their children to have premarital relations in their parents home with the parents knowledge? If not how should this issue be handled so as not to offend the children or if that is not possible what is the best way to handle it so as to not cause a huge blow up where the children feel their free agency is being violated? I myself believe the parents should not allow children to have relations in their home but it is a very touchy issue causing many problems when the issue is brought up. I feel this is a problem that many parents in the church are struggling with right now. I know of three instances in

my own experience where this has occurred and each time it has been the cause of much anguish and problems.

Kelly Brad Cox

Denver Snuffer · JULY 2, 2010 AT 2:06 PM

Kelly,

Perhaps that questions might be better asked over on this blog: <http://mormonmatters.org/author/joanna-brooks/>. Joanna Brooks answers all kinds of questions like that.

Truthfully, I don't feel qualified to address that subject for someone else.

Best of luck

Denver Snuffer

FEBRUARY 1, 2010

The Kingdom of Heaven Contrasted With Hell

It is a misnomer to speak of the “kingdom of the Devil” because the description presumes something more organized than is the case. It is difficult to organize when fear, hatred and anger are the primary motivations. Love is a far more cohesive, creative and loyalty producing motivation. All that Satan does is designed to destroy itself, as well as all those who follow him.

FEBRUARY 2, 2010

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Apologetics

I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and am loyal to it as an institution and as the proponent of a faith. Although I am keenly aware of the flaws any body of men and women will display, those weaknesses inherent in the human condition do not diminish the greatness of an institution. I believe

in constructive explanations about shortcomings, ways to understand or process what appear to be flaws. In that sense only do I believe in apologetics. To deny the existence of shortcomings is, I believe, to depart from the warnings given to us by Christ, Nephi, Mormon, Moroni, the Apostle Paul, Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and others. I like the comment made by President Hugh B. Brown about us Mormons: “We are a lay church; and this gives rise to much mediocrity.”

It helps to have a sense of humor if you’re going to try to be a faithful Mormon. It also requires thick skin.

FEBRUARY 3, 2010

Words Matter

I worry about things being attributed to me from private conversations or speaking events where the public was invited. I choose words with great care. The difference between truth and error can be quite a fine line in some important matters. Therefore, when I say, teach, write or answer a question with exact language in mind, and the listener or reader does not retain the distinctions when they attempt to repeat what I’ve said, I wind up being confronted with things I never said, don’t believe and would never teach. One of the reasons for this blog is so I can control what is attributed to me. I’m very willing to be held to account for what I teach or write. But I’m not willing to be held accountable for someone else’s understanding or partial recollection of statements I have made.

FEBRUARY 9, 2010

Questions and Answers

I get asked a lot of questions. The other day someone asked how “to write only what the Spirit directs?”

Answer:

That requires something quite subtle and hard to keep. The presence of the Spirit, its constant companionship, guidance and influence is so refined and difficult a matter to put into words that even the scriptures do not give an adequate account of the process.

Obedience is required, but there are obedient people who are utterly without the Spirit. Obedience can make a person rigid and unyielding, when they ought instead to be meek and pliable.

Discipline is required, but not if it makes a person dogmatic. The word “disciple” is derived from discipline, but a disciple *follows* the Master. A disciplined man can be on his own errand, rather than the Lord’s.

These words, like so many others fail to capture just how great and fine a balance is required for the Spirit to provide direction.

Meekness is required, but not in the way the world thinks of meekness. I’ve tried to explain the true quality of meekness shown by the Lord and His followers in *Beloved Enos*. It involves power, strength, and certitude.

The process almost defies words. It is very real, in fact tangible. But the way in which you know it to be right involves an ability to feel the balance, taste the good, harmonize with the greater intelligence which pervades everything that is. It comes from Him. It is Him, in a very real sense. All things were made by Him, bear record of Him, and are a testimony of His way.

Writing the words of eternal life require someone to have eternal life. They can still be mortal, but they need the promise of eternal life. So I suppose the Lord’s admonition: “Seek first the kingdom of God, and all things shall be added thereto” really answers the question. Or as told to Hyrum: “Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word.” The one must precede the other. At

least the statement of the Lord to His disciples, and the revelation to Hyrum Smith seem to indicate as much.

FEBRUARY 9, 2010

I Didn't Know

I was amused to find that my wife (who physically maintains this blog for me) had already made it active. I've been sending stuff to her to post, but figured it would be a while before this actually became something available for readers.

I'm also surprised that some people have already found it. I got an email today thanking me for it. So I did a search and found the blog is actually up and running and can be found through Google.

OK, then, welcome to this blog. If you're reading it, you've found it too. I'll try and add something at least every few days. Hopefully something that will matter.

FEBRUARY 10, 2010

Principles and Rules

Question by someone: What is the difference between "principles" and "rules"?

Answer by me:

Assuming you define "Principles" as the underlying reason for the commandment, then you're also speaking about what the Apostle Paul called the "Spirit of the law" as opposed to the "letter of the law." He said the "letter killeth" but the "Spirit giveth life." I think he was right. Any rule can be abused. Any rule can become broken even when it is being kept. Rules can become harsh taskmasters, inflicting punishment when they were designed to bless. The underlying principle, however, always seeks to bless. The un-

derlying principle was designed as a blessing. When the rule begins to oppress, then it should be abandoned in favor of the principle.

Rules have and do change. But principles remain constant. The brutality of the rules was exposed by Christ when He healed on the Sabbath. He did that specifically to demonstrate the futility of ignoring the principle, while only adhering to the law/rule.

In the English common law tradition there were cases “at law” and cases “in equity.” They divided the Courts into separate forums, where courts of law could not do equity. But courts of equity could ignore the provisions of law, modify them, or establish a higher principle which resolved fairly a dispute despite some legal impediment to the relief sought. That tradition follows the Lord’s example.

Principles ennoble. Rules preoccupy.

FEBRUARY 10, 2010

Email

Below is an email I am going to send in response to any new emails. I regret having to do this, but as should be apparent from the content below, I am forced to do so:

Over the past few years I have had the pleasure of meeting, talking, and associating with many new people. I have had the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions about the gospel, about books I have written, and about other subjects that help move along the truth of the restored gospel. I have been contacted by people far and wide who have read what I have written, and as a result, have wanted to meet or talk with me. Some people have wanted to meet over lunch on a weekday. Others have come to my office to meet with me. Some have

made appointments, others have just dropped in. I have spent countless hours talking with people on the phone. There are those who have wanted to attend the temple with me, and I have made arrangements to do so. This has been a great blessing to me. However, it has grown now to the point that I can no longer accommodate the many requests.

On any given day, I now receive dozens of email questions from people I know or am acquainted with, as well as people I don't know, who want answers to questions they have as a result of something I have written or for other various reasons. I've been asked to meet at the temple, to come to someone's home and talk, to allow someone to come to my house to meet with me, to visit in my office, or to do other things for them. I have been given articles, manuscripts, plays, DVD's, video tapes, books, letters, and other media and asked to read, edit, and/or give an opinion about the materials. I have been asked to speak on numerous occasions at various functions, which I have done on a few very rare occasions. Right now there are over a dozen requests to speak at places in Utah, California and Arizona.

I have sincerely tried to be available to everyone in whatever capacity they have asked me. I have given up a great deal of time in order to respond to requests when people have sought me out. I have enjoyed these wonderful associations and opportunities. Many of these have been blessings to me. I have learned much and I love the opportunity to discuss, teach and learn the truth, and to be taught by others.

It is with regret however, that I will no longer be able to make myself available in this way. Last Monday was when it reached a point I decided I could no longer continue in the same way. Before the day was over I spent six hours answering

emails related to books I have written. I have a wife and several children who need my attention, and an active law practice which requires my full time work. My family and business suffer from neglect when I spend excessive time answering Gospel questions. I employ 6 people whose families depend upon my productivity at work. They have been very patient with my diversions over the last several years, but they deserve better from me as an employer.

Despite the inability to be available directly, my wife and I have come up with a plan which will help solve the problem, I hope. My wife has agreed to maintain a website where I will post answers to questions I have received over the years, comments or things that I believe may be edifying, or whatever I think may be beneficial as a result of something that comes from a reader. I will try to update it at least weekly.

The address will be: <http://denversnuffer.blogspot.com>

Thank you for understanding these problems. I hope the solution will still allow me to be of service to anyone who asks something of me.

Kindest Regards, Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

FEBRUARY 11, 2010

Truth

When we receive truth we are expected to live our lives in conformity with the truth we've received. We shouldn't expect to receive more if we do not live what we've already been given. Living in conformity with such truth as you already have is also always required to avoid deception. It is simply not possible to harvest additional light while refusing to live the light already given. False spirits visit with those who invite them by their misconduct, re-

bellion or wickedness. Hence the need to constantly re-evaluate how you live and the choices you make.

FEBRUARY 11, 2010

Explanation

I was asked a question which provoked this explanation of the book, *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*:

The book was written to cause the reader internal reflection. There really isn't a "punch line" in the book. My testimony is essentially incidental; merely affirming that the principles taught in the book are true.

I worry that reading only the testimony, divorced from the explanation of how someone moves along in personal progress to the point they receive that personal witness, will make it just another "feel good" read. The book is a manual. It isn't designed to make people feel good. It is designed to get them to do something.

I worry that whenever people read of others' spiritual experiences they assume that because they have read about such things they are somehow "included" or "worthy" and that they are linked to God as a result. The book is designed to awaken people to their own lack of an existing link: then to cause them to resolve to establish that link for themselves.

So I think taking only the testimony alone contradicts the whole purpose for which it was written. The testimony was merely a brief, nine word ratification of the book's teachings. The focus was, and is, on receiving an audience with Christ. The book is a manual for the reader to do that for themselves. The reader, **not** the author, is the focus of the book. Indeed, with only brief exceptions, my personal presence intrudes into the book to highlight how to do something wrong. Then the book explains how to get it right.

FEBRUARY 12, 2010

What's in a Name

In response to a question asked today:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a temporary institution which will cease to exist after this life. There is no vision, revelation, scripture or statement promising us that the church as an institution will continue to exist after mortality. What the scriptures, visions, and revelations do tell us about the eternal description of the saved is that it is “the Church of the Firstborn” or “the Church of the Lamb.” Membership in that group is separate from membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Nephi uses “Church of the Lamb” (see e.g., 1 Ne. 14:12) to describe the latter-days group over whom the Lord will watch. Interestingly, although Joseph had this revelation before him when he organized the church, he did not choose the “Church of the Lamb” as the organization’s name.

When modern revelation refers to those who inherit the Celestial Glory, it calls them members of the “Church of the Firstborn” (see, e.g., D&C 76:67 also 93:22). Those who are chosen in our day to belong to the Church of the Firstborn are shown only one way in which that takes place. In a revelation given to Joseph Smith while translating the New Testament, Section 77, Joseph gave this explanation of the latter-day 144,000 saved persons in verse 11: “they are they who are ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, by the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth, to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn.”

At the time Joseph received the explanation recorded in Section 77 (March 1832) the church had existed for over two years. When

the official name was given in 1838 (D&C 115:4) the name chosen for the earthly, temporary organization was The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints — not the Church of the Firstborn.

The Church of the Firstborn exists on the “other side” so to speak. You qualify to get there by how you live here. But you have to be invited into that church by the “angels to whom is given power” to extend that invitation.

FEBRUARY 12, 2010

Not for Entertainment

I was reading in the first volume of the *Joseph Smith Papers* and came across a letter written by Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde upon their return to Kirtland after their mission to England.

During the interim things had broken down in Kirtland with lawsuits, cross accusations and apostasy. Although the missions had been a great success, with more than fifteen-hundred converts joining the Church, when they returned they found the existing Saints in disarray.

They were immediately confronted with criticism of Joseph and other Church leaders by the residents of Kirtland. In the letter to Joseph Smith, received on July 6, 1838, they responded to the criticism they were hearing with a comment which stood out to me. It would make a good motto:

“The faults of our brethren is poor entertainment for us” (*JSP*, Vol. 1, p. 280).

I like that. I think it is still good enough advice to remain true over a century and a half later: The faults of the Brethren are poor entertainment for any of us.

FEBRUARY 13, 2010

Daniel

When Daniel saw the Lord he “alone saw the vision” (Dan 10:7) and not those who were with him. The others felt the great presence (v. 7) but saw nothing. The physical effect upon Daniel was exhausting. He collapsed and had to be strengthened (v. 10). Three times he collapsed and three times he was touched by the Lord to strengthen him (vs. 10,16,18). It was real and VERY physical. Yet he alone saw the Lord. It is always so. Hence Paul’s comment “whether in the body I cannot tell; or whether out of the body I cannot tell” (2 Cor. 12:2). It IS physical. But those who are excluded merely feel the terrible presence, and see nothing. Those included are like Daniel and Joseph Smith, left exhausted from such encounters (see *JS-H* 1:48).

FEBRUARY 14, 2010

Valentine’s Day

Today is Valentine’s Day. Although I’m hundreds of miles away, my thoughts are with my wife. David and Solomon clearly never found a wife to be their equal, helpmeet, love and joy. I pity them. I have she who completes me; my queen and high priestess, love and companion, wise counselor and faithful friend. She is the standard against which all other women are measured, and all others found to be wanting. She is home.

I have yet to see a marriage I think the equal of my own.

The final parable in *Ten Parables* begins deliberately. I hope readers realize how important that discussion is to the way things really are.

FEBRUARY 15, 2010

Apostasy

I was asked whether those who are in the middle of an apostasy can detect that it is underway.

Yes and no: Yes, as to isolated individuals. No, as to the institutional mindset or they would have done something about it. The Great Apostasy began sometime during the second century. But you have to get down to the Protestant fathers in the 1500's and thereafter before there is any widespread shouting about what has been lost. For the intervening thirteen centuries people respected authority, and trusted that the leaders had the keys to save them.

I can't imagine the courage it took for Martin Luther to refuse to back down when he was confronted with thirteen centuries of history telling him he was wrong. We really do owe a debt of gratitude to him, and those who followed after, for ultimately establishing religious freedom. Americans more than any other people are the direct beneficiaries of that courage.

FEBRUARY 16, 2010

Two Women

TWO WOMEN

A Parable by Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

Once there were two women.

One was born to privilege, whose family had great wealth. The other, named Martha, was born poor.

They both grew up and at length Martha married, but the woman of privilege never did marry. As adults both women felt the need for motherhood.

Martha bore seven children.

The woman of privilege spent seven years in college studying child development and education, eventually receiving her Ph.D., but never married, nor had a child.

Now as coincidence would have it, the woman of privilege inherited her parents' home and moved back into the wealthy neighborhood in which she was raised.

Martha's family needed more room and searched for a house. They found a modest home located in wealthy neighborhood which had once been a servant's. Now the servant's home needed repairs, and few were interested in a home which, in comparison with the others around it, seemed merely a servant's residence.

Martha however, believed there was an advantage for her children to grow up among the children of greater privilege and therefore purchased the unwanted house.

And so it was that the woman of privilege and Martha came to live in the same neighborhood.

Martha, ever eager to learn more, had read books to better understand parenting. She was surprised to learn one of her favorite teachers lived in her neighborhood.

As coincidence would further have it, both the woman of privilege and Martha were called upon to serve together in teaching neighborhood children. They spent many hours together, but oftentimes did not agree.

For Martha, the experience of raising her own children led her to view things differently than the woman of privilege whose experience was based upon study, borrowed understanding and the science of others.

After six years, Martha concluded the conflicts between them were insurmountable.

In the seventh year, Martha concluded that if the woman of privilege could gaze into the eyes of her own children for but five minutes, she would know more than she did now, notwithstanding the many years of study which she had devoted to child development and education.

In the eighth year, Martha concluded it was her responsibility to teach the woman of privilege, and so the occupant of the servant's house undertook the burden of teaching the needy but unwilling.

It was a role that would require many years, with only limited success. Pride is unbecoming in a pupil; and meekness ever required of a teacher.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · FEBRUARY 24, 2010 AT 1:00 AM

You point out well in most of your books that we can learn truth but that doesn't mean we get to teach it. We need to be lead by the Spirit to teach truth.

I believe this principle applies to all truth and not just to the mysteries of godliness. In my experience, it's wrong to teach people things before they're ready to hear it. To teach them prior to their being ready (or prior to being led to do so by the Spirit) just sets them up to be condemned. They hear stuff they aren't ready to handle and that makes them stumble even more. Even the simple Word of Wisdom is in this category.

I don't think it's enough that Martha knows the truth. If the Spirit is directing her to teach the privileged woman, that's a different matter.

Denver Snuffer · FEBRUARY 25, 2010 AT 11:59 AM

This is a subject which the scriptures raise and we all need to resolve for ourselves. Alma's teaching about the balance between what you know and what you teach found in Alma 10:9-11 is just one place where the issue is raised. Included in Moses' endowment teachings, restored through Joseph Smith, and inserted into the narrative is the warning:

“And now they are spoken unto you. Show them not unto any except them that believe” (Moses 1:42; see also 4:32). Yet the account now appears in the Pearl of Great Price and can be read by anyone.

Hugh Nibley remarked that the greatest protection for the mysteries is the general disinterest.

A 10th Century Muslim teacher named Al-Ghazali preserved a saying from Jesus Christ which taught: “He who bestows knowledge on the ignorant wastes it, And he who withholds it from the worthy has done them wrong.”

The issue only arises when someone is in possession of sacred knowledge. Anyone who has attended the Temple becomes qualified to confront the issue. Of course, there are other ways of attaining to sacred knowledge which should be guarded. But the issue finally comes down to two questions:

1. Is it the kind of thing which is absolutely prohibited from being revealed, except at a certain place where the information is only to be discussed? If so, then the prohibition ought to be respected at all times and in all places, except where it is permitted to be used.
2. Is it the kind of pearl which ought not be cast before swine? If so, then the issue comes down to whether the discussion is with a swine. If so, then it will do them no good if you give it to them. If not, you have done them wrong by withholding.

The chief defect in handling sacred knowledge lies in the inabilities of the teacher. All great truths are simple, as was demonstrated in *The Second Comforter*. I am going to add a comment to the main board today on this issue. But in the hands of a great teacher, such as Christ, truth becomes a melody woven into a great hymn, which causes the listener to rejoice and exclaim in a chorus: “Hosanna!” In the hands of a clumsy teacher even great truths are so awkwardly put, so poorly explained that even a worthy student will have trouble accepting it.

FEBRUARY 16, 2010

In Response to a Critic

In response to a critic of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:

I believe Joseph Smith was a prophet, and you do not. I'm content to let you disbelieve. Why are you not content to let me believe? One of us is clearly mistaken, but I am content with both my belief and your disbelief.

Of the two of us, I think your hostility toward my position reveals an underlying insecurity about your confidence in your position.

I am prepared to be everlastingly judged on the basis of my beliefs. I insist the Lord has every right to hold me accountable for what I believe, do, think, say and how I behave.

FEBRUARY 17, 2010

Infidelity

If a man is unfaithful to his wife, he will be dishonest in his business dealings and in his other relationships. Hence the saying: "an adulterer is a liar." The two go together.

FEBRUARY 17, 2010

Salesmanship

Recognizing a problem is not solving it in the same way that a diagnosing an illness is not treating it.

It is always the first step, however, to recognize a defect. We don't solve a lot of problems because we fail to acknowledge their existence.

Then there are those who will argue that a defect is not really a problem, but a feature. Don't be fooled by salesmanship. Defects are **never** features.

COMMENTS:

Denver Snuffer · FEBRUARY 28, 2010 AT 6:46 PM

This was a comment in response to a question about problems with the LDS Church.

I think it is always more helpful to be positive. Whether there are problems or not, we are better off discussing how to improve. However, we cannot do that without recognizing that there are some problems.

FEBRUARY 17, 2010

Personal Responsibility

I have tried to lessen the burden imposed upon Church leadership in the books I have written. The Saints need to be more accountable for their own progress and understanding. The books impose responsibility upon the reader to establish their own communication with God, and then to assume responsibility for their own progress.

Whatever intelligence we attain unto in this life will rise with us in the next. Seeking to gain in intelligence, or light and truth, is always individual, never collective.

FEBRUARY 18, 2010

BYU Visit

I need to preface my remarks below with this: My son attended a Catholic High School for a year and had the wonderful experience of being in the minority there. I have lifelong friends who are Catholic. My family was Baptist and my sister remains a devoted Baptist. I have friends of many faiths, or no faith at all. Some friends have been LDS, and lost their faith altogether.

Some have converted from LDS to Catholic. All these wonderful people are valued friends. I attend annually a Presbyterian service blessing the Scottish clans with a dear friend. My friendships have nothing to do with the friend's faith.

Now, that having been said, I was down at BYU about a week ago. [While there, I was surprised to find that several of my books were for sale in the BYU Bookstore. Somehow I thought Benchmark Books in Salt Lake was THE local distributor.]

While walking about the campus I was reminded just how much I like being a Latter-day Saint. We're quirky, even peculiar people. There's a lot about us to laugh about. But underneath it all Latter-day Saints really try hard, in our strange way, to be good, decent people. The struggle to be that is met with frequent failure. But the exercise is good.

Devotion to any faith is good for the souls of mankind. In many ways we are not at all superior to other groups. I remember the talk given by Pres. Faust about the killings of the young girls in the Amish school a few years ago, which was followed by the compassion of the Amish victims' families to the widow and children of the murderer. If we were to hold up a contemporary group in the United States who most succeed in living a Christ-like life, it would likely be the Amish. Nevertheless, I really like being a Latter-day Saint and in fellowshiping and struggling with my fellow Saint. I find it joyful. I love the Saints. Even as I sense very keenly our many shortcomings. For me, it is still joyful to live as a Latter-day Saint.

FEBRUARY 18, 2010

Second Anointing

I've gotten numerous questions this last week on the subject of the "second anointing" or "second sealing." This is not a subject which I think invites a lot of open discussion. I've intentionally avoided it in my books.

Here's what I think is appropriate to explain: It is an explanation of what is required to get to the point you are prepared to meet the Lord. It is essentially a manual. It stops short of explaining what the Lord, in His on-going ministry to mankind, will do to prepare the individual for what comes next. That is His ministry. The Holy Ghost brings you to the Lord. The Lord brings you to the Father. That book was written to help you come to Him.

Beloved Enos is an explanation of what the results are, once someone has received the Lord's ministry. It takes Enos' record and uses it as a basis for the explanation.

Between the text of *The Second Comforter* and *Beloved Enos*, what is omitted is a description of the sacred ordinances involved in what is termed "the second anointing." I do not feel inclined to go into that.

FEBRUARY 19, 2010

After the Gold Rush

I've been a Neil Young fan since his Buffalo Springfield days. Among his acts of kindness over the years, he saved Lionel Trains from bankruptcy in 1995, because he is a model train fan. That affection grew from his relationship with his autistic son.

In any event, here is an A Cappella version of his **After the Gold Rush** song; one of the great anthems of modern rock. I found this on YouTube and thought it memorable.

(link: <https://youtu.be/d6BzTC-Q6Nqo>)



FEBRUARY 19, 2010

Who Can Be a Seer?

I was asked recently.

“Who can become a seer?”

I answered this:

You could probably substitute “seer” for “prophet” in Moses’ lament: “Would to God all men were [seers]”. The purpose of seership is the same as any other gift of the Spirit: to acquire knowledge of truth. And, assuming “God giveth liberally to all men,” as James promised us, it would follow this was among the things He intended all men to experience.

Read the description of the conditions of post-mortal residence in the presence of God given in Section 130. The “seership” experience there is commonplace. The “sea of glass,” or earth on which they dwell is a great Urim and Thummim, as well as the “white stone” given to them. The result is that ALL occupants of that sphere are seers. Accordingly, we should assume that we obtain our first instructions here to prepare us for living there. Seership, being necessary for life there, is something we ought to expect to be included in the Lord’s tutelage while we are all here.

ALL of us are to “covet the best gifts” on the one hand; and on the other “there is no gift greater” than seership. (That’s Paul and Ammon being quoted.) It follows necessarily, therefore, that we should be seeking to have some experience with this gift here in mortality.

FEBRUARY 20, 2010

Peculiar

The gentiles seem determined to end their reign. According to an announcement from the Church this week, missionary work is being shifted from European and North American populations into Latin and South America, Africa and Asia.

I’ve thought for some time that the failing conversion rates are the inevitable result of the “marketing” system being used by the Church. What distinguishes the Restoration from other faiths is our doctrine. We have been de-emphasizing doctrine for years. We try to seem more and more like another Christian faith. We aren’t. We are quite different. The reason to convert lies in our doctrinal differences.

No one is going to live the Latter-day Saint lifestyle who thinks that we are just another mainstream Christian church. To pay tithing, refrain from coffee, tea, alcohol, smoking and serve in Church leadership roles at considerable personal inconvenience and sacrifice requires our Church to be more than just another mainstream church. If that is all we are, most people (especially devoted people) are going to want an easier form of belief, like Methodism, Presbyterianism or Catholicism. If they offer the same doctrine as we do, then they will win.

I am a Latter-day Saint because I believe the doctrine. I am not a traditional Christian because I believe their creeds are false and

they teach for doctrine the commandments of men. Unless someone comes to believe that, there is no reason to leave a traditional Christian denomination and become a Latter-day Saint.

FEBRUARY 21, 2010

Social and Cultural “Rights”

In the Church News there is an article about religious freedom being eroded by encroaching social and cultural “rights” which conflict with religious freedom. The case of *Perry v. Schwarzenegger* in California, which challenges the Proposition 8 vote was cited by Elder Lance Wickman, the Church’s General Counsel (lawyer). In that case the public’s decision to prohibit same-sex marriage is being challenged on the basis that voters cannot negate a fundamental right.

The Church is alarmed about the growing potential for conflict between social and cultural “rights” on the one hand, and the free exercise of religion on the other.

The deeper problem the Church has with their position on this legal conflict in California, is the position taken on the Salt Lake City ordinance the Church endorsed a several weeks ago. In that decision, the Church announced that employment and housing were “fundamental rights” which same-sex attraction could not forfeit. The Church endorsed the use of coercive governmental power to compel employers and property owners to permit homosexual employees and renters, upon pain of punishment by the Courts. This was an extraordinary departure from past positions of the Church, and represented the first time the Church approved governmental compulsion against employers and property owners to protect homosexual conduct.

The effect of the Church's change in view on the Salt Lake City ordinance was almost immediate. A follow-on state-wide survey after the Church's changed position showed that there was a dramatic shift in Utah's view of tolerance toward homosexual behavior. Essentially, Mormons all over Utah fell in line behind the Church's new attitude.

Now the Church is attempting to sound the alarm about legal encroachment of cultural/social views (read homosexuality) into other areas which will inevitably conflict with religious liberty. But the Church has already conceded the argument. By extension of the Church's position with respect to housing and employment, the only question to answer is what to define as a "fundamental right." If housing and employment, then why not marriage? How does that distinction get made? And if any judge, anywhere, or ultimately five of the nine Supreme Court Justices, decide that marriage is a "fundamental right," then the result will follow that religion cannot prevent the practice. And if religion cannot prevent the practice of this "fundamental right" to marry despite a couple's homosexual orientation, then the LDS Church cannot prohibit or limit homosexual marriage practices anywhere. Not even in their own marriage ceremonies. For to do so would invade a "fundamental right" of the persons involved.

It will take time for the arguments to wend their way through the courts. But ultimately the Church's position on the "fundamental right" of homosexuals to be employed and housed without discrimination, using the coercive force of the government to protect that "right" against employers and property owners, will be the same reason the government will force the LDS Church to be coerced into acceptance of homosexual marriage. The LDS Church's own words/press release and public relations spokesman's words

will be the reason cited by the Court against the Church, at the time the decision is reached. The Court will announce that the LDS Church has already recognized the need for governmental power to be used to protect fundamental rights of housing and employment. The Court will rule the Church must, therefore, accept as a fundamental right marriage, as well.

FEBRUARY 22, 2010

What Have You Seen Lately?

Saturday my wife and I ate downtown in Salt Lake City. Instead of taking the Interstate back home, we meandered back to State Street and then down State Street. It was between 6:00 and 7:00 pm on a Saturday evening. I was surprised to see that there were eight tattoo parlors open at that time, all of which had customers and some of which were quite crowded.

I also saw that Salt Lake City hosted a three-day tattoo convention in February.

CHAPTER 2

Grow in Light

FEBRUARY 22, 2010

Adam-ondi-Ahman

At the first great priesthood meeting held at Adam-ondi-Ahman, there was Adam, who conducted, and seven High Priests who were in attendance. The “residue” of those who were present looked on, but the meeting involved these seven High Priests and Adam.

The appearance of the Lord at that meeting was an appearance to the eight, who were involved in the ceremony in which Adam’s calling and election was made sure. The on-lookers who were present did not see the Lord, although they could sense something important was underway when the Lord “administered comfort” to Adam. Only those who had been initiated into the High Priesthood were permitted to participate and to view the Lord as He appeared and ministered. You can read about this event in D&C Section 107:53–56.

We assume the great meeting to be held at Adam-ondi-Ahman in the future will involve a great crowd, and it may. However, if it is a repetition of the pattern from the first, there will be a small number, perhaps only seven or eight, who will see the Lord, with

the residue merely sensing something of importance is taking place. (See my earlier post on Daniel's visitation with the Lord.)

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · FEBRUARY 24, 2010 AT 12:32 AM

Do you mind telling what you are basing your statements on that the Lord's appearance at Adam-ondi-Ahman at the time of Adam was only to the 8 and not to the rest of those who were present? I read the reference you gave, D&C 107:3–56, but can't see the detail there, so it must be somewhere else (perhaps personal to you).

Denver Snuffer · FEBRUARY 24, 2010 AT 2:40 PM

Anonymous:

The description in D&C 107:53 refers to Adam giving a blessing to "them." You have to determine to whom the word "them" refers.

I wrote elsewhere about Daniel and the way in which the Lord's appearance was veiled from others who were present, Daniel alone seeing the vision. The same is true of the Lord's contact with Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. Those with him did not have the same open vision.

When Joseph and Oliver saw the vision in the Kirtland Temple, they were behind a drawn canvas veil, and others were in the building. They didn't see what Joseph and Oliver saw.

In the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, the visions which were opened to some were not to others.

There was an inner group of high priests for whom the Lord's appearance would be appropriate and they are named. Naming means something. The rest are referred to as "the residue" and are not named.

These patterns are very real. They are set out in scripture because they are real. There is a great difference between being one of "the residue" of good people and being a clearly named high priest, particularly when you encounter the number of seven for the meeting. The number is also important, as I've explained in books I've written.

The picture people get into their heads is difficult to remove. But this process is dependent upon the preparation of the individual, not membership in a group. I've associated importance with elements of the revelation which others may not think important. I believe naming the seven, the number of them (seven), identifying them as high priests, calling those others "the residue" and leaving their names out of the narrative, and the overall setting takes this incident and puts it into the Daniel/Kirtland Temple/Apostle Paul category of visions of the Lord. Where some present are excluded and only a specific group or individual whose presence was specifically invited by the Lord, are permitted to stand in His presence.

It is a terrible thing to enter into the presence of the Living God. Not all who are righteous are prepared for that. Hence my reading of the verses.

FEBRUARY 22, 2010

Slippery

I pay close attention to the Church and its leadership. I take careful note of what is said, and by whom. The closer you listen, the clearer the Church's methods and means become. They really don't take a great deal of effort to conceal things.

The Church is quite important to me. It deserves my careful study. Therefore I do not mind giving it the attention which it requires to understand what the Church is doing to cope with the various pressures, trends, and difficulties it encounters daily.

The Church's study of public opinion is so careful, so well done, and so frequently updated, that in his October, 2006 General Conference talk, Elder Jeffrey Holland made the following observation:

Not often but over the years some sources have suggested that the Brethren are out of touch in their declarations, that they don't know the issues, that some of their policies and practices

are out-of-date, not relevant to our times. As the least of those who have been sustained by you to witness the guidance of this Church firsthand, I say with all the fervor of my soul that *never in my personal or professional life have I ever associated with any group who are so in touch, who know so profoundly the issues facing us, who look so deeply into the old, stay so open to the new, and weigh so carefully, thoughtfully, and prayerfully everything in between. I testify that the grasp this body of men and women have of moral and societal issues exceeds that of any think tank or brain trust of comparable endeavor of which I know anywhere on the earth.*

This statement was based upon the Church's on-going public relations survey taking, opinion polling, and focus group studies. When I attended a valley wide leadership meeting, at which Elder Russell Ballard spoke, he mentioned that from the Church Office Building he had watched focus group discussions the day before which came in by video feeds from Chicago, Seattle, and several other cities (whose locations I do not recall).

When the Church changed its position and supported the same-sex attraction ordinance in Salt Lake City a few weeks ago, the Church's spokesman made the following public announcement of the Church's reasons for the change:

There are going to be gay advocates who don't think we've gone nearly far enough, and people very conservative who think we've gone too far; the vast majority of people are between those polar extremes and we think that's going to resonate with people on the basis of fair-mindedness.

This is the language of opinion polling. The words "going to resonate with people on the basis of fair-mindedness" are the

words of social sciences. The decision was not a “revelation” but a change in position based upon the polling which showed the position change could be safely made. *The Salt Lake Tribune* made the following report on January 30, 2010:

When Salt Lake City embraced anti-discrimination ordinances for gay and transgender residents last fall—snagging a landmark endorsement by the LDS Church and widespread support from city officials—more shifted than public policy. Public opinion—throughout Utah—jumped, too. Support for some gay rights, short of marriage, climbed 11 percentage points across the state from a year ago, according to a new *Salt Lake Tribune* poll, and shot up by 10 percent among Mormons. Two-thirds of Utahns (67 percent) favor employment protections and safeguards for same-sex couples such as hospital visitation and inheritance rights, up from 56 percent in January 2009, when pollsters asked the same question. (This year’s survey of 625 frequent Utah voters has an error margin of plus or minus 4 percentage points; last year’s was 4.5 percent.) Opposition dropped, overall, from 40 percent to 23 percent. Among LDS respondents, it plummeted from 48 percent to 28 percent. ‘This isn’t a gradual change of attitudes. This is a fairly dramatic jump,’ says Matthew Burbank, chairman of the University of Utah’s political science department. ‘Clearly, the fact that the LDS Church was officially endorsing this position had an impact on people.’ A similar number of respondents, 66 percent, also say they support expanding Salt Lake City’s anti-discrimination policy—the first of its kind in Utah and already mimicked in Salt Lake County—throughout the state.”

COMMENTS:

Gia Đình Vĩnh Cửu · FEBRUARY 23, 2010 AT 10:37 PM

Mr. Snuffer:

First, let me introduce myself. My name is Elijah Lawrence, I'm a 3L at the "classless" law school to the north, and I'm trying to be like Jesus. I don't intend to practice law when I graduate but I have a deep respect for good attorneys.

I was introduced to your writings by my uncle, Brian Black. I've read *The Second Comforter*, and am reading *Beloved Enos*, and both have triggered new thoughts for me, so I consider them to be good.

I have a couple questions regarding your assessment of the churches support for ordinances providing employment, housing, and other rights to gays. I understand you are busy and I don't want to further take you away from your family and work, so if time doesn't allow it please don't feel inclined to respond.

Question 1: Why do you feel the church has changed its position by supporting this recent ordinance? I actually had an institute teacher say the same thing to me two weeks ago. I have yet to read any statement by the church opposing legislation which allows gays housing, employment, and other rights. My understanding was that the church was and is opposed to gay marriage, but beyond that nothing was ever articulated by the church. I know many members interpreted that to mean granting any rights to gays was in conflict with the church's position, but I think that was based on a misunderstanding by church members. Is there a particular statement from the church opposing legislation affording such rights to gays?

I agree with you that any state that passes such legislation is tacitly acknowledging sexual orientation as a protected class, which makes it difficult to then argue that prohibiting gay marriage is constitutional.

Question 2: If (maybe when is the more realistic word given the current trends around the nation) the Supreme Court ends up ruling that laws restricting marriage to only a man and women violate the Equal Protection clause, why do you think the church will be required

to perform sealings for homosexuals? My humble understanding (and it is humble—I'm a lowly 3L) of constitutional law is that such a ruling by the Supreme Court would merely force state actors to perform civil marriages to any who requested one. The church would still be free to restrict entrance into the temple to those worthy according to church standards, and limit the sealing ordinance to heterosexual unions. Isn't it the case that even if the church had not lifted the ban on the priesthood and continued to deny the priesthood to blacks that it would be in the church's legal prerogative to do so? Again, my knowledge of constitutional law is limited, and I'm excited to see you engaging these issues.

All the best, and thank you for *Beloved Enos*—it is my “escape” from my law textbooks. =)

Elijah

Denver Snuffer · FEBRUARY 24, 2010 AT 1:24 PM

Gia Đình Vinh Cừ:

Your uncle baptized me. Therefore you must hold him to account for all the mischief which has followed in the wake of that ordinance. He is one of my dearest friends.

I taught Institute to the U of U law students for two years. It was a great experience. I still have some of those former students contact me from time to time.

As to Q1: The Church told us why they changed their position to support legislation. I quoted the statement in the post. They believe it will “resonate on the basis of fundamental fairness” and will only be opposed by those on either end of the spectrum. Significantly, the Church did NOT say this was a matter of either inspiration or revelation. It was a change in policy to the extent that the Church had never supported such legislation before. Done for the reasons they explained. If they want to amend or supplement the explanation, they can obviously do so and then I will respect that additional statement. But in the absence of a further explanation, they said why they did it and I accept their explanation. The Church had been quite clear

their opposition was as to marriage. Their silence on other “rights” was something which would not allow someone to read into, or out of the silence any meaning other than the Church opposed same-sex marriage. I don’t impute motive when there is no basis to do so. But it was a change to support the ordinance, and the meaning which can be read into it is the meaning the Church itself gave for the change.

Q2: I do not think coming successes by the homosexual community in the Courts will necessarily extend to Temple sealings (at least not at first). But if the Church retains the ability to perform civil marriages, then in my view the progression of the argument will result at some point in the Church not being permitted to use that authority discriminatorily. So LDS Bishops will be permitted (read that required once the Courts have finished ruling on the various claims of discrimination) to perform civil marriages/unions for homosexual unions. The challenge for the litigators seeking to use the law to change social norms, once the door is opened, is merely to put the legal issue to be decided by the Court in the right way so as to compel compliance.

FEBRUARY 23, 2010

Venus

I was with John Pratt on Saturday and he mentioned his new article on *Meridian Magazine* <http://www.meridianmagazine.com/> called “Venus Testifies of Christ.” I went home and read it and thought it was just delightful. He makes the case that Venus was the star which foretold all the great events in the Lord’s life. You can find the article on *Meridian Magazine* on-line.

FEBRUARY 23, 2010

Consider This

When I joined the LDS Church there were approximately 3 million members. That was in 1973. We have now over 13 million. That

means that there are approximately 10 million Latter-day Saints with less experience with the Church than I have. What an odd thing to consider.

President Monson, President Packer and Elder Perry are the only remaining members of the Presidency and Twelve who were already in place when I joined the Church. All the others were added to the Twelve after I joined. Again, that is an odd thing for me to consider. I can't imagine a Church where all the Presidency and Twelve were called after I joined.

I was thinking about all those who were in the First Presidency and Twelve when I first joined:

It was (to me) terrible to lose President Kimball. I'd grown quite fond of him from a distance in New Hampshire and Texas. Then when I went to law school, his son Ed Kimball taught at the J. Reuben Clark Law School, and President Kimball would come to visit his son. We'd run into him in the elevator or hallway and I grew even more respectful and attached to him.

Who didn't absolutely love Elder LeGrand Richards? What a delight it was to listen to him.

Elder McConkie and Elder Peterson were doctrinal giants. I went to both of their funerals because I had such a personal sense of loss at their passing.

FEBRUARY 23, 2010

Visit to the Nephites

I was asked about the difference between my explanation regarding the timing of the visitation of the risen Lord to the Nephites in *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*, and the timing proposed by Bruce R. McConkie and Joseph Fielding

Smith. I put the visit at the end of the thirty-fourth year, they put it immediately following Christ's resurrection. I responded as follows:

I won't respond or rebut the argument. I don't think it is important to resolve the matter. It is only important to understand the issue. From the things these men wrote, it is clear that Elders McConkie/Smith reason how it could have been immediate, despite the fact that the text says it was the difference between the beginning and end of the thirty-fourth year. The anchor of their argument is that the people were showing each other the great changes which took place during the destruction. They reason that this would have been immediately after the destruction, otherwise there would be no reason to be pointing it out.

I account for this by recognizing that the festival season caused a migration later in the year. At that time their presence at the Temple site would have introduced them to the destruction for the first time, despite the fact the great quaking and tempests had ended eleven months earlier. I also account for the various appearances of the Lord to "other sheep," as well as the forty-day ministry at Jerusalem in my reckoning.

However, I do not think it important for someone to disbelieve McConkie/Smith. It is only important how one decides to read the scriptures. Borrowed opinions are just that. People need to read the scriptures and decide what they mean for themselves.

In the book I refer to the "ceremony of recognition." This ceremony has a specific order. It begins with an embrace. The headnote (written by Elder McConkie) says "hands, feet and side" as the order. The text, however, refers to the side, then the hands and feet. That ceremony, so far as it is appropriate to do so, is explained in the text of *The Second Comforter*.

COMMENTS:

Denver Snuffer · FEBRUARY 24, 2010 AT 1:44 PM

LouN said:

From my understanding only the Presiding High Priest (PHP)/Prophet/President of the Church can declare Official Church Doctrine.

If this is true, could you please tell me: during what time period was Bruce R. McConkie the PHP/Prophet/President of the Mormon Church?

Once a man becomes the PHP/Prophet/President, is it OK to quote things he said before he was sustained as PHP/Prophet/President as if he were already sustained as such?

Was Bruce R. McConkie the PHP/Prophet/President at the time he wrote and published the definitive work on Mormon doctrine entitled “Mormon Doctrine?”

I agree with your understanding. And Bruce R. McConkie was never a President. A lot of people quote what was said before a man became Church President as if it had been said while President, but the distinction remains both unclarified and important. Until the Church resolves how to treat prior teachings of a President everyone is left to decide for themselves what significance to attach to them.

You know Elder McConkie wasn't President when he wrote Mormon Doctrine, and that the President had Elder Peterson review it for errors only after it had been published. Elder Peterson came up with a number of errors – in excess of a thousand – which resulted in changes between the first and later editions of the book.

FEBRUARY 23, 2010

It's All About You

I received an email over the weekend which finally helped me understand a reaction to *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*. Apparently there are readers who think that the book is about me. It isn't. It is entirely about the reader.

If someone reads it trying to get to a ‘punch line’ or great ending, they are reading with the wrong intent. The book isn’t about that at all. It is a manual. Its purpose is to provide the reader instruction while they are on their own path back to the presence of the Lord.

To the extent that there are any personal matters in the book, they are designed to illustrate common mistakes. My mistakes and errors are set out in the beginning of the chapters. Then the chapter explains how to get the principle right. Other than showing how poor a student I have been, my presence in the book is entirely secondary. I do bear testimony about the truth of the teachings, which I think is required for a book of that nature. But the book is entirely about you, the reader.

I reiterate several times in the text that it is not a book for every reader. It is not publicized, advertised, or promoted in any way. It is entirely a word-of-mouth book which will find appropriate readers without any effort on my part to promote it.

FEBRUARY 23, 2010

Truth—Anything More or Less

I’m in the unique position of being powerless. I preside over my family, nothing else. I write for all others only to persuade. I will not be penalized if someone who reads my writing rejects it. The question then is really not: “what is my motivation,” but instead: does the Spirit ratify the things I have written to *you*?

There is an alarming statement in D&C 93. It follows the definition of **truth** found in D&C 93:24: “Whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning” (D&C 93:25); meaning that we are all required to find the truth. Anything **more** or anything **less** is evil and means we have been deceived. In addition, the follow up to the parable of

the Ten Virgins found in D&C 45:56–57 warns everyone that the five foolish virgins who will not take truth as their guide are going to be hewn down and cast into the fire.

These decisions about what truth you must accept are important, but can only be made by trusting the Spirit. You should look to the Spirit for the answer to where and what is truth in this day of so much deception. Marketing, by its very nature, is deception (See, *The Marketing of Evil: How Radicals, Elitists, and Pseudo-Experts Sell Us Corruption Disguised As Freedom*, by David Kupelian). All of modern commerce is based on deceiving you. Making you think you need something when you do not. Exciting your envy to get you to purchase something you really don't need. So when it comes to the truth, you will need to demonstrate some “sales resistance” to Satan, and not be fooled into rejecting truth although it comes from a lone voice, crying from the wilderness (as has been so often the Lord's pattern in the past).

FEBRUARY 24, 2010

Self Government and Self Discipline

Self-government implies self-discipline. Freedom requires self-restraint in conduct and speech. People are free to say whatever they want, but when they want to say things that endanger others, then you have to consider limiting speech. That is always unfortunate. Ultimately, unless people share common values, common beliefs, and a common sense of proper conduct you cannot have “freedom” and “self-government” because it will end in violence.

When everyone agrees on first principles, there is little need for speech-limiting laws. When, however, something is deeply offensive and insulting to one group, and valued highly by another, cycles of debate end in cycles of violence.

The United States' Constitutional form of government presupposes an agreement on fundamental first principles. As that common consensus diminishes on fundamental principles, our form of government is increasingly less likely to work. If the "Elders of Israel" are going to save the Constitution, it will not be through legislation or litigation, but by conversion of people back to a common set of beliefs. Only then Constitutional government has a chance to survive.

FEBRUARY 24, 2010

Comments

You learn all the time in life. I've now learned that comments can take as much time as you let them; and if every comment gets a response, then using a blog to try to simplify will not work either. See previous post here. As a result here is how it appears it may work:

My wife, who is doing the mechanical work on this blog, will moderate comments and post them at her sole discretion. You must appease the goddess if you want to get something approved by her and onto the blog.

There are those comments which will get responses from me. Sometimes directly within the comment section of the post. Sometimes as a new post. Not every comment will get posted, and not every posted comment will get a reply. The hope is that everything of particular value to people/readers will get onto the blog. Also, feel free to talk amongst yourselves in the comment section. Be nice—remember the goddess is moderating.

I'm hoping this will not become a full-time job. Primarily because I still work for a living and blogging doesn't earn anything. It is merely a form of public service for the bored internet surfer who may be interested in Mormonism and related stuff.

P.S. We reserve the right to keep trying to make this work better.

FEBRUARY 24, 2010

Jumping Out a Window

When I first joined the LDS Church I thought every Latter-day Saint had revelations, visitations by angels, and miracles in their lives. I thought, the Joseph Smith story was the common experience for those who were members of this Restored Church.

It took a few years before I realized that it was the exception, not the rule, that such miraculous experiences took place. I learned that most saints were more akin to Hugh Nibley's description of his grandfather, a member of the First Presidency, who said that if he ever saw an angel he would "jump out the window."

I think there is a tendency to avoid discussing any contemporary occurrence of the miraculous in our individuals lives within the Church because of the frequent association of such things with deceivers and the deceived. In contrast to that fear, Moroni affirms that angels appear only to those with "a firm mind" (Moroni 7:30). How odd it is that we have this juxtaposition: On the one hand, in our day it is viewed as being evidence of a weak mind, or dubious character, and on the other Moroni asserts it is evidence of a "firm mind." One or the other has to be incorrect.

I think such things are experienced less because we talk of them less. As we talk of them less, we increase our doubts about such things. Doubt and faith cannot coincide.

So was Christ weak-minded or of "a firm mind?" Was Saul of Tarsus deceived or a deceiver, or instead a godly man who received notice from heaven? What of Joseph, Alma, Moses, Peter, Mary, Elizabeth, Agabus, and John?

Today we prefer our miracles at a distance. When we do accept the occasional miracle, we want it to be separated by culture, time and reduced to written accounts from the deceased. We think it's safer that way. Society trusts that when the miraculous has been reduced to history alone it can then safely be the stuff from which PhD's and theologians extract the **real** meanings. After all, our scientific society only trusts education, certification and licensing; not revelation, visitation and ministering of angels. Well, even if that is not as it should be, it is at least as Nephi said it would be:

They deny the power of God, the Holy One of Israel; and they say unto the people: Hearken unto us, and hear ye our precept; for behold there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men. Behold, hearken ye unto my precept; if they shall say there is a miracle wrought by the hand of the Lord, believe it not; for this day he is not a God of miracles; he hath done his work. (2 Nephi 28:5-6)

COMMENTS:

jw · FEBRUARY 28, 2010 at 7:51 PM

A couple years ago our stake patriarch visited our ward to give a talk. The moment he announced he was going to talk on a rarely discussed topic, ministering angels, I could sense a collective tensing-up of the congregation, as if to say "No, don't talk about that!" I was stunned. Later that day I was home teaching a family and mentioned the talk, and they straightaway changed the subject.

The supernatural makes people nervous. I'm beginning to think that we, collectively, have been brainwashed (I mean that literally) that supernatural events are evidence of insanity and generally being a nutcase. It is not tolerated well in society.

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 1, 2010 AT 12:00 PM

jw:

Right. My point. So we chase them away; then wonder why the stories of the miraculous only happened at the beginning of the Restoration.

Anonymous · MAY 14, 2010 AT 1:13 PM

My question to this post is how is one to know if what they have been experiencing is deception, delusions, or truly a miracle?

I ask because my whole life (49 years) I have been keenly aware of “others” beyond our awareness. I tend to “see” beings and things and have tried to hide it most of my life due to persecution. Many of the things I “see” have been validated medically or in other ways, but other experiences cannot be validated.

When I use this ability to help others, news sometimes leaks out & I have been called everything from a nutjob to a witch and usually by priesthood holders.

There is a man in Seattle (if I remember correctly) who fully believes he is Abraham and fully lives this delusion. He is an extreme example but it has made me question my own sanity in several of my experiences. I’ve prayed for years about this as well as studied and cannot find a conclusive answer.

So again I ask how can one truly know if what they are experiencing is from God or a delusion?

Denver Snuffer · MAY 14, 2010 AT 4:31 PM

It always comes down to a few things:

1. Does it testify of Christ or invite to believe in and accept Him and His role as Savior?
2. Does it edify, uplift and bring you to do what is noble or good?
3. Does it reveal to you something consistent with prior revelations, commandments or scriptures given from God?
4. Are you living your life to the best of your ability in conformity with what you have been taught in the Gospel, as contained in the scriptures? (By “best of your ability” I mean that you have no glaring sins which you

have not repented and forsaken. It is unlikely you will entertain a true messenger when you are deliberately in a state of rebellion against God.)

If the answer to all these questions is “yes” then I would trust what you receive. If any of them are answered “no” then I would not trust what you have received.

FEBRUARY 25, 2010

The Comment Moderator (Goddess) Thinks This is Important

A comment on Adam-ondi-Ahman

The description in D&C 107:53 refers to Adam giving a blessing to “them.” You have to determine to whom the word “them” refers.

I wrote elsewhere about Daniel and the way in which the Lord’s appearance was veiled from others who were present, Daniel alone seeing the vision. The same is true of the Lord’s contact with Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. Those with him did not have the same open vision.

When Joseph and Oliver saw the vision in the Kirtland Temple, they were behind a drawn canvas veil, and others were in the building. They didn’t see what Joseph and Oliver saw.

In the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, the visions which were opened to some were not to others.

There was an inner group of high priests for whom the Lord’s appearance would be appropriate and they are named. Naming means something. The rest are referred to as “the residue” and are not named.

These patterns are very real. They are set out in scripture because they are real. There is a great difference between being one of “the residue” of good people and being a clearly named high priest, particularly when you encounter the number of seven for

the meeting. The number is also important, as I've explained in books I've written.

The picture people get into their heads is difficult to remove. But this process is dependent upon the preparation of the individual, not membership in a group. I've associated importance with elements of the revelation which others may not think important. I believe naming the seven, the number of them (seven), identifying them as high priests, calling those others "the residue" and leaving their names out of the narrative, and the overall setting takes this incident and puts it into the Daniel/Kirtland Temple/Apostle Paul category of visions of the Lord. Where some present are excluded and only a specific group or individual whose presence was specifically invited by the Lord, are permitted to stand in His presence.

It is a terrible thing to enter into the presence of the Living God. Not all who are righteous are prepared for that. Hence my reading of the verses.

FEBRUARY 25, 2010

Increasing Light

Teaching is marred by the ineptitude of teachers. It does not matter how complex a subject being taught is, a good teacher will make it both simple and enjoyable to learn. When a subject becomes difficult to understand, more often than not it is because the teacher does not understand the subject well enough to make it simple.

For the Gospel, teaching is a matter of increasing light in the one learning. To do that the student must learn how to improve their obedience to true principles. Only someone's obedience to truth will lead them to greater truth. The teacher's obedience cannot and does not benefit the student of the gospel if the student is unwilling to receive greater light and truth by obedience.

The necessary obedience is not obedience to a man, or men, or a set of rules devised by men. It is not even obedience to a rigid set of commandments. Obedience and fidelity must be directed to the Lord. No matter how well someone may teach for doctrine the commandments of men, those who hear will never gain more than a form of godliness, without any power.

We all must progress in the same way Christ did. He grew from grace to grace, until at last He was called the Son of God. He had the fullness of grace and truth. Read John's testimony again found in the beginning of D&C 93. Pay attention to the first verse of Section 93, because it is the summary of what John's testimony will include.

The teachings are real. Increasing light is real. But each must gain it in the very same way as Christ and all those who have followed Him gained it.

A good teacher will always work himself out of a job by teaching how to find light without him. A bad teacher will call attention to himself, and try to make others dependent upon him. The worst teachers are those who want to control those who will listen to them and to dictate what they do, what they think, and how they must follow. Christ, and the light He brings, liberates, making each person an agent for themselves. Satan's plan is to put us into bondage, controlling us and making us fear.

FEBRUARY 25, 2010

What's in a Name?

The site we use for this blog has the unfortunate label of "Followers" for those who read the blog, or receive regular updates on new posts. The website comment goddess who works to manage this has attempted to change the name to "Readers" but can only do that within the fields open to be changed.

Now I realize those who follow this are “Readers” and only “followers” in the sense that they receive update notices. I acknowledge the insult given you by the Google label.

As an aside, if you really are a “Follower” then let me make one thing clear: You don’t want to follow me. You should be a follower of Christ. He can really do something for you. I cannot.

That having been said, now let’s go on being bemused at Google’s unfortunate choice of monikers for those who read a blog.

I’m really appreciative of the ability this forum has to reduce the need for repetition with many people. I hope it is convenient for readers, too.

FEBRUARY 26, 2010

Baptism of Fire

The question has come up about how the Lamanites could receive the baptism of fire and “know it not” when it happened. Whole books have been written on this subject and I can’t do it justice in a blog. So I won’t try. I’ll make a brief comment:

The alternatives are:

They knew something happened, but didn’t know what it was or what it should be called.

They didn’t realize something had happened at all.

If the reason is 1, then the result is un-troubling because without a vocabulary to label the event it is easy to understand why they “know it not.”

Much more troubling is reason 2. What if the baptism of fire is an event so subtle it could escape detection? And if that is the case, then how is one to know when or if they have experienced it?

Some writers have made the baptism of fire such a remarkable event that it connotes salvation, even exaltation itself. For those

who accept that definition of the event, then to reduce it to an undetectable occurrence seems to somehow diminish it.

Joseph described the effects of the Holy Ghost on a Gentile (purges the blood and remakes them into an Israelite), and on a descendant of Israel (pure intelligence). [I'm not going to give the cite from the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, because I don't have a copy with me while I'm writing this. So you look it up.] Both effects Joseph describes could be felt in a minimal way. Neither would require it to be dramatic.

"Fire" is a description of quickening, purging sin, and receiving the love of God. [Beloved Bridegroom gives a great explanation of fire as a symbol of the love of God.] If you are living in conformity with such light as you have been given, receiving this kind of "fire" would not necessarily be physically detectable. The real place where it would begin to show would be as a person prays, and then begins to receive answers, or "pure intelligence" as Joseph put it. "A sudden flow of ideas," which the recipient knows is beyond their capacity to think of or accomplish, would be another way in which the recipient would recognize its presence.

I think it is altogether possible for either explanation to be true. No matter which explanation, I don't believe it diminishes in any way the importance of this baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost. It is, in my view, the event marking the beginning of the process by which someone becomes ultimately a new creature. It is not the end of the journey. I would use other words to describe that.

FEBRUARY 26, 2010

Popularity or Persecution?

A recent trend with Latter-day Saint scholars has been the publishing of several books that try to make Mormonism seem like

Protestant Evangelicalism. I do not believe the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ is much akin to anything in Historic Christianity, and thankfully very different from Protestant Evangelicals. It is instead a return of Primitive Christianity as found in the New Testament. That is quite a different thing than what Historic Christianity has become, and almost altogether alien to Evangelicalism.

I believe the Church will advance only by acknowledging the differences, explaining them and showing what great things Historic Christianity has lost. Unless we have something different and important to offer, there is no reason for anyone to become a Latter-day Saint.

The opening statement of Christ to Joseph Smith in the First Vision ought to be the point we most emphasize. It was the many defects with Historic Christianity and its creeds which provoked the Lord to open the heavens again and start this great, final work. When we neglect that message, and try to seem like another brand of Protestantism we are neglecting the only reason for our Church's existence.

I know it is not up to me. And I do not challenge the right of the leaders, whom I sustain, to make decisions. But, if I could make a scourge of ropes and drive the social scientists out of the Church Office Building, I would. I think opinion polling and focus group results are worse than meaningless, they are misleading. It is an exercise in followship, not in leadership. If you see a trend through polling, and jump in front of it, that does not make you a leader. It makes you a clever follower.

I suppose this post is nothing more than proof of my tendency to err in judgment. But it is an honest and well meaning error which isn't being tried by the Church at present. When it was tried, in the early years, the newspapers railed against us, editorial

cartoons mocked us, mobs persecuted us, and in turn the Church grew in numbers so dramatic that a single set of missionaries sent to England baptized nearly 7,000 converts. The distinction caused by the persecution was valuable. Certainly not in a public relations sense, but very much in a “harvesting of souls” sense.

Sharp distinctions give the disinterested a reason to consider our message. Persecution attracts the honest who want to know why the persecution is happening. Joseph believed, and history has proven that persecution is the heritage of the righteous. Its absence may not really be a good thing. The cost of trying to avoid it is at the expense of forward progress. This is evidenced by the decrease in convert baptisms we see at present.

I have never seen any statement in scripture affirming that becoming popular in the eyes of the world was good or desirable. On the contrary, I see the Book of Mormon listing that as one of the great evils (See e.g., 1 Ne. 22:23).

COMMENTS:

Tom · FEBRUARY 28, 2010 AT 12:28 AM

Love the blog. Having read several of your books, it's nice to have a running commentary of what you're thinking on a daily/weekly/monthly basis or however often these posts end up being.

On this topic of popularity and persecution, I find it incredibly difficult to affect change, insofar as I feel inspired to do so (e.g., my own household). We've essentially gone from a culture (inside Mormonism) which shunned “mainstream” America in the mid-1800s to one which wants nothing more than to be “mainstream” America, which wants to “shake hands” all around. At all levels, we, as individuals, want to be accepted by everyone, rejected by no one. This typically means we go must go out and “impress” others with the “things” we have, because we seemingly, though we'll never admit it, take great

pride in those “things.” This is equally applicable to spiritual things and doctrinal beliefs.

Just today, for example, my wife reiterated how Pres. Hinckley had once counseled the members of the church to get as much education as possible because “the world will pay you what it thinks you’re worth” (republished in the April 2009 New Era, p. 19). On its face, that statement is obviously true. The world does pay us what it thinks we’re worth. End of story. Implicit in that statement, though, are many things left unsaid, especially on this topic of popularity and persecution.

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 7, 2010 AT 10:53 AM

I’ve thought that a case can be made that we have been reactionary throughout our history. The Church was abused by the United States, and as a result became uber-American, to disprove claims against us. When Reed Smoot’s hearings were underway, the Church was abused by the Republican party. As a result we became uber-Republican, to purchase peace with that party. When Evangelical Christianity abused us, we have made an effort to align with them, becoming uber-mainstream. We have oftentimes “answered” our critics by changing our behavior to subtract what they criticize and add what they advocate to our behavior.

FEBRUARY 26, 2010

The Telestial

Here’s a troubling thought to ponder: The Telestial are those who have received and bear testimony of their faith in prophets, such as Paul, John, Moses, Elias, Isaiah, Enoch, and Joseph Smith, but who “received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus” (See D&C 76:98–102).

Security therefore lies not in following men, even men identified in the verses who are true prophets, but only in following Christ and receiving His Gospel and testimony. What an absolutely uniform, individual obligation the Gospel imposes upon everyone.

COMMENTS:

db Schroeder · MARCH 2, 2010 AT 12:41 AM

My question has always been: What becomes of the true believers in Christ, that had the best of intentions, who were not LDS? -In the Spirit World will one of us teach them by saying: "Oh by the way, guess what, you had most of it right w believing in the Savior, but you need to know more to have the fullness of His Gospel, are you ready to progress and learn more"? Will it be a Pride issue at that point for them, or will those who love Christ, say, "How foolish of me while on earth of course I want to advance! I'm sorry for not recognizing that the fullness was there. Please forgive me and teach me now, so I can progress further and do what it takes to have all the requirements to enter into the Presence of the Lord. Is that the scenario of how it will all play out? What say you counselor?"

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 2, 2010 AT 11:30 AM

db,

People who will "accept Christ" will always be interested in obtaining ordinances from Him. The more difficult problem is willingness to accept Him. The less difficult is the ordinances. We perform those vicariously.

Alvin died before the ordinances had been restored, but Section 137 lets us know Alvin was not in any way limited by that. He was among those for whom vicarious ordinances were performed first.

The great hurdle for those who claim religion is described in Section 76, verses 99–101. To be a "follower of Christ" is something different from being a fan of Christ's, or a follower of a "prophet" rather than Christ. In fact, the verses there might well be evidence that those who accept the mantra "follow the prophet" have substituted a false standard for the correct one. We are not supposed to say we are of "Paul, and of Apollos and of Cephas" (all of whom were true prophets, by the way). We are not supposed to claim we are a disciple of the man holding any mantle or office. We are required to "receive the testimony of Jesus, [His true messengers].... and the everlasting covenant" (v. 101). I've

inserted the words: “His true messengers” into the quote in place of “neither the prophets” because if you use the scriptures as a guide, I think there may be a difference between what we think and what the Lord does. I don’t want to rule out the possibility that history in our day will repeat itself, and a voice crying in the wilderness will come without rank, authority, position or status which the Lord commissioned. Someone like Abinadi, Samuel the Lamanite, Isaiah, Lehi, John the Baptist, and even Christ. I’ve tried to discuss this possibility in *Come, Let Us Adore Him* in a way which highlights just how difficult it can be to really follow Him. He’s always requiring us to find the truth through our hearts, not by relying on presumed infallible institutional means. That can be a trap.

I think you can be a perfectly content, active, recommend-holding Latter-day Saint and “follow the prophet” but not follow Christ. Therefore the more relevant question is whether we who have received the ordinances have also received Christ. Because both are required. We all have to receive Him, and then receive the ordinances, just as He did.

It is a perfectly equal Gospel, you see. No-one has any great advantage. Including Latter-day Saints.

FEBRUARY 27, 2010

Argument

I’ve never won an argument with the Lord.

FEBRUARY 27, 2010

A Tennessee Ward and the Lord

I have a friend in Tennessee who emailed me this week about a Latter-day Saint congregation he visited a few Sunday’s ago. The congregation was of mixed races, and the meetings were louder, more animated and lively than the “typical” ward. He quite enjoyed it. His description of the visit made me long for the mission field again. In the mission field there are widely divergent congregations.

But the Wasatch Front is far different in texture and tone than anywhere else. I think there are people here who believe a stoic face is required to be reverent.

My impression of the mortal Lord is that He was gregarious, lively, filled with life, and given to smiling often. He surely was challenged by serious men involved in conspiracies to have Him killed, and for them His responses were serious. But He was filled with life, and love and humor. His many analogies drew from the common man's experience to teach with simplicity the deepest of ideas. I think He would have fit into the Tennessee ward my friend told me about.

I think when the scriptures note "He wept" it was because His normal demeanor was so upbeat, so positive and hope-filled that weeping stood out by contrast.

I've only sensed that I genuinely offended Him once. All other errors and mistakes have merely "bemused" Him, even though I have felt terrible from my end. He is a patient Teacher. Who knows exactly when you are ready and then how best to teach.

FEBRUARY 27, 2010

Elder Oaks at Harvard

Elder Oaks spoke to law and divinity students at Harvard this week. The talk was recorded and may be broadcast between General Conference sessions. He spoke for about 45 minutes then took questions. Among the comments he made was that neither the Church nor Evangelicals would identify Mormons as Evangelicals. He also noted the hostility of higher education to religious values and beliefs, despite the widespread religious convictions of Americans.

FEBRUARY 27, 2010

Becoming One

The idea of being “one” (as Christ put it in His great Intercessory Prayer in John 17:20–23) has been oftentimes misunderstood and the source of abuse. There should be nothing compulsory about this process. “Oneness” is a byproduct, and not an end. When we seek it as an end, then we have missed the opportunity to achieve it.

Believing “oneness” is achieved by making people think alike, look alike, be alike, or behave alike is so wrongheaded as to be Satanic. The ideal expressed by Christ as He prayed to the Father was that we should **each** attempt, in **our limited capacities**, to be more like Christ. The closer we approach that ideal, the more we become “one” as a byproduct. Merely giving a list of behavior as the way to “oneness” is not only foolish, but it is impossible. It must come from within, and cannot come from without.

Paul’s 14th Chapter of Romans is actually the only way in which “oneness” can be attained. Let everyone decide what they believe will make them closer to Christ, and allow them the freedom to follow that path. Let all others refrain from judging the behavior of others. Whether they “eateth herbs” or “eateth meat” let each be free to do what they believe to be right before God. “Judge not him that eateth: for God hath received him.” Let everyone do what in their own heart they believe is right before God, because God will respect anything done on His behalf. And let everyone else refrain from judging these honest efforts, but bear with one another.

This will give rise to widely diverse behavior, but will result in an absolute uniformity of intent. Everyone should be free to do what they believe God is asking them to do. And everyone should also respect the honest efforts of others.

Over time, perhaps over generations, behavior will grow closer as a result of the purity of the underlying intent. Not because someone is compelling uniformity, but because light and truth will eventually bring harmony.

Being “one” just as building Zion cannot be a goal in itself. It is always a byproduct of the kind of people which changed hearts produce.

In a private conversation with someone a few years ago he commented that he wished the definition of “Mormonism” would be changed. He thought that anyone who was willing to accept the ordinances of the Church ought to be regarded as being Mormon, no matter what else they may differ on. I’ve thought about his comment for years now. I’m inclined to see a great deal of wisdom in that idea. I’ve grown to see that those comments echo the earlier writings of the Apostle Paul.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · FEBRUARY 28, 2010 AT 7:45 AM

I really like and appreciate what you’ve said here, but I’m confused by the last paragraph. If someone is willing to accept the ordinances of the Church, what else could they be but a Mormon? Your friend must be referring to something here that I’m not catching. Please clarify.

Denver Snuffer · FEBRUARY 28, 2010 AT 6:37 PM

The fellow who made the remark was excommunicated for “apostasy.” He wanted to be a member, but wasn’t allowed back into the Church. His lament was that even if his personal views were objectionable to others concerning doctrine, he was willing to accept the ordinances and believed in their power to save. Therefore, he thought the definition of “Mormon” should be broad enough to permit anyone who would receive the ordinances to be a Mormon.

I thought about this for years. This definition would allow, for example, a Catholic Bishop to be baptized into the Church, receive ordinances from our Church, and yet continue to be a Catholic Bishop. Although this may seem odd at first glance, I see nothing wrong with it. He would have to reconcile his preaching with the things he accepts in our ordinances, but that would be up to him. Similarly, a Buddhist, Hindu, or Muslim who would accept our ordinances could be viewed as “Mormon” because he/she accepted the rites.

Joseph said he did not think Latter-day Saints should be like the Methodists. That is, we should not have creeds which establish borders and keep people out.

In one sense, once someone accepts the truth of Joseph Smith’s status as a prophet, realizes our new scriptures are from God, then receives the ordinances of the Gospel, they are really on their own individual journey to increase in light. We can try to help in an organized way through Sunday School, Sacrament meetings, Priesthood and Relief Society, Primary, Stake and General Conferences, but really the individual must find the path back for themselves. By widening the definition of Mormon to include anyone willing to accept the ordinances, we are acknowledging that if someone sees power in the ordinances they are converted to the truth. Being fully converted, and fully acknowledged by God is a long process thereafter. So why would we try and “herd” people when they can’t be herded in any event.

I could go on, but I try to keep posts quite short. This is a big topic, but I would just say: Think about it. Why not? This post on “Becoming One” describes how this process must be “without compulsory means” (D&C 121:46). We need to relax. Teach the upside. Set a proper example. Convert gently, by persuasion and example. Then allow people to come along at their own pace. When enough truth and light is offered in a kindly, gentle and persuasive way, they will come.

jw · FEBRUARY 28, 2010 AT 7:29 PM

That’s a very interesting idea. How far are you willing to take it?

For example, when I was a missionary in Germany, I tracted out a really great family. They wholeheartedly accepted the gospel, but had one problem: they were having a hard time quitting smoking. For this reason they could not be baptized, and to my knowledge they never did (hope I'm wrong). Should we have baptized them anyway and hope for the best? (The WoW wasn't a commandment initially anyway, but made one.)

In another example, some missionaries liked to tract Afrikaners because they were 'easy' to get baptized, but they just as easily slipped away, largely due to cultural differences and not fitting in.

In the case of the family, maybe we should've just baptized them. We don't automatically ex someone just because they have a smoking habit. The Afrikaners, on the other hand, would in many cases accept baptism, but would it do them or anyone any good if they just walked away into the sunset like they often did? Is there somewhere to draw the line?

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 1, 2010 AT 11:51 AM

jw:

I wouldn't draw a line. Remember the Ethiopian eunuch that Philip met near Gaza. One brief encounter, in which Philip explained a passage in Isaiah was about Christ. The eunuch believed, Philip baptized him and they departed from one another. The eunuch "saw him no more; and went on his way rejoicing" (See Acts 8:26-39).

Now I can't begin to explain the problems which this eunuch would have had to encounter and overcome as a result of being baptized. But Philip did it. He didn't try to integrate him into a program, nor to organize him into a quorum, but to simply deliver the message of salvation and ordinance of baptism.

I respect and obey the Word of Wisdom. I can state that with a clear conscience when in a temple recommend interview. I support it without any mental reservation. But I do not think it a virtue. I have no trouble with the fact Christ drank wine. Nor do I have any trouble with the fact Joseph Smith was drinking wine the day of the

martyrdom to lift the spirits of those confined in Carthage Jail. I do not view that as a moral lapse by either Christ or Joseph Smith. At one point we had a wine mission in Southern Utah, where we produced our own domestic supply of wine. I also do not think I have any moral superiority as a result of being a teetotaler. It does not invest me with any greater value before God. I suppose it reduces the likelihood I will contract some diseases, and reduce the likelihood I will die in an accident. So it has value. But not in a “God likes me better” sort of way. At least in my view.

I’d baptize anyone willing to receive the ordinances and let them receive such benefit as they can obtain from them. I would make Mormonism a movement and not just an institution. And I’d let the institution acquire such followers as would be willing to participate. But those interested in joining the movement and receiving ordinances would be permitted, if I were able to make the decision.

You must understand that this is exactly WHY I think I am not in a position to make such decisions. I’m just not an “institutional” guy. Therefore I do not think in those terms. I value the institution and support and sustain those who serve in it. I do whatever calling they ask of me. But I view the Gospel of Jesus Christ as encompassing all mankind, all truth, and any who will come to Christ everywhere. Not matter how minimally they may be willing to go in their first steps. The Church is Christ’s tool to be used to advance His work. But, as I have shown in Beloved Enos, it cannot and does not encompass all those things which the Lord presently has in His inventory for bringing salvation to mankind.

Jonathan · MARCH 1, 2010 AT 8:46 AM

I am in total agreement with you on this idea of oneness being a byproduct of trying to live Christ like lives. I do have one concern, however, you wrote: “ Let everyone do what in their own heart they believe is right before God, because God will respect anything done on His behalf.” What of atrocities done in the name of religion or God? For example, the Christian crusades, religious extremists? How

does this ideology prevent someone from slipping into a relativism? It seems to me that in these extreme cases these people are doing what they think God really wants of them.

I don't mean to "stir the pot," but I think this is a legitimate concern. Should we just allow this type of behavior and idly stand by?

I am interested to hear what you have to say.

Thank you.

Jonathan

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 1, 2010 AT 11:55 AM

Jonathan:

I do not believe in atrocities in the name of Christ. I believe in meekness, gentleness, persuasion, love unfeigned and no control or compulsion as part of the Gospel. The moment someone begins to exercise control, dominion or compulsion over the souls, minds or bodies of men, amen to their priesthood and amen to their participation in the Gospel of Jesus Christ (See D&C 121).

I think we have a long way to go in getting where we need to be. But the way to get there is by example. We need to live and learn correct principles. Once that is done we can begin to be in a position to teach correct principles. And correct principles allow people to govern themselves.

If someone is tempted to commit atrocities they really are without understanding of Christ's teachings. They need to be taught. I've written a chapter on this in Eighteen Verses. That book is about the major problems facing modern Mormonism.

FEBRUARY 28, 2010

Missionaries in Chile

According to this morning's Deseret News, all LDS missionaries in the affected areas of Chile are safe and accounted for. My wife suggested that there are readers outside Utah who may want news like that put onto the blog.

FEBRUARY 27, 2010

Trials

On Friday Marie Osmond's son died in LA of an apparent suicide. My heart goes out to her. Some trials in life are not meant to be understood, but only to be endured. The suffering from unexplainable ordeals can bring us closer to the Lord, who alone can comfort us in such extremities.

In Chile there are over 200 dead and many missing. There is a race to rescue about 100 people trapped in a building. Aftershocks and injuries threaten those who are trapped.

There are no magic words to console those who endure tests in mortality. But we do have the promise from Him whose word is law and cannot return to Him unfulfilled: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. 7:17). If God intends to do this in the final day, the only God-like conduct we can imitate is to lessen the burdens felt by those with a sense of loss today.

MARCH 2010

MARCH 1, 2010

Elder Oaks

My wife also suggested I add something about Elder Oaks' talk at Harvard, since some readers may not have access to the information:

When discussing our beliefs he explained that personal revelation is fundamental to Mormon beliefs. "some wonder how members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints accept a modern prophet's teachings to guide their personal lives, something that is unusual in most religious traditions. Our answer to the charge that Latter-day Saints follow their leaders out of 'blind

obedience' is this same personal revelation. We respect our leaders and presume inspiration in their leadership of the church and in their teachings. but we are all privileged and encouraged to confirm their teachings by prayerfully seeking and receiving revelatory conformation directly from God."

When asked by a Divinity School student why Joseph Smith was any more reliable than Mary Baker Eddy, he responded:

If you want to know go to the ultimate source. The answer to that question can only come from God himself. That's what I encourage anyone who asks me about it. I can't promise when it will happen with anyone, but I can promise it will happen.

COMMENTS:

Allen · MARCH 1, 2010 AT 8:51 AM

While it is true that we all are entitled to personal revelation as to whether or not a leader's inspiration is from God or man; if my personal revelation conflicts with a leader's "revelation" then the common response from leaders is: "You am the one who is getting the wrong answer. You are the one who has been deceived."

In other words, in practical application, the leader is always right and the member is always wrong. The leader's revelation always trumps the member's revelation. The leader can say whatever he wants and claim it is "revelation" and that immediately overrides any inspiration the member may have spent many days fasting and praying about. Where is the accountability in that? There is something deeply disturbing about this.

April Roundy · MARCH 1, 2010 AT 11:07 AM

I agree with Allen. More times than I care to remember have I been told by my priesthood leaders, including my husband, that I have been deceived. I have been in almost every calling in the church that a woman can have. Am I not given personal revelation in my stewardships? I truly believe in personal revelation, even the scriptures testify

to it, and I am a devout believer in angels, which also the scriptures testify of, however, as in Allen's case, the same is for me. I am in the wrong. Please, Denver, if you are so inspired to comment, it is greatly appreciated.

Tom · MARCH 1, 2010 AT 1:28 PM

I'll add another witness to what Allen stated. A few months back we had a lesson on obedience. The jist of the lesson was obedience, while a direct quote had it at obedience "to the apostles and president of the church."

As the discussion went forward, a couple of people came forth with the idea that we must live by personal revelation, that we must be prophets in our own right (Num 11:29, Rev. 19:10) and be led by that voice. A number of my fellow quorum members stated, somewhat surprisingly, that the personal revelation we receive as individuals is questionable and cannot be relied upon because we tend to insert our own personal feelings, desires and wants in place of that revelation. And, while we ("average" members) have this propensity to conflate personal revelation with our own desires and wants, the leadership of the church does not have that problem.

As I walked out of class, I overheard one member state that personal revelation is "scary" and "cannot be trusted."

So, although I agree with what Dallin Oaks stated in theory on this subject, I nevertheless note that the everyday practice of church members is at a different and inferior level.

The only thing I would suggest is to, as Denver noted in a recent post, "At some point ... you will find that individual service and obedience to God's will for you will create disharmony between you and others." That disharmony is to be expected, especially given the individuality inherent in following Christ and the Gospel.

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 1, 2010 AT 6:17 PM

From the comments it appears that both of you believe you received actual inspiration/revelation and that the critical priesthood leader

was wrong in the assertion that you hadn't been inspired. I will accept your premise for this response, because I have no basis to do otherwise.

A priesthood leader who pits himself against another person's inspiration always runs the risk of losing the respect generally afforded him. Therefore, any leader would be well advised to condemn another person's inspiration only when it is absolutely necessary and when he is absolutely certain he is right. Sadly, that kind of self-control is not often used.

The **RULE** is that most of those who have had or will have a "presiding" office in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will not perform their office responsibilities well. Joseph wrote from Liberty Jail, "We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion" (D&C 121:39). He also wrote: "Behold, there are many called but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men..." (*Id.* v. 34-35). The **EXCEPTION** is when someone actually does perform their office with meekness, pure knowledge and love unfeigned.

We should not be surprised at failings, lapses and abuses. That is the norm. We should be appreciative when we encounter the opposite. That is the occasional and delightful exception.

Just muse over this question: How many Latter-day Saint wives if they were free to choose over (and be promised the return of their children they had in their current marriage) would go back and marry the same man? If a man cannot live so as to make the woman to whom he is married love and admire him as the husband and father in her home, how can such a man hope to hold authority over others outside his family? (That is an important question which **WILL** be asked in the Day of Judgment.)

I expect very little from church leaders. I do not look to them as the example of truth and light. I look to Christ. I find His example extraordinary. He was meek; in the way I explain meekness in the book *Beloved Enos*. That alone is the test of how to hold priesthood

authority. I'm thankful when I have, as I do now, a Stake President whom I admire and have no reservations about his character, nature or behavior toward others.

Notice that in Joseph's statement he refers to "a little authority as they suppose." Implicit in that statement is that they have actually lost authority because they have abused it. When they do, "the heavens withdraw themselves, and amen to the priesthood or authority of that man" (121:37).

It's all in the scriptures. We have far too high of expectations of our fellow man. And we have far too many excuses for our own lack of charity toward them. Support men who preside over you. As Paul put it: "Be subject to the powers that be." Good advice. I don't envy those who try to preside in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Most are trying hard to do what they believe to be right. So I support them, pray for them, and do what they ask. But they do not define for me the standard to follow. Christ alone is that standard. In comparison to Him we all look inadequate.

MARCH 1, 2010

Keep the Commandments

I was asked about a list of "commandments" to keep. The person was sincerely trying to keep the commandments, but lacked a comprehensive list of them.

It is not possible to list all commandments. In one sense there are only two: Love God. Love your fellow man. All others are extensions of those.

If you love God you will do what He asks of you. Whenever something comes to your attention He would have you do, you do it. For example, Christ was baptized and said to "Follow Him." So because of your love of God, you follow Him.

But Christ also showed repeatedly, that the second commandment was greater than the rules. Keeping the Sabbath day holy, for

example, was subordinate to loving and freeing His fellow man. He freed men from sin on the Sabbath by forgiving sins. He freed them from physical injury or disease by healing on the Sabbath. Both were considered work, and therefore an offense to the commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy.

Your individual path back to God will begin with following the teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. At some point, however, you will find that individual service and obedience to God's will **for you** will create disharmony between you and others. Can't be avoided. If you're following Christ, you will find the same things He found. Helping someone in need will take you away from Church meetings on occasion. You can't make a list and keep it, because as soon as you do the list will interfere with loving God and loving your fellow man.

So the whole matter can be reduced to this: Follow Christ, receive the ordinances, accept the Holy Ghost, who will teach you all things you must do. Any list beyond that will inevitably result in conflicts and contradictions.

MARCH 1, 2010

Cool Change

I think *Cool Change* was Little River Band's greatest song. I found this video on YouTube which couples the song with video of swimming dolphins and whales.

These are mammals in the video. They are warm blooded and breathe air. Because they must breathe they are required to return to the surface. But in the video they seem to be playing, jumping, enjoying the jump into the heavens and out of the waters where they live. One of the dolphins leaps and twists like one of the Olympic events we just finished watching.

The upward leap seemed a symbol to me of what all life here was intended to do: reach up joyfully to that God who gave us life. Hope you enjoy the video and song as much as I did as I watched it with a daughter last night.



CHAPTER 3

Angels and Mysteries

MARCH 1, 2010

The Sacrifice

Abraham's great test in sacrificing his son Isaac was all the more difficult when you consider he was nearly sacrificed when he was younger, by his father, on an altar, in a false religious practice. When the true God whom he worshiped asked him to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac, Abraham was put in the exact position he knew from his own past experience to be evil. Despite this, Abraham complied.

Then God Himself provided a sacrifice (Gen. 22:8).

Not the ram found in the thicket on that day, but a living Son, later—in a direct corollary to what had first been asked of Abraham.

Many have stood back in amazement and considered the task given to Abraham to be outrageous, inexplicable and offensive. It was. But it was designed to make us realize how outrageous, inexplicable and offensive the sacrifice of God's Only Begotten was on our behalf. Abraham was one of the few men whose experience allowed him to identify with God the Father.

MARCH 2, 2010

His Words Are Commandments

A great resource for understanding how to gain eternal life is found in D&C 1:38. The Lord's word is law. What He says will not return void. It will all be fulfilled.

Immediately following his father's death, Moroni writes concerning the plates his father had made, which he was then completing. He recorded that the plates are "of no worth" in an economic sense, because of the Lord's "commandment" (Mormon 8:14). He says the Lord had spoken the words: "no one shall have them to get gain" (*Id.*). This means that since the Lord had spoken that the gold plates could not be obtained for economic gain, this meant the Lord had "commanded" that the plates could not give a person any economic gain. The only gain to be had was "of great worth" to the soul.

Moroni equates the Lord's remark on the plates' lack of economic value to a "commandment." This is exactly how it works. This is what D&C 1:38 is affirming, as well:

What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.

Salvation consists in getting the word of the Lord spoken to you as a promise of eternal life. When you obtain that word, it cannot be broken. It becomes a "commandment" of the Lord's which cannot fail. This is the kind of commandment we should seek.

I've tried to answer questions about "commandments" and I've tried to discuss the subject more fully in *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*. Instead of focusing on

a list of things to do or not do, I would commend to you the idea of getting from the Lord those words which will assure you eternal life. Not His words spoken to others found in scripture, but words spoken by Him to you. If you obtain this from Him, then you have a sure promise, though the heavens and earth pass away. This more sure word guarantees you, by covenant from Him whose words cannot fail, that you will be granted life with Him.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · MARCH 2, 2010 AT 11:03 AM

Wow, I really enjoyed this post. How does a person come to know such a thing has been spoken to them? I've heard one response that indicated there would be little reason to ask the question given the event. I recognize similar words in the ordinances of the Gospel, in a Patriarchal blessing, words of priesthood blessings and assurances in scriptures. All words that apply to the individual, me in this case, the ordinances even done in my own name by one of the Lords assigned and called servants. I have confidence in the ordinances and in the Lords word. I can accept them as the Lords word to me. Yet sometimes, but not always, there lingers an uncertainty. The amount varies depending on the day. Some occasions there is no uncertainty. So my question is, where to go from there. Can anyone speak to this?

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 2, 2010 AT 12:29 PM

In *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil* I showed how Nephi's ability to receive answers from the Lord progressed. It began with first being able to believe in his father's, Lehi's, words. His heart was softened.

He remained true and faithful to this answer, even defending his father. As a result the capacity to receive answers grew. It progressed to the point that, after he had shown the willingness to sacrifice all things, including his life if necessary, he was able to receive an audience with the Lord. The full account is set out in *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*.

This pattern is the same for all of us. It is the most frequent pattern in the Book of Mormon. It was what Joseph Smith did to receive the First Vision, and to receive what followed thereafter.

This pattern is also repeated in the book of Enos, as I set out in the book *Beloved Enos*.

It was meant for you to receive the “more sure word of prophecy” in this life. All of us were expected to receive this. It is open to all, and God is no respecter of persons. He will do the same for everyone as He will do for anyone. All are invited to come to Him.

MARCH 2, 2010

Conference on Chiasmus

Yvonne Bent has been researching sacred geometry for over ten years. As a result of her research, she submitted an art project that was displayed in the Church’s 8th International Art contest at the LDS Conference Center in Salt Lake City. A photo of her work was in the *Ensign* magazine, as well.

Added to her study of the Articles of Faith and sacred geometry, a milestone connection was made to demonstrate the same pattern as we see in the Hebrew literary style called chiasmus appearing in other fields and even in nature itself.

Yvonne Bent has organized a conference on May 15, 2010 at the Rose Wagner Auditorium in downtown Salt Lake City to have various presenters address conference attendees on the widespread sacred patternism, including chiasmus. She invited me to speak, and I will be among those who will participate in the program.

The conference will consist of lectures from persons who have discovered remarkable chiastic patterns in art, literature, architecture, science and math. In the evening there will be a concert to demonstrate the chiasm pattern in music.

I do not yet have the final information about the event, but thought I'd put this brief announcement on the blog for those who may be interested.

COMMENTS:

Kaisie · MAY 16, 2010 AT 6:43 AM

How did the conference go? I just read this today and see that I missed it my a day. I'm currently reading, "A Beginner's Guide to Constructing the Universe: The Mathematical Archetypes of Nature, Art and Science" by Michael S. Schneider. Will there be another conference in the future? Does Yvonne have a website or blog about the conference?

Thanks so much,

Kaisie :)

Denver Snuffer · MAY 16, 2010 AT 7:57 AM

On May 5th there was a post on this blog announcing that the conference had been postponed and I would make a further announcement in the future. Right now materials intended for the conference are being gathered for publication. A further announcement will come on this blog as the information becomes available.

MARCH 3, 2010

Temple Work

In relation to the world's population there are statistically fewer LDS each year. Our birth rate is declining and our baptism rate does not even begin to keep up with world population growth. In other words, each year there is far more temple work to be done than there was the year before.

COMMENTS:

Tom · MARCH 4, 2010 AT 11:50 PM

On this subject...when you mention that there is "far more temple work to be done than there was the year before" I wondered something.

To the extent we believe in revelation, continuing, lasting, insightful revelation, what role does revelation currently play in temple work?

I have heard some very powerful stories about temple work and mortal/immortal angels playing a key role in finding essential information in someone's genealogy, but for everyone who is going about it in a spirit of revelation and truth, I'd guess there are a number of others who do it just to get the numbers done.

I guess what I'm saying, from your standpoint, what role does revelation play in the actual performance of temple work? Performing the work – as Woodruff did with some of the Presidents of the U.S.A. and their 2nd Anointings – when those on the other side are ready for it would seem to be when it should be done. But, in actuality is the practice (from what you've seen) to just “check off a list” and get everyone's work done ASAP, or something better?

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 5, 2010 AT 10:03 AM

Institutionally we have the “Name Extraction Program” to get names from the census and other sources without regard to anything other than accuracy. Every name identified has work done for them.

For my own family, since I'm the first member of the church on either my mother's or father's side, I've been busy doing any names I can find. However, I have to say, both my Patriarchal Blessing and my personal experience has shown this personal, family quest to be filled with spiritual contact between myself and my ancestors. I referred to one of those experiences in *The Second Comforter*.

I think it is a mixture of both. But “getting it done” is the primary motivation.

MARCH 3, 2010

Judging

When Christ made His Twelve Disciples in the Americas “judges” over those people in the great Day of Judgment, He did not empower them to use their own discretion to reward or punish others.

He said they would judge others “according to the judgment which I shall give unto you, which shall be just” (3 Ne. 27:27). That same standard would apply to His Twelve Apostles in the New Testament (See Matt. 19:28). Christ Himself will provide the decision for us all; those Twelve will have the honor of announcing it.

I’ve often thought that with the standard set by the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount (“Judge not, that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged” - Matt. 2:1-2), that any time a person is given the opportunity, they should forgive others, just as Christ admonished us (See Matt. 6:14-15).

Those who think presiding over a ward or stake gives them an opportunity to dominate others are taking an extraordinary risk against their own eternal interests. My counsel would be to err on the side of forgiving, and never on the side of condemning. Even the woman taken in the act of adultery was told by the Lord: “neither do I condemn thee” (See John 8:1-11).

Christ’s teachings were meant to be applied internally to check our own behavior. Not externally as a means to judge or condemn others. If you see something amiss in other’s conduct, then persuade them by your example to be better. Lectures are almost always useless. An example is compelling.

MARCH 3, 2010

Declining Numbers

There was an article on Mormon Times about the declining baptism rate the Church is experiencing. The article can be found at: http://www.mormontimes.com/mormon_voices/mckay_coppins/?id=12892. I thought it was odd to approach this subject in an article which maintains there is nothing unusual about a declining rate of baptisms.

The prophecy of Daniel was that the stone cut out of the mountains without hands would roll forth, grind to dust the prior world orders, become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth (Daniel 2:34–35). Daniel’s interpretation included that God will establish a kingdom in the latter days which shall never be destroyed, nor left to other people. It will break into pieces and consume all other kingdoms and stand forever (*Id.* verses 44–45).

To the extent the Church claims to be this kingdom, or rock rolling forth, it should be expected to increase in size, and momentum, as it rolls forth to fill the earth.

The Church ceased to distinguish between baptisms for “children of record” and “converts” some years ago. Numbers are given in April General Conference. Last April’s conference statistical report included this statement: “Converts Baptized: 265,593.” There was a separate category for “Children of Record.” but there was no separate category for “Baptisms of Children of Record.” That used to be a separate category. Since it’s elimination, I have had the impression that “Converts Baptized” included all numbers, including baptisms of “Children of Record.” If that is so, then for the last recorded numbers of baptisms you would need to go back to eight years earlier, take the number of Children of Record, and subtract that number from the “Converts Baptized number to get the actual number of Converts. Eight years earlier from the number given in last General Conference, the statistical report announced that there was an increase of 81,450 Children of Record. So the actual number of baptisms of Converts alone would be 184,143. That appears to me to be the real number of Converts, exclusive of baptisms of Children of Record.

Now the Church hasn’t provided this separate number for Children of Record for about a decade now. And I can’t be certain that

the “Converts Baptized” category is actually an amalgamation of the two. But I think it is. If so, the decline from the time of President Kimball to today is more than significant, it is catastrophic.

I believe the only reason to convert to our faith is our doctrine. Since the Church has de-emphasized doctrine, the trend of lowering missionary success has confirmed my belief in the necessity of teaching doctrine. Not just in the Teach My Gospel program, but in every aspect of the Church, from Sunday School and Primary to Stake and General Conferences. Doctrine is what distinguishes us.

Deseret Book has actually told me that “doctrine books do not sell.” They are interested in fiction, which can be read in one or two settings.

COMMENTS:

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 4, 2010 AT 9:02 AM

I’ve never wasted a single meeting. Since I carry my scriptures, I find that I am able to get something out of them even if the teacher is not covering anything which holds my interest. (My presence in the class shows support for the teacher. And since no one can tell why I’m looking at my scriptures, it is not disruptive because people should presume I’m following the discussion or lesson.)

Tom · MARCH 4, 2010 AT 11:44 PM

Denver,

Along the lines of what you wrote in the original entry, do you feel that the Kingdom of God and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are synonymous terms which can (and are) used interchangeably?

You touch on it by stating, “to the extent the Church claims to be the kingdom... ,” but no amount of claiming makes it so, unless it really is so.

John Taylor, and others, have stated that the Kingdom of God is much bigger than the Church itself. The Church, as necessary as it is at this stage, is still only a temporary “institution” to use your term.

Regardless of what John Taylor stated, I’d love to read your thoughts on the matter. If you’ve already written about it in one of your books, a simple reference would suffice.

Thanks!

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 5, 2010 AT 10:14 AM

Tom,

The statement of John Taylor’s was consistent with Joseph Smith’s establishment of the Council of 50. That council included non-Latter-day Saints. It was the beginning of the “Kingdom of God” as an institution. Both members and non-members are to be part of that Kingdom when it is established. But it will be an outgrowth of the Lord’s work through the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to establish that kingdom. They are related, and will cooperate, but I’ve always understood them to be separate. We have one with us. We hope to see the other come.

MARCH 3, 2010

Repent and Come Unto Me

There is this interesting statement by the Lord found in D&C 10:67–68:

Behold, this is my doctrine—whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church. Whosoever declareth more or less than this, the same is not of me, but is against me; therefore he is not of my church.

The statement requires us to

Repent, and then

Come unto Christ.

Repentance is a lifelong process. As we get further light and knowledge we have to incorporate it into our lives and change behavior. Over a lifetime, this should be dynamic, not static.

The more difficult explanation is to “Come unto Him.” It is my view that this includes fully receiving Him into your life as did the brother of Jared, Nephi, Enos, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Joseph Smith, Daniel, Isaiah, Jacob, Mormon, Moroni, Alma the Younger, Paul, and so many others who have testified of Him. That is a subject so great that the entire body of scriptures exist to help us accomplish it.

Significant, too, is that whatever is “more or less” than this is not “of my church” according to the Lord. So we have to take great care to not overstate or understate this doctrine of His.

Adding endless requirements by the commandments of men is “against Him.” Similarly, any failure to declare the essential nature of coming to Him is also “against Him.” I think the first verse of D&C 93 is a formula for coming to Him. That formula declares that, when it is followed, you will see His face and know that He is.

MARCH 4, 2010

How Beautiful Upon the Mountains

The feet of those who walk upon the mountains crying peace are beautiful (Isa. 52:7) because they are clean from the blood and sins of their generation.

In the ancient ceremonies involving animal sacrifice, blood was shed upon the ground and the feet of those involved in the rites became bloody. The blood of the sacrifice upon the feet became a symbol of the sins for which the sacrifice was offered.

The feet of those who walk upon the mountains crying peace are cleansed from that blood. Christ’s washing of His Apostles’ feet

was to symbolize this cleansing which He alone could provide. He employs no servant to provide such a cleansing (2 Ne. 9:41). These feet, washed by Him are, therefore, beautiful because they connote the sanctity of the one crying peace.

“Crying peace” because the only thing which stills the mind of man, and brings rest from the trouble of this world, is the atonement of Christ. That is why it is called “the rest of the Lord.” When cleansed, it becomes the consuming desire of those who are clean to bring others to partake. Just like Lehi’s dream, when those who had eaten of the fruit of the tree of life ate, they immediately invited others to come and join them.

“Upon the mountains” because the mountain is nature’s symbol of the ascent to God. The climb represents repentance and purification of the soul. When a person stands upon the top of the mountain, she appears to be part of heaven itself and no longer earthbound. Her profile is with the sky, symbolizing the completion of the ascent back to God.

It is beautiful. All of it is beautiful. All of it is a reflection of the purity and intelligence of God, whose ways are higher than man’s ways as the heavens are higher than the earth (Isa. 55:8–9).

MARCH 4, 2010

True Blue, Through and Through

I’ve been thinking about an incident in the young life of Joseph F. Smith. He was outside a camp gathering firewood when a group of Mormon-haters rode into camp and scattered all the men. Joseph F. considered running for a moment, but then decided to go confront them. He walked with his armful of firewood back into the camp, right up to an armed man who was cursing the Mormons.

The man bellowed at Joseph F.: “Are you a Mormon?”

Joseph responded: “Yes siree; dyed in the wool, true blue, through and through.”

The man was so disarmed that he grabbed Joseph F.’s hand and told him he was the “pleasantest man I ever met!” (with a few obscenities mixed in.)

I like that story. I consider myself a “true blue, through and through Mormon.” Despite that, I know we have problems and many flaws. The scriptures foretell our many deficiencies. But human weaknesses and shortcomings are no impediment to the Divine origin of Mormonism; nor its ultimate destiny.

I think it is an error to have an unreasonably high opinion of ourselves. Conversely, it is an error to conclude that all is lost because of our shortcomings. We are full of sins and errors, slogging along making institutional and individual errors daily. But we are also, institutionally and individually, called to be involved in God’s work to redeem His children. He loves us all, with a love which can overcome our many failures.

MARCH 5, 2010

An Emphasis on Doctrine

In addition to what I posted earlier about baptism rates, there is another number which is somewhat misleading. The total member numbers reported in General Conference never deducts for those who are excommunicated or who voluntarily ask to have their membership terminated. There is likely a doctrinal reason for that. When a person is excommunicated they are re-baptized to return to membership, but they are not re-ordained to the priesthood. They are given a blessing to reinstate their covenants and blessings, including authorization to begin using priesthood again. But they are not re-ordained. Although they are excommunicated, they

retain some affiliation despite the severance. Nevertheless, most people do not assume someone who has been excommunicated would be counted in the number of total members, but it is my understanding that they are.

Also, I've heard estimates from as little as 25% to much more than that as the percentage of members for whom the Church has completely lost contact. That is, there is some significant number of members whose membership is so tenuous that the Church has nothing but a record. There is no address, no way to contact them, and no information about whether they are living or deceased. These people continue to be counted in the total membership number despite their complete absence of contact with or from the Church.

With the significantly lower fertility rate, and an aging population, the Church's future will not be anything like the projections of Professor Stark. That is, unless something changes.

I agree that there may be many reasons for the decline. However, the most prominent of reasons in my view is the de-emphasis on doctrine. As a convert to the Church I know what attracted me to become a Mormon. It had nothing to do with the formulaic discussions of the missionaries, slick marketing or good arguments. It had to do with doctrine. I DIDN'T WANT to be a Mormon. Quite the contrary. But I knew I should become a Mormon because their doctrines came from God and answered questions other faiths could not begin to answer.

I'd like to see the trend return to a dramatic increase of numbers. In fact, I think there are many millions in the United States alone who are only kept from the truth because they do not know where to find it (D&C 123:12). We won't attract them to the Church until we begin again to emphasize doctrine.

MARCH 5, 2010

A Lifetime of Service

I do not know President Monson personally. But his history is well known to all of us. He was a Bishop while in his 20's, a Stake President shortly thereafter, and then called in his late 30's to be a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. He worked for Deseret News before becoming a full time General Authority. Essentially his entire life has been church service, both in his profession and in his calling.

If you want to see what The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would produce if a life were entirely the product of the institution and experiences derived from serving in and under that institution, you have that in President Monson.

It is clear to me that he absolutely trusts the system which produced all his significant life experiences. The last two vacancies in the Twelve were filled by the senior president of the Seventy. This would make Elder Ron Rasband the next one in line to fill a vacancy in the Twelve. He (Elder Rasband) is a member of my stake.

MARCH 5, 2010

Heeding the Warning

There is an interesting article in *Meridian Magazine* about the Chilean earthquake. The Mission President and his wife went about preparing the missionaries for the earthquake before it happened. This was because they had received a prior warning. The article can be read here: <http://www.ldsblog.com/churchupdate/100303chile.html>

What is most interesting to me is that the warning came to the wife, not the husband. He respected her revelation, and they went

together to proclaim the warning. *Meridian Magazine*, which is a Church-owned website published this article. It delights me when there is recognition of the entirely democratic way in which revelation comes to us. And when we find a married couple without jealousy about such things.

MARCH 6, 2010

Institutional Charisma

There was an article in the *Church News* about a symposium at BYU dealing with the “Organization and Administration of the LDS Church.” The article can be found here: <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58903/Symposium-deals-with-the-institution-of-the-Church.html>. The article mentions a paper delivered by Professor Bushman titled “Joseph Smith and the Routinization of Charisma.” Among other things, Professor Bushman asserts the church’s “genius can be largely explained in the fact that the expectation of divine revelation has been built into the very administrative structure and offices of the Church, an expectation attributable to the Prophet himself.” This is what he asserted also in *Rough Stone Rolling*.

From the two thousand year example of the Roman Catholic Church, I fear presumptions like these. There is a profound difference between actual revelation and an “expectation of divine revelation...built into the very administrative structure and offices of the Church.” He uses comments from Joseph Smith to support the assertion, while ignoring the revelation in Section 121 cautioning that while many may be called, few are chosen. He ignores the revelation that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority as they suppose they begin to immediately exercise unrighteous dominion. Without confirming revelation given to every member of the Church, as a constant

check on abuse, the destiny of Mormonism will be a repeat of the history of Catholicism. A Holy American Empire will replace the Holy Roman Empire, both of which have or will resort to blood and horror as the means to reign over mankind. The bedrock of the Gospel is the testimony of Jesus. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19:10). That is the charisma the scriptures tell us to trust.

There is absolutely no historical precedent we can point to which confirms that charisma can be safely institutionalized. There are an abundance of examples, however, of men abusing religion to gain control over others to satisfy their pride, to exercise control and dominion over others, and to gratify their vain ambition. The only check against this are the individual testimonies of the few, humble followers of Christ. Nevertheless, we are told that in our day even they are going to be led into error oftentimes by those who teach them the precepts of men (2 Ne. 28:14).

MARCH 6, 2010

You Just Never Know

Went to baseball practice this morning. My youngest daughter plays on a boy's team (she's the only girl). Today in a scrimmage she was the only one to hit a double.

MARCH 6, 2010

Angels

There is a system by which men learn the mysteries of heaven and are saved. That system is set out in Alma 12:29–30:

- First, angels are sent to prepare men/women.
- Second, they are allowed to behold the Lord's glory.

- Then they converse with the Lord, at which point they are taught the things which have been prepared from the foundation of the earth for their salvation.
- All of which is driven by the man/woman's faith, repentance and holy works.

This is in keeping with Joseph Smith's revelation about those chosen to become a member of the Church of the Firstborn. They are chosen by the holy angels to whom the keys of this power belong (D&C 77:11).

If this isn't happening, then faith does not exist on the earth any longer (Moroni 7:37).

Ministering angels are an indispensable part of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That is why those keys were restored so early on in this dispensation, and are so widely disseminated into the Church membership (See D&C 13 and D&C 107:20).

MARCH 6, 2010

Wo, Wo, Wo

Enoch's powerful testimony to his condemned contemporaries included this question: "why counsel ye yourselves , and deny the God of heaven" (Moses 6:43). Men in that day preferred to have the counsel of men instead of the word of God, from God.

Nephi spoke of the "Zion" of our time and said: "Wo be unto him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men, and denieth the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost" (2 Ne. 28:26).

Now having one "wo" pronounced upon a people is a warning of condemnation in this life. Their ways do not prosper and they suffer setbacks because they listen to the precepts of men. They fall back. More concerning is when three "wo's" are pronounced upon a people. The connotation being a condemnation which will last

beyond this life and into eternity. So I take the following statement with some considerable seriousness:

[T]hey have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men. O the wise, and the learned, and the rich, that are puffed up in the pride of their hearts, and all those who preach false doctrines, and all those who commit whoredoms, and pervert the right way of the Lord, wo, wo, wo be unto them, saith the Lord God Almighty, for they shall be thrust down to hell. (2 Ne. 28:14–15)

Three “wo’s” pronounced and three names of God used to make that warning. False doctrines and whoredoms are an equivalent in this passage. That is, you are “whoring” after other false gods, and betraying the true Lord God Almighty, when you preach false doctrines which assure you, in your pride, that you are safe, elect, chosen and better than others. Such teachers are condemned three-fold.

What an interesting problem we have in front of us. No-one can trust in any man or men. All of us are required to hear God’s voice, and follow Him.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · MARCH 6, 2010 AT 11:49 PM

I choose to hear God’s voice. I seem to have a challenge in hearing these days. Prayer, fasting, studying...I am striving...what can I do differently to “hear Him”?

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 7, 2010 AT 2:30 PM

First, live by everything you know to be right. You do not have to follow something you have not yet been taught. But you do have to live true to what you’ve already been given.

Second, ask God. The inquiry of the rich, young man: “what lack I yet?” is a good question. Or, as Joseph put it, as to “know of your state and standing before God.” He alone knows the answer to that. We all tend to underestimate the significance of our virtues, and overestimate the importance of our mistakes.

MARCH 7, 2010

IMO (in my opinion)

I think that Alma 41:8 should be cross referenced with D&C 130:7.

The footnote at Alma 41:10b should also include Deuteronomy 32:8–9.

MARCH 7, 2010

Alma 41:15

Alma 41:15 includes this thought: “For that which you do send out shall return unto you again.” Profound thought. I do not believe you have to await the afterlife or Judgment Day to realize the truth of this statement.

Therefore, I try to take care what I “send out” for fear of how it may return unto me again.

MARCH 7, 2010

My Scriptures

I have several sets of scriptures. The one I prize the most used to be my every-day set. Into this copy I have added only additional cross-references and footnotes. There are no other marks. I suspect that I have added between 11,000 and 15,000 additional cross references and footnotes in red pencil to this set. It has become so valuable a study set that I do not take it out of my home.

I have a “retired” set which is literally falling apart. I used that set to teach from 1980 to 2000. It is tattered, and has very little, if anything, marked or added to it. I keep that set in my desk drawer at work.

Then I have a new set which has become my every-day set. I take it to Church with me.

None of these sets have thumb-indexing on the pages. I HATE that stuff. It distracts me when I use the scriptures. Both of the first two sets were “Type A” sets which Deseret Book used to publish without thumb-indexing. You can’t get a “Type A” set like that anymore. I tried. Even talked with the management at Deseret Book. Can’t be done.

So I bought a “Type B” set, which is the same paper as a “Type A” but just not genuine leather bound. Much cheaper set. Then I took that set to Schafer Bindery in Salt Lake and had them bind it with a real leather cover. So I have a “Type A” set, without thumb indexing, and it only cost in total about \$20 more than if Deseret Book made a proper set and sold them.

MARCH 7, 2010

With Respect to the Leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

I balance my deep respect for these men, and profound awareness that no-one is really equal to the burden which WE impose upon them, with the knowledge that I alone am responsible for confirming through revelation all truth. Now, I say “the burden which we impose upon them” to distinguish between what the Lord and scriptures says are their duties on the one hand, and the mythological duties which we have put upon them. The scriptures and the Lord

do NOT make them omniscient. As a group the Saints do. That is the first great error, and it is not the leader's error but the saints'.

I've seen many, many mistakes made by the Brethren. But I loved them and sustained them and have refrained from being overtly critical of them.

It is not an institution which will be saved. Indeed, the institution is doomed to be confined to this world, and not pass into the next. But, it is the individual who will be saved. Individuals, however, must receive what the institution offers to obtain salvation. Therefore respect for the church is necessary. It's role is essential. It's authority from the Lord.

MARCH 8, 2010

Amber Dubois

The body of missing 14-year old Amber Dubois was found and positively identified Saturday. Her body was placed in a shallow grave. The morning she disappeared she went to school with a check to pay for a young lamb she intended to raise as part of her membership in the Future Farmer's of America. Her remains were identified using dental records.

During law school we studied sociopathic behavior as part of criminal law. Sociopaths are incapable of empathizing with others and are not at all affected by the harm or pain they cause to others. When you combine sociopathic personalities with sexual disorientation and violence, the lethal combination produced is simply beyond reformation. I do not think it wise to ever release a violent sexual predator back into society. It is still too soon to know, but it appears Amber was the victim of the same sexual offender who was charged with another young woman's murder about a week ago. Amber's body was found by searching the same

area as his last known victim. He was out on parole from earlier violent sexual offenses.

I not only mourn Amber's death, but also the incapacity of the criminal system to have protected her and perhaps many other unknown victims yet to be discovered. Release of sociopathic sexual predators from prison should never occur.

COMMENTS:

Denver Snuffer · APRIL 16, 2010 AT 6:06 PM

Today the man who killed Amber pled guilty. California agreed not to seek the death penalty. This brings the question of who murdered her to a conclusion. May her family receive peace. She was only 14 when he abducted and murdered her.

MARCH 8, 2010

Genius

Joseph Smith was the first, great restorer of lost light in this Dispensation. He restored doctrine, authority, ordinances, scriptures and the organization for the Church. His ministry was one of the greatest among men in any age.

The second great restorer was, in my view, Hugh Nibley. He shed light on antiquity using the scholar's tools while calibrating the recovery of ancient truth using the restored doctrine, authority, ordinances and scriptures which Joseph had bequeathed him. Hugh Nibley's legacy as a restorer of lost truth from the past is second only to Joseph Smith's.

Joseph's genius was unique and inspired. So was Hugh Nibley's. In the case of Hugh Nibley, he inspired a whole generation of students and produced a small army of those who intended to follow his example. It is not as easy as it seems, however. From scholarly disciples, to FARMS to now the Maxwell Institute, the effort has

produced some good fruit. but you cannot institutionalize genius. The great contribution of Brother Nibley is simply something that cannot be replicated or continued.

Genius will always be (as Will Durrant put it while intending to be derisive): “isolated and unruly.” It could not be tamed in the schools of Greece, nor can it be captured in the halls of BYU. Credentials will never become a substitute for inspiration.

CHAPTER 4

What Guarantee Do We Have?

MARCH 8, 2010

Nadab and Abihu

I was asked about the relationship between Nadab and Abihu's death and the Day of Atonement ceremony. I responded as follows:

Remember that these two saw the Lord in sacred space (on top of Sinai with Moses) earlier in their lives (Exo. 24:9–11).

Despite their earlier audience with the Lord, they were not authorized to enter the Holy of Holies. Only the chosen High Priest, and then once an year, only on the Day of Atonement (Lev. Chapter 16; 23:26–32).

They entered into the Holy of Holies when they were not authorized, and burned incense contrary to the Day of Atonement ceremony. They were not authorized to be there nor to do what they did. Therefore they were struck down (Lev. 10:1–3). The Lord reminded Moses after their death that those who are going to enter into that place must be “sanctified” before entering, hence the Day of Atonement ceremony being a prerequisite for entry.

Later Jewish tradition required the High Priest to have a rope tied to his ankle when he entered the Holy of Holies, so that his

body could be recovered if he were struck down without the necessity of others entering the room.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · MARCH 9, 2010 AT 9:56 AM

This comment opens a new question. When did the Jewish tradition of wearing a rope tied to the ankle get instituted? Did Zacharias wear such a rope when he was delayed by the Angel Gabriel? Where do you research this kind of information? Hugh Nibley's books or other books or other sources?

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 9, 2010 AT 1:50 PM

Anonymous,

Wearing a rope was Second Temple, at least.

Zacharias was not in the Holy of Holies, but in the Holy Place, outside the veil. They did not need a rope there. In that room at least three priests entered morning and evening every day; and more once a week when the shewbread was replaced. Also when the menorah was serviced more would have been required for that duty, as well. All of whom were in the Holy Place, not the Holy of Holies.

I can remember a lot more than I can keep in a bibliography. The source would require me to rummage about in my library. That's inconvenient. I can make the comment to stimulate thought, but you'll need to go research it to locate a source. (It may be in Edersheim's book on the Temple, but I'd have to check.) I don't recall Nibley making any comment on this, but he may have. His books are indexed well enough you may be able to search just the index and see if he commented on it.

MARCH 8, 2010

Raising the Bar

The name of the policy which eliminates a large population of desirous young men from serving a mission was really unfortunate. "Raising The Bar" implies that these young men do not measure up.

Repentant young men who have been involved with serious sexual transgressions during their teens are by and large denied the opportunity to serve. So, also, are young men with medical conditions which require significant treatment or medications.

As a result of this program, there have been tens of thousands of young men who have not served. The missionary force dropped from the high 60,000's to the low 50,000's and has remained there. Those who have been excluded who wanted to serve have quite often felt judged and alienated as a result. Many have either left activity or left the church altogether. They form a body numbering now in excess of 100,000, and as they marry, have children, and raise their posterity outside the church they will eventually number in the millions.

Calling this program "Raising The Bar" has essentially precluded a change. You can't "Lower The Bar" without seeming foolish, or to invite n'er do well's.

I've seen what this program has done to young men who wanted to serve, and who would have been allowed to serve before the program was announced. I've tried to overcome their sense of rejection by the church, and have succeeded in only one case. The others have essentially all told me that the church had rejected them and therefore they intended to stay away.

MARCH 9, 2010

Equinox

The Vernal Equinox is Saturday, March 20th. It is that moment that arrives every year where everything is in balance, light and dark are balanced and nature everywhere from pole to pole is showered equally with the light and life of heaven. It occurs twice a year, and not again until the Autumnal Equinox in the Fall.

The First Vision aligned with the Spring, the date of which is not recorded. However, as Michael Quinn noted in his work (using borrowed research), the Smith family in general and Joseph in particular, would have associated power with the event. It is not unlikely that the First Vision occurred on the Vernal Equinox, just as Moroni's visits always coincided with the Autumnal Equinox.

For our day, the Autumnal Equinox is the more significant. The Vernal is associated with life, birth, beginnings, restoration and newness. The Autumnal is associated with death, closing, judgment and endings. We live on the cusp of the end times. Though there remain a great many things to be done, our era is the time when history is about to close out.

Observing the Vernal, Autumnal and Solstices was something done from ancient times, in ceremony and in ritual. Whole cities were built aligned to the cardinal directions of the compass and the lights of heaven. The lights of heaven were given to us first as "signs" and secondly as "seasons."

Don't let them pass by unnoticed. Otherwise you note less than even the plants and the animals whose life cycles and behavior acknowledge the passing of such events.

MARCH 9, 2010

Reincarnation

Yesterday at lunch I heard a great line from the Maharaja: "Reincarnation is only for the ignorant." Made me laugh.

MARCH 9, 2010

Baseball Season

High School baseball begins today. Hope it doesn't snow.

MARCH 9, 2010

All Things Bear Testimony

In reflecting back on John Pratt's recent article on Venus and its tie to the Lord's life, I have concluded that the phrase "under the earth" as used in Moses 6:63 is referring to the cycles of the "wandering stars" or planets. It does not refer to the subterranean composition of the earth's mantle.

Venus disappears on the horizon, taking it "under the earth." Then it reappears again, symbolizing the resurrection of the Lord. Venus being the great symbol of Christ, as John Pratt has shown.

As Val Brinkerhoff has also shown in his *The Day Star - Reading Sacred Architecture* volumes, the orbit of Venus tracks a pentagram in the sky over its eight year cycle.

Toyotas and light beer are of more interest to us than the procession of the equinoxes through the zodiac. All things do bear testimony of God. But we prefer the billboards on the side of the highway.

MARCH 9, 2010

Ordinances

Oddly, ordinances were intended to communicate an inner message of redemption and holiness. Instead, they get looked upon as credentials. They aren't. Possession of ordinances without inner holiness is meaningless. On the other hand, D&C 137 shows that possession of inner holiness, while lacking the ordinances, will not be an impediment. (We can send anyone with a card to the temple to take care of the ordinances. But how infrequent it is that we produce a redeemed and acceptable soul to our God and Father.)

COMMENTS:

Gentleman · MARCH 10, 2010 AT 8:42 AM

How do you reconcile this to D&C 52:14 And again, I will give unto you a pattern in all things, that ye may not be deceived; for Satan is abroad in the land, and he goeth forth deceiving the nations —

¹⁵ Wherefore he that prayeth, whose spirit is contrite, the same is accepted of me if he obey mine ordinances.

¹⁶ He that speaketh, whose spirit is contrite, whose language is meek and edifieth, the same is of God if he obey mine ordinances.

¹⁷ And again, he that trembleth under my power shall be made strong, and shall bring forth fruits of praise and wisdom, according to the revelations and truths which I have given you.

¹⁸ And again, he that is overcome and bringeth not forth fruits, even according to this pattern, is not of me.

¹⁹ Wherefore, by this pattern ye shall know the spirits in all cases under the whole heavens.

According to the Lord's own voice obeying the ordinances are an integral part of identifying when someone is on the path of truth vs. being on the path of error.

D&C 137 seems to apply only to those who did not have an opportunity in mortal life. For everyone else there is no excuse.

Denver Snuffer · March 10, 2010 at 1:02 PM

Gentleman,

I see no conflict. When anyone is offered truth, they are obligated to follow it. When we reject truth we risk judgment. I'm speaking about all people in the post. Including those who are raised in other religious traditions, know nothing about ours, and whose lives are good and hearts are right before God. They may advance in light and truth more than even we do. But eventually they will be offered and will need to accept the ordinances. While those of us who have the ordinances and think they are means to an end, or tickets to rewards, but whose hearts are not right before God, really are not "obeying mine ordinances." They can and sometimes do use the ordinances to justify a refusal

to obey them, or more correctly abusing them rather than obeying them. They were meant to convey something deep within, sacred and holy. Not to justify us but to bring us to repentance and contrition. I constantly worry that I err by not receiving what has been offered, choosing instead to think myself more than I am. Repentance is the only safe activity to bring us safely back to Him.

MARCH 10, 2010

Christ's Victory

Christ's great victory was won by this simple formula: "He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them" (D&C 20:22).

MARCH 10, 2010

A Little Leaven

Sometimes it is the thinnest of threads which keeps a people from judgment. A "little leaven" or a "little salt" can save a whole lump. The want of "five righteous" has and can destroy a whole city. When you consider so thin a thread as that, you must surely realize there are no private sins. Each life has cosmic meaning.

MARCH 10, 2010

Patriarch Smith

The Patriarch of the Church is Eldred G. Smith, now aged 103 years. His office used to ordain the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints using the hereditary priesthood line running back to Father Smith, Joseph and Hyrum.

Eldred G. Smith was made Emeritus in 1979, but continues to have an office in the Church Office Building.

MARCH 10, 2010

Powerful Doctrines

I've been reading Alma's teachings on priesthood in Alma 13. There are some startling things in there. We underestimate the depth of doctrine preserved in the Book of Mormon. Pre-earth life is unmistakably taught there.

Ordination to the high priesthood reckons from before the foundation of the earth. Power in that priesthood is derived from heaven (as D&C 121 teaches).

These powerful doctrines are not even imagined by other faiths or traditions. Among us it is hardly understood, and we possess the scriptures that teach it.

MARCH 10, 2010

Seriously

There's an article which estimates that 16% of the population (teens to 49 yrs.) of the United States has genital herpes. You can read it here: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSN0923528620100309>

Now there's an advertisement for the law of chastity...or anti-itch Gold Bond...

or a wire hair brush to scratch with...

The woman/man has not been born who is worth forfeiting what is lost by breaking covenants with the Lord.

MARCH 10, 2010

Patriarch

When I first joined the church we sustained the Patriarch of the Church, along with the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve as a "Prophet, Seer and Revelator." I would expect that at

some point Patriarch Smith will be succeeded by his oldest, direct, descendant, unless there is still a living sibling of his upon whom the office would devolve (which I doubt).

When the office was established, it formed an independent line of priesthood authority. This line was not be dependent upon selection by temporary office holders drawn from many family lines. Instead the Smith family, through whom the church was restored, would hold this hereditary office forever. It will be interesting to see how this office is handled in the future.

COMMENTS:

MissMel · MARCH 10, 2010 AT 9:46 PM

As a Smith descendant, I am curious about this. Once Eldred dies, would this office theoretically go to his eldest son or any Smith descendant who is the oldest? The reunions are full of white hair, so its anybody's guess...everyone seems to be over 90 or under 10....

Tom · MARCH 11, 2010 AT 12:03 AM

I thought that when Patriarch Smith was given "emeritus" status back in 1979 that it was never to be filled again. Is that wrong or is it not yet known what will happen.

Quinn notes in one of his books (*Extensions of Power*, p. 131) the following:

Whenever a patriarch after 1844 tried to magnify his presiding office, the Twelve and First Presidency recoiled in apprehension. However, when individual patriarchs seemed to lack administrative vigor, the Twelve and First Presidency criticized them for not magnifying their office. Few men could walk such an ecclesiastical tightrope. For various reasons the First Presidency and Twelve were in conflict with seven out of eight successors of the original Presiding Patriarch, Joseph Smith, Sr. The hierarchy finally resolved the situation on 6 Oct 1979 by making Eldred G. Smith an "emeritus" general authority without replacing him. This permanently "discontinued" the office of Patriarch to the

Church... vacating the office in 1979 ended the conflicts. However, according to Brigham Young's instructions, the 1979 action made the church vulnerable: "It was necessary to keep up a full organization of the Church all through time as far as could be. At least the three first Presidency, quorum of the Twelve, Seventies, and Patriarch over the whole Church ... so that the devil could take no advantage of us.[15]" It is beyond the scope of this analysis to assess such metaphysical vulnerability. Administratively, however, the decision to leave the patriarch's office vacant after 1979 streamlined the hierarchy and removed a source of nearly constant tension.

Denver Snuffer · March 12, 2010 at 8:52 AM

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So since that time the practice has been for living Presidents to continue to be referred to by the title “Prophet” by all General Authorities and other leaders. However, I have noticed that the President never refers to himself as “Prophet” in any declaration I have been able to find. He accepts that term as used by others, but does not apply it to himself.

The recorded times when a Church President was asked if he was “a Prophet” include testimony by Joseph F. Smith when asked by the Senate Committee in the hearings to seat Senator Smoot. His response was “my people sustain me as such.” President McKay was asked by a reporter and his response was “look me in the eye and tell me I’m not a prophet.” President Lee essentially repeated the same response to a reporter as President McKay. And when he was interviewed by the Press President Hinckley essentially repeated Joseph F. Smith’s response, saying in effect: “I’m sustained by the Church as such.” There may be others, but those are the ones I recall at the moment.

All of which is, I suppose, interesting history. I of course, sustain as “prophets, seers and revelators” the First Presidency and Quorum of the

Twelve every Ward Conference, Stake Conference, General Conference and temple recommend interview.

Anonymous · MARCH 13, 2010 AT 2:34 AM

It is interesting history...but, once made into an “emeritus” calling, does it die with Patriarch Smith? I suppose, by lineage, the calling never ceases...but as a practice of the church it could end with this “emeritus” status, could it not?

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 14, 2010 AT 10:30 AM

Although he is emeritus, he nonetheless retains the office. It isn't gone just because he is emeritus at present. Nor, for that matter, is the office gone if it is neglected and unfilled. It still exists in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Just as the First Quorum of Seventy existed in Section 107, though it was not filled until President Kimball did so. It was nevertheless part of the restored Church.

If they elect to let it lapse into a vacancy, it does not eliminate the existence of the office. It just shows neglect to fill it. A thing for which I presume those responsible will be accountable to the Lord.

MARCH 11, 2010

Do We Have a Guarantee?

I've been thinking about the “guarantee” we have as Latter-day Saints that God takes peculiar delight in us. We're His “chosen” and He looks down from heaven and grins broadly when He considers our enlightened advantage over our fellowman. I'm not sure I can reconcile that happy view of our circumstances with His frank assessment of us in D&C 112:23–26.

I'm thinking that the first order of the day for me is repentance.

MARCH 11, 2010

Judgment

Since the Lord reserves to Himself alone the final judgment (3 Ne. 27:27) I think we overstep our privileges when we presume our judgment of others is our right. In fact, the irony of judging while holding priesthood office is that the one judging may be the one really on trial. They hold office, are given “keys” and are upheld by other saints to see whether they will execute the assignment in conformity with D&C 121, using gentleness, meekness, persuasion, kindness and love unfeigned. If they don’t, they fail the test, and in the process establish the criteria and means by which they will be judged.

Ironically, the one judging is the one really on trial, and the one being judged will be a witness against (or for) them.

Things are different than we think. And that is as it should be. Otherwise the hearts of men could not be put on display here in this life, and the proving that this estate was designed to accomplish would fail.

We should be afraid to hold office over others. We should have pity or compassion for those who are called to these positions. Instead, we envy those who hold offices in the church. Nephi counseled against this (2 Ne. 26:21).

Now is the great day of deception when darkness covers so much of the social order that madness reigns. If you just turned the light on and saw our day as clearly as Nephi did you’d marvel at the abundant foolishness, vanity and errors we entertain. To do that you only need to read what Nephi wrote and realize he’s talking to and about US; not those who will never read the book.

We're being tested. More importantly, I'm being tested. So I need to "work out my salvation with fear and trembling before the Lord" just as Paul suggested (Philip. 2:12).

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · MARCH 13, 2010 AT 2:31 AM

Denver...

...can you elaborate on "judge righteous judgment?" (John 7:24).

I have always taken it to mean what you wrote (i.e. judge not the person). Recently, however, I have some proclaim that "judge righteous judgment" would mean "judge no judgment," given that none are righteous here on earth and all our paradigms are skewed.

I think this "judge no judgment" is correct in the sense of judging others, a person. But, are we to believe that we can't judge ("evaluate") things, events, situations, teachings, etc., as well?

What say you?

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 14, 2010 AT 10:26 AM

We necessarily make judgments daily. We have to in order to function in life. However, when it comes to deciding the righteousness of another, I leave it entirely to the Lord. I sustain others in what they are asked to do, without making it my responsibility to decide whether God approves of them or not. If they are difficult for me to abide, then I pray for my attitude to soften. If I am told they are not right before God, I ask that He do something about them.

There are just too many things in my own life, under my control, which I have yet to master. That is where I fight daily. Inside my own bounds. The "macro" picture doesn't matter much because of how limited an influence I have there.

I believe very much in the principle of a "little salt" and a "little leaven" which can preserve even an entire nation. My responsibility is to become that salt, become that leaven. Such a daunting task is more than enough to occupy my time and thoughts.

MARCH 11, 2010

It's YOUR Eternal Salvation

When it comes to the subject of one's eternal salvation, I can't understand why someone would simply trust others and leave it to them to tell them what is necessary. I should think everyone would study this matter night and day, and reach their own conclusion about what is important, what is not, what will save, and what is simply foolishness.

Joseph said he advised all to go on and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God. Alma said about the same thing in Alma 12:9–11.

When it comes to sacred knowledge, the absence of curiosity and relentless inquiry is evidence of apathy and indifference. Joseph posed the question in *The Lectures on Faith* of how we can hope to inherit the same reward as the ancients without following the same path as they did. Great question, that. Brings to mind Abraham's description of his own relentless search to find God in Abraham 1:2. I think that is the formula. As is also D&C 93:1.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · MARCH 13, 2010 AT 9:01 PM

What do any of us know about ourselves, God or where we came from and what we are that was not told to us by someone else? Someone else who was also told by others.

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 14, 2010 AT 10:21 AM

We are dependent upon others initially for all we know. But we get experiences which allow us to independently know things for ourselves. This is true of the seasons, mathematics, astronomy, friends, life and God. There may be a number of things in life about which we will remain dependent upon others for our knowledge, but God should not

remain one of them. He is as knowable as your own living grandfather, whom you may visit only from time to time.

db schroeder · MARCH 14, 2010 AT 10:53 PM

So Denver, are you saying don't pepper Heavenly Father overly, but trust in your own judgement when it necessitates to do so. Also be sure to be humble enough to ask for strength and wisdom as you proceed along your decided path on a certain issue. In other words, when the training wheels come off, don't ask HF to put them back on, go in Faith, asking for help as needed ?

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 15, 2010 AT 2:51 PM

No, I'm saying you can know God just as you know any other person. And you can visit with, or more correctly be visited by Him. Read *The Second Comforter: Conversing With The Lord Through The Veil* and you will see how knowable I believe God to be.

That having been said, I do think there are times when it isn't necessary for God to respond to questions we ask Him. When the famine gets bad enough, we'll decide for ourselves to go down to the Nile Delta in Egypt to save our lives (See Abr. 2:21). Our common sense and instinct for self-preservation is just as serviceable as a commandment from God to go where food is growing in times of famine.

MARCH 12, 2010

Posted by the Moderator (she thinks it important)

I think this is interesting history. I should like to know more of this kind of thing.

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MARCH 12, 2010

Accuser of Our Brethren

There is really no reason to complain about the church. That is a role I would never want to assume. Satan’s title is “the accuser of our brethren” (Rev. 12:10). Of what does he accuse them? The answer is

of all their natural failings, mistakes, shortcomings and errors. We are all ample examples of such shortcomings. No matter how good a life we may lead, we all fall short. The answer to this problem is not to accuse others but to forgive them. We cloak others in a robe of charity, and we in turn merit charity.

This is why Christ requires us to forgive all others. We get forgiveness as we give forgiveness to others. There is an extensive discussion of this in *Come, Let Us Adore Him*. It is true doctrine.

I think avoiding the role of “accuser” and filling the role of patient forbearance with others’ shortcomings is the only wise course in life.

COMMENTS:

Allen · MARCH 14, 2010 AT 9:30 AM

While I completely agree that we should look for the good in our leaders and forgive their imperfections, the trust we are expected to have in our leaders and their decisions, does not mean we should blindly follow them no matter what their personal actions are. At what point does a leader’s personal behavior effect the decisions he is making and the counsel he is giving in his church calling?

I have a friend whose now deceased grandfather was a stake patriarch at the same time he was having an affair with his secretary. Other stake presidents and bishops have been convicted of sexual abuse and are now serving prison terms.

At what point do we just forgive them and move on with our lives and when do we start to question their leadership decisions and counsel? One could argue that the patriarch’s previously mentioned affair was affecting the blessings he was giving. If I were someone who received a patriarchal blessing under his hand while he was having an affair, could I expect to get another more inspired blessing from another patriarch?

The whole idea of trusting in a man to give you messages from God seems to be full of pitfalls. When does a leader's personal actions affect the inspiration he is receiving? None of us can accurately judge when he is and when he isn't. That's the dilemma.

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 14, 2010 AT 10:14 AM

Stake Presidents are required to regularly read the Patriarchal Blessings given in their stake.

I sustain leaders, period. I let the Lord decide when and how to remove them. If I think they are unworthy, I make it a matter of prayer and take it up with the Lord. Until He removes them, I bear with, sustain and support them.

That does NOT mean I trust in their inspiration. Unless I have an independent confirmation, I trust no man. Salvation is too important to trust in any arm of flesh.

MARCH 12, 2010

The Lord is in Charge

I was asked if there was a day coming when men/women will be required to condemn those in the church whose conduct does not measure up. I responded:

There is certainly a day of separation coming. Angels are already begging to begin that process. The Lord has told them "not yet" but promised them it will happen "by and by" as His preparations continue.

The Lord is in charge. We needn't worry about how His purposes will all be fulfilled. Patience with the larger picture is easier when we realize that for each of us the smaller, individual picture is what is important. We have plenty to do individually to receive our invitation into the Church of the Firstborn. As we do what is necessary to receive that invitation, then we will become more

effective ministers of salvation for others. Worrying about the salvation of all others before being saved ourselves is a needless thought.

The evil of this day is sufficient (Matt. 6:34) because it really is enough to live well one day at a time. Eternity will be composed of living well one day. For God all is as one day (Alma 40:8). When we have done that, we are ready to receive eternity. Until then, worrying about the larger and more chaotic picture of what is going on keeps us from changing the only environment over which we have any influence or control. That is the environment of our hearts.

MARCH 13, 2010

Samson

I teach the Young Men tomorrow and will be discussing Samson's life and example. He conforms to one of the great patterns of men sent by the Lord to deliver His people. That often repeated pattern includes:

- **A couple or woman who cannot bear a child because of some infirmity, age, infertility, barrenness, or lack of marriage.**
- **A promise made that a son will be sent.**
- **The woman/couple receive a son despite the infertility problem before.**
- **The son then comes and plays a role which alters the course of the Lord's people.**

This was the case with Abraham and Sarah, to whom Isaac came. Manoah, to whom Samson came. Elkanah and Hannah, to whom Samuel came. Zechariah and Elizabeth, to whom John was sent. Mary and Joseph, to whom Jesus came.

There have been many others, but their stories are not always recorded or known.

Sampson was a Nazarite, the covenant terms of his dedication to the Lord is set out in Numbers 6. Among other things, a Nazarite was not to cut his hair during the time of the covenant. This was the reason Sampson's hair cutting was so significant. It represented the final break of the covenant.

Sampson was a Messianic figure. He foreshadowed the Lord.

There is a statement in Matthew that Christ was to be called a "Nazarene" (Matt. 2:23). That conflicts, however, with the later inquiry of Nathanael recorded in John 1:46: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" The more likely statement Matthew was referring to was that the Lord was to be "called a Nazarite" meaning he was under the covenant in Numbers 6.

I've written a parable about the way in which Sampson's life mirrored the Lord's in *Ten Parables*.

I believe that if we had a full account of the Lord's life we would realize just how much Sampson's life foreshadowed the Lord's. A hint of that is contained in that parable in *Ten Parables*.

MARCH 13, 2010

Different Traditions, Different Interpretations

In Stephen's testimony just prior to his martyrdom in Acts, he gives an account of Moses which does not appear in our version of the Old Testament. In Stephen's explanation, he attributes to Moses the knowledge that he was going to be a deliverer of Israel even before he killed the Egyptian (See Acts 7:24–25). According to Stephen, Moses was frustrated that the Israelites failed to recognize him as their deliverer.

Our account instead tells us that Moses was called by God, to his surprise. When called, Moses responded: "Who am I, that I

should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (Exo. 3:11).

This goes to show that there were different traditions reflected in the biblical accounts. Just as there are references to scriptural books which we no longer possess.

The relevance of personal revelation, and the need for continuing revelation, remain apparent even if you want to understand the very scriptures we believe in. Hence the almost immediate reaction of Joseph and Oliver to receiving the Holy Ghost and how scriptures took on new, even previously hidden meanings (See *JS-H* 1:74).

I was taught from the New Testament all my childhood by a mother who was a Baptist. When hands were laid upon my head after baptism, I re-read the New Testament and thought it was a new book.

MARCH 13, 2010

True and Living

The Lord’s reference to the Church in a revelation received on November 1, 1831 as “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (D&C 1:30) was true for the following reasons:

First, the Church was established by revelation, visitations from angels, and delegation of authority.

Second, it was “living” because the authority and gifts were present and unfolding; and new scripture and revelations were being received.

Third, it would continue to grow in knowledge, light and truth as further ordinances and rites were restored.

Finally, it was “true” because it taught the doctrines which gave converts the tools with which they could grow in light and knowledge until the perfect day (D&C 50:24).

The Lord's description in 1831 is what we should aspire to have said about us still, today. But, of course, that would require us to also be "true" and "living" in the same way as the Church in 1831.

MARCH 13, 2010

Concourses of Angels

The object of this mortal existence is to develop faith. We need adversity and a sense of isolation from God in order to develop the character necessary to be like God. There is a test underway. But it is conducted by a benign and friendly heavenly host, whose primary purpose is to develop in us a godly character and charity toward one another.

Men and women may see Christ in vision or in an appearance as a solitary personage. But no person has ever seen God the Father without also seeing a host of others. They are referred to in scriptures as a "heavenly host," or "numerous angels," or "concourses of angels." There is a reason that a company is always shown at the appearance of the Father. You should look into the matter. Within the answer lies a great truth about God the Father.

MARCH 14, 2010

Explanation

Just a short word of explanation:

I write all the posts and the reply comments which go onto the blog. However, I do not have time to maintain the site itself. My wife does all the posting, editing, maintaining, etc. She takes the comments I write and puts them into the blog itself. Therefore, when you are reading anything on this site from me, you are reading what she has mechanically put into the site using the forms, etc. required to make it work. I appreciate very much the

time she devotes to doing this, because I simply cannot take that time at present to do it myself.

So, when you send comments they go to her at the blog site, as well as a designated email address, then, when appropriate, she forwards them to me. I will respond to her and she will put them up onto the blog.

MARCH 13, 2010

Shepherds of Israel

In Ezekiel 34:11–12 it is written:

Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds: woe be unto the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock.

This description could be applied with several layers of meaning. However, the one I like best is the interpretation which relates “feeding” to teaching truths. Shepherds were given the calling of teaching the “flocks” of Israel higher truths which would exalt them. However, they instead focused their ministry upon things which were trivial, did not raise the inner lives of the “flocks,” and stirred up those who followed them into envy and strife. These shepherds were unworthy, condemned with the pronouncement of “woe” upon them and warned by the prophet.

Fortunately, Ezekiel’s message goes on to promise that in the latter-days the Lord will:

both search [His] sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that

are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. (34:11–12)

We are in that latter-day time now. He is seeking. But notice that throughout the description of His latter-day work, He alone takes credit for finding and feeding (34:13–17).

When He has gathered enough to establish again His kingdom, He will then make a new day in which “my servant David” will be the “one shepherd” over them, in that Millennial Day (34:22–24).

We’re supposed to be getting gathered now in anticipation of becoming numerous enough for there to be a Millennial King provided for us. We’re supposed to be in contact with the Lord as He alone gathers us in this latter-day. It is a glorious vision for which we should rejoice.

MARCH 14, 2010

Amos Was No Prophet’s Son

In a vision given to Amos, the Lord showed him a plumb line. This was the method used to establish a straight wall (Amos 7:7–9). When Amos delivered the message he received, the king threatened him. Amos’ answer was succinct:

I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit; And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, go, prophesy unto my people Israel. Now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac. Therefore thus saith the Lord; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy

land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.
(Amos 7:14-17)

Prophets in the past have come from obscure places. They quite often resisted delivering a message which the audience wanted to hear. Instead they corrected the behavior of a fallen people. There were no opinion polls, no focus groups to shape the message they delivered. Their words corrected, jarred, condemned and served as a warning which could allow the faithful to change the path they were on whenever needed. The Apostle Paul coined a term for teachers who taught doctrines that reassured those who ought to be condemned. He said such people “heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (2 Tim. 4:3). I presume “heap” means they get quite a few of them.

I’m pleased we live in a day of living prophets again, and that we receive stern warnings from time to time from those who know the Lord. Such occasions provide us all the opportunity to be warned, repent, change our ways and approach nearer the mark of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus (Philip. 3:14).

MARCH 14, 2010

Daylight Savings

We celebrated Daylight Savings by neglecting to reset the clocks and missing Sacrament Meeting. Apparently this was a widespread celebration in our ward, with less than half making it to the meeting on time. I sense a family tradition in the making here.

MARCH 15, 2010

Disgraced

Both the Republican leaders of the Utah Legislative Senate and House were forced to resign this year. The Senate leader because of a DUI. The Representative leader because of a sexual relationship with a minor many years ago, which he paid \$150,000 campaign money to buy her silence. In connection with the latter scandal, the church-owned *Deseret News* was aware of the sexual misconduct eight years ago, but kept silent until other news of the matter became public.

The problem with any political machine owning a state is the same everywhere. It really does not matter if that machine controls the city of Chicago or the State of Utah, the result is the same. People do “favors” for the insiders, and the public suffers as a result.

Utah’s reputation as “the reddest of red states” is well deserved. The competition to fill these seats for the two involved in the scandals is internal to the Republican Party. The result of doing so will not be unlike what has long been the case here in Utah, where only one side controls everything.

Both of these men were Latter-day Saints. They are victims of the corrupt political domination every bit as much as the public has been. Without a healthy opposition party, there is no real check upon misbehavior and excesses.

I’ve always thought that opposing views and people speaking their mind is healthy. Without some criticism of a person’s plans and ideas you simply get a chorus of “yes men” chanting how inspired or worthy or good all ideas are, no matter how flawed or foolish. Utah’s two fallen leaders are “family men,” one of whom was known as a champion of “family values.” It’s almost as if he

had shopped with focus groups to know what words to use to get elected, without any regard to what was within his heart.

Now is the great day of opinion polling and focus group directed marketing, in which the substance of any group of political leaders is always hidden behind the carefully crafted message intended to market image. Indeed, image is everything in this day of deceit.

So, choose your leaders carefully. They will all sound the same. It will not be the vocabulary which will distinguish the evil and corrupt from the true and good. It will only be what lies within them that will differ.

COMMENTS:

Gentleman · MARCH 15, 2010 AT 6:34 AM

I'll respectfully disagree with your statement: "It will not be the vocabulary which will distinguish the evil and corrupt from the true and good."

If you listened to the Republican presidential debates during 2008 it was very clear who was "polished" for the media and who was speaking from their own personal heart and experience in defense of the Constitution.

I personally think that it is getting easier, not harder, to distinguish good from evil (where I define this as those in support of constitutional principals and those willing to usurp freedoms).

If you know right from wrong (as defined in scripture and beginning with the War in Heaven) it is very clear to me who we should be supporting politically and who is dangerous. What we need are more people waking up to this realization. Unfortunately the majority think that the smooth words of leaders who have evil intents sound good...

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 15, 2010 AT 11:13 AM

I don't trust either political party. But I have noticed that neither one says they intend to destroy the family. Neither one says they are going to oppress and imprison us. Neither one says they will destroy the Constitution. Instead they claim that their social programs will

support the family, make life more fair, and give us protection against things which harm or threaten us. Whether it is a war on poverty or war on extremists it doesn't matter. "Privacy" and "freedom of choice" sound good, actually. I think I want privacy and I want freedom to choose. But I don't want 30 million unborn killed. No one says they are in favor of killing the unborn. Those words will offend. So it is "privacy" and it is "freedom of choice" and other euphemisms. It isn't a one-way street, however. "Protection" and "national strength" are also good ideas. But when it comes to reading every email sent or received by private American citizens, I don't think anyone is in favor of that.

Both sides triangulate into growing governmental control using the buzz words of saving something good, or defeating something bad. The actions, however, are not revealed until it is already a new fence or obstruction limiting our freedom even as it is celebrated as a "protection" for us.

I'm not affiliated with either political party. My wife, on the other hand, has been a Republican state delegate. But, then again, I went to BYU and she went to Utah. So there's a certain underlying tolerance we exact from each other.

MARCH 15, 2010

Christ's Touch

Ceremonial uncleanness under the law of Moses could be spread from the unclean to the person who came in contact with them. Uncleanliness could be spread.

A tradition grew among the Jews that the altar of the Temple could not be profaned, and that if an unclean person came into contact with it, the altar did not become unclean but instead the person coming into contact with the altar became clean. We have two examples of persons relying upon this tradition in the case of Job in the Old Testament and Zacharias in the New.

Joab was to be killed by Solomon, and he knew he was to die. To die in contact with the altar was to die clean, and so Joab fled to the tabernacle, took hold of the altar and was killed there. The ones sent to kill him hesitated because they also knew they were killing a clean man, and had to be told a second time to kill him by Solomon (See, 1 Kings 2:28–34). Solomon did not care that Joab would die clean.

In the case of Zacharias, his death is not recorded other than in a passing reference by Christ as He confronted the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 23:35). Joseph Smith said this reference was to John's father.

In the case of Christ, the tradition had fulfillment. He touched the unclean, but communicated cleanliness to them. Whether it was the woman with an issue of blood, a leper, or the dead, touching them did not make Him unclean, rather it made those whom He touched clean.

MARCH 15, 2010

Common Consent

My car insisted it was 5:36 this morning as I drove my daughter to Seminary. The Honda was not yet in on the collective conspiracy to sustain the loss of an hour by our common consent.

My daughter got out the owner's manual while we were driving and helped me convince the car to sustain the new hour. Now the Honda is also in on the conspiracy by common consent to change our bearings in the universe.

It still gets light and dark as before, but we call it something different. Happily, the Honda does not contradict that illusion anymore.

We cannot control the reality in which we live, but we can use our collective agreements to pretend it is otherwise. Now we awake and arise at a different time, but call it an hour later. Common consent is a powerful thing. It can be used to change how we look at time itself.

MARCH 15, 2010

Why a Teleprompter?

My wife and I were watching a KBYU broadcast of a speaker using a teleprompter to deliver a talk to students there. What a remarkable difference there is between an extemporaneous talk, given from the heart, and someone reading a teleprompter.

I think it is high tribute to President Obama that his use of a teleprompter is so casual and conversational that you cannot detect he is reading the comments. He actually seems to be speaking spontaneously when he uses one. That is a great gift, unfortunately not shared by many other public speakers.

When a talk is read off a teleprompter and sounds like reading, the speaker sounds insincere, even robotic. I wonder why we see them used so often anymore, even at BYU Education Week, among small audiences. When you rob a speaker of spontaneity, you deprive the audience of a connection which might have been made.

I can't read a talk. I can try, but I always drift off into a conversation and leave the script behind.

MARCH 16, 2010

Valiant

Those who receive a Terrestrial estate include “they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus; wherefore, they obtain not the

crown over the kingdom of our God.” D&C 76:79. This means that they actually did have a testimony of Jesus, were on the right path, received the Gospel and accepted it, but failed to be “valiant” in their testimony.

I do not believe this means rigid, dogmatic, insistent or bellicose. In fact, the religious people having these qualities have historically been the greatest persecutors of the few, humble followers of Christ in all generations.

I believe this means they were willing to suffer much for the Lord. To follow Him in meekness, gentleness, kindness, persuasion, and love unfeigned. To bear the crosses of this world, and to return good for evil. Valiance is measured by the patience you show to your fellowman when they say all manner of evil against you falsely, for His sake. It is measured by the things you suffer willingly and without complaint.

It is not to get a reward in this life. Nor is it to be given acclaim, recognition, applause or chief seats.

It is to minister to others, rather than to be ministered unto.

When I think of the greatest examples of such conduct as would be truly described as “valiant,” I think of mothers and what they have done and do to bring, bear, love and raise children in this world. Creation itself is renewed every time a new, innocent life is brought into this world.

MARCH 16, 2010

Ask, Seek and Knock

James promised the Lord would answer those who lack knowledge and ask with a sincere heart (James 1:5–6). The Prophet Jeremiah made a similar promise. In Jeremiah’s promise the words are a quote

from the Lord. He said: “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13)

He is approachable. He wants us to approach Him.

MARCH 16, 2010

Faith, Belief, Knowledge

The psalmist’s words, “by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer[.]” (Psalms 17:4) refers to all the words of God. Not just those in scripture alone, but also those that came from “thy lips” O Lord. The Lord visited with the psalmist as he recorded: “thou hast visited me in the night” (Psalms 17:3).

This idea of God’s visitation with those who follow Him is as ancient as creation itself. Belief was always intended to grow into faith. Faith was always intended to grow into knowledge.

MARCH 16, 2010

Adam and Eve

Adam and Eve could not have children while they were in the Garden of Eden. They lacked the capacity to bear children in the innocent state in which they then existed. See 2 Ne. 2:23.

They had been given the gift of childbearing as an endowment from God. The endowment of the capacity did not mean they had the means or understanding at the time to act upon it. Without the fall, they would not have been able to act on the endowment. They were like little children who are born male and female with the capacity to one day become parents, but who are immature and innocent, and therefore unable to bear children.

The great offense was in Satan’s control of the timing. Had they remained in the Garden throughout the Sabbath day of rest then they would have received the commandment to partake of the fruit

in the Lord's timing. At this point they would have moved from their innocent state into a condition not unlike the Millennial day. The "fall" would have transitioned to a Terrestrial state, rather than a Telestial state.

MARCH 17, 2010

It is Enough For One to Seek Him

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, in a fullness, with power to save and exalt, remains intact on the earth. Whenever there are those who come to Him, He will quickly come to them.

Since salvation is always an individual event, the failure of others to search for and obtain the great blessings which He makes available to His followers is not and never has been predicated upon the success of a group.

It is enough for one to seek Him. But when two or three are gathered in His name, He will not leave them comfortless, but will respect their faith, heed and diligence.

Lamenting about the decay all around you will not help you draw closer to Him. If you detect that decay, then your eyes have been opened, and you should do something about it in your **own** life. Condemning the failure of others has not advanced a single soul in history. It is true enough that the Lord may require by the constraint of the Spirit that people be "reproved betimes with sharpness" but only "when moved upon by the Holy Ghost" (D&C 121:43). But the Gospel of Jesus Christ consists in gathering light and truth, which is not accomplished by focusing upon the failings of others (D&C 93:28).

MARCH 17, 2010

Strangers and Angels

Here was my thought to the kids last night as they were getting ready to for bed:

“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb. 13:2). I believe that. I think it happens more often than people generally believe or even think possible.

MARCH 17, 2010

Nicodemus

When Christ taught publicly and could be heard daily, there was no need to approach Him at night in private. However, Nicodemus, a Pharisee member of the Sanhedrin, came to Jesus to examine Him “by night” without his peers knowing that he was making this contact. Christ knew the heart of Nicodemus, and put the matter squarely to him:

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

The assertion made here is:

“Verily, verily” — meaning that Christ was capable of announcing truth.

“I say unto thee” — meaning that Christ was capable of making commandments, establishing conditions, announcing the requirements for salvation. Indeed, Christ was putting Himself into the position of Moses, becoming a lawgiver.

“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.” — meaning that if Nicodemus intended to see heaven, Christ was declaring the condition for entry. Becoming a new crea-

ture was essential. Without newness, new birth, a new approach to life, all things which Nicodemus followed would lead away from the kingdom of heaven.

Nicodemus responded: “How can a man be born again when he is old? Can he enter the second time into the mother’s womb, and be born?” (John 3:4).

This isn’t a rhetorical or meaningless question, nor does it announce ignorance. Nicodemus is testing Christ. If this is a new lawgiver, and possessed the capacity to announce conditions for entry into heaven, then He needs to explain His meaning. This is a Pharisee Rabbi, asking a young, new Rabbi to set the matter plainly. Christ responded:

Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. (John 3:5–8)

Now it is put plainly:

Born as a new man, by water (baptism) and Spirit (receive Holy Ghost) is required to “enter into the kingdom of God.” Without receiving these new ordinances from the new officiators (John the Baptist and Christ), the old ordinances will no longer be accepted. This is a call to Nicodemus to receive the new prophets then preaching. Without accepting these new prophets, he could not enter into God’s kingdom.

Flesh is just flesh. What is required to be able to go where God is will require every person to receive a new Spirit, new life, and become connected with heaven.

Heaven is unruly, unpredictable and blows without predictability. The Spirit is unruly, requiring things which men do not anticipate. It takes you places you have not been before. You cannot just sit within the councils of the Sanhedrin and reason with men's understanding. You must become inspired by a higher source. You must accept that new direction from above, or you will never enter into God's kingdom.

Brilliant. Christ taught the teacher. Now the matter is put to him: Will he receive a new life, and leave the old one? Will he become born again.

How hard it must have been for a man in Nicodemus' position to approach Christ. The fact he came at night testifies to the discomfort of his circumstances. Yet Christ, in patience, told him how to receive eternal life.

What a revealing encounter. We are the richer in our understanding for it having occurred.

MARCH 17, 2010

Twelve Oxen

The Temple of Solomon had a "sea" for washings of the priests. The description of that "sea" is found in 1 Kings 7:23–26. Significantly the "sea" sat upon the backs of twelve oxen (verse 25). Three were facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east.

In the time of the First Temple, these twelve oxen foreshadowed the scattering of Israel to the four corners of the earth. The destruction of the First Temple completed the scattering, which began at the death of Solomon, who was responsible the construction of the First Temple. When he died, the kingdom was divided north and south. The northern kingdom contained ten tribes, which would

be taken into Assyrian captivity at about 725 B.C., and then be lost to history as they scattered northward. The remaining two tribes of the south were taken captive by Babylon at 600 B.C., and then a “remnant” returned. They were finally dispossessed of their land at 70 A.D. by the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, and scattered throughout the Roman Empire.

We also build fonts in Temples with twelve oxen bearing the font of water used for baptisms for the dead. These twelve oxen are also divided into groups of three facing north, west, south and east. Now, however, the oxen signify the gathering of scattered Israel. They also signify by their number, three, the concept of presidency or organization under restored priestly authority. The circle of twelve also are a symbol of restored, reorganized Israel in the latter-days to once again exist as a united people upon the earth.

MARCH 18, 2010

How I Study the Scriptures

I was asked about how I study. It was a good enough question I thought I ought to address it here.

First, I spent over 20 years teaching Gospel Doctrine weekly. To prepare for a class I would read the assigned scriptures on Sunday evening. Beginning Monday I would research in commentaries what others had said about the passages in the assigned lesson. Then before going to bed I would re-read the scriptures for the next lesson.

I would continue this process daily until Thursday. Beginning Thursday I would start to outline what I intended to cover in the lesson on Sunday.

Throughout the week I would listen to the relevant scriptures for the next lesson on tape/CD whenever I was in my car. So on the way to and from work I would listen and re-listen to the scriptures.

On Saturday I would pray then put a final lesson plan together. It took about 10 hours a week for me to prepare a 50 minute lesson.

In all the time I taught I never repeated a lesson. I tried to go deeper and deeper into the meaning of the material every time I taught it.

Today with that background I read books and scriptures daily. However, I take what I learn back into my scriptures and add cross-references or margin notes to make scriptural passages more meaningful for me. My scriptures have very little underlining and no coloring, but there are many notes and cross-references in them.

I try to tie any new concept I learn, no matter the source, back into the scriptures. Lately I have also taken to using an electronic version of the scriptures to help locate material or passages which relate to a topic.

MARCH 18, 2010

Weekend Movie

I watched a new DVD we bought from Deseret Book titled *One Good Man*.

If it was satire or intended as irony then it was quite good. If it was just a straight up drama then I hated it. Since it was an LDS product, and sold at Deseret Book, I assume it wasn't meant as irony or satire.

It offended me because the lead character was called to be a Bishop. This makes the hero a church leader. The hero treats one of his ward members as disposable, but goes out of his way for non-members and widows. It resulted in the inactivity of an entire family whose sole outreach by the bishop was to go Christmas caroling with his family on their porch. While there, he tells the wife that he, "hadn't seen them in church lately."

It was depressing. As irony it shows how a “good” man can’t always do good. Life is riddled with conflicts and unintended harm. So I like it as irony.

MARCH 18, 2010

Dumbing Down?

I had a friend suggest to me that the Lord was requiring the church to “dumb down” the curriculum. I absolutely reject that idea. It’s just preposterous. The Lord always offers light and truth to any who come to Him. It is men who turn away from what is offered.

MARCH 19, 2010

Satan Fell From Heaven

Satan was not thrown out of heaven until after this earth was created. Jesus remarked, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Luke 10:18). Similarly, John’s revelation records that Satan “which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:9). From this we know that Satan was not cast out until after the creation of this earth had prepared a place into which Satan could be cast.

Several of the astronauts who walked on the moon during the Apollo project reported having deeply spiritual experiences when they left the earth. One of them became a full-time minister.

C.S. Lewis wrote a science fiction trilogy in which the first volume titled *Out of the Silent Planet* made this earth isolated from the heavenly chorus because of its wickedness.

Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea: for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. (Revelation 12:12)

COMMENTS:

db schroeder · MARCH 19, 2010 AT 8:41 AM

I often wondered exactly when Satan had to make his exit.

I think *if* or because he took part in the Creation, that's where his ego helped get the best of him, and why he later found himself in the Garden- claiming it to be "his kingdom".

It's like the guy doesn't accept HF's Will, doesn't know HF's mind, but figures out parts it out later and then tries to thwart man's progression w different techniques.

However, man can check Satan every time, if he is in constant tune w Divine revelation and inspiration from Heaven when he lives his life accordingly.

It will never stop Satan's attempts, but we can be fortified against his techniques and methods -and read them a mile a way.

Kisi · MARCH 21, 2010 AT 8:24 AM

Great insights in both of these! Thanks. *Out of the Silent Planet* and that whole trilogy is one of my most favorite things that C.S. Lewis ever wrote.

Why does Satan appear in the Garden to Adam and Eve as a snake? The serpent is a symbol of Christ in both the Old Testament w/ Moses, and the Book of Mormon referring to the same. And then there's all the references to Christ as the "feathered serpent", Quetzalcoatl, etc. Was Satan trying to imitate Christ? We are also told to be "wise as serpents". I'm sure there's more to all this than I'm seeing. Can you add more insights for us please.

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 21, 2010 AT 10:41 AM

I've written about this subject in *Come, Let Us Adore Him*.

Almost all false teachings originating from Satan turn him into God, and God into him. The great metaphysical god of Christianity, Judaism and Islam is bodiless, spirit, non-corporeal, etc. This is Satan.

He imitates, he destroys, he burdens and enslaves. God creates, originates and liberates. Those who are deceived by Satan bind others,

put burdens upon them, enslave them. Those who follow God preach liberty and open the chains binding mankind.

MARCH 19, 2010

Continual Worship

After Christ's resurrection, when He had ministered to His disciples, and proven that it was He who had been crucified, Luke makes this interesting observation: "And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God" (Luke 24:52–53).

First, it is interesting because Christ had fulfilled the Law of Moses. Therefore, the rites of the temple of Herod were no longer necessary. Yet Christ's disciples returned to the temple "continually" to worship Him. Second, the temple was under the control of those who conspired to kill the Lord. Despite this, Christ's disciples were "continually" in the temple.

True worship by a true disciple is never impaired by the circumstances. We should not allow anything to distract us from our own "praising and blessing God." If it can be done in the temple of Herod after the crucifixion of Christ, it can be done today.

MARCH 20, 2010

Prophets and Entropy

I have been struck by how much of the message which Samuel the Lamanite and Abinadi both deliver have previously been the subject of Nephi's prophecies. Almost every bit of Samuel the Lamanite and Abinadi's messages are first included within Nephi's message. It is possible that both of these later Book of Mormon prophets were "restoring" to new generations the message originally taught by Nephi which had fallen into neglect.

The entire message of Joseph Smith was to restore what had been here before and become lost. The work of scholar Margaret Barker suggests that Jesus Christ was restoring First Temple theology and earlier lost traditions.

If the gospel was originally preached to Adam (and I think it was) then every prophet from that day until now has simply been restoring what was once here. Prophets fight the law of entropy. Mankind keep losing truths and prophets keep bringing them back.

One of the great “signs” that there is a true prophet on the earth is the restoration by them of truths which have fallen into disuse or neglect. True prophets are at war with entropy and decay.

MARCH 20, 2010

Witch of Endor

King Saul lost his counselor-prophet when he died of old age (1 Sam 25:1). Saul’s unstable conduct and unfaithful behavior precluded him from getting an answer from the Lord. “And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets” (1 Sam. 28:6). So Saul went to visit a woman who could conjure the dead. Saul had the woman conjure the deceased Samuel.

Saul had prohibited conjuring as a matter of law within the kingdom (1 Sam. 28:3). So think about what he’s doing:

- *it’s illegal to go see a conjurer, so he’s breaking his own law.*
- *he goes to see the witch of Endor in order to get access to the dead prophet.*
- *so are we to trust the witch? or are we to trust the spirit that the witch conjures to be reliably Samuel?*

Life really gets complicated for the superstitious and foolish.

MARCH 20, 2010

Stake Conference

Stake Conference weekend! That means that I'll be helping to minimize the crowds in the parking lot at the Stake Center by leaving my car at home. I'll also help out with the crowded seating problems at the Stake Center by leaving some seats open. I know it is a sacrifice to do this, but it's one I'm willing to make.

It's the equinox. I'm going to do something memorable.

MARCH 21, 2010

A Public Service

My youngest daughter plays on a 10-and-under boy's super league baseball team. They played in a tournament this week. In the first three games she was hit by pitches in every game. In one, the bases were loaded and her hit-by-pitch walk scored an RBI. I told her she had "RBI'd" a run and I was proud of her. She thought about it a while and asked, "What does RBI mean?" I said, "Run batted in." She replied, it should mean "Run by injury."

In the last game she hit a single and RBI'd 2 runs.

I noticed that the moms for the opposing teams all rooted for her when she was up to bat. The dads, however, were horrified that a girl was competing with their sons. I think she's doing a public service.

MARCH 21, 2010

On a Scale of 1 to 10

I've figured out part of the problem I have in discussing Mormon issues with others. Oftentimes there is a disconnect between how important the two parties view the subject being discussed. To

illustrate the point, I'm proposing a completely arbitrary method of ranking an issue on a 10 point scale of ascending importance as follows:

1. Completely meaningless
2. Trivial
3. Relevant
4. Somewhat significant
5. Significant
6. Very significant
7. Important
8. Very important
9. Critical
10. Essential to salvation

When I think a subject is “1” and someone else thinks it is “10” then naturally I don't care about the point. They think I must be convinced of the point or I am going to forfeit salvation itself.

When that is the case, we don't connect very well. If we do reach an agreement, I don't think the agreement amounts to much. They on the other hand, think they've won a major point, or provided a valuable service. I would likely be bored with the discussion, and since I didn't value the subject's importance would probably offend the other party by my disinterest.

On the other hand, views change. At one point I am convinced that some behavior or conduct is either 9 or 10, only to later realize that it is more likely a 3 or 4. That change in attitude may be due to nothing more than living longer, getting more experience and developing a little humility about life and its challenges.

I think that a lot of discussions, disagreements and strong arguments are rooted in an assignment of different levels of importance to the subject.

For example, when I was an Elder's Quorum President, Home Teaching by Quorum members was something between an 8 and 10. I'm not an Elder's Quorum President any longer, and I go home teach my families because I really care about them. I like them. I want to be with them. I find them interesting. I've been 100% for many months and, if I miss at all, it is due to either their absence during the month or mine. But I try to keep in close touch, not because of some "assignment" but because I like them. If I were to assign a level of importance to home teaching now, based on the scale above, I would candidly give it a 5 or 6.

There are people who believe the center piece of the relief society room during a lesson is a 10. I don't relate well to that. And there are those who think President Monson's General Conference Addresses are a 1. I don't relate well to that, either.

Before a discussion begins about gospel subjects, I think it is always helpful to first find out how important the subject is to the person with whom you are speaking.

MARCH 21, 2010

Priesthood

The Priesthood is separate from the church. For example, when someone is excommunicated they are told to stop using their priestly authority. When they are re-baptized they are never re-ordained. They are simply given authorization to now begin using their authority again.

We do not re-ordain someone when they are re-baptized because re-ordination is unnecessary. They held priestly authority even while they were not a member of the church.

Priesthood preceded the church and is the basis upon which it was organized. It will last beyond the church, at least in the final,

Patriarchal form. That priesthood will endure into eternity, for it is the basis upon which the eternal family is predicated. The eternal family is the government of God, not the church. After this life, the church will come to an end. But the family, as a form of government, and priesthood of a Patriarch and Matriarch, presiding as a king and queen, priest and priestess, will endure.

MARCH 22, 2010

Heroes

I've been reflecting on the frailty of the human experience. We are buffeted and torn from the time of birth, tempted and beckoned to choose poorly, subject to hunger, fatigue and loneliness. The wonder is not that we see so much failure and frustration in mankind. Rather the wonder is that we see occasionally such heroic lives that shine like a brilliant star while lived among us.

The *Deseret News* had an article and pictures of the young Utah lives cut short by service in the military. For the families of these valiant men and women who died for our country's interests, the loss will be lifelong. They will hardly take a breath from the day of their son or daughter's death that the memory of their child does not stay with them.

I don't think we do enough to express our collective gratitude for those who have lost their lives for others. Whether they are in the military, police service, firemen or others who die trying to render noble service for the rest of us, we owe a debt of gratitude to these families.

MARCH 22, 2010

The Importance of Personal Revelation

In Section 19 the Lord explains what the words “endless torment” and “eternal damnation” mean. They are words of art, and are essentially proper nouns referring to God’s punishment (See D&C 19:4–12).

This is an enormous help in understanding the scriptures generally. Words are chosen carefully, and the Lord is deliberate in how He puts a message across. Things may not mean what we initially think they mean.

The scriptures are designed to reveal **and** conceal. They are able to reveal even very hidden and mysterious things to the understanding of mankind when we understand what is being discussed. Until the reader has been prepared for this understanding, reading the messages will not necessarily result in greater insight.

It is almost as if you have to know the answer first, or have it revealed to you. Then, while in possession of the truth, you can see that prophets and seers have been speaking about these matters since the beginning of time.

How often do we reflect on Christ’s “opening the scriptures” to His followers? This is something that ought to make us all think about how little understanding we obtain without first receiving light and truth from Him. Once again it points to the absolute necessity of personal revelation.

MARCH 22, 2010

The Problem With Too Much Praise

I think criticism is necessary to the human condition. When a great public official in Rome was given a victor’s parade, there would be

a companion in his chariot whose responsibility it was to tell the man being celebrated that all fame is fleeting. Rome had it right on that score.

Sometimes a sincere and devoted man can offer his help best by giving criticism to someone he loves. When the only response which is tolerated is that the person is “doing great” or is “wonderful” there is stagnation and failure.

I love baseball. All young men should play baseball. It is a game of failure. If you only fail 70% of the time as a batter, you can become a Hall of Fame player. No amount of praise will compensate for a .110 batting average. Criticism is unnecessary.

One of the *Simpson's* “Treehouse of Horrors” episodes had Bart being omni-powerful. Because of his great powers, whenever anything bad happened people would say, “it’s good Bart did that.” This was to appease the all-powerful Bart. It only made him worse. Funny episode involving a cartoon character, but with a powerfully true underlying message. Too much praise corrodes. Worship of demigods inevitably risks making demons of them.

MARCH 23, 2010

Near Death Experiences

I was asked about Near Death Experiences and their interface with conversion. Here’s my take:

The advantage is that they know there is a continuation of life after the death of the body. However, whether they use that knowledge to advance in light and truth or not is individually determined.

Some have used NDE’s to become guru’s and sell books or give talks. That may detract from getting more light and truth. The thing about growing in light and truth is that it is always directly connected with the humility of the person. Humility or openness

to new ideas and greater understanding is required to move from wherever you may be at present to a position of greater truth. It is that openness to new ideas which is indispensable to gaining knowledge of God.

Closed minds, particularly those that may grow out of religious experiences or beliefs, are not benefited by what great things God has to offer in the continuing education of His children.

Joseph Smith once commented that it will be “a great while after we have left this life before we will have learned” enough to be saved. It is not all to be understood in this life.

Openness to ideas and further instruction is necessary to continue in the path of truth and light. A NDE may open one's eyes to some truths, But the fullness of what is to be taught or gained from God is not given in a single experience or in a brief tutelage from missionaries. It is a lifelong quest.

CHAPTER 5

Truth Is Independent

MARCH 23, 2010

Godliness

I was asked about godliness.

The ordinances are helps, symbols **and** requirements. “Helps” in that they establish milestones that memorialize passage from one stage of development to the next. “Symbols” in that they point to a deeper meaning or spiritual reality almost always grounded in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. “Requirements” in that they mark the defined route taken by Christ as a mortal to fulfill all righteousness.

The power of godliness is tied to opening the heavens and receiving assignments, confirming revelation, or blessings from God. Promises given to others are not promises to you. Men are rarely reliable sources from which to attain the Word of God. It is the unfortunate condition of mankind that, so soon as they are given a little authority they begin to use unrighteous dominion. Heaven, on the other hand, does not dictate, abuse, misuse authority or entice you to do evil.

All power is tied to heaven. When the powers of heaven are withdrawn from someone, then their authority comes to an end and they have no power.

The ordinances as symbols point to the real thing. The real thing is Jesus Christ and His Gospel.

If you want to have the power of godliness in your life, it must be gained through Jesus Christ; access to whom is available to all men on equal terms.

MARCH 23, 2010

The Education of All of Us

I've been marveling at the irrelevance of higher education to the process of receiving light and truth.

PhD's are generally so schooled in their discipline that they view the Gospel in the light of their educational training. A scholar studies economics and then everything looks to him like it can be explained in economic terms. Or a scholar studies philosophy and then everything looks like it can be fit into a paradigm matching their school of thought.

I suspect the only book Nephi or Lehi had for their migration was the brass plates containing a version of the Old Testament. Slim library pickings for what great things those two prophets were able to receive through their lives. It isn't the volume of the books we possess which helps our search into deep truths. Indeed, our libraries may well interfere with knowing God. It is the depth of how we live the basic principles contained in the scriptures which let the light of heaven shine into our lives.

Joseph Smith's early education was so limited that our children have a comparable education at the conclusion of fourth grade. But what he learned from on-high, by revelation, made him a towering pillar of light and truth.

Joseph once commented that if you could gaze into heaven for five minutes you would know more that if you read everything that

had ever been written on the subject. Now imagine the libraries that are filled with material written by the world's scholars and theologians about heaven. Those who have written include such luminaries as St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, Dante, Rabbi Bacharach and Buddha. Yet five minutes of "gazing" would supplant all they had to offer.

The wonder of it all is that so few are willing to trust a prophet's advice. We read endlessly uninspired books written by the uninformed, and bypass the process commended to us by the scriptures.

A bad education (which is most educations) is worse than no education when it comes to the things of heaven. When men are learned they think they are wise, and therefore have little reason to trust in God or revelation from Him to correct their misunderstanding. I think the Book of Mormon had something to say about that (See 2 Ne. 9:28–29, 42). I consider myself a fool. (That is the one advantage I have over those who also hold doctorates. I know it does not provide me with any advantages, but does impose considerable disadvantages because of its corrosion to my thinking.)

Heaven is an endless source of surprises. There's nothing mundane going on there.

MARCH 23, 2010

White Stone and a New Name

I was asked whether the white stone and new name in D&C 130 are the same as *The Second Comforter*. It was an interesting question and I thought I'd put the answer up here:

There are some equivalentents (i.e., if A=B and B=C, then A=C) in the Gospel when it comes to this subject. The ministry of *The Second Comforter* is to bring those to whom He ministers to the Father, and have them accepted by Him. This means that the Fa-

ther accepts them as a member of the Heavenly Family, or in other words, promises them exaltation.

Since the end of that ministry is to have the person accepted by the Father as a son or daughter of God, then an equivalency can be drawn between the final outcome and *The Second Comforter*. This is what is done in D&C 88:3–5. Joseph Smith did something similar in a statement he made in which he put the voice declaring a person's exaltation first, and the visit of Christ and the Father with that person second. You can read about it in the *Words of Joseph Smith*, pages 3–6, but the most relevant excerpt is found below:

The other Comforter spoken of is a subject of great interest & perhaps understood by few of this generation, After a person hath faith in Christ, repents of his sins & is Baptized for the remission of his sins & received the Holy Ghost (by the laying on of hands) which is the first Comforter then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering & thirsting after Righteousness. & living by every word of God & the Lord will soon say unto him Son thou shalt be exalted. &c When the Lord has thoroughly proved him & finds that the man is determined to serve him at all hazard. then the man will find his calling & Election made sure then it will be his privilege to receive the other Comforter which the Lord hath promised the saints as is recorded in the testimony of St John in the XIV ch from the 12th to the 27 verses Note the 16.17.18.21.23. verses (16.v). & I will pray the father & he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; (17). Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you & shall be in you (18). I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you (21). He that hath my commandments & keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. & he that loveth me shall be loved of my father.

∅ I will love him ∅ will manifest myself to him (23). If a man Love me he will keep my words. ∅ my Father will love him. ∅ we will come unto him, ∅ make our abode with him.

Now what is this other Comforter? It is no more or less than the Lord Jesus Christ himself ∅ this is the sum ∅ substance of the whole matter, that when any man obtains this last Comforter he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him or appear unto him from time to time. ∅ even he will manifest the Father unto him ∅ they will take up their abode with him, ∅ the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him ∅ the Lord will teach him face to face ∅ he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God, ∅ this is the state ∅ place the Ancient Saints arrived at when they had such glorious vision Isaiah, Ezekiel, John upon the Isle of Patmos, St Paul in the third heavens, ∅ all the Saints who held communion with the general Assembly ∅ Church of the First Born ∅c.

(This is an excerpt from Willard Richards' Pocket Companion contained in *The Words of Joseph Smith*.)

Since the white stone and new name mentioned in D&C 130:10–11 are referring to the state of exaltation and inheritance, and since the promise which *The Second Comforter* (Christ) is working to obtain for those to whom He ministers is the promise of exaltation, that equivalency may also be made. The difference as I see it is that those described in the verses in D&C 130 are in a future state, in which they have actually inherited the condition of exaltation, have entered into the Celestial Kingdom to dwell there and possess the white stone on which their new name is written; whereas the promises Joseph speaks of in the quote above and the promises in D&C_88 are given to a mortal and are to be realized fully in the future.

Now the promise of the Lord is reality itself. What He says will happen. His Word becomes the law of the universe (See D&C 1:38). Therefore when viewed with the eyes of faith, the Word is the reality, and the inheritance is immediate for those with faith. This is the reason why Joseph said when a man receives

this last Comforter he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him or appear unto him from time to time. & even he will manifest the Father unto him & they will take up their abode with him, & the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him & the Lord will teach him face to face & he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God[.]

Finally, since the mortal who receives these things is already in company with the Lord and the Father, they are already occasional visitors in a Celestial Kingdom although they are still here in mortality, required to endure to the end, suffer death and then await resurrection. Despite this, they are celestial and their lives are punctuated by contact with celestial beings from time to time, as the Lord determines is appropriate or necessary.

MARCH 24, 2010

First Principles of the Gospel

Someone asked this question:

In one part of *Come, Let Us Adore Him* you talk about the Dispensation in the Meridian of Time. How “Men of good faith and sincere desire doing their best to follow after God, lost the light of the Spirit, then lost sound doctrine, and ultimately lost their covenant status and drifted into darkness.” Did you mean this collectively? Over time as a group? As an individual of good faith, sincere desire, doing their best to follow after God, losing the light

of the spirit, then sound doctrine and later drifting into darkness.... How tragic. If after all that they still failed, what then is our hope for an individual now, in our dispensation? Are we doomed to the same outcome? I see many following the same course as anciently.

My answer:

It is troubling. It is the terrible problem of mortality. We are all prone to drift and fail. It is only by constant renewal of faith that we can hope to succeed. No matter how far we have come, what great things we have obtained, we are still subject to failure. This is why the **FIRST** principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: “faith, repentance, baptism and laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.” We never outgrow these **FIRST** principles.

I believe them to be “**FIRST**” in the sense of primacy, not a singular event which happens and then you can take them off the list of stuff to do. They are primary. They are foundational. They are required to be used constantly. Therefore, they are “**FIRST**.”

So, we always go forward in **faith**. No matter how much we already know, we must use faith to go forward. We live within the limitation of linear time. We experience things in a flow that happens without our control. Life unfolds as an unknown to us, and we must cope with all it hands us from day to day. That requires faith to confront this uncontrolled, unfolding stream of time in which we are presently confined.

Repentance is required because even if we are doing what we should be doing we are always going to learn more. It is the nature of the Gospel that our light should increase. Whenever we learn more, we must change to reflect what we have just gained. Change is the heart of repentance.

Baptism is to have sins washed away. If you are already baptized, then the ordinance does not need to be done again, but the

remission of sins and washing them away is required repeatedly. For those already baptized, this is done through the Sacrament. It is still required for us to have sins remitted.

The **Holy Ghost** should be a regular participant in our lives. Its renewed companionship is also primary. Its witness to us that we are on the right path is the only way to wage the necessary war against entropy which seeks to take you into darkness. It is the source of renewed light that always enlightens when it comes.

These are the only means by which we can avoid the same dismal fate as all others of all prior dispensations. We must do this individually. It does not matter if it is done collectively. I've yet to see any reason in the scriptures to expect great collective success by the Gentiles who inherit the Gospel in our dispensation. There are individual promises to the few Gentiles who will repent, have faith, be baptized, enter into the covenant and remain faithful. But the collective outcome is not particularly rosy.

MARCH 24, 2010

Truth

There is "truth" which exists independent of what we think or believe. (I use the word in the same sense as D&C 93:24–25.) Our collective forgetfulness does not erase truth. Nor does our vain imagination alter truth.

Whenever a doctrine is changed because of man's planning or arguments, then we are teaching for commandments the doctrines of men; just as Christ complained to Joseph in the First Vision (*JS-H 1:19*).

During the Third and Fourth Centuries the debates over "adoptionism" were causing doctrinal havoc for the Christian movement. As they solidified control over the movement, the leaders of the

developing Historic Christian faith had a plan to cure the schism involving arguments that Christ was just a man who had been “adopted” at His baptism to become the Son of God. The original words spoken at His baptism came from Psalms 2:7. These words supported the “adoptionist’s” arguments. The answer was simple—change the text of the Gospels. So they edited the words and changed them from saying, “Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee” to instead, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). That drove a stake in the heart of the “adoptionist” arguments.

Bart D. Ehrman has shown how this, and other controversies, affected the text of the New Testament in his book *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*.

Patterns in history have a way of repeating themselves. Men almost always find it easier to change doctrine than to conform to the truth; and to edit books to fit their failures than to follow direction. Our challenge is to learn the right lessons from history. We should not succumb to the easy advantages of changing the principles our religion is founded on, in order to accomplish “good” and repel criticism by adapting to meet the critics’ arguments.

Truth is immutable and unchanging. We either conform to it or apostatize from it. We can’t change it.

How grateful I am to still have prophets among us.

MARCH 24, 2010

Abinadi’s Message

The significance of a prophet’s message can never be measured by the extent to which he is accepted or even acknowledged by his peers. In the case of Abinadi, he was an outcast whose origins and

even ethnic affiliation are unknown. He is the only person in the Book of Mormon with this name. His lineage cannot be determined from the name, and whether he is Nephite, Lamanite, or some “other” is not disclosed.

His only credential was his message. He came to announce warnings, was rejected, and ultimately killed. He had no success with the people, and made only one convert.

Abinadi is a hinge character around whom the entire remainder of the Book of Mormon will center. His one convert, Alma, will become the spiritual leader of the Nephites, and that convert will become the leading writer of the Book of Mormon. Then his posterity will be the focus of the remaining history of the Book of Mormon.

Abinadi’s prophecies were cited from the time he delivered them to the end of the Book of Mormon. But measured by the events of his life, he failed. His one convert fled persecution and hid in the wilderness.

However, measured by the full sweep of history, he is the pivotal character, the central figure from the time of his appearance until the end of the Book of Mormon.

I think there’s a profound lesson in Abinadi’s appearance and legacy. If the Book of Mormon was edited by those who “saw our day,” and was edited to foreshadow our own history, then we ought to be cautious about discarding a message from someone like Abinadi.

The only meaningful credential is the content of the message. Trappings of office, genealogy, name, status, and standing were all irrelevant to Abinadi.

MARCH 25, 2010

Central America or North America?

I used to view the subject of where the events in Book of Mormon took place as one of those trivial matters (2 on my earlier scale). However, I've found that FARMS has become quite animated about the subject. They are quite critical of the North American model. This has somewhat raised the subject's importance in my view.

There are two views. One is that the events took place in Central America. The other is that they occurred in North America. The best explanation of the Central American setting is John Sorenson's book: *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, published by FARMS. The best defense of the North American setting is Bruce Porter and Rod Meldrum's book *Prophecies and Promises: The Book of Mormon and the United States of America*. FARMS gave a very critical review of the Porter/Meldrum book.

I used to think this subject was unimportant enough to allow it to remain undecided. After reading both sides' arguments, I am inclined to believe it has more significance if you accept Bruce Porter and Rod Meldrum's view. If you accept their view, then Joseph Smith knew something more about the Book of Mormon's events than Sorenson advances. Also the fit of Book of Mormon prophecies into a highly focused unfolding of events also follows. In fact, the D&C comes into sharper focus when you accept the Porter/Meldrum view.

I am inclined to now view this as an important or very important issue (7 or 8 on my earlier scale). I think everyone ought to read those two books and decide the subject for themselves. Since the Sorenson book was written first, and the Porter/Meldrum book is somewhat a response to it, I think they should be read in that order.

MARCH 25, 2010

HBO and Politicians

My wife has become a Republican County Delegate again. I stayed home.

Given the sorry state of the current political class, I'm just glad when the political scandal of the day doesn't involve sodomy of a parrot.

Sobbing politicians blubbering how sorry they are for the DUI/nude hot-tubbing with underage girls/oral sex or drug use require me to then explain to my kids things I would rather defer until they are older. What good is it to not buy HBO when the evening news features Republicans and Democrats confessing sins as sordid as anything we get in R-rated movies?

MARCH 25, 2010

All is Well in Zion

According to the Joseph Smith's First Vision, the Restoration occurred because of the apostasy of Historic Christianity. All churches "were wrong" and their "professors were all corrupt." "All their creeds were an abomination." The people who inhabited these churches "draw near [to God] with their lips, but their hearts are far from" Him (*JS-H 1:19*).

This is the historic moment which justifies the Restoration. It forces a choice upon the world. Mormonism is either correct, or it has no reason to exist.

This forces The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints into a dilemma. It must either proclaim that it is the only repository of saving truth, or it must strike a compromise which betrays the reason for its existence.

Jesus Christ did not intend to let those who follow the work He was to commission through Joseph Smith to become popular, successful, or live in peace. He intended to put them at odds with all the rest of the world. The very reason for His strange act was to notify anyone who heard about it that they were to repent, change, accept new truths, or remain “corrupt” and with “hearts far from Him.” It is an instant challenge to the world.

When we shape the message of the Restoration into a vocabulary which does not offend, we miss the point. We are **REQUIRED** to offend. We are **REQUIRED** to sound the alarm to “Awake! Arise!” When the message to those who accept the Historic Christian faiths is that “you’re OK” we are contradicting Christ’s opening statement to Joseph Smith.

All of this is only true if what we are doing is continuing the work begun by Joseph Smith. If we have abandoned what he restored, then never mind. We can fit in and get along. In fact, we can not only fit in and get along, but we can even mimic the other mainstream faiths of the day. We can adopt a positive mental attitude, and proclaim: “All is well in Zion, Babylon, Athens, Rome and Nineveh. In fact, all is well everywhere. Don’t get up. Stay asleep. We’re just here to help make you feel better about yourself.”

MARCH 26, 2010

An Explanation

This came to me through an email and I thought I should address it here. This is the email I received:

I got information through the grapevine about a woman who is claiming that Denver ordained her to do something and that he put his hands on her head and set her apart for some type of work.

I don't know all the details, but I was not happy when I heard that. I know that he wouldn't do that but thought that Denver should know that this woman is going around telling people this.

I thought I would put it on the blog and explain.

First, I don't have any idea what woman this is referring to; nor for that matter who wrote the information in the email. It was just forwarded to me, and I was given permission by the one who forwarded it to use it on the blog.

Second, I've not "ordained" a woman to do anything. Nor do I intend to "ordain" a woman to do anything.

Third, I have given blessings to my wife, daughters, home teaching assignments who are sisters, and other women who have asked from time to time, just as others do who hold priesthood and are asked to give a blessing. That has never involved "ordaining" a woman to some assignment or work.

Finally, the only women I have "set apart" for an assignment was done while I served in a Bishopric at BYU, or while serving on the High Council. Apart from that I haven't "set apart" any woman. I've done numerous "setting apart" assignments in Elder's Quorums, and other assignments, but those were men.

MARCH 26, 2010

Have You Heard Christ Sing?

I had the following article brought to my attention:

http://www.templestudy.com/2010/03/22/universal-creation-song/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+Templestudyc+om+%28TempleStudy.com%29

It is my view that Christ's Sermon on the Mount was actually a hymn. It was announced as a form of "new law" or higher path. Those to whom He addressed it would have readily recognized the propriety of it being sung, as the article above reflects.

I was then asked if I had heard Christ sing. I replied, "We all have, but only a few can now remember it."

MARCH 26, 2010

What a Difference an Inning Makes

I was at the Alta-Jordan baseball game yesterday. It was almost unwatchable for the first three innings. There were 6 runs scored without a single hit. The 3-3 tie was the result of hit batters, walks, errors, and general bad play. Ugly doesn't even begin to describe the mess that went on in the beginning of the game.

Then both teams seemed to get over their hesitation and actually remember how to play again.

Jordan had an 11-6 lead going into the last at-bat in the top of the 7th inning. Alta needed 5 runs to tie the game. They put together a string of hits which pushed 5 runs over the plate and tied the game.

In the bottom of the 7th, Jordan got runners on, and had runners at the corners with only 1 out. Alta's defense rose to the occasion and kept them scoreless.

In the extra inning, at the top of the 8th, Alta pushed two runs over. Then held Jordan scoreless in the bottom of the inning to take a 13-11 win.

Worst three beginning innings of baseball I think I've seen in High School play. Best five innings thereafter I've seen. What a difference!

MARCH 27, 2010

The Word of God

We have a whole different mindset than did the ancients. We view things through the prism of Aristotle. We think that “reality” is what we can observe and touch and measure. However, there was once a mindset where what is “reality” was what God said. The Word of God alone was enough to make the reality.

When God said or promised something that was enough to make what God said true, real, and eternal.

God says: “You are my son, this day I have begotten you” (Psalms 2:7). When that occurred, it was enough to make a man a son of God. I don’t know if we even believe that possible now.

Today we assume if it is to happen at all it will be in the after-life. To the ancients, the person to whom this promise was made was instantly a son of God, even though he may have to live out a life in mortality before entering into the kingdom promised him.

The “king-making ceremonies” of the Egyptians, for example, made the Pharaoh a son of Horus and a God. He was a God on earth even though everyone knew that he needed to eat and breathe to survive. He would eventually die and be buried. He was a mortal - but he was a God. The promise was everything. The words of the ceremony, the effect of the anointing, the commitment to the man was enough to make him a God.

This concept of man becoming God hails from a different culture and time. One untainted by the “head of gold, arms of silver, belly of brass, etc.” It is from a time when the Eastern mind, (words are eternal, everything here is temporary and an illusion) was in place among those who are talking with God.

Christ took the Father's words so seriously that Christ became the literal embodiment of God the Father's words. He, Christ, was known as the "Word of God" because He remained true to every word spoken by the Father. If you want to know what the Father said, look to Christ.

So believing/accepting the words of God are critical to getting the true reality of what this life is all about.

MARCH 27, 2010

Adoptionism

I wrote a post about altering or rewriting scriptures to resolve doctrinal disputes. The example used was taken from the time before the New Testament settled into its final form. That example, "adoptionism" was rejected by the majority view, and ultimately the text of the New Testament was changed to make the doctrine "false" from the text. That change was made during the Third and Fourth Centuries as a result of what is now called the Christological debates.

Someone asked if I thought Christ was adopted. That wasn't the point of the blog post. But as long as the question was asked, here's my view:

No, He was the Son of God. However, even as the Son of God He still was required to be acknowledged by Him in mortality to be saved. Once He entered into mortality, took upon Him blood, He was subject to the Fall. Despite being subject to the Fall, He lived His life in such a way that the Fall could not have a proper claim upon Him. It was unjust He should die. When, therefore, death overtook Him, it was unjust. That injustice was the reason He could resurrect. The grave could have no just claim upon Him, and therefore death could be reversed in Him. The Father accepted Him as His Son while He was still in mortality. This was done because

as a mortal, subject to the Fall, inhabiting a body with blood and the elements of corruption, Christ needed to receive the Father's acknowledgment as His Son, even though He was indeed His Son.

Now the adoptionist theory was contrary to this. They held the view that Christ was just another man and got adopted to become the Son of God. He was God's Son solely as a result of that adoption and not in any other way. I reject that idea.

But I accept that He needed, just as everyone else needs, to be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, proceed through the ordinances of the Gospel, and ultimately receive His calling and election made sure. He said He needed to "fulfill all righteousness" and He did all that was required of any of us. God acknowledged Him as His Son. This is required for anyone to be saved. Christ showed the way and walked the path. So in that sense He, just as all of us, needed to be "adopted." Him because He was mortal. Us because we are conceived in sin.

MARCH 27, 2010

Joseph's First Vision

I was asked if Joseph Smith saw more than two personages in his First Vision. In the account written in 1835 Joseph stated: "I saw many angels in this vision."

The account in the Pearl of Great Price (written in 1838) omits any mention of this detail.

MARCH 28, 2010

Process Not Event

Almost everything about the Gospel plan is a process and not an event. There are events to be sure, but for most of us and for most of the time we are only working through the process.

A great deal of the scriptures have been written by those who have been through the process, and who are trying to give us instruction to repeat it in our own lives. “Events” which occur are in the scriptures, as well. But we will never arrive at the “events” unless we first realize there is a process and we begin to participate actively in that process.

The first chapter of Abraham, second and third verses, describes a lengthy process. It took decades to unfold. It was not merely that Abraham determined to do something and then it happened. He’s giving a recitation of the process whereby he became at last a “rightful heir” and a “prince of peace” who had “received instructions” and “held the right belonging to the fathers.”

His quest began in “the land of the Chaldeans.” His ordination would not occur until he was transplanted nearly a thousand miles to the place where Melchizedek would at last ordain and endow him (D&C 84:14). Shem was the “great high priest” we know as “Melek” (king) and “Zadok” (priest) or in other words Melchizedek (D&C 138:41).

[Bruce R. McConkie and President Joseph Fielding Smith taught that Shem was NOT Melchizedek. They reasoned that the meaning of words “through the lineage of the fathers, even till Noah” meant that there were generations between Noah and Melchizedek. And that since Noah was Shem’s father, there were no generations. I do not think the words refer to the “generations” after Noah, but to the generations before Noah. In other words, Noah received the priesthood through the generations going back to Adam, and then having that priesthood which began in the first generations, he conferred it upon Shem, whose new name was Melchizedek. It was this “great high priest” who conferred the priesthood on Abraham.

You should be aware that I am differing from what McConkie and Smith have taught on this issue.

I'm confident in my position and not persuaded by their reasoning, but you are free to believe who you choose.]

When we read the quick summary of Abraham in 1:2–3, we can wrongly presume that this was a quick event, not a long process. It was lengthy. It did not unfold without decades of desiring, seeking, receiving promises and then having them fulfilled.

A great deal of what we read in the scriptures is quickly describing the process. They can be misleading in that respect. Nephi's early account of his visionary experiences suggests instant clarity and understanding. However, Nephi took decades to unravel what he had been given. We are reading his third account. He first wrote it when it happened. Then he recorded it a second time on his large plates. It was not until he had received the commandment to prepare the small plates (on which he wrote the account we read in 1& 2 Nephi) that he finally gave us the third, refined, and completed account. This was decades later. He had "pondered continually upon the things which [he] had seen and heard" (2 Ne. 4:16) during the intervening decades. The account we have reduces the decades of reflection into a single, cogent statement.

The Lord does no magic. He aids us in our growth. We have to grow and overcome. Nephi's vision was something which, without decades of pondering, he could not state with clarity to a reader of his testimony. It is always required for us to conform to the Lord's understanding and abandon our own.

The comment by Moses in Moses 1:27–30 shows how despite the vision he could not understand. He had to ask, "tell me, I pray thee, why these things are so, and by what thou madest them?" It

would take great effort to be able to catch up with the things he witnessed.

The Lord lives in a timeless state (D&C 130:7; Alma 40:8). We live inside time. When the Lord shows things to prophets from His perspective, it takes a while for men to comprehend what they have been shown. It is a process. Our effort is also required.

Men are not perfected in an instant. We do not learn, even with a Perfect Teacher, without applying ourselves. It sometimes takes, as in the cases of Abraham and Nephi, decades of pondering in order for us to understand and finally receive what has been given to us. In the meantime, the Lord gives us experiences in life which will allow our minds to open to what He has done for us.

Joseph's First Vision was originally his own conversion story. By the time of the third account (the one we have in the scriptures) it had changed into the opening of a dispensation for all mankind. It changed from Joseph's conversion into the herald call from heaven to all mankind. The years from 1820 to 1838 were required for Joseph to understand the difference. Same vision. Much different understanding.

So it is with all sons of God.

It is a process which unfolds. It unfolds, as we will finally come to realize, in perfect order, perfectly. If you want to read about it I have tried to describe it beginning with *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*

MARCH 28, 2010

President Packer's Testimony

I have enormous respect for President Boyd K. Packer. To me he is one of the great lights in the church. I know he had a role in the excommunication of seven "intellectuals" years ago, and that

controversy remains today. One of those affected was a fellow who attended law school at the same time as I did. I feel for both him and President Packer. I do not feel inclined to criticize him, nor have I. I do wish the breach between my friend and the church were healed.

President Packer has given many important talks in his career. Perhaps one of the most significant was given in the October, 1977 General Conference. In it he made the following explanation of his testimony and of the testimonies of General Authorities. He is speaking of the time when he was first interviewed to be called as a General Authority by President:

President McKay explained that one of the responsibilities of an Assistant to the Twelve was to stand with the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as a special witness and to bear testimony that Jesus is the Christ. What he said next overwhelmed me: "Before we proceed to set you apart, I ask you to bear your testimony to us. We want to know if you have that witness."

I did the best I could. I bore my testimony the same as I might have in a fast and testimony meeting in my ward. To my surprise, the Brethren of the Presidency seemed pleased and proceeded to confer the office upon me.

That puzzled me greatly, for I had supposed that someone called to such an office would have an unusual, different, and greatly enlarged testimony and spiritual power.

It puzzled me for a long time until finally I could see that I already had what was required: an abiding testimony in my heart of the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith, that we have a Heavenly Father, and that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer. I may not have known all about it, but I did have a testimony, and I was willing to learn.

I was perhaps no different from those spoken of in the Book of Mormon: “And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not” (3 Nephi 9:20; emphasis added).

Over the years, I have come to see how powerfully important that simple testimony is. I have come to understand that our Heavenly Father is the Father of our spirits (see Numbers 16:22; Hebrews 12:9; D&C 93:29). He is a father with all the tender love of a father. Jesus said, “For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.” (John 16:27)

Some years ago, I was with President Marion G. Romney, meeting with mission presidents and their wives in Geneva, Switzerland. He told them that 50 years before, as a missionary boy in Australia, late one afternoon he had gone to a library to study. When he walked out, it was night. He looked up into the starry sky, and it happened. The Spirit touched him, and a certain witness was born in his soul.

He told those mission presidents that he did not know any more surely than as a member of the First Presidency that God the Father lives; that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father; and that the fulness of the gospel had been restored than he did as a missionary boy 50 years before in Australia. He said that his testimony had changed in that it was much easier to get an answer from the Lord. The Lord’s presence was nearer, and he knew the Lord much better than he had 50 years before.

There is the natural tendency to look at those who are sustained to presiding positions, to consider them to be higher and of more value in the Church or to their families than an ordinary member. Somehow we feel they are worth more to the Lord than are we. It just does not work that way!

It would be very disappointing to my wife and to me if we supposed any one of our children would think that we think we are of more worth to the family or to the Church than they are, or to think that one calling in the Church was esteemed over another or that any calling would be thought to be less important.

Recently, one of our sons was sustained as ward mission leader. His wife told us how thrilled he was with the call. It fits the very heavy demands of his work. He has the missionary spirit and will find good use for his Spanish, which he has kept polished from his missionary days. We also were very, very pleased at his call.

What my son and his wife are doing with their little children transcends anything they could do in the Church or out. No service could be more important to the Lord than the devotion they give to one another and to their little children. And so it is with all our other children. The ultimate end of all activity in the Church centers in the home and the family.

As General Authorities of the Church, we are just the same as you are, and you are just the same as we are. You have the same access to the powers of revelation for your families and for your work and for your callings as we do.

It is also true that there is an order to things in the Church. When you are called to an office, you then receive revelation that belongs to that office that would not be given to others.

No member of the Church is esteemed by the Lord as more or less than any other. It just does not work that way! Remember, He is a father—our Father. The Lord is “no respecter of persons.”

We are not worth more to the onrolling of the Lord’s work than were Brother and Sister Toutai Paletu’a in Nuku’alofa, Tonga; or Brother and Sister Carlos Cifuentes in Santiago, Chile; or Brother and Sister Peter Dalebout in the Netherlands; or Brother and Sister Tatsui Sato of Japan; or hundreds of others I have met while traveling about the world. It just does not work that way.

And so the Church moves on. It is carried upon the shoulders of worthy members living ordinary lives among ordinary families, guided by the Holy Ghost and the Light of Christ, which is in them.

I bear witness that the gospel is true and that the worth of souls is great in the sight of God—every soul—and that we are blessed to be members of the Church. I have the witness that would qualify me for the calling I have. I’ve had it since I met the First Presidency those many years ago. I bear it to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

I believe President Packer means it when he says his testimony was “the same as I might have in a fast and testimony meeting in my ward.” When someone in a position of Church leadership has an audience with Christ, we hear about it. Joseph Smith told us. Oliver Cowdery told us. Sidney Rigdon told us. So did President John Taylor, President Joseph F. Smith and David B. Haight. Their calling is to bear a witness of Him. When they have an actual audience, I believe they tell us.

The calling of the Twelve is to “bear witness” of Christ (D&C 107:23). Because of that calling, they must proclaim they have a “witness” even if it could be more correctly described as a testimony born of the Spirit. I accept their “witness” of Christ and believe it is authoritative. However, I do not read into their testimony what they do not put there themselves.

I accept the “witness” of the living Apostles, although it is a rare exception when one has an audience with Christ. In recent talks Elder Scott has gone to some length to testify and describe his own spiritual experiences. I trust in them. I trust him. I believe him to be an Apostle. It is not necessary for an Apostle in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to have a personal audience with Christ.

Years ago Elder Mark Peterson said he did not think it possible for a gentile to receive an audience with Christ. He thought that was confined to pure-blooded Israelites. Since he was a gentile apostle to a gentile church, he did not believe it possible for him to receive such an audience. As I understand it, that is the general view among the brethren. The charge given by Elder Oliver Cowdery to the Twelve (telling them they must receive an audience with Christ for their ordination to be complete) was discontinued in 1911 by President Smith. It was discontinued because so few had received that audience. But that does not make these men any less apostles.

I trust President Packer. I accept his testimony. I believe it is enough to qualify him for the work, just as President McKay told him. I am impressed with his humility in explaining his testimony in General Conference. It increases my trust in him as a servant of the Lord.

COMMENTS:

Joshua M. · MARCH 29, 2010 AT 5:58 PM

So are you saying that a gentile can not have an audience with the Lord?

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 29, 2010 AT 7:47 PM

No, that is not what I am saying. That was Elder Peterson's view. I have always had a contrary view. And I believe Nephi had a contrary view.

Sara · MARCH 31, 2010 AT 7:04 AM

Can you explain more to me about why any of the brethren would think they cannot have an audience with Christ? I know there can be different definitions of gentile, but what about becoming of the blood of Israel when we are baptized? If they believe that others have had such an audience, why would they not believe they can? Since I joined the Church and first read what Joseph Smith had to say about it, I have always believed it possible for me and anyone else, so it is disturbing to me to think the Apostles might not believe it. It makes me wonder if I have misunderstood all I have read and felt about this previously, although I don't believe I have. Can you explain this some more? Thank you.

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 31, 2010 AT 12:50 PM

There is a new blog post I wrote yesterday which my wife will put up later today or tomorrow (she's in charge of managing this blog site) which will give you the doctrinal explanation for both the view of Elder Mark Peterson and my own. I'd commend you to that. However, you should not "find it disturbing" that any person finds it a difficult thing to believe in. The leadership of the Church have more than a full time job. They manage a multi-national, multi-lingual organization with over 14 million members (according to a General Authority visiting my ward last Sunday). This is not an easy job for them. I think President Packer's General Conference address was intended to bring a little balance to our view of them. He is being candid. I think he wants us to have a more realistic view of them, and to stop holding a mythological

view that is unsupported by the reality. Anyway, keep reading. My wife will get the post up in due course. Be patient.

Greg · APRIL 28, 2010 AT 4:32 PM

Do you happen to have a reference that you could point me to for the following statement? Thanks.

The charge given by Elder Oliver Cowdrey to the Twelve (telling them they must receive an audience with Christ for their ordination to be complete) was discontinued in 1911 by President Smith.

Greg · MAY 10, 2010 AT 10:05 AM

Thought I would come back and see if you've had a chance to comment. I'm familiar with Oliver Cowdrey's charge to the Twelve. Specifically, I am interested in the source to this charge being discontinued in 1911 by President Smith. Thanks. I look forward to a reply.

Denver Snuffer · May 10, 2010 at 5:42 PM

I'll put it up as a post today (May 10th) because it is too long for a comment.

MARCH 29, 2010

Believe it is Possible

The first step in the path back to God's presence is to believe it is possible. Without this, the rest of the path does not exist.

MARCH 29, 2010

Spring Baseball

Alta lost to Lone Peak in a snow flurry on Friday. They have another game set for Tuesday at Alta. It is supposed to rain. It will be interesting to see how much different snow and rain make the game.

There was one pop-up in the infield by Lone Peak which went "major league" height—nearly out of sight. In the snow, the Alta

shortstop called for the ball, backing off the second-baseman. As the ball descended, the wind and snow pushed it and the shortstop drifted with the ball. By the time it came down, the shortstop had moved within twenty feet of first base. He actually missed the catch. Between the snow and wind the play was anything but routine.

Both teams played in the same conditions. So there's no excuses for the outcome. But I have to admit, I was grateful when it ended (despite the loss) because the weather made watching it so unpleasant.

I'm hoping the rain-play on Tuesday will be more tolerable to sit through.

Thankfully, state playoffs are generally played in warm, dry weather; and when you get far enough along, also on a neutral field.

MARCH 29, 2010

Cycles

I've been impressed with Isaiah the last few weeks. His words are timeless. He describes patterns which recur whenever people seek to follow God. It is little wonder Nephi chose to adopt many of Isaiah's words to describe what he (Nephi) had seen in vision.

I'm struck by how often one prophet will adopt the words of another prophet as his own. One of the great moments in scripture is when Jacob has his people come up to the temple, promising to give them a prophecy. When they arrive, he reads them the words of Zenos, found in Jacob Chapter 5. Then, after this long recitation of Zenos' words by Jacob, he adds the following:

As I said unto you that I would prophesy, behold, this is my prophecy—that the things which this prophet Zenos spake, concerning the house of Israel, in the which he likened them unto a tame olive tree, must surely come to pass. (Jacob 6:1)

That's it. His great prophecy: What Zenos said will happen!

I like that. Succinct. No messing around. Just telling these folks that this prophecy he read from another prophet was from God.

It's a profound message. We endlessly lose light. Then assignments come to prophets to bring back a little (or a lot) of it, and they restore again. We've been in the process of restoring truth since Adam. This is because we have also been in the process of discarding truth since Adam. It's a race between the discarding and the restoring. Mostly discarding seems to win.

MARCH 29, 2010

God of Truth

I was asked about the meaning of the statement in scripture that "God cannot lie." It is an important concept and it has a highly specific application. I have dealt with it at length in the book *Beloved Enos*. I would suggest reading the discussion there. If there are still questions, send me another inquiry.

MARCH 30, 2010

"dried up with thirst"

Isaiah prophesied about the effect of losing knowledge about God. He wrote: "Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst" (Isa. 5:13).

This is an apt description of people when they are not "fed" with truth and light.

In contrast, Nephi wanted the Latter-day followers of Christ to have a "feast" to consume while toiling in this fallen, difficult

time. But Nephi notes the “feast” will come to us from hearing the words of “angels” and not from the “arm of flesh.” Nephi taught us:

Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do. (2 Ne. 32:3)

Whether we are to “feast” or be “famished” is up to us. Seek, ask, knock: it will be opened. Stay content, do not ask, seek, or knock: you will remain dried up with thirst.

MARCH 30, 2010

The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl

When I was in 9th grade the teacher asked me to read a short story aloud to the class while she went to the office. She asked that I do it because the class would likely listen if I were the reader, but if I were not then they would be out of control. Mostly because I was not a good listener at that age.

In any event, I read the story aloud. Despite the intervening years I still recall the thing. It was by Ray Bradbury and was titled *The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl*. The character in the story killed someone, and was cleaning up fingerprints from the murder scene. The cleaning went on as the story was narrated, and at some point it became apparent that the character had gone insane.

The story ended with the police coming and finding the person still there cleaning up fingerprints. The cleaning included the fruit at the bottom of the bowl. Fruit that had never been touched. The character was simply mad.

I think of that phrase whenever I see something completely mad. Particularly when I see behavior which is inexplicable. I’ve

had a few “fruit at the bottom of the bowl” moments while on the High Council. I try not to have them while at home.

It just isn't necessary (or possible) to micro-manage your children's lives. Nor is it wise to try to micro-manage millions of other people's lives. Whether as a parent, as a government leader, business leader, or as a church leader, Joseph Smith's advice is still timely. He said the way he managed the church was to “teach them correct principles and let them govern themselves.” I'd like to see a return to that. In all parts of daily life.

COMMENTS:

Denver Snuffer · MARCH 31, 2010 AT 12:56 PM

After looking at what you people are sending in, I told my wife I'm not going to let the guesses be posted. No, it isn't a tattoo I've wanted (I don't want a tattoo), nor the edict to stop asking people to open their scriptures during sacrament meeting talks, nor the raising the bar stuff I posted about earlier, nor the multiple earrings. I'm just saying that there are moments of madness we all seem to recognize at times and when we do it is a “*Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl*” moment. Now stop guessing. (I have to admit though, some of them were quite funny.)

MARCH 30, 2010

The Lamb and the Lion

There is only one place in scripture where the Lord is identified as both the “Lamb” and the “Lion” in successive verses. You can find it in Revelation 5:5–6. In verse 5 He is referred to as “the Lion of the tribe of Juda.” In verse 6 He is called “a Lamb as it had been slain.”

The moment when the “Lamb” and the “Lion” lay down together is the time of His great return. He is both. A Lamb to those who are prepared at His coming. A Lion to those who are not prepared, for whom judgment will be poured out.

When you see that painting of the Lamb and Lion lying down together (we have one in our Stake Center), you are seeing the two great symbols of the Lord's Millennial reign.

MARCH 31, 2010

General Conference

April General Conference is upon us. I'm hoping to be able to see or hear some of it while at an out-of-state baseball tournament set for this weekend.

We have a tradition of attending General Priesthood meeting at the BYU Marriott Center. I'm worried that I won't be back in time for that session. I always like to attend with a larger group, and since you don't need tickets to attend at BYU, I like going there. All my sons grew up with this tradition.

If you're in Utah County or Salt Lake County, I recommend it. Outside of the Conference Center itself, I think it is the largest single body of priesthood attending that session of conference.

MARCH 31, 2010

Pollutions

The great latter day "pollutions" referred to by Mormon in Mormon 8:31 are the behaviors of men; not environmental waste. Mormon identifies what those "pollutions" are: "murders, and robbing, and lying, and deceivings, and whoredoms, and all manner of abominations."

Those are harsh indictments. But it becomes even more harsh when Mormon identifies US as the culprits. He calls us "pollutions." He tells us we have polluted the "holy Church of God." That can only mean the Restored Church. Sobering indeed.

“O ye pollutions, ye hypocrites, ye teachers, who sell yourselves for that which will canker, why have ye polluted the holy church of God?” (Mormon 8:38). Remember that Mormon saw us.

Jesus Christ showed Mormon US. He was in a unique position to accurately tell us what ails us (Mormon 8:35).

So why do we think ourselves in good spiritual condition? Why are we confident we aren't condemned by the Lord? Why do we presume that as Latter-day Saints we are safe. Why do we think Mormon is talking to all those other churches; churches who will never read his book, and therefore cannot be warned by it? It defies common sense, really.

We are in a lot of trouble. He's trying to help us. How foolish to think we can line up beside him and point the finger away from ourselves. He won't let us do that, you know. He's pointing the finger right at us.

MARCH 31, 2010

Just the Commandments

According to the Moses account of the creation, at the time the commandment was given to “not eat of” the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the woman had not been created (Moses 3:15–17). It was after giving Adam this commandment that the woman was created (Moses 3:21–23).

Eve's knowledge of the commandment came from Adam, not from God.

God's commandment to Adam was:

Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given

unto thee; but, remember that I forbid it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

The restriction placed on Adam was to “NOT EAT” of the fruit of that tree.

Adam’s explanation to Eve was different. Eve explained her understanding to the serpent when the serpent tempted her: “God hath said—Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die” (Moses 4:9). Eve’s understanding of the commandment varied from what had been given to Adam by the addition of the words: “NEITHER SHALL YE TOUCH OF IT.”

Adam added to the Lord’s commandment. This additional precaution was the error which set the transgression in motion. For when Eve saw the serpent touching the fruit and not dying, it lent credibility to the assertion that “ye shall not surely die” (Moses 4:10). Being innocent, and therefore vulnerable to deception, Eve could not know she was confronting a lie. Instead she saw with her own eyes that the commandment “not to touch” clearly did not result in death.

One of the great lessons of the Moses account is that adding to the commandments of God, no matter how well intentioned, is going to lead to error if not tragedy. We do as He asks. Without adding to, nor subtracting from what He has bid us to do, we should follow what we are asked by Him.

We cannot improve on His commandments. We cannot build a fence around His commandments by adding other precautions, gestures, supplements, or restrictions. When we do that we produce excess, rigidity, unintended consequences and error. We teach for doctrines the commandments of men. Inevitably leading to a form of godliness without any power. It’s an historic path to failure,

diminishing power in the priesthood until it is gone altogether. Detracting from our spiritual as well as physical health. Removing our strength. Corrupting our posterity, as they are distracted from what they should receive as they seek for what they cannot attain by “some other way.”

I rather like Moses’ account.

APRIL 2010

APRIL 1, 2010

Boyd K. Packer’s Testimony, Part 2

Because of a question contained in the comments section under an earlier post, I am adding this explanation:

Elder Mark E. Peterson explained his view regarding The Second Comforter (a visitation by Jesus Christ with a believer) in conversations of his which have been repeated to me. He had been asked about the issue, and explained his view to those who asked. He believed that The Second Comforter experience was not available to Gentiles. He quoted 3 Nephi 15:20–24 as the basis for his view, which includes this statement by Christ to the Nephites at the time of His appearance at the Temple in Bountiful:

they understood not that the Gentiles should be converted through their preaching. And they understood not that I said they shall hear my voice; and they understood me not that the Gentiles should not at any time hear my voice—that I should not manifest myself unto them save it be by the Holy Ghost.

I interpret the above quote differently than Elder Peterson. It is my view that this statement made by Christ was explaining His immediate post-resurrection appearances. Those were limited to

the scattered sheep of Israel. These scattered sheep were unknown to each other, and therefore “lost” from each other’s knowledge. However, they remained (just as the Nephites) in organized and believing bodies of scattered Israelites. It was to these organized bodies alone that the risen Savior’s ministry extended immediately following His resurrection.

In contrast, in the latter-days the prophecies are to the contrary. In the latter days, Christ’s appearances as The Second Comforter have been without regard to any limitation of who may be visited. Now, those who believe who are identified with the Gentiles, are grafted into the branches of Israel and become part of the covenant people (See e.g., 1 Ne. 10:14).

With respect to the Gentiles in our day, it is promised directly to them by the Lord, through Nephi, that His appearances will include Gentiles, in very deed:

And it shall come to pass, that if the Gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day that he shall manifest himself unto them in word, and also in power, in very deed, unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks— (1 Ne. 14:1). This is that day.

APRIL 1, 2010

Tithing

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a three-year system for collecting and spending tithes.

In the first year the funds are collected.

In the second year the funds remain invested while a budget is prepared for spending the tithing. In the third year the funds are spent.

During the time when the funds are collected (first year), they are put to use in investments or deposits which yield a return.

Similarly, while they remain invested during the second year, they also yield a return. When the third year arrives, and the funds are being spent on budgeted expenses, until the day they are spent they continue to collect interest or a return.

The amount of tithing collected in the first year is the amount designated “tithing” contributions. This is the amount that is budgeted and spent in the third year. All of the return on tithing yielded in the form of interest or return on investments is treated as “investment income” not tithing.

When the church spends “tithing” on temples, chapels, publications, etc. those monies are confined to the original amount collected as “tithing” only.

When the church spends “investment money” those include the interest, return, etc. collected on the tithing money during the three year cycle from when originally collected until the time it is spent. It also includes the returns on the returns as they accumulate over the years.

Therefore, when the church announces that a project (like the large reconstruction of downtown Salt Lake City) is not “tithing” but is “investment income” of the church, this is the distinction which is being made.

APRIL 2, 2010

Repent and Be Humble

As the Apostle John closes his Gospel, he adds this comment: “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written” (John 21:25).

In D&C 7’s headnote we read that Section 7 is a “translated version of the record made on parchment by John and hidden up.”

In D&C 93 we read, “John saw and bore record of the fulness of my glory, and the fulness of John’s record is hereafter to be revealed. And he bore record, saying:…” (D&C 93:6–7). From verses 7 through 18 it is an excerpt from John’s more complete, and as yet unrevealed account.

[Bruce R. McConkie concluded that this was the testimony of John the Baptist, and not John the Beloved. I have accepted Elder McConkie’s position in books I have written, however, I believe the account in Section 93 is more likely John the Beloved’s record. Since the issue is only a 3 to me on the earlier scale I proposed, I have simply accepted Elder McConkie’s view in what I have written.]

John likely had a good deal more to add concerning the Savior, but deliberately withheld it. Similarly, we have the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon as a reminder that not everything has been revealed to us which prior generations had given to them.

We ought to have a bit more humility about our “Restoration” than we have. The fact is, we have never been given what the ancients were trusted to possess. We have never been equal to them. We certainly aren’t now. Until we take seriously the Book of Mormon (which will require us to both repent and become more humble than we’ve ever been), we aren’t qualified to receive more (See, e.g., 3 Ne. 26:7–12; D&C 84:54–58).

Of what then do we have to boast?

APRIL 2, 2010

Various Creation Accounts

There are different versions of the creation. The Moses, Abraham and Genesis accounts are similar in putting Adam alone at the point when the commandment was given to not partake of the fruit of

the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The Temple account does not preserve this.

All the accounts are intended as initiation ceremonies. In the Abraham account, for example, there are directions given to the players who perform the ceremony. They are all “endowment” documents.

Each ceremony can be viewed as a separate revelation. The fact that there are differences means nothing. All of them are intended to highlight or emphasize different teachings. It is foolish to ask “which one is right” because they are all right.

The creation (or transplant of man onto this world) is not really the reason for the various ceremonial accounts of the event. They are intended to orient us to how we got here (by a deliberate, planned act of God), why we are here (to find our way back to God) and why conditions here are difficult (to gain knowledge of good and evil). The accounts are really about us. Each of us was born innocent in the beginning, gradually become accountable, feel ourselves outside the presence of God, and must work to return.

APRIL 2, 2010

Where Do Your Fast Offerings Go?

The ward I live in has been an exporter of fast offering donations for decades. I don't think there has been a time since its beginning when we haven't exported fast offering donations. Two weeks ago in a meeting with the Priest's Quorum, our bishop remarked that we are using nearly all the fast offering contributions inside our own ward to meet family needs of our own neighbors.

This economy has affected the church's “breadbasket” along the Wasatch Front. The church is able to project international efforts

because of the tithing of the saints in Utah. When Utah's economy falters, the church is affected.

The last report the US Government released (that I saw) announced that tax collections were down 40%. If tax revenues are down by this much, tithing contributions must bear some proportion near to that.

The US has been blessed for the sake of the church. When we do not merit blessings, judgments follow. The economic prosperity of the US has not been because we are better than other people, but because it furthers the Lord's purposes. When you view our current circumstances in moral terms, then we should ask what we need to do to merit further blessings from the Lord.

There are no private sins. We have only the illusion of privacy. All eternity looks on at us, at times in complete wonder at our astonishing pride and vanity.

APRIL 2, 2010

Ideas and Thoughts

Ideas are things. Real things. They come into existence as we create them. They will become subject to the judgment of God, because our thoughts are perhaps the most real part of us (See Alma 12:14).

We should guard our thoughts as we guard the lives of our children. Our thoughts hold the key to everything else.

This is so important a matter that the Lord tied knowledge of priesthood itself to the thoughts we entertain in the privacy of our minds. Only when our thoughts are worthy are we able to bear the presence of God (D&C 121:45).

If you study the scriptures and then meditate upon them also. You will only develop power within as you do so.

APRIL 3, 2010

Las Vegas

We returned from Las Vegas. I have an assortment of observations:

They didn't have a law school there just a few years ago, and lawyers were scarce. They've been able to make up for the shortage I can tell from the billboards. Lawyers do traffic tickets for \$50 and DUI's for \$700. They get catchy phone numbers like 444-4444; and if you want a "half-priced" one he's 400-4000. Not sure what a half-priced lawyer amounts to.

Sex still sells, apparently. At least the advertisers think so. I wonder if Lot would live in Las Vegas were he alive today.

I walked through the casino to the hotel elevator carrying my scriptures, baggage and in company with my wife and four daughters. I assume we were as much a spectacle to the patrons as the patrons were to us.

While there must be a few folks for whom gambling offers some sort of glamor, I did not detect much of that. Mostly you could see boredom or desperation on the faces of the typical patron.

They don't pay the girls who deal on the blackjack tables enough to dress properly. Poor things only have a tiny remnant of a pair of levis on, not enough to cover their underwear. Their exposed garters and fishnet stockings betray a style dating back to the 1960's. They were practically unclad on top, as well. I assume these hallmarks of poverty betray an employer who is exploiting their labor without appropriate remuneration.

The baseball was fun, but Alta went 2-2. Still searching for the right combination in the batting lineup and trying to fill a gap at 3rd base still, too. They'll get there. Now we're back in Salt Lake for some more 'snowball.

General Conference was broadcast live on the TV, but I couldn't find either an AM or FM station carrying it on the radio. I wondered why that was.

The LDS Temple is pointed out on the top of the Stratosphere Hotel as a point of interest. I thought that was interesting.

I noticed an older couple wearing newly-wed attire. They both had enough miles on them to make them either eternal optimists about the state of matrimony or habitual about their marital affairs. I like to think them optimists.

APRIL 4, 2010

Creation Ceremonies

I was asked about the creation account being tied to ritual initiation ceremonies. All the ancient accounts of creation were given in connection with initiations or ceremonial rites. That is true of the Egyptians, Babylonians, Israelites, Babylonians, Hopis, etc. The ritualized explanation of the origin of human life is tied together with the meaning of life, and obligations about how life was to be lived, and what the afterlife will hold. The restored Temple rights are consistent with the most ancient of traditions.

Interestingly, the rites of the Masons do not have this basic orientation, and are therefore not part of the tradition from which the endowment ceremony springs.

APRIL 4, 2010

Section 132

I have written that it is my view that Section 132 is not a single revelation, but as many as five. I was asked about how I divide Section 132. Before I respond a few words of explanation:

First, the version we have was written in 1843 at the request of Hyrum. He (Hyrum) intended to take it to Emma and persuade her it was from God. Hyrum knew this revelation had been a continuing source of friction between Joseph and Emma and he offered to try and get Emma to accept its truthfulness. So Joseph agreed to dictate it. The scribe was summoned, and Hyrum asked if he should retrieve the Urum and Thummim. Joseph responded that he could recite it from memory, and then dictated it as it now appears in Section 132.

There were two copies made. The one Hyrum took to Emma was burned by Emma. The second came west and was ultimately made public in the 1850's and added to the scriptures.

The dating of the revelation is uncertain, but the headnote to Section 132 notes that “the principles involved in this revelation had been known by the Prophet since 1831” (Section 132, headnote). Given the uncertainty of dating, the typical approach by scholars has been to date it from when the first practice began. I think that is wrong. I would date it from the time Joseph translated Jacob, Chapter 2, in 1829. Joseph prayed during the translation of the Book of Mormon to receive the visitation of John the Baptist and the ordinance of baptism. I see no reason why the translation of Jacob ‘s comments on plural wives would not have provoked a similar inquiry and revelation.

We know the information was suppressed from at least 1831 to 1843. What we do not have is an earlier version from which to reconstruct the entire process; we only have the finished product in 1843. With that, I think the revelation divides into sections as follows:

First, the original revelation begins in the first verse and continues until verse 40. This is concerned with one subject and provides

the doctrinal and historical basis for the practice of plural wives. However, the subject changes in verse 41 and comes in response to another inquiry regarding the subject of adultery.

The answer to the question on adultery is a separate revelation beginning in response to Joseph's inquiry in verse 41 and continuing through verse 50. That revelation confirms upon Joseph the sealing authority by the voice of God (a separate issue altogether) and pronounces Joseph's calling and election sure. This is the voice of the Lord to Joseph confirming his exaltation and it is unlikely to have happened at the same time as the original revelation in 1829 or 1831. [It is important that this conferral of authority to seal, and his calling and election are contemporaneous events. This is not well understood by the church today, but nevertheless true.]

Verses 51 through 56 are a revelation to Emma which appears to be separate as well. It makes no sense to have this revelation given to instruct, warn and counsel Emma until after she learns of the first revelation and has reacted to it. Once that has happened, a separate revelation to her about her reaction makes sense.

Because of Emma's refusal after her warning, the final section from verses 61 through the end is a new explanation of the law. It talks about how to proceed in light of her (or any woman's) rejection of the principle.

These are four of the potential five sections which appear to me. It is possible that verses 64–66 are also separate from verses 61–63, which would then make five total revelations which are grouped into this single section of the D&C.

Now, what is important about this revelation being in separate parts (to me at least) is that first, the subject was not fully understood by Joseph when first received. He encountered practical and doctrinal questions even after the first revelation came on the

subject. That is commonly experienced by all who receive revelation from God. Additionally, it is important that the sealing authority was given to Joseph by the word of the Lord, in revelation to him, apart from the events in the Kirtland Temple. This is consistent with how that authority came to Helaman in chapter 10 of Helaman, as well. The voice of the Lord speaking about exaltation and conferring authority at the same moment is the Lord's way of doing things. It was no different for Joseph.

Now, least anyone be confused or begin asking questions about plural wives, I do not believe in the practice. It was discontinued and we do not practice it. I have addressed the polygamists' claims to the right to continue the practice in *Beloved Enos* and my position is as I stated there.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · APRIL 4, 2010 AT 12:50 PM

Looking for a little clarification. What do you mean when you say "I do not believe in the practice" (reference to plural wives)?

There are numerous ways that statement could be taken/read (i.e. you do not believe in the practice at all, you do not believe in the contemporary practice of it, you do not believe it's doctrinal, etc).

Is there a difference between not believing in the practice, and not believing in the doctrinally of the issue?

Denver Snuffer · APRIL 4, 2010 AT 2:33 PM

I don't think it appropriate to now have more than one wife. I accept Section 132 as an authentic revelation.

Moderator Comment · APRIL 4, 2010

Comments, when posted, are posted as written. We do not vouch for their accuracy, their doctrinal soundness or anything else.

Some comments are personal and are not meant to be posted. We read each and every one. An honest attempt is made to address each one. Thank you for your patience.

Some comments disagree with the post. We will not debate the comments that are made, but hope they are of value to those of you who are reading this blog.

We appreciate you and your comments.

CHAPTER 6

My Glasses Aren't Rose Colored

APRIL 5, 2010

“What it Means and What it Does Not Mean”

I was asked about the meaning of receiving The Second Comforter. There is a chapter in the book (*The Second Comforter: Conversing with the Lord Through the Veil*) titled “What it Means and What it Does Not Mean” that summarizes the matter.

Life here is complex and sometimes difficult. You have both moral and legal obligations which every one of us owe to society, to employment, to friends and neighbors, the Church, the government, the civil and criminal law and taxing authorities. Some obligations are not “moral,” but nevertheless binding and controlling. Being taxed, for example, is not a moral matter, but it is a legal matter. Governments obligate their citizens to pay them and all citizens are required to do so. No matter what your standing before God may be, you are going to have to pay taxes. Christ made that clear when He paid taxes and responded to the question about taxes by confirming the obligation (See Matt. 22:15–22).

The promises of God are helpful in enduring to the end. But they have no value here apart from peace of mind. They are not

“property” which this world will value highly. They are for the coming life.

APRIL 5, 2010

Encouragement and Example

All the prophets can do is offer encouragement to others. They can affirm that the path back to God exists and can be walked even in a day of sin like today. They cannot do the walking for anyone other than themselves. Each person is obligated to walk on the path for him or herself.

Examples of others offer encouragement, but can never replace the obligation devolving upon each individual.

It would be easier for a person to live in harmony with God in obscurity than with public notice. Sometimes, however, the Lord requires a person to take a public stand as part of the trial or obligation imposed upon them. Whether the person complies with that duty is a measure of the person's sincerity.

APRIL 5, 2010

Unique and Individual Experiences

Every life is a miracle. Every lifetime unique. How amazing is life and the wondrous experiences we are privileged to receive while here. We cannot really see what is inside another person because their experiences have been unique to them and cannot be shared.

We should resolve all doubts about someone's motivation or heart in favor of them. It is always best to be slow to judge and quick to forgive.

My father would say: “I never spoke a word in anger that I didn't later regret.” He was a wise man. I think that is good advice for all of us.

APRIL 6, 2010

David Christensen YouTube

My friend David Christensen has done yet another video on YouTube. He asked that I put it up on the blog. Below is a link to it.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KWGzSSCgoo>

This is how David works to present a message he believes in to the world. His talent and passion for this is undeniable. The time is indeed far spent.

APRIL 6, 2010

April 6

It is April 6th. This is the day Latter-day Saints regard as the birth date of the Lord. His coming into the world in the springtime symbolized the new hope found in Him. Creation begins anew with the return of light, warming of the earth, flowering of trees and plant life. Springtime is when the sheep, cattle and other animals bring their young into the world. It is a time of hope in the cycles of nature. His coming at this time confirms His role as the Bringer of Hope.

He came to redeem the world that all may be saved by Him.

APRIL 6, 2010

President Monson

Why I admire President Monson.

Christ's denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees included the caution that the outward observances of the law were less important than the "weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith" (Matt. 23:23).

James, the brother of Jesus and Presiding Bishop of the New Testament Church, whom I regard as the unidentified “Teacher of Righteousness” taught that “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

Thomas Monson’s lifelong ministry to the widows, elderly and fatherless is sincere, real and lasting. One of the widows to whom he paid a visit a few short months ago was my wife’s grandmother, the great-grandmother to my children. At the time, she was confined to an assisted-living home. Without any advance notice President Monson showed up on a stormy Sunday afternoon. Due to the weather conditions, the care center had decided to cancel their Sacrament Meeting. He came through the storm, put the meeting back into place, and conducted this Sabbath celebration for the confined, elderly widows and widowers.

He lives that “pure religion” which includes the “weightier matters” that, above all else, we ought not leave undone.

Virtues are worthy of recognition. I like to take a lead from the Egyptian judgment scale and to weigh a man’s heart against a feather to decide another man’s worthiness before God. For with what judgment we judge we shall be judged (Matt. 7:2).

APRIL 7, 2010

Presiding Patriarchs

I was asked the names of the various Presiding Patriarchs of the church.

First, Joseph Smith, Sr., the father of Joseph Smith. Served from 1833 to 1840. Second, Hyrum Smith, older brother of Joseph Smith. Served from 1841 to 1844.

Third, William Smith, brother to Joseph Smith. Served from May 1845 to October 1845.

There was an interval between 1845 and 1847 while the Church moved west when the office was not filled. John Smith was called in 1847 and served until 1854.

Fifth, John Smith, who served from 1855 until 1911. Sixth, Hyrum G. Smith, who served from 1912 until 1932. Seventh, Joseph F. Smith II who served from 1942 to 1946.

Eighth, Eldred G. Smith who began in 1947 and still serves, although as emeritus since 1979.

APRIL 7, 2010

D&C 46:13–14

I was asked whether D&C 46:13–14 meant that only some could see the Lord while others would have to rely on their testimony. I responded:

It could mean:

1. Some (and only some) will know Him, and others will be able to believe on their words (but will not know Him).
2. or,
3. Some, initially less than all, will know Him, and others will, initially, believe on their words. But if the others who believe on their words follow the same path as those who know Him, they will also grow to know Him as well.

The correct choice between these two is described in Nephi's account where he could not believe his father, Lehi. Then he prayed and the Lord "visited" him by softening his heart so he could believe his father's words. Then he developed faith to receive stronger impressions, and acted consistent with them. Then he was able to

“hear” the Lord by continuing on that path. Finally he had angels minister to him and prepare him to receive an audience with the Lord. And, after remaining true and faithful to the path, he at last received an audience with the Lord.

Nephi’s spiritual development is described in detail in the early chapters of *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*.

D&C 93:1 says “every soul” not just a few. Not just a select group. But “every soul.” I believe it means all. Not just a few; while others are relegated to believing on their words.

D&C 46:14 is talking about where people begin. Not where they finish.

APRIL 7, 2010

“Schizophrenic?”

I was asked why there are sometimes “criticisms” of the church on my blog and in the books I have written. Someone would like to know whether or not the views I advance weren’t “schizophrenic” by both criticizing and defending the church, and what my true belief about the church was. I responded:

I have had many people with whom I have “ministered” as a Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Ward Mission Leader and High Councilor who have become disaffected with the church. I’ve worked to help them come back. What I write reflects this history with these struggling Latter-day Saints. There are many people who have left the church (or have given up on the church) who have read what I write and come back to activity again.

There are those who are in the process of realizing that the church has flaws who now want to quit. There are people who have begun to encounter problems who just don’t know how to process

them. It doesn't do any good if I pretend there aren't problems. Many of these saints have a crisis underway because they have been pretending, and now they find they cannot cope with the tension any longer.

One of posts at the beginning of this blog describes what my attitude is. I recognize weaknesses, have no intention of avoiding them, and am not an apologist in the traditional sense. But I believe in the church, accept its authority, and think its role is necessary and even critical to the work of the Lord.

Acknowledging the flaws is admitting the obvious. But getting those who are discouraged, losing their faith, or have left the church to reconsider that decision is another thing. They cannot be reached spiritually without some acknowledgment of the problems in the church. They aren't going to be deceived by offering a clever polemical argument.

Once the varnish comes off the institution of the church, for many, faith dies. But that is not necessary. Nor is it inevitable. It is possible to see the frailties of men and still also see the hand of God.

I've had many conversations with what would be regarded as leading Mormon educators, writers, and authorities who have essentially lost their faith and continue to hold on to being a "Latter-day Saint" because of the culture or employment or family. I'm trying to help them and any others in a similar spot. I'm trying to say that the church may be flawed, but despite that, it is worthy, worthwhile, necessary and good. I have had some success.

I've had a number of men and women tell me that I've helped rescue them from their faithlessness. What I have written has helped them balance their attitudes. People who have had their names removed voluntarily, or who have been excommunicated, or who

have drifted into inactivity have been persuaded by what I've written to see what they have lost by that disassociation from the Church.

It may be that someone who has "rose colored glasses" will find some of what I write difficult to take in, particularly if they haven't encountered any particular criticism about the church before. I regret when that happens. However, all of us are going to need to confront the growing array of arguments against the church and its leadership as time goes on. Some of the church's most effective critics are former members. Indeed, with the internet, the arguments against the church are multiplying, as are the number of critics. I try not to gloss over the flaws or ignore their existence or to pretend that there aren't legitimate questions being asked about what has or is happening within the institution of the church. I'm saying that we can and should have faith anyway. The church matters and its mission has always been possible to accomplish.

I also want those who sense we've retreated from the original scope of doctrine and practice to realize the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ remains on the earth. It is as accessible to anyone living today as it was while Joseph was here. The failure of others does not impose any limitation upon the individual who sincerely seeks, asks and follows. We are not dependent upon others or even the institution itself to receive that fullness. Although the ordinances offered by the church remain the foundation upon which the fullness must be built.

CHAPTER 7
D&C 132

APRIL 8, 2010

D&C 132, Part 2

There was a question about Section 132 received after this post. The previous post on D&C 132 did not address the underlying subject of the section. I only discussed the text divisions and timing of the document's creation. The question I received asks about the substance of the revelation, and in particular, the status of women in plural marriage.

I have a few observations which color my views of this subject. This will take a few posts, but below is my first set of observations:

When plural marriage was first introduced publicly in the 1850s, the brethren were rather candid about the history of monogamy. They explained that the societal and governmental institution of monogamy was intended to exploit women. By depriving women of husbands, it resulted in an excess number of women who could be prostituted. Men could then have one wife, for whom they bore the burden of support and shared parenting responsibilities, while other women could be used without any burden of support or shared parenting duties. The brethren also explained that one

of the reasons Rome was originally opposed to Christianity was because it was a cult that threatened to spread the practice of plural marriage throughout the Empire. Their comments are in the *Journal of Discourses* and you can read these explanations there if you are interested.

So as the practice of plural marriage was introduced publicly, it was accompanied by an attack on monogamy; claiming that women were exploited and disadvantaged by the practice of monogamy. This inverts the argument against plural marriage. The claims against it were based in large measure upon the notion that it exploited women and made them subservient. So the argument turns on its ear the “exploits women” card.

When introduced, the practice of plural marriage ran counter to nearly two thousand years of cultural practice. It was decidedly counter to the Elizabethan mores of the age. It was shocking to the Latter-day Saints who learned of the practice. Not only was it foreign in concept, but the Saints had absolutely no basis for implementing it successfully. They had no history, no example, no trial-and-error wisdom. There were no previous examples that they could select behaviors from that would help solve obvious issues arising from the practice. So they began the whole trial-and-error sorting out.

Unfortunately, the practice was introduced in 1853 (publicly) and died in 1890 (publicly). It began secretly in 1831 and died secretly in 1904. Whether you take the public bracket of time or the secret bracket, that isn't enough time for the process to have resulted in handed-down wisdom gained by living that kind of lifestyle.

Those who are outside the Latter-day Saint community (fundamentalists, etc.), and have continued to practice of plural marriage do not really provide a basis for inter-generational wisdom. They

live a “bunker-like mentality” — always under siege and never allowed the social and cultural opportunity to practice this form of marriage freely and openly. The results of these efforts are tainted by the hostility, rejection and prosecution by the population at large towards those who try to live this kind of marital relationship.

How the view of women changes under this practice is something that we are not in a position to evaluate accurately. We have a cultural bias, an historic bias and religious bias that colors our view. We do not have a reasonable framework from which to make a neutral evaluation of the subject. The only contemporary societies that have plural marriage in any significant numbers are so socially ill, so backward and violent that a liberal, democratic and open society cannot take any wisdom from them to judge this matter. We are left to look backward into biblical times for clues about the practice. Unfortunately, even there we do not get much guidance or many examples of happy outcomes. Hagar, a princess from Egypt, was at odds with Sarah and ultimately so incompatible that one had to leave. Jacob’s wives were competitive and jealous. The account we have seems to make Jacob responsible for exploiting these ill-feelings. David’s relationships were unsteady. Solomon was ultimately led into idolatry by his foreign, political marriages. The biblical record does not seem to give any hope of a happy outcome (or at least not much hope). So when trying to evaluate it, there is little happy news or basis for celebrating it as a triumph of matrimony.

Then there is the underlying exploitation of young women. These women are married and pregnant so early in life that they are essentially obligated to remain in the marriage. I think that is a reflection of the unhappiness that is anticipated by such unions. The younger bride syndrome seems to be a tacit admission that

unless you put the women into this kind of difficult bind (choosing between their children or fleeing), then women won't remain in the marriage. This is an interesting admission seen in both the Muslim communities and in the Fundamentalist communities. It betrays a similar state of unease about women's desire to remain in such relationships.

All in all the practice does not seem to offer (in this life) much advantage to either husband or wife. Nor does it seem to produce happiness here. You can read the book *In Sacred Loneliness* as an account of our own history with the difficulties of the practice.

Now that doesn't address the "doctrinal" question asked. I'll post again on that issue. However, when you consider the revelation, this is the first point that should be on the table. It is a terrible sacrifice. No society appears to have had much success in implementing it. The "practical" verses the "ideal" is something that tells us important information.

Humanity has not been able to create a widespread social experiment using this form of marriage, notwithstanding its basis in doctrine. At least not one that has been well documented, with wisdom to guide the way. There are of course societies where the economic order consists of a widespread slave class supporting a socially dominant, wealthy class. In these societies, escape from hunger and enslavement requires a plural marriage arrangement. In these circumstances, plural marriage is greeted as a form of liberation. I do not consider those worthy examples. We don't want or expect to build Zion on the backs of a slave class.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · APRIL 8, 2010 AT 12:23 PM

When plural marriage was first introduced publicly in the 1850s, the brethren were rather candid about the history of monogamy. They

explained that the societal and governmental institution of monogamy was intended to exploit women. By depriving women of husbands, it resulted in an excess number of women who could be prostituted.

I don't understand that. If there are about equal numbers of males and females how does monogamy result in an excess number of women?

Tim

Denver Snuffer · April 8, 2010 at 9:29 PM

From infant mortality to adulthood, males die at rates far higher than do females. This was even more pronounced a discrepancy during the first centuries as Christianity was gaining a foothold in Europe. By the time you reach marital age, the female population was significantly greater than the male population.

APRIL 8, 2010

D&C 132, Part 3

Further on Section 132:

Joseph taught that we can't expect to achieve the same glory as the ancients if we do not make a similar sacrifice as they did. It's all in Lecture 6 of *The Lectures on Faith*. I've quoted that stuff in several books and won't repeat it here. If you don't have a copy you should get one. **And read it.**

Anyway, it is quite important to note the necessity of sacrifice to produce the kind of faith which saves. Joseph's explanation required us to sacrifice all things to be able to lay hold on saving faith. Without the knowledge that we would give up everything, even our own lives if necessary, we cannot receive eternal life. We have to trade this life for the next. No trade, no exaltation.

So when a man or woman reaches the point where she/he can be tested, the Lord will supply a test to them to prove (to them-

selves) that they will sacrifice all things. [The Lord already knows, but we don't. And it is **OUR** faith which is required to be tested.]

For most women, they make this kind of sacrifice when they marry. They literally “give up their lives” and become a wife. Even to the point they surrender their prior name and become known by a new name and begin a new life. The sacrifice for them is completed in childbirth, where they risk their life and then shed their blood to bring a new person into the world. For women, therefore, this estate provides a ready-made opportunity for the development of this faith. For men that is much different. That is why we produce so few men worthy of preservation into the next life in an exalted state.

Joseph Smith succeeded in receiving his calling and election. His promise of eternal life appears within Section 132. That is no accident. If the revelation is a series of communications, beginning in either 1829 or 1831, and continue through nearly the time of the recording in 1843, all of which are on the same subject, then they are all interrelated.

Joseph's sealing authority is confirmed in verse 46 and his calling and election is confirmed in verse 49. This would have been after Joseph had received the beginning of Section 132 and had actually begun to live it. Meaning that Joseph was doing what he was commanded to do, and that in so doing he was sacrificing everything. Even his own life was being sacrificed. He was developing the faith necessary to know he would surrender everything to God by this principle. Later, when he would go to Carthage and die, it was not as difficult for him to do because he had earlier lived a principle which proved to him that he would obey God at all costs. Death under such circumstances was not a test, merely a confirmation of what Joseph already knew.

Plural marriage was so difficult for Joseph that it was THE means by which he advanced in faith to the point he knew he would surrender all things to God. It was the key to his exaltation. Not because plural wives are needed, but because of the difficult sacrifice this practice imposed upon him.

Now if that were true for Joseph, then we should not think the practice of plural marriage, with all its difficulty and sacrifice, something desirable to undertake. Nor should we be fooled into thinking that Joseph wanted or welcomed it. The revelation belies this notion.

Therefore I take it as a given that plural marriage was introduced as a test. Not as a reward or as a holiday for Joseph Smith and his close associates. It was a difficult, trying ordeal.

Now there's more to be said, so I'll add another post at some point on this as well.

APRIL 8, 2010

D&C 132, Part 4

More on Section 132:

This brings us to some details that need to be understood. The clarifications in verses 41–44 were a result of the “mechanics” of how the practice was implemented. The various efforts to “fulfill the law” while still keeping up Elizabethan appearances included performing a “sealing” for time and eternity to one man, while the woman was married for time to another man. This relieved the eternal husband/companion of any duty to have conjugal relations with, or provide financial support for the woman while here. It allowed her to live a “normal” married life with her husband, while still committed eternally to another. A sort of nod in the direction of the plural

wife revelation, without any real commitment to actually practice it here. There were other forms of compromise attempted, as well.

The defining of what was and what was not “adultery” was necessary in light of the troubles on the ground, so to speak. Confusion began to multiply as these compromise efforts were attempted by people who really didn’t want to get this thing going in the way David and Solomon had done.

Also, verse 51 grew out of a specific incident in which Joseph and Emma were arguing. She protested his secret addition of more wives (beyond those she had approved) and was complaining to him about it. In response to the arguments, Joseph offered to have her marry William Marks (the Nauvoo Stake President) as well. This is what is referred to by the oblique reference: “that she stay herself and partake not of that which I commanded you to offer unto her.” This, again, was an event in the 1843 time frame. It could not possibly have been part of what was happening in either 1829 or 1831 when the first part of the revelation was received. Showing once again this was an amalgamation of several revelations, and not a single transcript.

Not everyone in Nauvoo knew what was going on. Nor was everyone who practiced this principle discrete enough to escape notice. Enter John C. Bennett, who had abandoned his wife and children and come to Nauvoo pretending to be something more than he was. He got added to the First Presidency and elected mayor of Nauvoo. He learned of the commandment, and then began to let his libido go in Nauvoo. He produced a system of seducing other men’s wives under the practice of “spiritual wifery” which he would later blame upon Joseph Smith. Indeed, John Bennett’s account of Joseph’s exploits seem more autobiographical of Mr. Bennett, with Joseph given credit for Bennett’s wrongdoings.

As I said before, this was not a culture into which this commandment fit neatly. It was awkward. They just didn't know how to do it, nor what would work or not work. Even so basic a matter as the definition of "adultery" became hard to sort out. The half-way measures Joseph tried to implement in order to avoid the outright practice were not working. They were producing such confusion that these verses were needed to sort the mess out.

Trying the souls of those who were involved, indeed! Proving whether you have faith to sacrifice everything for God, indeed! This was terrible, difficult stuff. Not the license for a libido that critics were trying and still try to make it seem. Even Bushman has mentioned how few offspring Joseph Smith produced as a result of the plural wife system. It seems that the only offspring Joseph ever fathered were through Emma. (Of course we have the tale of Eliza Snow's miscarriage, but that child did not live. So far as has been documented, all Joseph's living descendants came through Emma, despite DNA testing of other living descendants from putative children.)

Look, we should have compassion and empathy for these people. They didn't want it any more than a normal, mature and moral person living today would want this. They were draftees, not volunteers. It was quite hard for them and even harder on them.

Anyway, I still am not to the answer to the question, just laying the groundwork to understand the answer first. I'll write some more on this as I have time.

APRIL 9, 2010

D&C 132, Part 5

Section 132, continued.

Words have unique meanings when used in scripture. The Lord has given us great insight into word usages in D&C Section 19:4–12. He uses words as proper nouns which then change meanings.

Part of the question raised concerns the word “destroy” as used in Section 132. I have described the meaning of destroy or destruction in footnote 225 on page 161 of Nephi’s Isaiah. It does not mean annihilate. It means to divest of government or control. In the context of Section 132 to be “destroyed” does not mean to be killed, or obliterated, but rather it means to lose your order, your government or covenant. The form of government that will endure into eternity is the family. Without a family connection, you remain separate and single, without exaltation. Therefore to be “destroyed” is to be severed from the family unit, or marriage relationship which the section of the D&C is establishing.

It is also necessary to understand that the role of the woman in the establishment of an eternal family unit is critical. It is central. Some of what is involved in understanding the relationship between the man/woman and covenant making is just not appropriate to be set out in public. Therefore I won’t do it. To the extent it is appropriate, I have given a basis for someone who wants to understand in several things I have written. The closing chapters on sealing authority/power in *Beloved Enos* is part of what should be understood. The tenth parable in *Ten Parables* is also critical to understanding what and why an eternal relationship would be preserved. The chapter on **Sacred Ordinances** in *Come, Let Us Adore Him* gives some further information. I’d commend you to that information.

I also found this in Hugh Nibley's latest book, which helps with understanding, also. Particularly in light of the information contained in the tenth parable referred to above:

Sarah, like Isis, is the ageless mother and perennial bride; with the birth of Isaac she becomes young again — 'Is any thing too hard for the Lord?' (Gen. 18:14). The woman who stands behind Osiris on the throne is Isis, sustaining him in his office with uplifted hand; it is Isis, 'fused' with Hathor as the 'king-maker,' as Jan Assmann puts it. (*One Eternal Round - The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, p. 156)

"Neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man, in the Lord," wrote Paul (1 Cor. 11:11). You cannot have an eternal marriage without both. In the relationship, the woman's role in creating a king is central, for it is the woman who will establish him on his throne. In turn, it is the man who will then establish her on her throne. Her act precedes his, and his act confirms and blesses the new government or family unit as his first act as king. For king without consort is doomed to end. Together they are infinite, because in them the seed continues. They may still be mortal as the events take place, but because they continue and produce seed, they are as infinite as the gods.

The role or importance of the woman in the eternal family unit is not diminished in any respect by the confusion and sorting out being done in the later verses of Section 132. The information there is attempting to restore order to the chaos that had developed through the half-hearted attempts to comply with the new order without actually engaging in a fully public, acknowledged marital relationship involving a man and multiple wives.

As to the reference to serial marriage of “virgins” in the later verses, this was a return to the original intent. When you marry a virgin, you are getting someone who does not already have a spouse. Using innovations, like sealing a second “wife” to a man when she was already married to another, was never the intent. These verses about marrying virgins returns to the foundation of a first marriage for the woman. She was to be involved with a direct, actual marriage, not to be in some half-hearted compromise relationship where the relationship was not truly and fully a marriage for her. She was to acquire a husband and mate. She would have all the rights and the husband would owe all the obligations, as if he were married to her alone. She was “his” and therefore he was obligated to her for support, maintenance and duties as a husband. There could be no sharing. There could be no half-way measures. This was to be his wife in very deed.

Now I’ve taken perhaps too long to answer the question, and it may in turn raise other questions, but I’ve tried to bring some clarity to this rather confused and messy circumstance. It was the confusion of the early practice that brought about the need for multiple updates and clarifications which all got amalgamated into the single Section 132. Part of the revelation comes from the attempts to work around the earliest portions of the revelation, received between 1829 and 1831. The clarifications don’t make as much sense when separated from the conduct that resulted in the clarifications.

There is a reason we don’t have much from the church about this section. Right now the whole thing has become an embarrassment. We (the LDS Church) have become the chief antagonists of the polygamists in the west. We want to clearly draw a line between “us” and “them.” The church learned its lesson by hard experience.

Now the lesson learned is going to be constantly reapplied to show all the world that we have abandoned the practice. We do that by constantly denouncing the polygamists. As part of that campaign we can't really go back and give Section 132 a wholesome treatment. That would seem to contradict what we now preach and practice. Such are the results of history.

APRIL 9, 2010

D&C 132, Conclusion

Section 132, concluded:

Which brings us to the question of why Section 132 would be given in the first place. I don't think it is enough to say "Joseph asked the question" as the full reason for it being revealed. Joseph could have received the revelation without the requirement to live it. We could have an understanding that this was a correct principle, but that we had no obligation to comply with it (just as we do now). However, we were at one time given it and, commanded to live it. So the question is "why?" Here's my take:

We are witnessing the end of the times of the Gentiles. There is a worldwide collapse of the Gentile populations. (Gentiles being the white, European populations.) Although we have scattered Israelite blood in us, the LDS Church was founded by those who are "identified with the Gentiles" (D&C 109:60). But their (our) time has run its course.

The God of this land (North America) is Jesus Christ. When people reject Him, they lose their claim on the land and are swept away (See 2 Ne. 1:7-10).

We have now, by the popular vote of the Gentiles who possess this land, chosen a leader who proclaimed on April 6th, 2009 (the Lord's birth date) that "we are no longer a Christian nation.

Birth rates among Gentiles have collapsed. The European social democracies require a large working class to support the retiring older class. The older retiring class did not have a birth rate that would supply the needed taxpayers, and therefore they are importing a younger working class throughout Europe. The younger working class is drawn from third- world people who have much higher birth rates. Those people are primarily Muslim. As a result there are many European nations whose demographic picture leads to the inevitable change from Gentile/Christian nations to Muslim nations within the next twenty to fifty years. The Danish peoples will be among the first. France has a majority of their school-age children now who are Muslim. All of them are threatened by a religion that rejects Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Redeemer of mankind. They are, in a word, anti-Christ.

In the US the birth rate is only a replacement rate. But social programs require growth. That population growth is the only way to amortize the governmental spending. Increased government spending requires in turn a surge in population to support by taxation the necessary payments. This is being accomplished by the deliberate failure to police the immigration of foreign populations. It is a fiscal plan, not a demographic, social, religious or political plan. The government will not be able to pay for itself if large working-class people aren't found and brought into the US. Fortunately, most of those who are coming to the US are already Christian, and only a small fraction are Muslim. However, the Gentiles who are identified with the white population are declining, and being displaced by those who are identified with Book of Mormon remnant populations (although perhaps not THE remnant destined to build Zion — that's a whole different subject).

The church's birth rate has also declined rapidly. At present it is only a small fraction above the larger US rate. There result is the same loss of Gentile momentum in the building of the church. The Gentile population of the church is collapsing just as it is throughout the world.

What the revelation in Section 132 offered to the Gentiles was an opportunity, while the Gentile's day was still in full bloom, to create a much larger population from which to build Zion. I've seen some estimates that, had we lived the principle of plural wives from when it was restored until today the resulting population of Latter-day Saints would have been in excess of 150 million. The Latter-day Saint population would essentially have political control of the United States. That didn't happen, and now the time of the Gentiles has passed. We can't make up for lost time now. Nor are we exhibiting any desire to do so, as our declining birthrates demonstrate. Indeed, large families have vanished as a subject for General Conference. The Brethren seem to have forgotten the message once preached to "not artificially limit the size of your families." That message was spoken in General Conference as recently as President Kimball's time. Their examples are also important and telling. (Taking only the most recently called of the Twelve: Elder Bednar has three children, President Uchtdorf two. President Eyring has six. Elder Anderson has four, Elder Christopherson has five children. Now we don't always know the reasons why people have the number or children they do, so I do not read too much into this. However, there was a time when the reason all did not have six or more children would get attention, and an explanation would be offered. Now we don't even notice and it is simply not an issue. We presume that larger families are optional and completely unrelated to living the Gospel of Jesus Christ.)

Well, as with all things in the Gospel, we are handed opportunities. What we do with them is up to us. However, these opportunities are gifts from the Lord. We are now a tiny fragment of what we might have been at this point in history. We are vulnerable as a people in a way that we could have avoided with living the principles in Section 132. The results are going to play out in conformity with the rather pessimistic view of the Gentile's failed stewardship foretold by Nephi, Mormon, Moroni and modern revelation.

There's always a back up plan. That plan will rely upon a "remnant" to take things over and return to what was once offered to the Gentiles. And to the extent that a few Gentiles will follow the covenant, they are invited along and included as covenant people. But by and large they will be left behind.

Now Section 132 was an opportunity, not a burden. We never got enthusiastically behind the opportunity and the earlier posts explain why. I think the reasons for the failure are perfectly understandable. I think it was reasonable. But it is a fact that we failed with the opportunity. Worldwide we have a little less than 4 million active Latter-day Saints and an estimated total population of approximately 14 million. Those results are not what might have been. The Gentile Saints are vulnerable in a way they would have avoided had they taken the opportunity and done more with it.

But of course, that is true in a much larger sense, as well. The promise of an "innumerable posterity" presumes that the one receiving the promise realizes that it is a great blessing, and not a curse or burden.

OK, those are my thoughts. It's taken a bit to lay out. And I probably should add that there are those who would disagree with much of what I have said. However, I've given enough thought and

study to the matter to have reached these conclusions, and I offer them to you for whatever you want to make of them.

COMMENTS:

Kisi · APRIL 9, 2010 AT 8:18 PM

Thank you so much, Denver. What you have written and offered to us to understand is enormous. I'm in shock after having read the last post here with the realization that it brings about how we have failed. Everything you have said truly fits the scriptures and the picture. It makes me terribly sad, though. It's important for me to see this picture and let the realization sink in. I believe we need this realization in order to move forward doing with all seriousness what needs to be done in order to be numbered with the remnant that is going to pick up the ball we've dropped.

I think about how we as a people believe that we have succeeded and are those carrying forth the glorious success of the final Dispensation that won't fail. The Dispensation won't fail, but we as the Gentiles with the Gospel for the most part have.

Denver Snuffer · April 9, 2010 at 8:51 PM

I'll have to write something about the two different models of building Zion we see in the scriptures restored through Joseph Smith. We once had two different options. It rather looks like we've made the choice between them and are now left with only one. Part of the choice we've made has to do with Section 132 and our response to plural marriage relationships. Oh well, chin up! The covenant-keeping Gentiles are invited along for the ride still!

Taylor · APRIL 10, 2010 AT 1:29 AM

Thank you for the time spent with the section 132 posts. I think all who have read have learned a lot.

You said those populations now increasing in the United States more resemble the remnants of the book of mormon population but are not THE remnants destined to build Zion. Who are those destined to build it then?

Denver Snuffer · APRIL 10, 2010 AT 7:05 AM

That's a whole different subject. I'll probably address it at some point. It would take longer than this stuff on Section 132 to make it really clear. So I have to figure out what to say and what to leave out.

Anonymous · APRIL 12, 2010 AT 4:41 PM

What the revelation in Section 132 offered to the Gentiles was an opportunity, while the Gentile's day was still in full bloom, to create a much larger population from which to build Zion. I've seen some estimates that, had we lived the principle of plural wives from when it was restored until today the resulting population of Latter-day Saints would have been in excess of 150 million. The Latter-day Saint population would essentially have political control of the United States.

I have heard this before but I don't understand it. How can 10 women with 1 husband produce any more children than 10 women with 10 husbands?

Tim

Denver Snuffer · APRIL 12, 2010 AT 9:41 PM

There have always been "excess" female members of the Church during childbearing years who lacked husbands. Men die in higher numbers from childbirth through adulthood. Go to any care center where the elderly are being assisted and you will find an imbalance there. It begins in childhood.

The number of female Church members who lack active, faithful LDS husbands is a continuing problem in the Church. So great a problem that the Church has tried to figure out why in Japan it is reversed. There the male population of active LDS participants are higher in the great exception to the rule.

This issue was so pronounced that a few years ago Sheri Dew was added to the Relief Society General Presidency in part to symbolize the fact that single, unmarried LDS women have a home in the Church and belong as members despite their marital status. Her presence was a great encouragement to many, many sisters.

To use your example, if you have 10 women and only 2 active LDS men from which to choose, then 8 will either not marry, or marry outside the Church. If they marry outside the Church, the odds of their children remaining active LDS diminishes considerably. Over generations the attrition rate becomes predominate. Further, you don't always have 10 men for 10 women due to the disparity in mortality rates. Of course, mortality rates become irrelevant if one active LDS male can have more than one spouse.

The declining LDS fertility rates are so significant at this point that we are barely above replacement numbers. The trend is toward reproducing (like the larger European populations) at a rate below replacement.

Over time the LDS community will take on a whole different look; with the dominate face of the Church's population being Hispanic. That is the result of population trends and fertility rates.

CHAPTER 8

Grow Where You Are Planted

APRIL 10, 2010

Outgrowing the Church

I was told by someone that they “had outgrown the church, didn’t get anything out of meetings, and therefore did not attend anymore.”

I responded: “As to your ‘growth,’ that may or may not be true. However, even if it is true, then the church needs you all the more for what you have to offer. Continuing service inside the church will always take a person to still greater peace and light.”

What I did not say is that whenever one assumes their own spiritual or intellectual superiority to others, they have lost light and become a fool. Spiritual development here distinguishes the best from the worst by so little that God regards us all as equal. What this world views as intellectual achievement is more often than not a hindrance to finding and following God.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · APRIL 11, 2010 AT 6:01 PM

Why would the service have to be “inside the church”? If greater peace and light are the goals, then isn’t it entirely possible that one person may find greater peace and light through service rendered and given

“outside of the church,” and may indeed be inspired and directed to minister outside of the confines of an institution?

I’m not questioning your premise, as I think that’s a general rule of thumb that I’d agree with. But, it would appear that service to our fellowmen/fellowwomen is the goal, and I’d think that that service could be as useful outside as inside in certain cases.

Then again, if we’re serving merely to aggrandize ourselves into believing we’re worthy of “greater peace and light” (whether inside or outside of the church), then I think we’re missing the boat entirely.

Denver Snuffer · APRIL 12, 2010 AT 8:28 AM

First, service inside the Church is part of a covenant made at baptism to bear one another’s burdens, mourn with those who mourn, etc (Mosiah 18:8–10). Second, because service rendered inside the Church directly affects those who are trying to become a part of Zion; a challenge much greater than faced by those unaware of the need to construct Zion. Third, because your own testimony is affected by those within the Church whom you serve and help.

Despite this, service anywhere is noble, good and worthwhile. And personal reward cannot be the end. It, like so many other things given by God, must only be a byproduct. Once it becomes the end it is vanity and will not work. Our hearts must actually change. We need to really love others. Not in a feigned or pretended way, but really to hold love for others. We tend to love those whom we serve and to care most for those we sacrifice the most to help.

APRIL 10, 2010

Creation Accounts

All ancient accounts of the creation of life here came through a presentation intended either as an initiation or an ordinance. The various accounts we have are also from such settings. Genesis is the ritual account given through Moses. The words “God said” should better be rendered “the Gods shall say” (meaning that this is telling

the players what to do). Similarly, the Abraham account saying that one “like unto the Son” or “like unto God” is describing the player’s role. It is a dramatic presentation.

There is no need to read into any of the various texts something which isn’t there. Hence the earlier post dealing with the creation accounts and how Eve was left out of the original statement of the commandment regarding the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The account sets it out with the commandment coming before Eve’s creation in all but the current Endowment presentation. Our version has been changed from time to time to accomplish various efficiencies as we have adopted filming, and other innovations to make the Endowment fit within new formats and time constraints.

APRIL 10, 2010

Holy Ghost

The equivalents made in Moses 6:61 are very interesting. The definition of the Holy Ghost includes these various equivalent descriptions of the Holy Ghost:

The record of heaven.

The peaceable things of immortal glory.

the truth of all things.

That which quickeneth all things.

That which maketh alive all things.

That which knoweth all things.

That which hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice and judgment.

These seven equivalents are the Holy Ghost. It is this which “dwelleth in you” (D&C 130:22). Seven being the number of perfec-

tion. The Holy Ghost being the Third Member of the Godhead. And, of course, we hope to join them in exaltation.

Finally, Christ promised the Holy Ghost would “teach you all things” and “bring all things to our remembrance” (John 14:26).

Christ truly said: “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you” (Luke 17:21). That is, of course, so long as you have taken the step of “receiving the Holy Ghost.” You were admonished to do that by someone with authority at your baptism. The power of doing so (as President Packer pointed out in General Conference last Saturday) is entirely left to you.

APRIL 11, 2010

That Was Funny

I was driving my daughter home from baseball practice and the car in front of us began driving erratically. It slowed down. Then wandered from side to side. The driver was clearly distracted and we could see him looking down at the seat next to him and fiddling around with something.

My daughter said: “What’s he doing?”

I replied, “He spilled his Coke and is trying to put it out with a fire.”

She thought about it for a minute then laughed long and hard. Funny what can strike your kid’s sense of humor. I take it as a sign of intelligence when word play can amuse.

APRIL 11, 2010

Why Not the Cross?

I was asked about the cross as a religious symbol and why I thought it inappropriate. Here’s my response:

When Christ described what He accomplished for us in His Atonement, He referred exclusively to the suffering in Gethsemane (D&C 19:15–19). Therefore, in the Lord’s own explanation, He used the suffering of Gethsemane exclusively to let us know the price He paid.

I know that among others, James Talmage and Bruce R. McConkie, have said that the suffering in Gethsemane was renewed on the cross. I have a different view, and I explain that in *Come, Let Us Adore Him*. I will not repeat that here. I expect that since this is my personal view, there will be many who do not share it with me. However, it is my view that the cross was the means of death; and His death became possible by what He went through in Gethsemane. Had He not been weakened through the ordeal in Gethsemane, He could not have died on the cross. But when He arrived at the cross, all that was left to accomplish was His death, while fulfilling the inspired, prophetic foretelling of the event in conformity with the 22nd Psalm.

The original Saints who belonged to the Primitive Church (New Testament Church) regarded the great symbol of Christ as the fish. That symbol was used in the first centuries following Christ. It was supplanted by Constantine. Constantine adopted the cross as a symbol for the new, Roman state religion which changed the Primitive Church into the new, Historic Christianity. It would undergo a name change to the Catholic Church (meaning Universal Church), then the Roman Catholic Church as it was entrenched as the state religion of the Roman Empire. It has also been referred to as the Holy Roman Empire. All those names are suitably descriptive. The adoption of the cross as a religious symbol for this new Historic Christianity, supplanting the earlier fish symbol, is one of the reasons I think it not appropriate. It symbolizes the change

of Primitive Christianity into a new religious form significantly different from what it was when it began.

The cross symbolizes the newer form of the faith, which adopted many of the earlier Roman state myths and simply gave Christian names and references to them. The celebration of Sol Invictus mid-winter became the celebration of Christmas. Spring fertility rites, including use of the egg and rabbit symbols of fertility were converted into a “Christian” holiday of Easter. Local deities no longer hailed from Olympus, but semi-deified “Saints” could be prayed to just as the earlier veneration of local deities. The full panoply of changes would require books to explain, but for me these changes are symbolized by the adoption of the cross as the great symbol of the new Historic Christian movement. Hence the reason I think it inappropriate as a symbol for a restoration of Primitive Christianity.

APRIL 12, 2010

Fast and Testimony

In our ward yesterday we heard testimonies from ward members who rarely speak. It was delightful. One of the best testimony meetings I can recall. One fellow who spoke was so moved by what he was telling us that he had to choke back tears. His elderly mother has Alzheimer’s disease and he could not be certain what was getting through to her. She responded to him touching her hand, rubbing her back, and whispering to her during his last visit. His comments focused on charity toward others, and the great example he pointed to was the group responsible for caring for the people at the facility where his mother was located.

They were primarily Hispanic. They labored with smiles on their faces and showed such genuine care for the people that he had to

thank someone as part of his last visit. He spoke with a woman working there, and thanked her and the whole staff through her for the kindness, charity and love they show while providing care for the people they serve. The woman was grateful for his comments. His whole testimony was about charity and caring for others. It was quite moving, and a reminder again of how many opportunities there are to provide service to others.

Another fellow spoke about his baptism, long ago in the South. He was baptized in a “muddy stream” when he was young, and he can remember how cold it was on that day. It was the first time my children had heard him speak, although we have been in the same ward for nearly two decades. They all were surprised he had a southern accent. And they all said they now “really loved the guy” because of what he said and how he said it. Before they hardly noticed him because he was so very quiet.

What a wonderful thing a ward family is. There hasn't been a ward I've attended that hasn't been quirky, diverse, interesting and at times trying. It's a good thing we are divided by area and cannot choose where to attend. We have no choice but to associate with a diverse lot of people. I think that is healthy.

APRIL 12, 2010

Current State of Things

I was asked why I do not sound the alarm about the current state of society more often. My view is that fixing problems on a large scale is not helpful. The fix should occur at the individual level. We fix the whole of society with individual conversions, not by better legislation. I do have a view about the state of the world at present. It comes from Moroni, and other modern revelations. I might as well lay out that view, briefly:

Satan does not create. He cannot. He only destroys what others create.

Since life itself is sacred, and he cannot create life, he shows his “great power” by taking life. This is the reason he taught murder to Cain, because if life is among the greatest of gifts from God, Satan’s secret work of murder attacks the power of creation (See Moses 5:29–32).

If you want to know where Satan’s great work is prospering anytime in history, look for those groups who organize to kill others. Those who preach hate, lead to violence, lead to murder and ultimately mass killing. These are the ones who do not create, nor do they respect the great gift of creation given by God to mankind. These are they who are overcome by the devil, who love a lie, who make war with God and will ultimately succeed in completely rejecting what He has offered to them (See D&C 76:28–37).

“Destroyer” is one of Satan’s names (See D&C 61:19).

Murder of the innocent is one of the unpardonable sins (See D&C 132:19). It is so offensive because it undoes the great gift of life given by God. It is a direct challenge to God’s authority. He alone holds the keys of life and death. Killing directly invades God’s authority.

We live at a time when there are organized efforts to form groups for the sole purpose of killing others. This behavior is so directly analogous to the Gadianton conspiracy within the Book of Mormon that the lessons there should serve as notice to us. Moroni interrupted his translation of the Book of Ether to give us this warning:

Ether 8:20–26

²⁰And now I, Moroni, do not write the manner of their oaths and combinations, for it hath been made known unto me that

they are had among all people, and they are had among the Lamanites.

²¹ And they have caused the destruction of this people of whom I am now speaking, and also the destruction of the people of Nephi.

²² And whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they shall be destroyed; for the Lord will not suffer that the blood of his saints, which shall be shed by them, shall always cry unto him from the ground for vengeance upon them and yet he avenge them not.

²³ Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to get power and gain—and the work, yea, even the work of destruction come upon you, yea, even the sword of the justice of the Eternal God shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction if ye shall suffer these things to be.

²⁴ Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation, because of this secret combination which shall be among you; or wo be unto it, because of the blood of them who have been slain; for they cry from the dust for vengeance upon it, and also upon those who built it up.

²⁵ For it cometh to pass that whoso buildeth it up seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries; and it bringeth to pass the destruction of all people, for it is built up by the devil, who is the father of all lies; even that same liar who beguiled our first parents, yea, even that same liar who

hath caused man to commit murder from the beginning; who hath hardened the hearts of men that they have murdered the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out from the beginning.

²⁶ Wherefore, I, Moroni, am commanded to write these things that evil may be done away, and that the time may come that Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, but that they may be persuaded to do good continually, that they may come unto the fountain of all righteousness and be saved.

Having said the foregoing, let me add that I do not think knowing our awful circumstance does a thing to fix it. What fixes it is to have more people come to the Lord, develop love for their fellow man, and live the commandments given by Him. That is something done one person at a time. I despair when I think in larger numbers than the individual. I rejoice when I think of the single person. For anything is possible with each person, no matter what their circumstances.

APRIL 12, 2010

Follow Christ In All Things

I was asked:

Nephi invites us to follow Christ in all the ordinances starting with baptism. The endowment clearly requires us to follow Adam in seeking more light and truth, receiving ordinances and making covenants. Finally, when we arrive in the sealing room we seek to follow and obtain the blessings of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. Ultimately we follow Christ in all things, but I wondered if you could comment on this.

My response:

Nephi followed Christ. Adam followed Christ. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob followed Christ. We get examples from sacred writings (and ordinances) which incorporate reference to earlier disciples of Christ, but always in the context of showing the need to follow Christ.

There is no jealousy about using a man who followed Christ as an example to follow. One of the reasons the Melchizedek Priesthood is named after a man rather than retaining the original “Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God” was to prevent the frequent repetition of the Son of God name (See D&C 107:2–4). This was respectful of the Son of God, while using the man Melchizedek as the example for using the authority which comes from the Son of God.

However, the one we follow is Christ and we follow His Gospel. When we decide to follow only a disciple of His, even if it is a true disciple, we miss the mark and fall to a Telestial state and are no better than the liars and thieves (See D&C 76:98–104). So even when it is a man whose example we list or refer to, it is only to the extent that the man illustrates the correct manner to follow the Son of God.

The God of the Telestial Kingdom (in which we are presently situated) is the Holy Ghost. The God of the Terrestrial Kingdom (which the Millennium will reflect) is Jesus Christ. The God of the Celestial Kingdom is God the Father (See D&C Section 76). The Holy Ghost brings us to Christ. Christ brings us to the Father. The Father extends the promise of exaltation by making you a son or daughter of God.

The plan of redemption brings us from our current, fallen state back to a state of awareness of our condition, and then by cleansing

us, elevates us in light and truth. The primary God with whom we deal here is the Holy Ghost. However, the association with Christ is promised by Him in Chapter 14 of John. Joseph Smith explained that when the promise given by Christ in that chapter of John is realized, then the Father and Son will visit with the person from time to time. He also clarified that the visit referred to is actual, not just something “in the heart” of a believer (D&C 130:3).

Abraham is the example used in the sealing ordinance because Abraham’s covenant with the Lord is the prototype of what the Lord promises all those who follow Him. Those promises include eternal increase (posterity), land (inheritance) and eternal life.

APRIL 13, 2010

Missionary in Kenya

There’s a family I home teach whose son is on a mission in Kenya. They ride a motorcycle to teach outlying areas. Three at a time on the bike through the rain and on muddy roads. They are in a city of 75,000 and not a road is paved in the entire city. Sort of like Sandy, Utah right now. Comparable size and dirt roads everywhere while they do their “stimulus” spending on roadways.

They baptized four new converts last week. My young elder (he’s mine because I still home teach him over the internet) did two of the baptisms. It was quite a milestone in his young life.

The pictures are quite interesting. Here’s this 6 foot white, smiling kid standing with a crowd of shorter, very dark faces all with the look of joy and kinship on their countenances. He’s sort of a spectacle to the people there. Not only his height, but his light skin and blonde hair. Kids ask if they can touch him (and he lets them).

What an adventure this young man is on. What fun it is to share it by reading his emails sent back home. It reminds me of just how small the world is after all. I guess Disney got that right...

CHAPTER 9

Humor Requires Underlying Truth

APRIL 13, 2010

THE Remnant

The subject of THE “remnant” is too great to undertake in a post here. I’ve attended meetings lasting two days in which the subject was the sole matter being discussed. I’ve had discussions, read a manuscript, exchanged emails and spent years on this subject with people who know more about the details than do I. Therefore my conclusion is that it exceeds the parameters of this venue.

Identification of the “remnant” was critical to Joseph Smith. Although we’ve discarded the issue, it was of central concern to the early Brethren. So much so that the “remnant” was what drove the movement westward near the “borders of the Lamanites” The first missionaries were sent to the “Lamanites” as part of the Restoration’s concern with the promised “remnant” of the Book of Mormon people (See D&C 32:2). The Saints were required to move west to be near these people as part of locating Zion (D&C 54:8).

The Book of Mormon is filled with promises addressed to the “remnant” of those people. Modern revelation promises they will blossom as a rose (D&C 49:24).

The first Temple built in the west after the exodus was in St. George to be near the suspected “remnant” to be reclaimed. The first company in that Temple’s first session included a Chief from the Hopi tribe. Brother Nibley was partial to the Hopi as the “remnant” or at least a part of the “remnant” and he wrote a good deal about them.

This is an important subject. Worthy of study. But it is too great a subject for treatment in a limited venue like this. To do it justice would require this forum to become devoted to that subject for many days. By the time it was finished, I doubt anyone would still be reading. So I’ll just reaffirm the subject is important, and there are many passages in the Book of Mormon dealing with the “remnant” of the Book of Mormon people. Promises extended to them have not yet been fulfilled. But all those promises will be fulfilled. As they are, the role of those people will change from what we see it today into something much more central to the Church.

APRIL 13, 2010

The Individual and Truth

There are two propositions I believe have the potential for defining our lives here in mortality.

First, the importance of the individual.

I really do believe in the importance, centrality and power of the individual. What happens everywhere in the world begins with interpersonal relationships and the individual. More can be done, and is done to change the course of history by the actions of individuals than anything else.

There’s that old saying that when God wants to change the world, He sends a baby. Whether that baby is Buddha, or Gandhi, or Abraham Lincoln, or Henry Ford, or Thomas Beckett, or Jesus,

the world changes when babies enter mortality. All lives matter. No one matters more than another in my view. The accumulation of lives well lived is the stuff of history. How many unnamed artisans were required to build the Parthenon?

Our day is the great day of the individual. Now your thoughts can be sent by electronic means anywhere in the world. Your audience can include every living person who has a connection to the internet. I think there is a purpose there.

You matter. All of us do. Good ideas can now spread on eagle's wings, so to speak. A spark kindled today can light the whole world.

Second, the primacy of good.

I believe truth will triumph. To be here on the earth required an initial "screening," which was conducted before the people who are born here were permitted to come. All those who live here came from a shared God and Father of us all. Therefore, we have something in common.

Truth is recognizable. It must be fought to be suppressed. Although some will wage that fight and succeed in blighting **their** sense of the truth and light, the overwhelming majority will not. The "light of Christ" given to all mankind as a commonly shared inheritance persists here.

The result is that truth will win. In free exchanges of ideas, it will be truth that will ultimately triumph. I believe the truth will win even if it is only spoken as a whisper in a hurricane of opposition. It will win.

It is unnecessary for truth to come from authorized sources. It is irrelevant for it to be opposed by authorized sources. It will always triumph. Crush it, burn it, send it into the wilderness and crucify those who believe it - it will triumph.

APRIL 14, 2010

Record Keeping

Joseph touches on a principle in his letter on September 6, 1842 that is quite important. It relates to keeping record and the day of judgment.

After quoting Revelation 20:12, Joseph explains there are two kinds of records kept. One is on earth, recording what men have done here. The other is kept in heaven. The one agreeing with the other (D&C 128:7). He goes on to explain how these two records are related.

What is recorded on earth is recorded in heaven. What is not recorded in earth “shall not be recorded in heaven” (D&C 128:8).

This principle was extended by President Spencer W. Kimball in a talk he gave in October, 1975 while President of the Church. His comments included this:

*Get a notebook, my young folks, a journal that will last through all time, and maybe the angels may quote from it for eternity. Begin today and write in it your goings and comings, your deepest thoughts, your achievements, and your failures, your associations and your triumphs, your impressions and your testimonies. Remember, the Savior chastised those who failed to record important events. (Originally printed in October, 1975 *New Era*; reprinted in *New Era*, Feb 2003, at page 32)*

Why would angels quote from your personal journal? It would be based on the same principle given by Joseph Smith in Section 128. Recording here those sacred events which happen in your life is necessary for the same events to be recorded in heaven. The personal records of disciples of Christ have become scripture, but they began as a personal journal. Nephi’s record was his journal.

Alma's, Abraham's, Enoch's and many others were also. Section 128 is a letter. Most of the New Testament consists of letters. These were written to or for family members or friends.

Do not underestimate the significance of what you record on earth in your own records. If you record sacred events, written under the influence of the Holy Ghost, angels may not only quote from it (as Pres. Kimball suggested), but they may regard it as scripture itself.

APRIL 14, 2010

My Calculations

I was asked about the numbers in activity used in an earlier post. (*Sorry no link, the moderator can't remember which one*) That calculation was one I made based on the statistics we were given by the Mission President on our area.

By way of background, I did a two year stint as the Ward Mission Leader, followed by five years on the High Council over missionary work in my stake. During the last two years on the High Council we would meet quarterly with the mission presidency. During those meetings we would be updated on the numbers throughout the mission and the church. The numbers worked out to approximately 37% activity rate church-wide. HOWEVER, the definition of "active" included anyone who attended a single sacrament meeting during a quarter. This had the effect of inflating the number by all those who attended during Easter and Christmas (because they all became instantly "active" during two quarters of the year). They also were affected by the count of sacrament meeting attendees who came for missionary farewells and missionary homecomings.

I did a count of my own to try and come up with a "distortion" number to attempt to calculate who was really carrying the load as

an average. I couldn't get a consistent result using my own ward to allow for Easter/Christmas and missionary farewell/homecoming additions. But it appeared to me the distortion was somewhere between as little as 5% and as much as 10%. I took a mid-point between the two and made my overall estimate of 4,000,000 out of the total church membership as those who are really serving regularly, attending regularly, and who are not merely "active" by virtue of quarterly appearances in a sacrament meeting. I hope that serves your purposes.

APRIL 14, 2010

A Parable

A parable—for which I borrow Hindu and Buddhist notions to make it possible to tell.

There was a certain man who feared not God nor regarded his fellow man; who was filled with ungoverned lust and anger. He married, fathered a child, and abused his son daily, for he was without compassion. In the course of his abuse, he injured his son frequently. When the child was a young boy, in a fit of anger, the man killed his son. He was arrested, convicted of the murder, and executed.

Time is known only to man, but not to God, for all things past, present and future are before Him at all times in one eternal "now." God, who is merciful and whose purpose is to improve His children, to bring about their immortality and lead them into eternal life, needed this man to understand within his heart how his acts affect others. For the man regarded not his fellow man and could not feel compassion for his wicked deeds. With God all things are possible, and therefore the man was sent back again to mortality for further instruction.

When he returned, the man was born as the son of a certain man who feared not God nor regarded his fellow man. His father was filled with ungoverned lust and anger. His father abused him daily and in the course of abuse he was frequently injured. One day the father killed him.

When men die they return to God, who gave them life, and so the child, who had once been a wicked man, returned again to God. The Lord asked him upon his return: "Do you now understand?" The man replied,

Yes. I have been both. I have been the victim and I have been the perpetrator. I have been the father and I have been the son. I have released my uncontrolled anger and I have been the victim of it. I remember abusing and I also remember being abused. I see now that when I was ungovernable and unkind it was only myself who I abused. What I have given has returned to me and I have caused my own suffering.

The Lord said, "It is well. Now let these experiences work in you, for without the opportunity to use them to live aright, you are not yet ready."

Having been the wicked father and the abused son, the man returned again to the same time and place to now be a neighbor of the wicked man and the abused son. How, then, ought the neighbor act so as to show he had truly learned?

What we do to another, we only do to ourselves. We will all find in the end that we are indeed our brother's keeper. We are our fathers, and we are our sons, and we ought to be One with each other.

APRIL 15, 2010

Mark Twain

Mark Twain had a greater influence on my childhood development than any other writer. Here are a few of his quotes:

“It ain’t what you don’t know that gets you in trouble. It’s what you know for sure that just ain’t so.”

“Loyalty to petrified opinion never broke a chain or freed a human soul.” “It’s no wonder that truth is stranger than fiction. Fiction has to make sense.”

Benjamin Franklin and Mark Twain gave Americans their sense of humor. Whether you’ve ever read anything written by them or not, they form the underlying basis for our American humor. Deep inside all their wit lies the truth.

APRIL 15, 2010

The Battle is the Lord’s

I had an interesting conversation yesterday. It provoked this comment.

When Julius ended the Republic by crossing the Rubicon with the 13th Legion from Gaul, he established a dictatorship that would change into the Empire thereafter. The Republic was dead. The Empire lived on.

Julius’ great nephew is regarded as the first fully recognized Emperor of the Roman Empire. He ruled until his death in 14 AD as dictator for life.

Rome dominated the world, subduing other peoples who were considered inferior to Romans. They believed it was Rome’s right to rule the world. Roman control was benefiting others. This was

the Pax Romana, or peace of Rome. It came at the point of a spear. Such is the peace offered by the leaders of this world.

Among the lands under Roman control was the Judean province in which Jesus Christ was born. The place of His birth was directly affected by Augustus' taxing (Luke 2:1–6). He was a Jewish subject to the vassal king of the Herodian family. His life was lived between two Roman controlled provinces.

Jesus was asked if it was lawful to give tribute to Rome. He responded by asking for a coin, noting Caesar's image on it, and remarking "give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:17–22).

Jesus never challenged Roman authority. He submitted to it. When the time comes for the establishment of Zion, it will not be necessary for us to deviate from Christ's example. Those who are in the promised latter-day Zion will be protected by "the terror of the Lord." The residents will be those who "will not take up arms against their neighbor" (D&C 45:66–71). There is no need to overthrow the world. It will overthrow itself. The Lord will not permit the wicked to destroy the righteous (1 Ne. 22:16). It is the wicked who destroy the wicked (Mormon 4:5).

We live in a world today in which Pax Americana has established controlled violence the world over. The fear of destruction holds forces at bay which would gladly destroy one another if permitted. The key to replacing the current world order with another one, as many insurgencies the world over recognize, is the destruction of Pax Americana by destroying American hegemony. A lot of people are working on that, both inside and outside the United States.

Latter-day Zion will not need to take up the sword to defend themselves. The Lord will be their shield and protection. Since the wicked are responsible for killing the wicked, you join them when

you decide to take up arms. You also exclude yourself from those who are to come to Zion—for that group will be composed only of those who refuse to take up arms against their neighbor (D&C 45:68, above).

Read again how Zion was protected in the days of Enoch (Moses 7:13–17). It wasn't an army or arms which protected them. It was the Lord who dwelt among them.

Our challenge as a people is to live so the Lord can dwell among us. He will “take up His abode” with us as *The Second Comforter*, if we are prepared to receive Him. This is why I have written what I have written. Zion will be a byproduct of a prepared people. It never has been and never will be the result of a violent, armed, and politically motivated insurrection by people who want to isolate themselves from the world. Such people will only be a part of those who take up arms, and acting as part of the wicked, join in the destruction of the wicked, including themselves.

This does not mean that some righteous will not be required to die. The Lord's ability to protect us will require His hand move in “justice and mercy” to fulfill His promises. Those who die will die unto the Lord. Those who live will live unto the Lord. But the battle is the Lord's.

COMMENTS:

Steve · APRIL 16, 2010 AT 9:21 PM

The Lord said,

Nevertheless, thine enemy is in thine hands; and if thou rewardest him according to his works thou art justified; if he has sought thy life, and thy life is endangered by him, thine enemy is in thine hands and thou art justified. (D&C 98:31)

The Lord does not say you can never be sanctified if you protect your own or your families life by taking your enemies life. You are

justified before the Lord and your enemy is in your hands if this is the case. Where does it say if you take your enemies life then you cannot come to Zion? It is true, everyone that will not take up arms against his neighbor will need to flee to Zion for safety, and there will be no need for arms in Zion. I want to know where it says that before you get to Zion, if you protect yourselves by taking another life, you are automatically excluded from Zion.

Denver you say “Since the wicked are responsible for killing the wicked, you join them when you decide to take up arms.” How can you say this given what the Lord says in 98:31? Are you saying the Lord will justify the wicked?

How can we square any of this when Moroni was allowed to put to death people that there only sin was not to take up arms in defense of their freedoms? People were put to death for not taking up arms, and the people that put them to death were not wicked people and I’m sure some even are in the celestial kingdom as we speak.

I read your blog regularly, Denver, but I do not totally agree with your sentiments on this topic.

Denver Snuffer · APRIL 17, 2010 AT 7:47 AM

I am not trying to persuade anyone. I’m only stating what I understand and why.

As to your comment, I agree one would be “justified.” There is, of course, a difference between being “justified” and being “sanctified.” I do not seek merely to be justified in defending myself, but to offer sacrifice that I might be sanctified.

Steve · APRIL 17, 2010 AT 2:47 PM

“I am not trying to persuade anyone. I’m only stating what I understand and why.” Understood, but, you are an intelligent person, when you say “you join the wicked when you take up arms”, your “understanding” is totally different than what Christ is actually saying. Obviously Christ does not agree with you. Christ will not justify the wicked, yet he will justify someone who is living his laws who takes up arms to defend themselves. So it follows that anyone that takes up arms will not fall

into the ranks of the wicked as you proclaim. Your understanding confuses me since it does not agree with what Christ appears to be saying.

I agree that there is a huge difference between justification and sanctification. But, according to Christ's own words, defending yourself does not appear to disqualify you from becoming sanctified or being a citizen of Zion as you say it does.

Defending yourself is not mutually exclusive to these things according to the scriptures. You cannot assume if it says one thing it also says the other.

Denver Snuffer · APRIL 17, 2010 AT 4:31 PM

I have not asserted that "Christ agreed with me." But I would note that Christ never took up arms. His only resort to a physical demonstration was to make a small scourge with a rope to drive out money changers from the Temple. No one was hurt. His display was of righteous indignation, not of physical compulsion. Those who retreated did so from shame, not from risk of physical injury.

He suffered injury, but did not inflict it. He healed injuries and infirmities in others, but never imposed them. He took others' pains upon Himself, but did not cause it.

There is also the example of Alma and Amulek, where women and children were being burned to death and Amulek wanted to end it using the power of God. Alma counseled to the contrary, saying the actions of the wicked would result in them being held accountable for shedding innocent blood. He went on to explain his own and Amulek's death were unimportant, as well (See Alma 14:10–13).

When Joseph surrendered he expected to die. He said he would be killed if he fell into the hands of the mob again before he left Nauvoo. When his friends came to persuade him to return, he said if his life was of no worth to his friends it was of no worth to himself. Then as he departed Nauvoo he said he went as a lamb to the slaughter. He had a legion of warriors; and he asked them to surrender their arms. The small pepperbox handgun he had was given to him in jail, and was no match for 200 men armed with .50 caliber rifles. Discharging

it was not intended to repel the mob, but was merely symbolic. When his brother fell dead, Joseph rushed to the window to end the killing by letting them have his blood. It worked, and it saved Bro. Taylor's and Bro. Richards' lives. He laid down his life, and when he could have summoned an army to his defense, he disarmed them instead.

I am content in my views. You needn't share them.

APRIL 16, 2010

Mosiah 18:8–10

I was asked why the language of Mosiah 18:8–10 related to membership in the church, and not to others outside the church. Here's my response.

These verses are talking about entering into a covenant and becoming “the fold of God” (Verse 8). This fold will be “called his people” (*Id.*). The fold, who have this covenant, and who are called His people, are to be “willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light” (*Id.*). The whole passage is relating to the interrelationship between those who are of the covenant, the fold, and who are God's people as a result of this covenant. These are the duties owed internally to the fold.

It continues to explain that these people should be “willing to mourn with those that mourn” (Verse 9). The word “those” should be read in the context of the covenant, the fold, the people and the obligation arising from within the group.

These verses are church/fold/covenant people related, and govern the obligations which those who come into that fold owe to each other. It arises out of the covenant of baptism (Verse 10).

The obligation owed within the church membership to one another on the one hand does not eliminate other obligations owed to your fellow man. Indeed, it is one of the chief obligations owed

to all humanity to cry repentance and bring others into the fold. Christ also extended the obligation to care for others without regard to their status, including in His parable of the good Samaritan. So to say there is one duty owed within the church is not to say there are not other obligations owed to others outside the church.

APRIL 16, 2010

Forward or Backward

I got asked about loss of teachings or practices within the LDS community. My response is as follows.

It makes no difference whether it is an individual or a community, we are all on a single path that goes two ways—forward or backward. We are either gaining, or we are losing. We cannot stand still.

Whether a group or a person, we are either gaining (restoring) light and truth, or we are losing (apostatizing) from light and truth. This world is a world of change. Nothing remains the same. Everywhere you see either growth, or decay. These forces are at work everywhere. They are also at work within you.

You either search out new truth, find it, live it, and thereby become restored to truth, or you back away from it. If you are backing away, losing it, neglecting it, and discarding it, you are in the process of apostasy.

In a restoration process, there are moments along the way which are marked and notable. Having the inspiration of the Spirit, or feeling the remission of your sins, or receiving revelation, or having a visit of an angel are notable. The culmination of the restoration would be to return to God's presence. Should that happen, through The Second Comforter's ministry, then you have been restored in full.

In an apostasy process, you also have a few momentous events. Having a loss of sympathy for others, feeling progressively more critical of others, becoming neglectful of prayers, failing to associate with fellow saints, neglecting the sacrament are early along the path. Ultimately asking to have your membership terminated, engaging in drug abuse, patronizing the sex industry, are strong signs someone has departed from moving in one direction and has begun to move quickly into the other. (I'm not saying that these are related, nor that someone who leaves the church voluntarily is doomed to addiction, immorality or worse. There are many people of good faith who struggle with the church. That is a different subject.) It is clear, however, that when a person has become a murderer, seeking to kill the saints, as we have seen in history, such a person has finished the course of apostasy and is beyond feeling.

These are examples which try to quickly illustrate the point on a personal level. Quickly, at the institutional level, we have at one end a full restoration, a return to Zion, and the Lord dwelling among them. At the other we have a society whose wickedness and abuse of children is so far spread that fire comes down from heaven to destroy them. Complete restorations and complete apostasies are rare. What history is made up is the description of struggling along the path. We ebb and flow back and forth, without becoming fully ripe either way.

Christ promised at the end of time there would be a ripening. "Wheat" and "tares" will ripen. Then there will be a harvest (Matt. 13:37-42). However, the haphazard manner of the harvesting makes a full return of Zion before His coming seem unanticipated by the Lord's teachings (Matt. 24:39-40). Modern revelation gave us that opportunity. We clearly have not done so, and at present seem clearly not interested in doing so. That is a subject for another

time, however. As Christ put it, we need to seek for our individual, complete restoration because the group will not.

There are two ways—forward or backward. It is not required that you finish the course in a day; but times are coming in which the environment will require of you a greater commitment as “wheat” on the one hand, or leave you to descend into becoming a “tare” on the other. So the direction you are on now is quite important. Either you are restoring truth or you are discarding it.

COMMENTS:

DJones · APRIL 18, 2010 AT 9:51 AM

Denver, in your post, “Forward or Backward”...you wrote the following:

“As Christ put it, we need to seek for our individual, complete restoration because the group will not.

My question surrounds this last sentence... “As Christ put it...” Would you mind saying more about this, and explaining a little more by what you mean?

Denver Snuffer · APRIL 18, 2010 AT 1:48 PM

The words “As Christ put it...” had reference to the two quotes taken from Matthew. They were “side by side” takings of those who would be found righteous at His Second Coming. His two examples cited did not use any gathering of good into one group and the bad into another. These different types of people (wheat/tares or laboring together in a field) are homogenized by Christ into a mixed community from which are gathered the two separate types of people. The comment was specific to the two examples cited in the same paragraph.

DJones · APRIL 20, 2010 AT 6:19 AM

OK...got it...Thank you for the explanation...I see your point!

APRIL 17, 2010

A Confession

Confession of sins is supposed to be good for the soul. So I figure I'll make a confession of my attempted arson. I offer no defense for this crime, since I need none. The statute of limitations having run many years ago.

When my friend decided he no longer wanted to make payments on his new 1969 Chevy Nova, I offered to total the car for him so he could collect the insurance money. As we were speeding along getting ready for me to wreck it into a collection of roadside boulders, he chickened out. So we never destroyed it that evening. Within a few days, however, he returned to his despair over making payments. We discussed it for some time without any resolution to the problem.

Because of some movie (I think with Steve McQueen, but for the life of me I can't recall what it was about), we came up with a solution: We'd burn the car. Surely insurance would total it if burned.

So we parked it behind the Mountain Home Newspaper office, where we worked, and set the plan in motion. My friend soaked the front seat with kerosene, lit a cigarette, tucked the lit cigarette into a match-pack, set it on the soaked front seat, and we went inside. We were waiting for the cigarette to burn down to the matches, the matches to ignite, the ignition to set the kerosene afire, and the fire to destroy the car. We waited. And waited. And nothing seemed to be happening. We stayed in the front of the newspaper office, wanting to appear surprised when the news of a burning car was brought to us, but nothing happened.

I think it was an hour or more before we went to the rear of the building to check on how our felony was progressing, and noticed that in the upper glass block skylight there was flashing red lights, clearly showing flames licking upward from a burning Chevy Nova. We thought it worked! Now someone needed to notice it and call the police. But we couldn't be the ones who discovered it. So we retreated again to the front of the building and settled in to wait out the discovery.

When another hour or so had passed we again peeked into the back of the building and again saw that same flickering red light. We retreated again.

Another hour later and still no sirens, no commotion, nothing. We checked again and sure enough the red flickering was still underway. We wondered what it was about a Chevy Nova that would let it burn for hours once ignited. Then concluded that if no-one else was going to make the grim discovery, we could at least see the results of our handiwork directly instead of through glass block skylight reflections.

So we opened the back door and there sat the Chevy Nova completely undisturbed. Intact, fully operational and not even singed. Puzzled, we wondered at what we'd been seeing flickering these past hours. It turned out to be the outdoor sign of Jovial Jerry's bar, whose sign was on the sidewalk outside the bar with which the Mt. Home News shared a parking lot.

Well the Nova didn't burn. When we inspected our crime scene it turned out that kerosene will put out a lit cigarette without igniting. The cigarette was there, soaked with the seat, and the matches were unusable as well. The only damage was a cigarette burn to the front seat upholstery.

Well my friend had suffered so much from the hours of anticipation and was so relieved at the failure, that he determined to just keep the Nova. However, from that day till the day he sold it it always stank of kerosene.

There, confessing my sin does make me feel better. Maybe I'll cover some others in the future.

APRIL 17, 2010

LDS Books

I was asked to recommend some books. I am going to first discuss some of what I've read over the years.

The first year after joining the church I was eager to learn what the religion was about. I began reading whatever I could find to inform me about the new faith. I started with the following, which I obtained from a bookstore inside the home of a woman in the ward:

- *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, by LeGrand Richards.
- *The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* *Life of Heber C. Kimball* *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* *Jesus the Christ Documentary* *History of the Church by Joseph Smith* (all volumes)

I was transferred by the Air Force to Texas, and continued to read there until my discharge from the military. While there I read the following:

- *The Life of John Taylor*
- *Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* by BH Roberts (all volumes)
- *Evidences and Reconciliations* *The Gospel Kingdom* *Mormon Doctrine* *The Promised Messiah* *The Articles of Faith* *The House of the Lord* *The Mortal Messiah* (all volumes)

- *Ensign, Conference Report and Journal of Discourses* (not all volumes read)
- *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*
- *The History of Joseph Smith by His Mother Lucy Mack Smith*
- *Discourses of Brigham Young*
- *Brigham Young: American Moses Doctrines of Salvation* (3 volumes) *Answers to Gospel Questions* (5 volumes) *Gospel Doctrine* by Joseph F. Smith
- *Messages of the First Presidency* (6 volumes)

By the time I arrived at BYU, I thought I was beginning to understand the faith, at least as it was taught and understood at the beginning. There was a debate between BH Roberts and the Chaplain of the United States Senate which I really liked. It was titled *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity: The Roberts and Van Der Donckt Debate*. Nibley's book *The Timely and the Timeless* came out and I still have my original copy. During law school I also discovered Hugh Nibley, and found an actual Deseret Book store. Back then Deseret Book sold doctrine. In fact, almost everything they sold or printed was doctrine or history. I bought and read until I couldn't find an early or contemporary work about church history or doctrine I hadn't read. I have acquired a library since joining the church that includes every significant LDS doctrinal book as it became available in print. I still try and keep up with all the current reading that I believe is worthwhile. But the new stuff is getting thinner and thinner in material, importance and doctrine. In fact, it is quite rare that a new book isn't disappointing to me; particularly when it comes from Deseret Book. *The Joseph Smith Papers* project is the exception; however it is coming out under the Church's new publication arm (a division of Deseret Book.) A good

example of the foolishness to which Deseret Book has descended is that *Odds Are You're Going to be Exalted* book that came out a couple of years ago.

That having been said, I was asked by someone what I thought was absolutely essential reading. Here's my list:

- The scriptures (first, foremost and without peer)
- *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*
- *Lectures on Faith*
- *Words of Joseph Smith*
- *Approaching Zion*, by Hugh Nibley
- *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*

I think if you study those six books, you will understand the Gospel.

COMMENTS:

DKD · APRIL 17, 2010 AT 5:19 PM

As I thought about it, I also really like "*The Comprehensive History of the Church*" by BH Roberts. After reading Truman Madsen's biography of BH Roberts *Defender of the Faith* I felt almost obligated to read it..... given the sacrifice and effort of Brother Roberts in writing it... I would have felt guilty not reading it. It was wonderful reading.

Another work by BH Roberts that had a huge impact on me was *The Way, The Truth, The Life*. He has a couple of speculative chapters which created some "discussion" among the brethren.... I love it and found it very edifying.

I am so grateful to all those (including you Denver) who have a talent for writing and sharing with us that don't have that talent or skill. :)
thank you.

Denver Snuffer · APRIL 18, 2010 AT 8:28 AM

I have it on fairly reliable authority that a new edition of *The Words of Joseph Smith* is being prepared. I would not purchase it as a used book,

because it has become “rare” and therefore quite expensive. I bought it when it was first in print. Wait. It will be in print again soon I think. Also, you can find it as an electronic copy on the LDS Library discs which get sold through Deseret Book from time to time. That, also, is undergoing an update and I’m not sure if they are currently available. But they will be again as well.

APRIL 18, 2010

Egypt and Egyptian

The brass plates of Laban were also in Egyptian. Mosiah Chapter 1, verses 1–4 discuss the education of Mosiah’s sons. They were taught “in all the language of his fathers.” That phrase gets explained. But before clarifying what “all the language” included, the brass plates are mentioned in verse 2. These plates contained the commandments that the sons of Mosiah needed to understand and were not possible for father Lehi to remember. Therefore it was necessary for them to possess the brass plates to stimulate their memory of the commandments.

Continuing on with the explanation, and addressing specifically the brass plates, it is written:

it were not possible that our father, Lehi, could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for he **having been taught in the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings**, and teach them to his children (*Id.* v. 4., emphasis added).

This somewhat changes the picture of Jerusalem at the time of Lehi’s departure. The record of the brass plates included what we would recognize as the Old Testament record, from Moses’ five books down to the time of Lehi’s exodus (See 1 Ne. 5:10–16). For

the entire Old Testament account to have been written in Egyptian onto the brass plates means that Egyptian was a preferred language. It wasn't just an efficient language that Nephi selected for his own record, but instead a preference that was widespread among the Jews throughout Jerusalem at the time of Lehi's departure.

By the time Mormon took over abridging the record, the language had been further modified for efficiency and reduced effort in carving the record onto metal plates (See Mormon 9:32–34). It was a more efficient, though less exact, form of language than Hebrew.

The Egyptian influence upon ancient Jerusalem and our own Bible should be studied. The presence of Egyptian hieroglyphs in our scriptures (Book of Abraham Facsimiles 1–3) also puts us on notice that we need to look into Egyptian matters. Hugh Nibley has written a number of books on the matter, the most recent of which was released as *One Eternal Round* on the occasion of Nibley's 100 year from birth. *Abraham in Egypt* was an earlier work also on this subject. And there has been a three volume set on the *Early Life of Abraham* published through BYU (quite an expensive set to own). It is interesting how much Egyptian influence there has been in our faith. Remember that the Egyptians sought to preserve the faith which existed before the flood and was practiced from Adam to the time of Noah (Abraham 1:26). It may have become eroded and drifted, but it nevertheless preserved truths from the beginning. Abraham was sent to them to help restore the original faith which they originally tried earnestly to preserve.

Whether we like it or not, we have an interest in knowing more about ancient Egypt than any other Christian faith.

COMMENTS:

Mark Peterson · APRIL 18, 2010 AT 3:17 PM

In *The Second Comforter* you state that Laban was Nephi's cousin. How do we know that?

Denver Snuffer · APRIL 18, 2010 AT 6:27 PM

Mark Peterson: The following verses let us know that there was a shared genealogy between Laban and Lehi's family:

1 Ne. 3:3, 12:

³For behold, Laban hath the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of my forefathers, and they are engraven upon plates of brass.



¹²And he desired of Laban the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, which contained the genealogy of my father.

1 Ne. 5:14, 16:

¹⁴And it came to pass that my father, Lehi, also found upon the plates of brass a genealogy of his fathers; wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph; yea, even that Joseph who was the son of Jacob, who was sold into Egypt, and who was preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he might preserve his father, Jacob, and all his household from perishing with famine.



¹⁶And thus my father, Lehi, did discover the genealogy of his fathers. And Laban also was a descendant of Joseph, wherefore he and his fathers had kept the records.

The choices are:

1. Laban and Lehi are brothers, making Laban Nephi's uncle. I rule this out because there is no appeal made to Laban on the basis of being an uncle, no acknowledgment by Lehi that he was sending his sons to visit with his brother, or other mention. It would be likely to have appeared in the record had that been the association.

2. Laban and Lehi share ancestors, but are not brothers. I assume this must be the case as a result of ruling out brotherhood above. This makes Nephi a cousin of Laban's.

APRIL 18, 2010

Violence and the Violent

There has been an abundant outpouring of vitriol by those who disagree with my view about "the battle is the Lord's" (an earlier post). The comment moderator has asked me about them, because she's reluctant to put some of them up. They claim the view I hold is either Satanic or else I have been deceived by the Devil. They insist I have a duty to kill people rather than refrain from doing so when there is a threat of violence directed at me or my family. They claim Brigham Young and Joseph Smith both require me to begin killing enemies under appropriate circumstances, rather than submitting to being killed.

From time to time someone writes something which they later regret and they send another message asking for the comment to either not be put up or to be deleted if it had already been posted. I reminded her of that and suggested that she wait a few days and see if people decide to withdraw them before making any decision. Ultimately I leave it to her to decide.

I did want to add a comment about the use of violence. First, I trust the inspiration of a non-violent man, constrained against his will, when he determines the Lord requires him to act far more than I would trust the judgment of someone prone to violence when they suggest the need to kill, take violent action or attack. Throughout history all those who have made claims their violence was excused claimed they were "defending" themselves. There is a

chapter on this subject in *Eighteen Verses*, which covers the topic a bit more than I am inclined to do again here.

I would comment about the Mountain Meadows Massacre and its sad legacy. The recent publication by the Assistant Church Historian as co-author of yet another new treatment of the unfortunate moment when Brigham Young's clamor for "defending" the Saints got out of hand. The book is called *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*. The book reiterated how mistaken and regrettable that moment was in LDS history. It is the great example pointed to by anti-Mormon sources as proof that Mormons are capable of all the depredations of Historic Christianity, Roman Catholicism and Puritanical excesses that killed those who offended them. The church has issued an official apology, and President Hinckley visited the site and dedicated a monument as an act of Latter-day Saint contrition and regret.

That single moment in church history is something which all our prayers cannot take back. We cannot restore those lives which were taken. We cannot explain we are really Christ's disciples to the descendants of that party of victims. They continue to hold resentments which have festered for generations and still call out condemnation for our act of violence and murder.

If we had suffered then, as we had in Missouri and Illinois we would have been better. If given the opportunity to suffer again for our faith, we would be better remembered by history if we learn the lesson of Mountain Meadows. We are ennobled by our sacrifices. We are detested for our revenge and violence. In General Conference a few sessions back, President Faust gave a talk titled The Healing Power of Forgiveness. Unfortunately, his great example came from the Amish, whose young daughters were killed by a murderer, whom they forgave. It was not taken from our own conduct. I would

commend that talk as a more recent and more reasoned statement on violence and the violent than the comments of Brigham Young who Latter-day Saint historians now admit had some role in the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Not because he approved it, he did not. Indeed, he sent a message to let the entrapped party go. But his message arrived too late. The violent attack had already taken place. The violence having been rationalized, at least in part, by Brigham Young's own militant comments in the preceding years.

I am not trying to persuade anyone. Go ahead and resolve this issue for yourself. I am only setting out my own view. Take it for what you think it is worth. If you think it is "of the Devil" or "Satanic" then of course you ought to reject my view. But I have considered the quotes of Brigham Young before reaching my view, and find them in a context which even I believe he grew to regret

APRIL 19, 2010

A Student of the Lord

Our obligation is to conform our opinions to the Lord's instruction. That requires us to be careful about how we listen, how hard our hearts are, how much we want to let in, and how loyal we choose to be to traditions. It is rare for any man to be an eager student of the Lord's. The scriptures give us only isolated examples. Abraham was one of them. He WANTED to receive and obey commandments. (Abr. 1:2.)

Resistance to truth prevents us from obtaining it. The Lord will not force us to understand Him or His ways. Instead He invites us to come and learn from Him. Joseph Smith made this remarkable statement:

We consider that God has created man with a mind capable of instruction, and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion

to the heed and diligence given to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect; and that the nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin; and like the ancients, arrives at that point of faith where he is wrapped in the power and glory of his Maker and is caught up to dwell with Him. But we consider that this is a station to which no man ever arrived in a moment: he must have been instructed in the government and laws of that kingdom by proper degrees, until his mind is capable in some measure of comprehending the propriety, justice, equality, and consistency of the same. (TPJS p. 51)

Closing your mind to the Lord's agenda before He has had an opportunity to fully instruct you is damnation. Damnation merely means the end of progress. So when we fail to progress in our understanding, we voluntarily damn ourselves.

The Lord's system, however, involves gentleness, meekness and love unfeigned. It requires patience and pure knowledge. (D&C 121:40–42.) Before we can elevate anyone else's understanding we have to stand on higher ground. To lead a soul to salvation, as Joseph put it, required the following:

Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity—thou must commune with God. (TPJS p. 137)

Given this requirement for a man to be able to lead another soul to salvation, it would seem that few are really qualified.

Choose your teachers carefully. Accept any truth you are offered and you will be offered more. Reject a truth given to you and you close down the opportunities given to you for learning.

Someone asked the question a bit ago: “Humility = light?” and I haven’t responded till now. The answer is humility allows someone to be taught. We are all ignorant, but not all are willing to let in new understanding. We must be taught about the things we do not yet know for us to be saved. Without humility we cannot be taught, and therefore we cannot gain light. Humility is so fundamental a requirement for gaining further light and truth that without it we cannot grow. The two are so intimately linked together they form a near equivalency.

APRIL 19, 2010

BYU Women’s Rugby

The BYU women’s rugby team forfeited the championship opportunity because of required competition play on Sunday. An article was written about the event, which can be found at:

<http://www.fanhouse.com/2010/04/18/to-pray-or-play-that-is-not-a-question/?ncid=webmaildl5>

I applaud anyone who puts principle ahead of self. Sacrifice is still required.

APRIL 19, 2010

Pax Americana

Prof has left a new comment on your post

“The battle is the Lord’s”:

I’m particularly interested in what you mean by this: “We live in a world today in which Pax Americana has established controlled violence the world over. The fear of destruction holds forces at bay which would gladly destroy one another if permitted. The key to replacing the current world order with

another one, as many insurgencies the world over recognize, is the destruction of Pax Americana by destroying American hegemony. A lot of people are working on that, both inside and outside the United States.

Do you support “American hegemony” in order to maintain “Pax Americana”? And from what source did you get these terms?

Those are really several questions. I will try and answer briefly. This is a very cursory explanation to the inquiry.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, there followed the universal recognition that there only one surviving super-power. I think the truth was that even prior to the Soviet breakup there was only one real superpower, but the international propaganda machine and the eastern European subjugation by the Soviets essentially formed such a land barrier and controlled such a population base that they were accepted as a second super-power. The reality was somewhat different, but in this world perception is everything and so long as everyone believed there were “two” the world acted consistent with their being two.

Now the world acts consistent with there only being one. As a result of there being one, political pacts, economic alliances, trade, military alliances, treaties, social mores, entertainment, language, corporate interests and sea lanes are all governed by what the United States tolerates or accepts. Even China has so limited a military sphere of influence that they can “control” Tibet and the upper Korean Peninsula, but have no ability to project power over active American resistance. That does not mean they aren’t working on it. They are. But they can’t compete at present.

Whatever other strengths other nations may possess, they cannot compete with the total inventory of American power. Economi-

cally the entirety of Europe is not able to compete with American economic power. There are other members of the nuclear power states, but none with the delivery systems, proven capabilities and demonstrated will to use nuclear weapons in combat.

A full elaboration of the unique American combination of power is far too great a subject to cover here. Just one other example: Al Jazeera was launched as a counterpart to CNN, Fox News and the BBC. These networks dominate international news. An earthquake in Istanbul happens and residents there turn their TV's to CNN, Fox News or the BBC to find out what is happening. Al Jazeera is an attempt to get another cultural perspective different from an Anglo-American vantage point. To possess the dominate vantage point in the news is to possess the advantage.

Why are Turkey and Greece not in combat with one another despite their long lasting territorial disputes? They are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) founded by the US at the end of WWII to attempt to avoid another land war in Europe. Why is the Korean Peninsula not back in combat? The fear is that it would draw the US and China into direct conflict and that would be a disaster for the whole world. So an uneasy peace endures. Why is Taiwan not overrun at present by China, when they claim sovereignty over it? It is because China has not yet reached a point of development where they feel safe to have a direct conflict with the US. Again, there could be many examples, but the world stage is set by American interests which dominate other considerations.

The resentments pile up and attempt to organize. Chavez has high hopes in Venezuela, just as Castro had high hopes in the 1950's in Cuba. But just like Castro, Chavez is having a difficult time keeping the lights on in his energy rich country.

The current American president candidly admitted “whether we like it or not, American is the world’s sole superpower.” He’s taking flack for that right now. But it was a correct statement. America is the dominant power, and its interests influence the world over. Foreign aid props up many countries which would not exist without it.

There are many people who would like to see American power end. You would have to have never seen the news to not hear that rhetoric coming from critics the world over. And inside the American political landscape there are those who want to see an end of American foreign entanglements. The most outspoken may be the Libertarian Party, whose candor about the need to withdraw from the world stage is part of their every campaign.

I have not evaluated the wisdom of the reality. I’ve only commented on its existence. How America got here is a product of history and decisions made in past generations. President Washington’s Farewell Address cautioned against “foreign entanglements” which would cost us lives and treasure. He was right about what he foresaw. President Eisenhower warned against the “military industrial complex” (a term he coined), and how it would eventually control such economic interests that it would skew our national policies and priorities. I think he was right as well.

The terms are taken from Roman history and applied to American history. We are re-living the Roman model, without borrowing wisdom from those who saw its decline and fall. Gibbon is still good history, and a model for modern historians as well. The parallels between these two empires are so striking that even the element used by the Lord in Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream are similar. The Roman being iron, and the American being iron and clay. The parallels are unmistakable to any student of history.

We repeat history. We are living with the past and cannot see ourselves outside the forms we have inherited from our past. Tradition controls even the way we read scripture. Therefore we are blind to what they tell us until it has been fulfilled, at which point we see in hindsight only what things we have forfeited. Zion is alien here, and therefore we have a difficult time envisioning it without putting it into Babylonian/Roman form. Zion, however, is without ambition, competition and aggression. It has fled.

APRIL 20, 2010

Seeking for and Obtaining Gifts—Part of the Expected Pattern

I received this comment and question:

As I have learned more about the scriptures, I have come to find many “anomalies” in the lives of the prophets are actually not anomalous but part of the expected pattern. Examples of things I once thought exceptions which I now believe are expected steps along “the way” include Moses’ struggle with the devil, the 2nd Comforter, the sealing power, Christ’s willingness to give Nephi anything he asks, John’s vision of all, Abraham’s astral journey and John’s entering into the temple in heaven.

The appearance of the Liahona in the Book of Mormon seems anomalous, a physical object of divine origin given to aid his servant in completing his journey. But is the Liahona in fact, an anomaly or can any righteous member expect physical tokens from heaven to aid them on their own journey before they arrive in the celestial kingdom?

I would agree that there is a pattern, it is universal, and the prophets are trying to give that pattern to us in the history they

record, the examples they teach, the parables they offer and the commandments they reveal. There is one, universal system which everyone will receive as part of their journey back to God. In order to pass the angels who stand as sentinels along the path you must proceed in an orderly fashion through the veil. It will be one by one.

Yes, I agree there are physical tokens given as an aid to getting there. Take the gift of seership, as an example. We know there was an instrument given to Joseph to aid him at the first. He used it to gain an understanding even before the translation of the Book of Mormon plates commenced. He would tell his family stories about the ancient inhabitants, their customs, manner of dress, etc. His mother, Lucy Mack Smith records this in her history. This understanding came as a result of Joseph's possession and use of the Urim and Thummim, making him a "seer" in the sense of the term used in Mosiah (Mosiah 8:13–17).

Eventually Joseph developed the independent gift of seership, and no longer required the physical instrument to be used in order to exercise the gift. He became, like Enoch, able to "see" without use of the instrument (Moses 6:35–36).

We tend to think this a great rarity and grand exception. Yet we also find that everyone who enters into the same state of exaltation as God will be required to possess this same gift. (D&C 130:5–11.) If possession or development of this capacity is expected for all those who reside with God, then the gift is intended to be universal among the exalted. Therefore, we should not delay seeking this as one of the best gifts to desire (D&C 46:8; 1 Cor. 12:31).

Since whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto will rise with us, and you will have so much more the advantage if you have gained greater light and truth by your heed and diligence than others who have failed to show such diligence, there is no reason

to delay. Just as Moses wished all men were prophets, I wish all men were seers.

APRIL 20, 2010

Truth = Truth

Truth is a knowledge of things as they were, as they are, and as they are to come (D&C 93:24). As a result, truth is really not subject to debate. We either know the truth or we are deceived. If we know it, we have an obligation to declare it. If we are deceived, we have an obligation to be humble enough to at least consider the truth before we reject it.

When we dispute in anger, we move away from truth.

For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. (3 Ne. 11:29)

The truth is not being taught when men argue in anger with one another. When they do, the Spirit withdraws and learning ends.

Truth should appeal to the heart and mind. It should bring joy. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy;” (D&C 11:13). I do not believe there is any past scriptural precedent for angry people bearing a threatening message about vengeance and revenge who then proceeded to build Zion. I doubt we will see such an unprecedented and unscriptural event occur in the future.

Words that describe Zion include:

Humble

Meek

Submissive

Contrite

One

No poor among them

Presence of God among them

Peaceful

Only people not at war

Singing songs of everlasting joy

Of one heart

It is an odd thing how those who learn about the possibility of Zion think that possessing that awareness entitles them to live there. Before anyone will be admitted to Zion they will necessarily have to bring it into their own lives. Gathering a crowd without considering first who has been chosen by the angels who possess the keys for this gathering, and those who have been sealed in their foreheads by those angels, is just another foolish and futile act (D&C_77:11).

Hugh Nibley wrote an article in *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless* titled: "Zeal without Knowledge." That title was taken from Romans 10:2. In that article he wrote:

We think it more commendable to get up at 5:00 a.m. to write a bad book than to get up at nine o'clock to write a good one. That is pure zeal that tends to breed a race of insufferable, self-righteous prigs and barren minds.

Nibley could be so hard on us at times. But then again, he also hit the nail on the head.

For some particularly unsuited people to talk expectantly about Zion when they are utterly unprepared to understand the subject is beyond irony. For them to be stirred to anger about the subject

because they disagree with another's view about Zion must provoke both bemusement and despair for the gods.

APRIL 20, 2010

Why *The Second Comforter*?

I was asked why my list of essential books included *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*, but omitted my other books. I responded:

If someone understands the message of *The Second Comforter*, they will be able to get for themselves everything else contained in all the other books. *The Second Comforter* is not about me, it is about the reader. You should apply that book to yourself, which will lead you inevitably back to the presence of the Lord. The Lord will then instruct you in all things needed to be prepared to be presented to the Father.

Beloved Enos is a description of the results of that audience. If you understand and apply *The Second Comforter* you will receive those results.

Come, Let Us Adore Him is my testimony of Christ. But my testimony is not as important as your own. It may help you to develop your own, but without your own testimony borrowing from another can never be the end of the journey.

I wouldn't write a book unless I believed it to be important and to contain truth coming from a higher source. Nevertheless, it is what you know, not what I as an author may know, that will save you. It is the salvation of others, not the attention of others, that concerns me. If I can help point them to the Lord, then I have some limited use. Beyond that, I have no purpose.

Since all that we hope to receive from the Lord flows from the discussion in *The Second Comforter*, it is that book which I believe to be most important.

COMMENTS:

DJones · APRIL 20, 2010 AT 6:21 PM

In your recent post about being a “student of the Lord”, you wrote:

Our obligation is to conform our opinions to the Lord’s instruction.

That requires us to be careful about how we listen, how hard our hearts are, how much we want to let in, and how loyal we choose to be to traditions.

In my 35 years of membership in the Church, I have noticed that a good many preach and teach doctrine based on the traditions of men, without consulting the scriptures to even validate what is being taught is even true. So, when someone like you or a Hugh Nibley or a Bruce Porter, or another who teach from scriptures comes along, a wall of resistance appears in the mindset of an audience...whether or not that audience is a Gospel Doctrine Class, Priesthood lesson, or even a casual discussion around a dinner table with family members... for me at least, frustration levels are high most of the time when my attempts to insert a higher level of Gospel truths into the discussion is thwarted. It seems like most members in my circle of (non) influence are content to remain in ignorance or to hold on to “traditions” that just are not true!!

I’ve read in your book, *The Second Comforter*, the confronting statement on p.14: “You have no right to impose upon unprepared souls higher information than they are able to bear.”

Your blog is confronting to many, and to others it is a source of welcomed words, thoughts and concepts that have been thought about but never expressed except in well chosen circles, and maybe even then, with a great deal of caution.

Any advice or counsel would be welcomed.

Denver Snuffer · APRIL 20, 2010 AT 8:51 PM

There are some “justified” ways to teach. Christ used the little children to teach them directly what their parents were not able to take in, except indirectly. His message was abbreviated to the parents. Then His tongue was loosed as He taught their children. The parents were able to “eavesdrop” and hear what was lawful for Him to give the innocent children, but not permitted to be given directly to them. So He did a ‘workaround’ that was in keeping with the limitations which are imposed on the most sacred things. That is the first principle. You cannot reveal to the unworthy; but you can minister to those who are prepared and others can eavesdrop who may then become able to take it in.

The second principle is that you cannot force information upon someone. You can answer questions, when asked. But you cannot impose. If you notice, this blog is almost entirely composed of answers to questions others asked me. I respond. The questions are asked by those who are ready to hear an answer in almost every case. The forum, however, has a lot of others who are “eavesdropping” and may be benefited by the answer.

This pattern is taken from the Lord’s own example. I did not invent it. I am following it. It is a pattern which will work, if followed.

You cannot reveal something to the unprepared and have them receive it. Cannot happen. When they are ready, it will open to their view. Until then, you can speak a truth, but they will not comprehend it. Worse still, if you do a poor job you may cause someone to reject a truth which will condemn them. So the pace must be controlled by the questioner. Without a question (or constraint by the Lord), I remain silent. With a question to answer, however, I am free to respond.

Look at Christ’s ministry among both those at Jerusalem and in the Americas. You will find this pattern in both.

APRIL 21, 2010

Lectures on Faith No. 6

This is an excerpt from the Sixth Lecture in *The Lectures on Faith*. This was at one point a part of the Doctrine & Covenants. They were prepared for the School of the Prophets and approved by Joseph Smith. Their presence in the scriptures was the reason for the change in the title from Book of Commandments to Doctrine and Covenants. The “Doctrine” portion of the book was comprised of these lectures. They were subsequently removed from the D&C. Below is an excerpt which I think is needed to be understood by anyone who would like to comprehend the faith restored through Joseph Smith:

An actual knowledge to any person that the course of life which he pursues is according to the will of God, is essentially necessary to enable him to have that confidence in God, without which no person can obtain eternal life.

It was this that enabled the ancient saints to endure all their afflictions and persecutions, and to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing (not believing merely) that they had a more “enduring substance. (Heb. 10:34)

Having the assurance that they were pursuing a course which was agreeable to the will of God, they were enabled to take, not only the spoiling of their goods and the wasting of their substance joyfully, but also to suffer death in its most horrid forms; knowing (not merely believing) that when this earthly house of their tabernacle was dissolved, they had a building of God, a house “not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2 Cor. 5:1)

Such was, and always will be, the situation of the saints of God, that unless they have an actual knowledge that the course that they

are pursuing is according to the will of God, they will grow weary in their minds and faint; for such has been, and always will be, the opposition in the hearts of unbelievers and those that know not God, against the pure and unadulterated religion of heaven (the only thing which ensures eternal life), that they will persecute to the uttermost all that worship God according to his revelations, receive the truth in the love of it, and submit themselves to be guided and directed by his will, and drive them to such extremities that nothing short of an actual knowledge of their being the favorites of heaven, and of their having embraced that order of things which God has established for the redemption of man, will enable them to exercise that confidence in him necessary for them to overcome the world, and obtain that crown of glory which is laid up for them that fear God.

For a man to lay down his all, his character and reputation, his honor and applause, his good name among men, his houses, his lands, his brothers and sisters, his wife and children, and even his own life also, counting all things but filth and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, requires more than mere belief or supposition that he is doing the will of God, but actual knowledge; realizing that when these sufferings are ended he will enter into eternal rest, and be a partaker of the glory of God.

For unless a person does know that he is walking according to the will of God, it would be offering an insult to the dignity of the Creator were he to say that he would be a partaker of his glory when he should be done with the things of this life.

But when he has this knowledge, and most assuredly knows that he is doing the will of God, his confidence can be equally strong that he will be a partaker of the glory of God.

Let us here observe, that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things, never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things; it was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things, that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God.

When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice, because he seeks to do his will, he does know most assuredly that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not nor will not seek his face in vain.

Under these circumstances then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life.

It is in vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they in like manner offer unto him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him.

It was in offering sacrifices that Abel, the first martyr, obtained knowledge that he was accepted of God.

And from the days of righteous Abel to the present time, the knowledge that men have that they are accepted in the sight of God, is obtained by offering sacrifice.

And in the last days, before the Lord comes, he is to gather together his saints who have made a covenant with him by sacri-

fice. (Ps. 50:3–5, “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant unto me by sacrifice.”

Those then who make the sacrifice will have the testimony that their course is pleasing in the sight of God, and those who have this testimony will have faith to lay hold on eternal life, and will be enabled through faith to endure unto the end, and receive the crown that is laid up for them that love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But those who do not make the sacrifice cannot enjoy this faith, because men are dependent upon this sacrifice in order to obtain this faith; therefore, they cannot lay hold upon eternal life, because the revelations of God do not guarantee unto them the authority so to do; and without this guarantee faith could not exist.

All the saints of whom we have account in all the revelations of God which are extant, obtained the knowledge which they had of their acceptance in his sight, through the sacrifice which they offered unto him.

And through the knowledge thus obtained, their faith became sufficiently strong to lay hold upon the promise of eternal life, and to endure as seeing him who is invisible; and were enabled, through faith, to combat the powers of darkness, contend against the wiles of the adversary, overcome the world, and obtain the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.

But those who have not made this sacrifice to God, do not know that the course which they pursue is well pleasing in his sight; for whatever may be their belief or their opinion, it is a matter

of doubt and uncertainty in their minds; and where doubt and uncertainty are, there faith is not, nor can it be.

For doubt and faith do not exist in the same person at the same time.

So that persons whose minds are under doubts and fears cannot have unshaken confidence; and where unshaken confidence is not, there faith is weak; and where faith is weak, the persons will not be able to contend against all the opposition, tribulations, and afflictions which they will have to encounter in order to be heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus; and they will grow weary in their minds, and the adversary will have power over them and destroy them.

APRIL 21, 2010

FYI

I have been surprised by the level of excitement which some of my posts have caused. My views are an extension of the faith I hold. It is not possible to take one issue and isolate it from the whole of what I know to be true. Therefore, if you want to understand the view, you need to take the time to read what I have written, which explains fully what I know, and why I know it.

To understand it will be necessary for you to study the faith as restored through Joseph Smith. I have explained what I believe and why I believe it in six books now. Rather than attempting to argue me into another position, it might be helpful to first understand what I have written.

However, I realize some people will not do that and therefore I attempt to respond piecemeal here to questions asked. But there are really two dialogues going on here. One is between those who have read what I have written and know why I am responding as

I do. The other is between those who have no background from which to understand my answers and who make presumptions about them.

I appreciate the convictions of others, including those who disagree with me. I am thankful to the people who raise questions about what I have written. The level of excited rhetoric is something I do not find personally offensive, but I worry that those who use it will later regret doing so. I put up a quote from my father a little bit ago about never speaking a word in anger that he did not later regret. I would extend that to words spoken in haste, or in overwrought judgmentalism. Oftentimes at a later point a person regrets saying them. So I was extending to the authors of the comments a few days to reflect on whether they wanted them to be put up before them appearing here, as a courtesy to those who wrote them.

I am a trial lawyer. Everything I do for a living is opposed by someone who is paid to oppose my positions, my arguments, my reasoning. Therefore I do not get upset when someone holds a contrary view and expresses it. I live with that daily. My concern lies with those who express forcefully and judgmentally things which they may, upon second thought, realize reflects more about them than they would like.

In any event, I do want to note that there are at least two different dialogues going on here at any given time.

CHAPTER 10

The Traditions of Men

APRIL 21, 2010

The Traditions of Men, Part 1

I received this question in a comment: *“You often refer to incorrect traditions that you see members following. Can you give me a few specifics?”*

This is a potentially sensitive question and I want to answer it with care. Before doing so, however, I want to clarify some initial matters: First, I sustain the church’s leaders and I do not challenge their right to preside, make decisions, direct the affairs of the church, control tithing and call leadership. I “fall in line” behind them and do not question their right to lead. Second, I have a testimony of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and of President Monson as the only one authorized to exercise all the keys within the church. Third, I do not think that observations about the church, even if they are critical of it, are proof that someone is misled, under Satan’s influence, or on the road to apostasy. In fact, there are many active Latter-day Saints who have concerns, but who are content to remain active, faithful and supportive members of the church. *Concerns* are not the same thing as rebellion or rejec-

tion. Fourth, I do not either expect or advocate any changes being made. When or if changes are made they will happen as a result of someone else's actions, more than likely someone who would be in a position of authority within the church. I am not such a person.

Also, I want to be clear that I may personally make a value judgment about what has changed and mourn the loss, but another person may look at the same events and say they are good, developmental and preferred to what was there before. So these are **MY** opinions, and not necessarily the view you should adopt as your own view. You will have to decide such things for yourself. That having been clarified, here are some of the things which have changed dramatically and are the product of accepted tradition now, but were entirely innovative when they happened.

The discarding of the Presiding Patriarch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. There is no scriptural authority for this change and there was nothing in the original order which suggested that a change would be made. Now the current state of things is equivocal. We actually have still a Presiding Patriarch who is still living. He is emeritus. Whether the church intends to terminate the office upon his death is unclear. If they do, that will be an innovation and (in my personal opinion) unfortunate.

The alteration of the Presiding High Priest's status from "President" to "Prophet." From the time of Joseph Smith until 1955 the term "Prophet" was used exclusively to refer to Joseph Smith. It was changed in 1955 to apply to the living President, David O. McKay. Before then no living man was ever referred to as "Prophet" within the church, other than Joseph Smith. When the word "Prophet" was used after Joseph's death, it was understood the term meant Joseph Smith.

The result of this change was to create a “cult of personality” around the church president in much the same way that the Catholic Church has created a “cult of personality” around Mother Mary. You need to understand that whole subject before you get too excited by my putting it that way. If you do not understand this technical description then you need to become acquainted with it to be able to comprehend what I am saying here. To briefly touch upon the subject, the Catholic view of the “cult of personality” around Mother Mary is positive. It does not get viewed by them as a defect or some terrible aberration. Pope John Paul II considered himself a part of that “cult” involving Mary.

In our context, what has happened as a result of this alteration is that the former significance of the church’s president was administrative, and priestly. He was a final arbitrator and judge, a presiding authority and a leader whose words were to be considered carefully. He was NOT considered infallible or to be invariably inspired. In fact, during the presidencies of the Prophet Joseph Smith, President Brigham Young and President John Taylor, they all spoke against any notion of infallibility of the church’s president. President Young was particularly cautionary about trusting church leaders instead of the Holy Spirit as your guide. President Young said too much trust of a church leader would bring the saints to hell.

President Woodruff was so criticized by members for the Manifesto that he defended himself by claiming that the Lord wouldn’t let him make a mistake on that order. He said that the Lord just wouldn’t let the church’s president lead the saints astray. That comment was what would later be used to buttress the notion popularly believed today that the “prophet is infallible.”

President Heber J. Grant was an unpopular church president. One of the problems with getting the saints to respond to the

church president's counsel was solved when the president of the church became the living "Prophet." You can reject or question counsel from an administrative authority. But to question a "Prophet of God" was to invite the damnation of hell. So the change in nomenclature worked a mighty change in the perceptions of the Latter-day Saints. The "cult of personality" was an inevitable result. Everything the president did would be done as "God's Living Prophet." No matter what decisions were made, no matter their wisdom, goodness or undesirability, the result was the same: "They **must** be inspired. We may not have the human capacity to see it, but God's ways are higher than man's after all. To question is to lack in faith."

The change put the president into a league in which at a minimum criticism was disrespectful. Worse, if you were convinced that he made a mistake, it followed almost as an inevitability that you were absolutely forbidden from saying so because to do so revealed a "weakness in the faith." In fact, there are General Conference talks which speak about criticizing the church president (or "Living Prophet") claiming that the criticism was due to a weak faith, and it would lead to apostasy unless a person repented.

This cult of personality has grown as a result of internal structural changes, including correlation. The outcome is particularly dramatic with respect to the tolerance of women's inspiration. Whereas, in the early years a woman could be regarded as a "prophetess" (Eliza R. Snow, for example), today that recognition would be offensive to correlation, where all functions are combined under priesthood, and all priesthood is subject to the president alone as final authority.

The changes have been evolutionary, and over a single person's lifetime not all that dramatic. However the cumulative effect from the start to now is dramatic. Right now the church views any

revelation or miraculous event originating with a woman as suspicious. It was so markedly contrary to this trend when a mission president's wife foretold the Chilean earthquake, and the *Meridian Magazine* covered the event without any notice that the message came through the wife, that I linked to that article on this blog. The article presumed the propriety of the inspiration. But the message came to the wife, not the mission president. That would be an un-correlated event today, and there is an existing infrastructure that would frown on that. Happily the event was not questioned, but instead celebrated.

The “cult of personality” has been extended to cover everything. You name it it is now covered. Take any complaint at all: The chapel paint is hideous! Well, there are those who will argue that the chapel's paint is chosen by the regular authorities of the church, who are chosen by the prophet, and your complaint about the paint color is really questioning the Prophet of God's authority. Therefore you are on the road to apostasy...

It doesn't matter the subject. The argument works by extension to everything. The Bishop cheated his business partner: You shouldn't question that because...yada, yada,...you're questioning the Prophet of God. Therefore you are on the road to apostasy.

Try: My child was molested by her primary teacher. Oddly enough it even works there, too. At least there are many people willing to apply that by extension to every ridiculous proposition advanced. So the cult of personality has now assumed a front and center position to curtail discussion, debate or consideration of even healthy alternatives to the way things are. EVERYTHING is inspired. EVERYTHING, by extension, is happening because a “Prophet of God” has made it so. Therefore unless you concede that “All is

Well in Zion” you are questioning the “Prophet of God” and on the road to apostasy.

The stifling effect of this is pernicious. It is not a view shared at the top. In fact, the brethren preach against this notion, but to no avail. I have coined the term “Brethrenites” to describe the result of this cult of personality in my book *Eighteen Verses*. There’s a chapter in there that discusses this problem.

Crap, this is going to take longer than I thought. Well, here we go again. This will be “Part One” and I’ll continue this with something more.

APRIL 22, 2010

The Traditions of Men, Part 2, Continued

Originally, the view of personal revelation or any visionary experiences was quite different than what many believe today. In fact there are those who claim that ANY vision, visitation or revelation not received by the Prophet (meaning the president of the church alone) should be viewed as false. God speaks to the Prophet, and only to the Prophet, and we are to wait to hear what God wants us to know from the Prophet. This is an extension of the adoption of the term “Prophet” and the resulting cult of personality.

During Joseph Smith’s time, he welcomed the revelatory experiences of others. He neither discouraged them nor felt threatened by them. His enthusiasm for what others told him of their revelations, and the acceptance of others’ revelations is readily apparent in the first volume of the *Joseph Smith Papers*. Today the tradition is quite the contrary. Today, if anyone has a revelation they are advised to keep it to themselves. When others hear about them the cautionary attitude adopted is — ‘if it were something important then the Prophet of God would have told you about it.’

The effect of the adoption of the term “Prophet” for the living church president has been far ranging and dramatic. There has been a dramatic change in people’s expectation of personal revelation, as a result of this title shift. The result is, of course, if you do not expect revelation you are not going to receive it. The expected charismatic gifts of the Spirit during the early church is now replaced by the assumption that charismatic gifts are driven by office and position. Bishops get revelation for wards (and by extension no one else does or can). Stake presidents get revelation for stakes (and by extension no one else does or can). Mission presidents get revelation for missions (and by extension no one else can or does—except in the notable case of the recent earthquake in Chile, as I mentioned before). What has always been true is that presiding authorities alone are the final say on revelation or guidance for their calling. What is not true is that no-one else can, has or does get revelation. Revelation comes to those who are prepared. It comes in response to seeking, asking, knocking, and not automatically as a result of a new office or position. Now someone called to office may humble themselves, begin seeking, asking and knocking and then get revelation. But the revelation was always available, and the same information is available to all, “even the least of the Saints” as Joseph Smith put it. The proposition that there is a control over available revelation is one of the results of the post-1955 development of the cult of personality centered on the President as the Living Prophet of God.

Another change now firmly in place is the administration of temporal affairs within the church. For example, the Presiding Bishop’s office controlled the operations involving all the church’s construction projects until the David O. McKay presidency. As a result of some problems (beyond the scope of this), the **First**

Presidency decided to take construction over as part of their duties. One of the members of the First Presidency got involved in some difficulties (again beyond the scope of this), and to placate the Quorum of the Twelve, the responsibilities were shared. The result was that the First Presidency and Quorum of Twelve now have budgetary involvement with the church's building program. This is a massive undertaking. It involves worldwide construction of church facilities. It is a major duty devolving upon these men. However, it was one time an Aaronic Priesthood assignment, and the duty of the Presiding Bishop's office. Temporal concerns are associated with that order of Priesthood. On the other hand, the higher Priesthood is involved primarily with the spiritual concerns of the church. It's all in the D&C. But the shift of Aaronic/temporal concerns onto the shoulders of the Melchizedek Priesthood leaders has its effect. The extent of that effect has been reflected in comments made by those who serve in the Twelve or First Presidency. They hardly have time to do more than move from one meeting to another. One said he never had time to reflect or meditate.

The original Twelve Apostles of this dispensation were given a charge by Oliver Cowdrey that their ordination was not complete until they had received an audience with Christ. That audience was what would entitle them to be a witness of the resurrection. The charge was given to newly ordained Apostles from the time of the first called Twelve until 1911, when the charge was discontinued. It was discontinued because so few of them had ever received an audience with Christ. Since then the Apostles have been encouraged to bear a witness of Christ based upon their spiritual conviction that He lived, died and rose from the dead. The manner in which this is done is to suggest an actual witness of His resurrection. But the words are carefully chosen.

When he was put under oath by the Senate Confirmation Committee, President Joseph F. Smith was asked directly if he was a “prophet of God.” His response was, “my people sustain me as such.” The senator asking the question didn’t understand the answer, and asked again. After some back and forth, President Joseph F. Smith was asked directly if he had ever had a revelation; to which he responded that he had not. He added a bit later that he, like all other members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had a testimony that Joseph Smith was a Prophet and Jesus Christ had appeared to him.

[Now as an aside, this testimony was in 1905. Later, in 1918 President Joseph F. Smith received the vision now published as Section 138 of the Doctrine and Covenants; the Vision of the Redemption of the Dead.]

The church holds the tradition that the First Presidency and Twelve are sustained as “Prophets, Seers and Revelators” and as a result of that sustaining vote they must necessarily have all seen Christ. This idea/tradition is so widespread that even when the brethren clarify what their testimony consists of most members of the church won’t listen to, or accept what they say. I’ve posted about President Packer’s talk on his own testimony a little while ago in another post. There are those who don’t believe him, and insist he is holding back because such things are just “too sacred to be revealed.” However, the calling of an Apostle, as set out in Section 107, is to **bear witness of Jesus Christ**. There isn’t anything “too sacred” about bearing testimony of Him that would prevent an Apostle from stating without equivocation they are a witness by having seen the Risen Lord. President Packer has been truthful, forthcoming and honest. I accept what he says at face value and I respect and sustain him all the more because of it. He is indeed an

Apostle of Jesus Christ. And he is also an honest witness of Him. However, he has essentially explained what his testimony consists of honestly, truthfully and fully in General Conference. People continue to ignore his words and substitute the myth for the reality.

The terms “prophet, seer and revelator” come from scripture where the president of the church is to “be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God” (D&C 107:92). The way this is read in the church today is that any person who holds the office of President of the High Priesthood is ipso facto a “seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet.” Meaning the office defines the gifts. What if that is not the intent of the scripture? What if the scripture means, instead, that a person who is these things is the only one to be called to the office? That is, unless the person “be” such a person possessing these gifts, he is not and cannot be the President? Such questions are not even possible to be asked today. They are, according to the current reading of that verse, evidence of weak faith and evidence someone is headed for apostasy. Therefore a discussion about this verse’s meaning and possible differences of meaning are excluded and no other view is possible to be discussed.

President David O. McKay did not get a testimony of the church until sometime after he had been called as an Apostle. President Gordon B. Hinckley, when asked about revelation, said “I don’t know that we need much revelation anymore.” President Packer has defined revelation as when the presiding authorities reach an agreement. President Nibley (a counselor in the First Presidency and Hugh Nibley’s grandfather) said if an angel were to appear to him he would jump out the window. There are other examples, but the point is that there are many statements which have been made by the highest authorities in the church which

contradict the popular myth that the Lord has and does regularly appear to, meet with, and speak face to face with the presiding authorities. Despite this, there are people who presume the Lord is in the weekly meeting in the Temple, every Thursday, telling them how to run His church. In contrast, President Young said when he asks the Lord for guidance and then he receives nothing, he will make his best judgment and proceed. And the Lord is bound to sustain him in his decision, since he asked for guidance. That approach is healthy, and allowed President Young and others to move forward. However, it is one thing for men of good faith and decency, who are making honest and worthwhile efforts to manage the church to have our prayers, faith and confidence; and quite another to assume these men quote the Lord with their every breath. As a church this subject is just not discussed. As a result those who suspect that the brethren are making great efforts and are good men, but who may not have had an audience with the Lord are kept from asking the question. When a Gentile reporter has the impertinence to ask such a question, they are rebuked and told things like that are sacred.

A Prophet of God is not required to have seen Him. A prophet can and has been inspired to speak for the Lord by the inspiration of the Spirit. But when the scriptures use this phrase “and the word of the Lord came unto me, saying...” This formula assures the listener that the words which follow originate from the Lord and not a good and honest man’s best advice. All this has happened in the past and therefore you cannot discount a prophet’s calling because the word of the Lord comes by the Spirit, rather than from a personal visitation. Visitations are rare. However, the calling of a prophet in scripture was not institutional. The Lord was directly, personally and individually involved. Moses was told by the Lord,

directly, as the Lord stood in a pillar-cloud at the door of the tabernacle: “Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream” (Numbers 12:5–6).

When the Church was led by a president (from the death of Joseph Smith until 1955) there was no cult of personality around the church president. He was the presiding High Priest over the High Priesthood. When the title shifted, things began to change. Today a discussion about this process is not possible because the subject matter is too charged.

The difference between good men doing good things in good faith, who are entitled to our support in their calling and efforts on the one hand, and a prophet of God whose words are questioned at the peril of eternal damnation on the other and is the overwhelming difference which now plagues the church. We cannot have a discussion that questions the wisdom of church policies, procedures or decisions. When even obvious mistakes are made, people who notice are not to speak of it, and if they do they are told that they are weak in the faith and on the road to apostasy. Criticism is essential to a healthy mental state. Without feedback and criticism you cannot raise a normal, healthy child. Try raising a child to whom you lavish only praise, and to whom you say, without regard to how bad, poorly or evil an act they commit: “You are inspired! You are right! It was good of you to have done that! God Himself inspired that act!” What you would raise up would be a monster. Without criticism and challenges to decisions made, no-one can ultimately become anything worthwhile.

We have a church in which those who love it the most, and whose perceptions may be the keenest, are required to take a host of questions, suggestions or criticisms and never give them voice.

The only negative feed-back must originate from either outside the church, or if inside they are cast out because they are weak in the faith and on the road to apostasy. This was the inevitable evolution from the cult of personality. It is still unfolding. It will progress in a funnel which narrows over time until, at last, when the work has been fully completed, we will have a Pope who is infallible. Not because he is always inspired, but instead because he holds the keys to bind on earth and in heaven, and as a result God is bound by whatever he does. History assures us this will be the case. UNLESS, of course, we open things up to a more healthy way of going about our Father's business.

Well, this is too long. I'm not done. But I'll add more later.

APRIL 22, 2010

The Traditions of Men, Part 3, Continued

This subject causes a great deal of anxiety for saints. The fact it causes anxiety is proof that the saints have become conditioned to a mythology which requires everything to be good, all to be well, our current path a direct line to Zion itself, and all questions concerning the current state of affairs to be wrong. More than "wrong," questions are evidence of weak faith and the road to apostasy.

From the questions which started as soon as this subject began, I see I need to reiterate what I said at the first. I have a testimony, I am active in the church, and I am not in a position to change things. I support the brethren, pay tithing, serve where called and do not challenge the right of the regularly constituted authorities to manage the affairs of the church. I rise when President Monson enters a room I am in, I sustain him with my vote, my prayers and my confidence. I admire him. I posted about him a few days back. I meant what I said. I do not envy him nor aspire to church

leadership. I am not called and do not anticipate I would ever even be considered; in part because of things like this subject appearing on this blog and concerns raised in books I have written.

I love the church and I am content as a Latter-day Saint. I love my ward and serve gladly wherever I am called.

The fact that those clarifications need to be added again, although it should have been apparent from the beginning remarks, is again revealing how shaky the saints are today. We do not have a foundation that allows us to consider alternatives. We have a single “on/off” switch for all subjects and for our testimonies. That is NOT as it should be. We should be able to confront dilemmas, difficulties, troubling news and failures by leaders while we suspend judgment and tolerate dissonance. We want instant messages, instead of having the patience to see the Hand of the Lord work over decades to bring good things from bad.

An open, candid and critical look at ourselves is not possible with people who are so insecure that they feel threatened. The progression of these insecurities will be disastrous unless at some point it is reversed. When those who raise questions are excluded, told they are weak in the faith and are on the road to apostasy, eventually everyone who is thoughtful is chased away from the church. Instead of celebrating their critical thinking and working to understand issues better, we chase some of the best minds out of the church. I wish all our critics were active members. I wish all our discussions were open enough to allow the marketplace of ideas inside the church to air everything. As I have said before, I believe the truth will prevail. You can knock it down, burn it, pave it over, kill it and threaten it, but it will prevail. A whisper of truth will overcome a hurricane of opposition. It endures. It will triumph.

I've only touched on a few matters here. I'm not going to go further at this point. However, the greater mischief we face at present is the de-emphasis of doctrine. We are raising a new breed of Latter-day Saint today whose familiarity with doctrine is negligible. They understand only a fraction of what has been restored, and for many of the doctrines, their understanding is incomplete, or so skewed that they are incorrect. Doctrine has become less important. We feed upon "inspirational stories" that salve the emotions, but do not edify the soul or bring the personal changes necessary to return to God's presence. More and more of the saints grow up inside this new environment and have never even gained a fundamental command of the doctrines which Joseph Smith restored. Gospel Doctrine classes rehash the same material every four years, which is quite challenging to those who have a memory which goes back decades. The format adopted for teaching involves group discussions, and the teacher becomes a "discussion leader." Little is learned. The group is made to share fellowship, and feel better for having attended, without any forward momentum in understanding the doctrines of salvation and exaltation.

When, over time, the leadership is replaced at all levels by those who are raised in the current milieu, the church will have completed a transformation back into a Protestant, powerless body of good people who want to do right and feel good about themselves. But the power of godliness will have fled them.

President Packer again sounded the alarm in General Conference. It was a brilliant talk. I use the term "brilliant" to describe the light within it. He said we had done a "good job of correlating" the priesthood "authority" but we had failed to disburse any "power" in the priesthood. I think it was a wonderful talk. What I would like to see discussed is whether there is a cause-and-effect between

the correlation process on the one hand, and the admitted failure of priesthood power on the other hand. That discussion, however, cannot happen in the current environment. To ask the question about the underlying wisdom of the correlation process would be to directly challenge the “inspiration” of the prophet Harold B. Lee, who created this process. Therefore, any questions about correlation demonstrates that the one asking questions is weak in the faith and on the road to apostasy. So the discussion cannot occur. That is until we become a little more secure in our faith and are willing to de-mythologize the cult of personality and recognize that questions are the first step to getting answers.

I love the church, and my fellow saints. I mourn many of the changes. However, I also celebrate the fact that the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, with all its gifts, privileges, opportunities and power remains still on the earth. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints administers the fundamental ordinances of that Gospel. How far you take it is up to you.

There was a talk in General Conference given by a Seventy named Poleman, in which he distinguished between the church and the gospel. The talk is still available on-line in its original form. However, he was required to re-record the talk to conform to the correlation department’s challenge to any statement which distinguished between the church and the gospel. Right now testimonies within the church recite the mantra “I know the church is true.” The correlation process has made the church into god. People’s testimonies of the “church” have supplanted their testimonies of Christ. Read any Ensign issue of any Conference held within ten years after the triumph of the correlation process, and consider how many of the talks focus upon the church and the church’s processes and goodness, in contrast to how many of the talks focus upon

Jesus Christ and His doctrines. Christ's role has been diminished by the emphasis upon the correlated church.

These are trends and traditions. They are at their incipient stages. We are a 180 year old church. Barely out of the cradle, so to speak. But trends endure. Add another 200 years of progression of these trends and you will vindicate the fellow who said: "When Mormons have been Mormons as long as Catholics have been Catholics, the Mormons will be more Catholic than the Catholics." If you want to see the future of the church in its present course, attend Mass this Saturday evening (held on Saturday so as to keep your Sunday open for basketball playoffs and MLB play now starting).

APRIL 22, 2010

Kim Smith Concert

Subject: Kim Smith Concert

April 30th 7 pm 2001 S State Street North Building Main floor
(Salt Lake Council) Auditorium

COMMENTS:

Taylor · APRIL 22, 2010 AT 10:33 PM

Who is Kim Smith?

Brian Bowler · APRIL 22, 2010 AT 10:35 PM

I attended the Book of Mormon Evidence Conference before General Conference, and Kim Smith and her son was there. I was really touched by her music, her stories of the Smith family, and the Spirit of Emma and Joseph. I felt for the Smith Family, and know that Joseph and Emma still work and yearn to bring their family together.

It taught me that the Gospel truly is about families.

Brian Bowler

Clinton, UT

Denver Snuffer · APRIL 23, 2010 AT 6:36 AM

She is a direct lineal descendant of Joseph and Emma Smith. Her son looks uncannily like Joseph Smith. They perform original music based upon their insights and experiences. The concert is free.

APRIL 23, 2010

Ultimate Source

I really appreciate my status as a lay member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I'm no-one who any of you should think important. I'm just like you. I offer my opinions and they are yours to consider as you try and sort out the challenges of this life. The ultimate source for light, truth and salvation is the Lord. Not me. Not even an institution. Not some other man. You should be dependent upon the Lord for your knowledge and Him alone. The Spirit brings you words from Him.

As you listen to any man speak, measure what he has to say against the standard found in the scriptures and against the whisperings of the Spirit to you. Any man who tries to come between you and the Lord is seeking to make themselves an idol and they will lead you astray. There is no-one who can stand between you and the Lord. He alone is the keeper of the gate, and He does not now and never has employed a servant there (2 Ne. 9:41).

You should obtain your own independent knowledge of everything another man tells you. If you don't then you are surrendering what should never be surrendered: your own agency and responsibility.

APRIL 23, 2010

“...for it shall be sweet unto them.”

I received another inquiry (in the form of a comment on this post) about the subject of self-defense, citing various scriptures from the Book of Mormon as proof I have a flawed view. This is the comment:

I have thought it would be so nice and easy to just let them kill me and go to the spirit world scot free as it were! Clapsed in the arms of Jesus again! No blood on MY hands...

But then I read in the Book of Mormon, the commandment of Jesus:

“And again, the Lord has said that: “Ye shall defend your families even unto bloodshed.”

Alma 43:47

Very clear. So I do not think I am obedient to Him if I refuse to take up arms. How do you reconcile this, Denver?

There is a further warning from this marvelous Book for our day that is apropos: Alma 48:24: “they could not suffer to lay down their lives, that their wives and their children should be massacred by...barbarous cruelty”

You see, I cannot ignore the high probability that I will need to defend my wife and children from “massacre by barbarous cruelty” in the Last Days.

I plead with you NOT to suffer to just lay down your life and watch as you see them massacred.”

I debated over whether to let the subject die or to respond. I decided I'd give the following reply:

The Book of Mormon history of an escalating arms race between the smaller Nephite people, against the greater Lamanite people,

teaches us many things. First, technology can level the playing field. The Nephite technological adaptations kept them safe from Lamanite aggression. Second, an arms race continues after each encounter. The Nephites began using armor. The Lamanites adopted the use of armor. Later wars included this technical advance on both sides of the battlefield. The result was still more innovation by the Nephites, with controlled fortifications, limited points of entry, and kill-zones with cross fire from towers aimed at the aggressive Lamanites. All of this reads like the modern Military-Industrial Complex (to use Pres. Eisenhower's term). It ended badly, however.

Ultimately, it was not the force of arms that brought about peace. It was conversion of the Lamanites, and the Divine power in judgment to destroy the wicked. Conversion allowed some Lamanites to survive the destruction. But the hand of the Lord was what ended the widespread wickedness, killing and disorder.

The conversion of the Lamanites was greatly accelerated when the group converted by Ammon determined to lay down their arms, even at the cost of their lives. Over a thousand of them were killed before the killing stopped. When it stopped, however, more were converted than had been killed.

When the Lord visited them and they experienced a two century long hiatus from warfare, their Zion did not have arms, killing or war. When they divided again, they set in motion a return to the earlier cycles, ultimately ending in the complete destruction of the Nephites. They left a record. Their advice cannot be divided from their history. Their history was filled with violence. It ended in the genocide of the "good guys." The end of the record is referred to by Mormon all throughout his abridgment of the records. We should not miss the end of his story as we read the unfolding story.

Death is not the end. John the Baptist was arrested and beheaded. He suffered no loss. He returned to minister to Joseph and Oliver and bestowed upon us a lost priesthood. Peter and James were martyrs. They suffered no loss either. Stephen was stoned to death, and had the heavens open to him and a visit with the Father before his death. He died forgiving those who stoned him, as he was at that moment filled with grace and charity toward others. Stephen suffered no loss. Joseph Smith was killed by a mob. He suffered no loss. He moved to his inheritance. Isaiah was put inside a hollow log and sawed in two. He suffered no loss.

Killing is not as easy as the theoretically-macho may think. It changes a person. My father landed on Omaha Beach on the morning of June 6, 1944. On the morning of June 7, 1944, he was the only one of his company who was able to continue fighting. He was there at the liberation of Paris. He fought in the Battle of the Bulge. He killed men. It affected him. He could hardly speak about it. What few comments he made were separated by years in between. A sentence here, a comment there. Even when asked directly, he wouldn't offer more than a paragraph. It wasn't a memory he could either forget or bring himself to discuss openly. It is a great and terrible thing to kill another.

Using popular culture to illustrate the point, there is a younger partner of Clint Eastwood's character in *Unforgiven*. He talked about how much he wanted to kill someone. After he had finally killed a man, he said to Eastwood's character, "I'm not like you." Meaning that he couldn't reconcile himself to having taken a man's life. That is only a movie and Hollywood and perhaps overwrought. But it nevertheless touches upon something absolutely true—killing is irrevocable. There is no repair for having taken another's life. Those who do carry that to the grave.

You can toss about quotes from anyone you please. But when you cause another's life to end you have done something irrevocable. You have crossed a line which, even with all your prayers and regrets, you cannot reclaim.

Given the choice between killing and being killed, I think a perfectly rational person can decide they would rather be killed than kill. And I think the Lord could respect a decision of that kind, as well. Death can be sweet for those who are prepared (D&C 42:46).

APRIL 24, 2010

Who Will Save You?

I was asked if some mortals, like Jesus Christ, are inerrant, perfect and without sin. Actually, the question was phrased differently. The question asked if I thought the church president could make mistakes. [I suppose my rephrase gives my view.] But to clarify:

I do not think any person should trust ANY other person to save them. Don't trust another man, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Don't trust me. Don't rely upon those who are gifted, those who lead you, or any man.

I am more afraid that this people have so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire for themselves of God whether they are led by him. I am fearful they settle down in a state of blind self-security, trusting their eternal destiny in the hands of their leaders with a reckless confidence that in itself would thwart the purposes of God in their salvation, and weaken that influence they could give to their leaders, did they know for themselves, by the revelations of Jesus, that they are led in the right way. (Discourses of Brigham Young, 135)

If a man is a leader and he has the Spirit of God upon him, and speaks by the Spirit of God words of eternal life, then I follow the Spirit of God, not the man. I trust no one. And I look to find the Spirit of God, wherever it speaks, without regard to who possess it.

APRIL 24, 2010

Faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ

I've been asked why I remain faithful if I think things are off track. (That's an abbreviated way of stating a long question.)

I believe in the Book of Mormon. Therefore I expect that the Latter-days will be filled with trouble, difficulties, and the church will be struggling with perplexities. If we didn't have problems we wouldn't fit the pattern Nephi, Mormon and Moroni warned about. So when I see problems I do not get anxious, I accept what is and deal with it.

I don't blame anyone. We didn't get here by some single person's failings. We have proceeded carefully, and with the best of intentions. But we still have challenges. That is part of being here in the Telestial Kingdom.

Doing a little good, conferring a little hope, and bringing a little light into the world each day is as much as a person can hope for. I can do that. I am grateful for the limited sphere inside of which I serve. I fight on that small bit of ground and leave the bigger picture for those who are responsible for the bigger picture.

I have a great deal of sympathy for those who are required to lead in this troubled world. I doubt I could have done any better, and fear I may have done a lot worse. So I temper any shortcomings I see with the recognition that things aren't as easy as we sometimes think they are. I'm grateful for what I have been given and am content with life.

APRIL 25, 2010

What Can They Share?

I was asked:

For those among us who have had a personal visit with the Lord...what can they share with us that have not? Can they share what our Lord looked like? His eye color? hair? height? how was he dressed? Is he among us now? How did he sound? Is this too sacred to be discussed openly?

From the beginning, mankind was told not to make idols and displace their reverence for God by a physical image or talisman. It has been enshrined in the Ten Commandments

(Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them. (Ex. 20:4–5).

The commandment extends to the “likeness of anything that is in heaven” and would include the Lord.

The images I have seen of Him are for the most part inaccurate. The reason we don't have accurate pictures is in all likelihood related to the fact that those who come to see Him would understand the importance of avoiding idols and would question the wisdom of recreating an image of Him that might be used by others to displace their attention and worship.

What is appropriate is to affirm that He is real, that He lives, that He has been resurrected from the dead, and that He came, sacrificed and rose because of His role as the Savior and Redeemer of mankind. I've written as much as I've been asked to write about Him by way of testimony in the Appendix to *Eighteen Verses*, in *Come, Let Us Adore Him*, and a brief physical description in *Nephi's*

Isaiah. However, the brief physical description is not enough from which to reconstruct an image. It merely refers to some of His physical attributes and then tie them to the scriptural accounts to show why the narrative in the New Testament would read as it does.

The most important understanding of Christ is tied to what He suffered in Gethsemane. D&C_19:16–20 and my testimony about Gethsemane are both useful in understanding what He went through and what role our own actions will play in obtaining the benefits of His Atonement.

COMMENTS:

db schroeder · APRIL 25, 2010 AT 5:12 PM

Denver,

Clarify one thing..

It is true that in mortality he wasn't as beautiful as He is now, correct?

In mortality he was much more common looking.

We read this in Isaiah I believe.

db's

Denver Snuffer · APRIL 26, 2010 AT 5:24 PM

The Isaiah statement ("there was no beauty in him that we should desire him") I have rendered: "He was not bonafide" or "He had no credentials to command respect" as a better translation of the underlying meaning. He was not a recognized authority figure. That was the meaning Isaiah was communicating, not something about His physical appearance.

APRIL 25, 2010

What Does it Mean to Possess Your Soul?

I was asked this question:

"In one scripture the Lord connects patience to possessing your soul. What does it mean to possess your soul? And it's connection to patience? This is a very new connection for me."

My answer:

That's a great question. The verse is D&C 101:38, reads: *"And seek the face of the Lord always, that in patience ye may possess your souls, and ye shall have eternal life."* To possess your soul is to have body and spirit inseparably connected, in a resurrected and immortal state. D&C 88:14-16 explains:

Now, verily I say unto you, that through the redemption which is made for you is brought to pass the resurrection from the dead. And the spirit and the body are the soul of man. And the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul.

To possess your soul, therefore, is to have the resurrection.

In the context of 101:38, it is also saying that while in that resurrected state you will "inherit eternal life." This means to receive exaltation. So the concept that these words are covering is the concept of exaltation and receiving, in the resurrection, a Celestial inheritance.

Patience is tied directly to this. Indeed, patience is required for this. No person arrives in this state without offering sacrifice sufficient to develop the faith to lay hold on eternal life. That is explained in the post a day or so ago about the Sixth Lecture on Faith. This kind of sacrifice is very rarely done in a single act, but over a number of years by faithful obedience to the Lord's plan for your own life. It is developed by learning the Lord's will for your life and then following that will.

The whole concept begins by framing the issue around, "seeking the face of the Lord always." That is, possessing your soul, eternal life, and exaltation are all tied to the quest to return to God's presence here in mortality. It is tied to the path of seeking The Second Comforter. As you know, I've written about that process and it

takes more room than this blog can accommodate. But this verse it speaking about that process.

It's a beautiful verse. It is another affirmation that The Second Comforter is intended to be a regular minister to mankind. Not some distant, unattainable visit, limited to a select few because of its difficulty.

CHAPTER 11

Awake and Arise

APRIL 26, 2010

Awake and Arise

From time to time I am constrained to say something that is beyond what I feel comfortable saying in a public venue. This is one of those times.

The content of this may not be for everyone. In fact, I think there can be a lot of mischief done by reading this if you are unprepared. Nevertheless, I'm constrained to cover this by Him who knows much better than I do—I readily recognize I am a fool. When something like this happens, I bury my own feelings and do what I'm told.

I pointed out a bit ago that Joseph Smith received the sealing authority in a revelation to him sometime between 1829 and 1843, the exact date is not known. The way in which he received this authority was by a direct revelation to him from heaven. The “voice of the Lord” came to Joseph making the declaration. At the same time Joseph's calling and election were made sure. Here are the verses from Section 132:

⁴⁵ For I have conferred upon you the keys and **power of the priesthood**, wherein I restore all things, and make known unto you all things in due time.

⁴⁶ And verily, verily, I say unto you, that whatsoever you seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever you bind on earth, in my name and by my word, saith the Lord, it shall be eternally bound in the heavens; and whosoever sins you remit on earth shall be remitted eternally in the heavens; and whosoever sins you retain on earth shall be retained in heaven.

⁴⁷ And again, verily I say, whomsoever you bless I will bless, and whomsoever you curse I will curse, saith the Lord; for I, the Lord, am thy God.

⁴⁸ And again, verily I say unto you, my servant Joseph, that whatsoever you give on earth, and to whomsoever you give any one on earth, by my word and according to my law, it shall be visited with blessings and not cursings, and with **my power**, saith the Lord, and shall be without condemnation on earth and in heaven.

⁴⁹ For I am the Lord thy God, and will be with thee even unto the end of the world, and through all eternity; for verily I seal upon you your exaltation, and prepare a throne for you in the kingdom of my Father, with Abraham your father.

⁵⁰ Behold, I have seen your sacrifices, and will forgive all your sins; I have seen your sacrifices in obedience to that which I have told you. Go, therefore, and I make a way for your escape, as I accepted the offering of Abraham of his son Isaac.

No one noticed this when I put it up, and no one has asked any questions about this. Therefore it is apparent that none of you have been prepared to receive what this is talking about. I am going

to try to help you to see things by asking questions. I will not be answering them. I just offer them to you to ponder:

Did you notice this is referring to “power” and not authority?

Do you see any connection between this “power” and President Packer’s talk in General Conference about the church’s inability to disseminate “power” among the saints in the same way the church has been able to disseminate authority?

Does sealing authority and calling and election necessarily go together?

Can a man hold sealing authority if his calling and election have not been made sure? How does this authority come to a man?

Must it come from the word of the Lord, declaring it from heaven, or can it come by some other kind of laying on of hands from another man?

Since Joseph received it from the declaration of God from heaven, and Nephi received it the very same way (see Helaman 10:6–11), is this the only way to receive it?

If it comes from heaven alone, can any institution ever control this “power” generation after generation by handing it down from man to man?

Why did Joseph receive this power by the declaration of God from heaven, perhaps as early as 1829, outside the Temple and apart from the vision in Section 110?

Since Elijah’s words in Section 110:13–16 do not mention the “power to seal” did Joseph really get the sealing “power” from the vision in the Kirtland Temple?

Does Elijah only confirm the process of restoring keys has completed, but sealing “power” came from somewhere else?

Is it possible that the institutional church has one understanding, but the truth and the scriptures teach another understanding?

If that is possible, then why have you not been studying things out for yourself to decide what the truth is concerning where this kind of “power” comes from?

Is this related to the “sealing” which is done, not by the church, but by the angels as revealed in D&C 77:11?

Should you get a testimony of Christ, rather than recite merely that you “know the church is true?” Can the church be true, and yet your soul not saved?

Do the ordinances of salvation, including sealing you up to eternal life, require you to have “power” given to you from heaven?

With respect to the words in D&C 121:36: “That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.”

Do these words relate to this same subject?

Do these words confirm that if priesthood “power” has been lost that the remaining priesthood “authority” cannot bind or seal?

Do the words “that they may be conferred upon us, it is true” (in 121:37) confirm the very real distinction between “authority” and “power”?

Is President Packer trying to alert us to something very important missing in the current state of the church?

The questions are not intended to suggest any answer. They are food for thought. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is so important a subject that you ought to be thinking deeply about it. Joseph Smith said:

[T]he things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto

salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity-thou must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God, than the vain imaginations of the human heart! None but fools will trifle with the souls of men.
(DHC vol. 3, page 295)

We should not be dealing with the Gospel at a superficial level. We should be ashamed of how we have been treating it. Again, Joseph said:

How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations—too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of the called and chosen of God, according to the purposes of His will, from before the foundation of the world! We are called to hold the keys of the mysteries of those things that have been kept hid from the foundation of the world until now.
(Id.)

A religion that allows you to foolishly waste the days of your probation will not save you. That religion is NOT the faith that Abraham followed or that Jesus Christ taught. If you are attending “vain and trifling” meetings that are “low, mean, vulgar and condescending” then you must do something about your own education in the faith to obtain exaltation.

The path trod by the ancients is exactly the same path every saved soul must walk. Read this (blog post - “Lectures of Faith No. 6” - April 21, 2010) again.

I testify that you can know for a certainty the answer to these questions. Anyone can. Even the least of the Saints.

I wish all mankind might be saved. Neglect and indifference seem to be such prevailing impediments to the salvation of the souls of men that Satan must rejoice, look up at heaven with a great chain in his hands, and declare that he has bound all mankind! How little the world has changed since the time of Enoch.

Awake. Arise.

Your soul is in jeopardy.

COMMENTS:

DKD · APRIL 26, 2010 AT 3:46 PM

Nevertheless, I'm constrained to cover this by Him who knows much better than I do – I readily recognize I am a fool. When something like this happens, I bury my own feelings and do what I'm told.

Have you been asked by the Lord to give this message?

Please pardon my question if it is inappropriate.

Denver Snuffer · APRIL 26, 2010 AT 5:32 PM

Since the power of priesthood is based upon the power of heaven, and the power of heaven cannot be controlled or handled apart from the principles of righteousness, I think Section 121 ties the two together. I believe all real authority comes only and exclusively from God. Men are nothing without that (Him).

When the Lord suggests something to me, He gets my attention. I've long since quit resisting. I put a comment up on that some time ago. Something like "I've never won an argument with the Lord" as I recall.

APRIL 26, 2010

Get Busy!

Another statement from Joseph Smith worth considering as part of deciding how seriously you would like to be a disciple of Christ's:

All men know that they must die. And it is important that we should understand the reasons and causes of our exposure to the vicissitudes of life and of death, and the designs and purposes of God in our coming into the world, our sufferings here, and our departure hence. What is the object of our coming into existence, then dying and falling away, to be here no more? It is but reasonable to suppose that God would reveal something in reference to the matter, and it is a subject we ought to study more than any other. We ought to study it day and night, for the world is ignorant in reference to their true condition and relation. If we have any claim on our Heavenly Father for anything, it is for knowledge on this important subject. Could we read and comprehend all that has been written from the days of Adam, on the relation of man to God and angels in a future state, we should know very little about it. Reading the experience of others, or the revelation given to them, can never give us a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God. Knowledge of these things can only be obtained by experience through the ordinances of God set forth for that purpose. Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject. (DHC vol. 6, page 50)

The definition of “ordinances of God” are not all contained in a formal church setting. Read again the experiences of others in scripture and you will find that a great deal takes place between the Lord and those who follow Him. When He appears He also ministers. There is also the description of the “sealing” which will qualify those living in our day to become a member of the Church of the Firstborn, which involves an ordinance performed by “angels to whom is given power” and to whom this ministry belongs (D&C 77:11).

Search the scriptures. They testify of all things. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints administers the ordinances of salvation and prepares you to receive further light and knowledge directly from the Lord. If you have received what the Lord offers through the church, but have failed to take the final admonition to receive further light and knowledge by conversing directly with Him, then your salvation has not been perfected. You still have work left before you.

Get busy.

APRIL 27, 2010

God is no Respector of Persons

I am surprised by how people regard me as something special. I have been blessed by the Lord to be able to write some books and put some information on this blog. However, if you were raised LDS and put forth some nominal effort to living your religion, you have lived a better life than I have. I wasn't raised LDS and had no understanding of the Gospel, or the underlying reasons for the commandments. Therefore, I never obeyed even a fraction of the commandments that you have grown up following.

I am absolutely convinced that any one of you is a better candidate than I was to receive an audience with the Lord. The wonder of this process is not that someone has done it, but that so few have. Given that I am probably the least qualified, the point should not be lost on you. If it has happened to me, then it absolutely can and should happen to you.

God is no respector of persons. All are alike to Him. Qualifications are based upon the behavior and faith of the person, not on their status or past mistakes.

You probably think your errors are more serious an impediment to God accepting you than He ever has. He doesn't want to judge you, He wants to heal you. He wants to give you what you lack, teach you to be better and to bless you. He doesn't want to belittle, demean or punish you. Ask Him to forgive and He forgives. Even very serious sins. He does not want you burdened with them. He wants you to leave them behind.

His willingness to leave those errors in the past and remember them no more is greater than you can imagine. It is a guiding principle for the Atonement. Asking for forgiveness is almost all that is required to be forgiven.

What alienates us from Him is not our sins. He will forgive them. What we lack is the confidence to ask in faith, nothing doubting, for His help. He can and will help when you do so.

The sins that offend Him are not the errors, weaknesses and foolishness of the past. He is offended when we are forgiven by Him, and then return to the same sin. That shows a lack of gratitude for His forgiveness. Even then, however, there are addictions, compulsions and weaknesses that we sometimes struggle with for years, even decades. When the sin is due to some difficulty based on biology, physiology or an inherent weakness that we fight for years to overcome, then His patience with us is far greater than our own. He will help in the fight. He will walk along side you as you fight. He does not expect you to run faster than you have strength. When, at last, because of age or infirmity, a troubling weakness is at last overcome, He will readily accept your repentance and let you move forward clean, whole and forgiven. That is His ministry—to forgive and make whole.

I know all my mistakes. They are greater than most of yours. I am in awe of His mercy and forgiveness. I am not at all impressed

by my worthiness. It is nothing. It consists of borrowed finery from Him who has let me use His great worthiness to cover my own failings. To the extent that I have any merit, it comes from Him. I remain astonished that He would condescend for someone like me.

It is a wonder some think I have an advantage. I assure you that the promised blessings are available to ALL. If that were not true then someone as weak, simple and flawed as I am would never have had the hope that I now have in Christ.

APRIL 27, 2010

Opposing Wickedness Through Violence

There is a continuing unease about the subject of opposing wickedness through violence. So I thought I would add this additional explanation:

I do not foresee that a gun will be effective against radioactivity; nor against weaponized anthrax. I read the plagues that are coming and the descriptions in D&C 29:15–21 and I do not foresee a handgun doing me any good under those circumstances. I see wicked being killed, but no role for me and a sidearm to join in the fray.

I do not foresee any need for Zion to be protected by armed machine-gun nests around a perimeter when a pillar of smoke by day and fire by night hangs over them (D&C 45:65–71). In the description, it does not say they go up with songs of joy, interrupted by occasional gunfire and all hell breaking loose. It says they proceed quite peacefully, singing songs of everlasting joy (verse 71).

When sickness and scourge are poured out, there will be widespread death and destruction. But there is no need for me to join in the killing. In fact, all those who take up the sword are included within the ranks of the wicked scheduled to die (D&C 45:30–33).

I think the “power” we need in the Priesthood of God will be necessary to protect us from plagues. To stay the disease which will be poured out. To keep at bay the effects of the illnesses caused by the wickedness and evil of men who, killing one another and leaving the unburied dead to rot, will spread cholera, diphtheria and other illness.

I do not foresee the need to take up arms. The violence of nature will be responsible for killing many. In fact, the depopulation of the earth will be as a result of the following, as I understand it:

- War
- Pestilence incident to war
- Famine (incident to war and pestilence)
- Drought (incident to wickedness)
- Hail (to destroy what few crops remain)
- Earthquakes and Tempests (targeting those who remain alive but who are wicked and threaten Zion)

Nowhere on **my** list is there an entry for a Zion-based sniper unit. (I’m just trying to let a little humor into this, not mocking this idea. It is a serious idea to be sure, deserving serious thought and pondering.)

What we are going to face is global genocide. A handgun won’t do much good against the things that are prophesied. There may be isolated opportunities to shoot a bad guy. But there may also be the same isolated bad guy who, in his fear and cowardice, may be vulnerable to conversion to the Gospel if we don’t shoot him. What is coming will intimidate mankind so fearfully that men’s hearts will fail them. I think preaching to them while they are in such a stupor rather than shooting them may work. And if not, well then I haven’t taken my brother’s life.

APRIL 28, 2010

Holy Ghost vs. The Holy Spirit

I was asked this question:

Can you comment on the Holy Ghost vs. The Holy Spirit and who Jesus is and who the Father is, etc... Also, is it possible that Jesus is the same Spirit as the Holy Ghost? Moses 5:9

This is fraught with debatable language in the scriptures. There are those who will absolutely disagree with what I have to say. I can explain how I have sorted it out to my understanding, but you should recognize that there are others who would take a different view of the scriptures and of the definition of these roles of the Godhead.

First the clarification:

The Holy Ghost is a personage. It is an individual. It is a Spirit that will dwell inside you (D&C 130:22).

The Holy Spirit is the power of God which fills the immensity of space (D&C 88:12–13).

Now the problem:

Sometimes the Holy Spirit is called the “Light of Christ” rather than the Holy Spirit (D&C 88:7–11).

Sometimes the Holy Ghost is called the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13).

Whether you are reading something about the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost is something that must be determined by the context, not the language used.

The relationship between the Holy Spirit or Light of Christ and every living thing, whether a planet, plant, animal, human or ecosystem is direct, immediate and continual. They are all borrowing power from the Holy Spirit to live, move breath, remain organized, and do according to their own wills (Mosiah 2:21–25).

This is the means by which the Holy Ghost, which resides inside of you, receives intelligence from Christ.

The Holy Ghost is the “record of heaven” which lives inside you and that you have lost contact with because of the veil. It is a personage of spirit who resides inside you, and you must “receive” it after baptism by finally listening to that inner “truth of all things” or “record of the Father and the Son” (Moses 6:61, 66).

The Holy Ghost bears record of the Son. When the Son speaks to you through the Holy Ghost you hear the words in the first-person. Hence the Holy Ghost speaking that it “is the Son” in Moses 5:9.

I’m keeping this short because the more I explain the more questions will arise. So clarity on this topic is almost invariably related to brevity.

COMMENTS:

The Zang Family · APRIL 28, 2010 AT 10:06 AM

Out of 1 Nephi 11, Here’s a phrase I don’t understand fully: I was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord. Why did Nephi use the word “in” instead of “by”?

And then:

I spake unto him as a man speaketh; for I beheld that he was in the form of a man; yet nevertheless, I knew that it was the Spirit of the Lord; and he spake unto me as a man speaketh with another.

Who is this talking with Nephi? It seems like he is saying he looked like the form of a man, yet he knew it was something different (a God instead? or was it the “Spirit” of the Lord, and not his form, like a sci-fi hologram projection from outer space?).

Does this shed light on the topic in this post any about the Holy Ghost?

Denver Snuffer · APRIL 28, 2010 AT 10:22 AM

Being “caught away in the Spirit” is referring to the experience of being moved to another location but going only as a spirit. The event can seem so physical that you are not sure if you have been physically or only spiritually caught away. But you are moved to another location for what you are then shown.

The personage Nephi saw was Christ, but before His incarnation, when He appeared as a spirit-being. His body was composed of spirit, but looked as the body of a man. This was the same manner in which He appeared to the Brother of Jared when he saw the hand come from behind the veil to touch the stones. The description as a “form of a man” is describing the fact that Jesus Christ was a person, yet God, and appears to the senses as a man in form.

There are those who have speculated this personage was the Holy Ghost. That is incorrect. It was Jesus Christ.

The Zang Family · APRIL 28, 2010 AT 10:41 AM

Thanks. How is your body preserved when your spirit is gone? Does the Holy Spirit as described above keep it alive, or is it painful when you return to it? Is it always of necessity a near-death experience? Or is it a more mature and faith-developed understanding/appreciation of dreaming?

Anonymous · APRIL 28, 2010 AT 1:56 PM

So does that apply to Mary being “caught away in the spirit”? (Same wording.) Her physical body was left behind?

Denver Snuffer · APRIL 28, 2010 AT 4:10 PM

The expression in that context is talking about another matter. She was also said to be “overshadowed” by the Holy Ghost, etc. These are various expressions to communicate that the Child she conceived came from God, and not by normal processes involving an earthly father.

There is also the example of Philip, who was physically moved by the Holy Spirit to another location. This expression involved the direction to move and minister elsewhere, as a result of which he left

the eunuch and went elsewhere. There is also the example of Adam's baptism, in which his baptism was done by the "Holy Ghost" carrying him away to the water, putting him under the water, and bringing him back from the water. In that instance Adam's movement was physical, involved submersion into the water beside which the incident took place, and was inspired by the Holy Spirit and direction given him by the Lord.

There are other examples, but the phrase is descriptive of the inspired movement to a new scene or location in which a revelation or event takes place while the person is "in the spirit." These things seem so physical as to make it impossible to say they are spirit-only events. Paul said repeatedly he did not know if he was in or out of his body when caught up to the third heaven. This was because all feeling, senses, smell, touch, sight, etc. are as if in the body.

Read Joseph Smith's first vision in the PofGP again, and you will note that "when he came to, he found himself lying on his back." Meaning that he was having an experience with the Father and Son, which took place while "caught away" in the Spirit.

APRIL 28, 2010

A "friend" of God

Here's a concept to ponder...

In the beginning, our relationship with God is rather primitive. We start out fearing Him and following His "commandments" in the hope of appeasing Him or avoiding punishment.

We later get some insight that allows us to see Him as a more loving God. As a result of that insight and growth, we begin to view the commandments as warnings and blessings that will benefit us if we heed them.

Developmentally there is a point somewhere far distant along this path where we become a "friend" of God. Abraham achieved

this. When he did, the relationship was quite different than what it was in the beginning.

When the Lord requested Isaac be sacrificed, it wasn't a "commandment." The language in the KJV Bible is too coarse to really communicate the idea underlying what happened. It wasn't a "commandment" to Abraham. It was more of a polite suggestion. It was an expression of the Lord's preference. The suggestion was quite gentle. Abraham responded to this polite suggestion from the Lord by proceeding without question. He was willing to sacrifice his long awaited heir.

Now if you can get your hands around this idea, then you can begin to see the difference between where our relationship with God starts and where it should eventually end. At the beginning, our relationship with God is quite primitive. At the end it is a trusted, loving friend in whom absolute confidence resides in the one who has become His friend.

There is such a profound difference between one end of the spectrum and the other that it hinders our understanding of the examples we see in scripture. We distort things considerably when we view His relationships with others in the scriptures in the same context we relate to Him.

When a person has become a "friend" of God, they are introduced to another level of language and experience with Him. When they become a member of His family, they have yet another kind of relationship. The openness and love that exists, and the accompanying trust that goes with it, is something quite distinct from the coarse beginnings of the path.

The faiths which view our relationship to God as "slave to master" are only in the beginning of the process. From that end things

which seem to be alright (and may even be alright) are different from what is found further along the progression.

Your end is to become part of the household of God, a member of the Church of the Firstborn, and a family member of God the Father. When that happens, the relationship is considerably more polite and respectful than it is when you are first experiencing awareness of God's existence and His commandments to bring us light and truth.

COMMENTS:

JR Morgan · APRIL 28, 2010 AT 6:24 PM

Friends bear and share each others burdens. Friendship for me is sacred. I strive to be a friend to all but there are a few whom which I feel the relationship truly reciprocal and those relationships are a pure joy and light to me. These are those that I have walked miles of this life's journey with, who know my heart, my joys and my sorrows. They are those that believe in me and honor who are not afraid to challenge me. They are whom I would gladly give all to support and sacrifice so they may be happy. I look forward to the sublime association to my Savior.

Mercyngrace · APRIL 28, 2010 AT 8:32 PM

Isn't this the natural progression of every loving parent-child relationship?

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 20, 2010 AT 8:05 AM

Friends embrace.

APRIL 29, 2010

Abraham and Sarah

I have been thinking a lot lately about Abraham and Sarah and their relationship. Their story is one of the greatest in history.

Little details in the story are touching. The “ten years” that Sarah waited (Gen. 16:3) before urging Abraham to father a child with Hagar is based upon a custom at the time. Abraham’s willingness to follow the custom was because the Lord promised him children, Sarah could not conceive and Sarah urged him to do so. In fact, of the three, Sarah’s urging was what seems to persuade Abraham. Her urging is tempered by making it seem she is looking out for her own interests: “it may be that I (Sarah) may obtain children by her” (Gen. 16:2). This softens the request, makes it a blessing for Sarah, and casts it in terms which do not belittle or dismiss Sarah. Then, as the account reads: “Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai (Gen. 16:2).

Abraham was willing to wait on the Lord’s promises of children. He was willing to forego the customs that allowed a man to take another wife. It was Sarah’s gentle persuasion that convinced Abraham to take Hagar. Sarah was loved by Abraham with his whole heart. It was this great marriage relationship that allowed the Lord to preserve them as the parents of “all righteous.” A new Adam for the Lord’s covenant people. And, of course, there cannot be an Adam without an Eve. Sarah becomes the “Mother of All Righteous.”

This is more critical than most people recognize. It was because of this important relationship that the tenth parable in *Ten Parables* begins with the marriage relationship. Without this, there was no reason to save the man.

Marriage is separate from its two parties. It has a life of its own. The husband and the wife may be parties to the marriage, but the

marriage itself is a separate and living thing. It is distinct from the two partners in the relationship, and greater than either of them. It lives. It is real.

The only people whose right to eternal life has been secured, to my knowledge, came as a result of the marriage relationship and its worthiness to be preserved into eternity. Neither is the man without the woman nor the woman without the man in the Lord. Therefore, if you are interested in eternal life, the very first place to begin is inside your marriage.

APRIL 29, 2010

Repentance and Redemption

I was asked this question:

In D&C 138:57–59 it states: “the faithful elders from this dispensation, when they depart this life continue their labors by preaching to those who are in darkness and under bondage of sin, etc.”

*The scripture then says that the dead who **repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of the lord.** I thought temple ordinances, including baptisms for the dead, were only necessary for those who are heirs to at least some degree in the Celestial Kingdom (See Doctrines of Salvation, II, p. 191).*

If this is so, then why does the scripture go on to say “[a]nd after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation.”

If they repent and are redeemed through the ordinances of the temple then why are they paying the penalty for their transgressions? I understood D&C 19:15–18 to mean if you repent then because of the atonement you do not suffer because Christ suffered for us. As

I read this scripture it can only mean one of two things. First, some people who end up in the Celestial Kingdom must suffer for their own sins. Second it could mean that these people are not going to the Celestial Kingdom (“for they shall receive a reward according to their works”). So am I wrong that an “heir of salvation” (not “exaltation”) can end up in the C, T or T Kingdom, as all are kingdoms of glory and the heirs of each of these kingdoms are saved with a “resurrection of endless life and happiness”? (Mosiah 16:11). And if so then why did they need the ordinances of the temple?

My response:

To enter into the Celestial Kingdom requires the ordinances of the Temple. As explained in D&C 131:1-4:

¹ In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

² And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

³ And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.

⁴ He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase.

This statement defines the “**highest**” as the only one involving the covenant of marriage. The other Celestial Kingdom residents would require all Temple ordinances, from washings, anointings through endowment to be able to enter and pass by the sentinels who stand guard there. Only the **highest** requires the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.

As to who will “suffer for their own sins” and yet enter into the Celestial Kingdom, there are at least two categories: First, those who have received their calling and election, but who return to sin, but not an unpardonable sin. Those are required to “pay the price”

for this misconduct (D&C 132:26). Second, those who are “sealed up” through the faithfulness of their parents, who claim them as children of promise as a matter of right because of the sealing upon the parents. Such children will need to either qualify in their own right, or if inheritors of the promise through the merit of their parents’ sealing they will have to suffer to become clean in order to inherit what is sealed upon them by this right.

It is a good question. It shows the order in heaven and the way in which things are governed by laws established before the foundation of the world (D&C 130:20–21).

APRIL 30, 2010

Communication From the Lord

I was asked how a witness of the Spirit is felt. Here are a variety of ways in which we receive communications from the Lord:

There was a talk I still recall where Elder LeGrand Richards used the expression “goose flesh.” He was referring to the feeling he got upon hearing something he knew to be true as soon as it was spoken. He got “goose flesh” as he listened. That is not a bad way to describe how some people feel the witness from the Spirit. This form can also be replicated by stirring music, art or other performances. So if this is how one feels the Spirit, they must distinguish between an emotional outpouring and a manifestation from the Lord.

I believe that everyone’s capacity to hear the Spirit bear testimony to them is more or less equal, as all have given to them the “light of Christ” (D&C 84:46; 88:7; Moroni 7:19).

How someone recognizes the witness to them is person-specific at the start. Whether it is Elder Richards’ “goose flesh” or a burst of unmistakable insight coming from beyond, or a warmth in the

heart as D&C 9:8 describes, is based upon individual sensitivities. How you feel this may differ from how I do.

When it has progressed from these initial stirrings to the “voice” which you hear within you, that assumes a more uniform experience. The “voice” is clearly not your own, and introduces ideas or concepts that are clearly not your own. You can have a dialogue with this “voice” in which your ideas are juxtaposed with those coming to you. It is not audible, but you hear it inside. It is clearly not your own voice, but that of another.

When you have proven yourself faithful and true to all required of you by the “voice” that comes into your mind and heart, then it becomes possible for angels to visit with you. Angels all come from this earth and have their mortality here (D&C 130:5). If they appear as disembodied (not-resurrected) spirits, they may appear only as beings dressed in white. They will not make physical contact with you. Satan may attempt to appear as such a being, but since he invariably tries to deceive, if you attempt to make physical contact he will reciprocate as part of his deception. As a disembodied spirit, however, you can detect his lack of physical presence when such contact is attempted. A true messenger who lacks a body will not attempt physical contact, but will deliver his message to you. If a visitor is either resurrected or translated, they may appear without glory, in which case their physical appearance will be as any other person. The only difference you will likely note is that their countenance is pure and radiates a purity that other mortals rarely manifest. If resurrected and appearing in glory, they bear unmistakable signs of Celestial Glory.

The closest image I have seen to the glory shown by a resurrected, glorified, celestial personage is the upper pattern, in gold, imprinted onto the Dome of the Rock Mosque. When I saw it for the first

time a few months ago, I was startled by the pattern and its radiant glory. It is the closest earthly pattern I have seen to depicting a Celestial Glory. I do not know who fashioned the pattern, but they were depicting something that I recognized to be inspired by what lies beyond the veil and patterned after Celestial Glory itself.

Beings appearing in Celestial Glory do not show themselves, or in other words, cannot be seen, except by those only who are prepared to behold them. Others who may be present when they appear will feel a presence that often frightens them, as in the case of Daniel's companions in Daniel Chapter 10.

The final stage in development requires one to "see" the things that are being communicated. This happens when the "answer" to the inquiry is opened to view, but only inside the mind. You can actually "behold" something as if it were before you, without actually being there. Such a process is physically demanding, despite the fact it is so intangible a matter as to defy description. Seeing things by this process is not limited to time, place or location. A person exercising this gift, for example, may be able to behold Abraham as he receives the box containing the records from his father, who held the box in no particular regard because he could not open it.

When the person has developed the ability to "see," the answers to inquiries come almost entirely through the exercise of this gift. Although all these forms of messages and communication from the Lord and His messengers are still available to a seer when conditions or the circumstances warrant it.

There are seers among us. In fact, we "sustain," institutionally, fifteen men to be such every General Conference. The development of the gift, however, comes not by consequence of office alone but by the diligence of the individual. All are on equal footing before the Lord.

Therefore, although it may be conferred upon you or them, the realization of these blessings depends upon their/your faithfulness. Elder Scott, for example, uses terms in some of his talks which intimate seership. The Vision of the Redemption of the Dead (D&C 138) has language I recognize as a seer's. So does D&C 76.

COMMENTS:

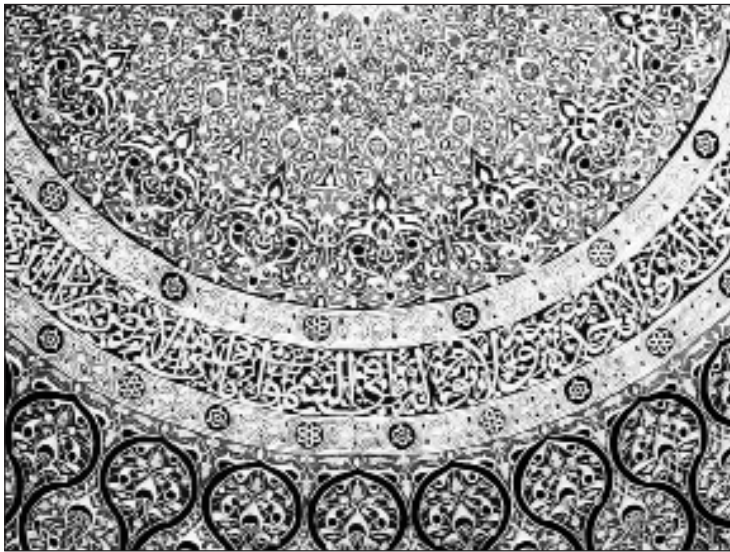
DKD · APRIL 30, 2010 AT 1:28 PM

Denver,

The Dome of the Rock.... are you talking about the gold "tiles" converging at the peak of the Dome?

The tile work on the octagon base and elsewhere is spectacular as well.

<http://www.islamicity.com//Culture/MOSQUES/Jerusalem/DRock.htm>



Denver Snuffer · APRIL 30, 2010 AT 3:35 PM

On the Dome of the Rock: No, I'm talking about the interior finish, with the pattern shown there. The appearance of the pattern is very

much like the “cloven tongues of fire” which one sees in Celestial Glory. I apologize that I don’t have a link to give where you can see that artwork. But it is interior, not the exterior.

Denver Snuffer · APRIL 30, 2010 AT 9:43 PM

I’ve looked at almost all the links above. Yes, that is the artwork, but the quality of the pictures is so bad that it just doesn’t do it justice. The clarity is bad and the symmetry of the art pattern is distorted. A good quality picture will give you so much better a view of this amazing piece of interior art work. Delicate, gold leaf, inset with the pattern that makes it look like flames. It is stunning if you have a good quality picture. These are not particularly good quality, but it is indeed the pattern I was referring to.

Denver Snuffer · John Pontius sent me a copy of his latest book *The Triumph of Zion*, which I am planning to read after I finish reading two other books I currently have underway. When John and I met last year I thought he was a noble soul and a good man.

Denver Snuffer · May 3, 2010 at 6:10 PM

Check the book *The Blessings of Abraham: Becoming a Zion People*, written by Douglas Clark, page 102 for a reference to the “ark” which came down from Adam containing sacred records. That’s a source. But in this post I was referring to seeing the object by virtue of the gift of seership. Nevertheless, there is a cite where you can read a bit about it.

APRIL 30, 2010

Sacred Things

I was asked this question:

What do you say to people who state: ‘I doubt people who’ve had an audience with Christ would be out writing books and blogs about it. We are counseled not to talk about sacred things. (Followed by several GA quotes.)

I would say that they should accept counsel from whomever they trust and follow it. I might add that if they read *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil* they will get an answer to the question. But, if they are hostile and offended and ask the question out of fear, I would not add the clarification.

It is not necessary for everyone to be stirred up by argument or persuasion to listen to something they do not want to hear. What is coming will stir up everyone who has not been already touched by the Spirit. Patience. We're headed somewhere. The Lord remains in charge and has a plan to cause every knee to bow and every tongue to confess the truth of who He is, what He has done, and what He has been doing. We shouldn't rush people forward.

There is more mischief in introducing people to truth before they are ready to comprehend and welcome it than there is in remaining silent. It is uncharitable to tell someone a great truth which they are unprepared to accept.

MAY 2010

MAY 1, 2010

Eternal Life and the Covenant Marriage

“Eternal life” requires a couple who can have increase, or bear children. The requirement is that through the continuation of the marriage covenant men and women become exalted. And without that, they remain separate and single, saved, but not exalted. D&C 132 explains:

¹⁵ Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are dead,

and when they are out of the world; therefore, they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world.

¹⁶ *Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.*

¹⁷ *For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever.*

¹⁸ *And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife, and make a covenant with her for time and for all eternity, if that covenant is not by me or by my word, which is my law, and is not sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, through him whom I have anointed and appointed unto this power, then it is not valid neither of force when they are out of the world, because they are not joined by me, saith the Lord, neither by my word; when they are out of the world it cannot be received there, because the angels and the gods are appointed there, by whom they cannot pass; they cannot, therefore, inherit my glory; for my house is a house of order, saith the Lord God.*

The Celestial Kingdom has three heavens or degrees within it. To attain the highest, which is the only one in which the marriage covenant exists and continues, a person must have entered into a marriage and been sealed by the holy spirit of promise. As D&C 131 explains:

*In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;
And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];*

³ *And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.*

⁴ He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase.

Exaltation is tied to the marriage covenant and without an eternal marriage there cannot be exaltation.

However, (I point out hesitantly) that all these verses are phrased in the masculine. In most cases the masculine does not matter because the commandment applies to both the man and woman. That is, when mankind is referred to collectively, it is referred to in the masculine. For example, the first couple are sometimes referred to collectively as “Adam” when what is meant is Adam **and** Eve. Therefore, what I’m going to say is not a universal truism and cannot be applied without regard to context. Here, however, it can be applied. Because in this instance, the male’s right to exaltation is utterly dependent upon his successful completion of this requirement as part of this probation.

Women, on the other hand, who would be otherwise worthy (and that involves a great number beyond those who are parties to sealed and worthy marriage), are among those who D&C 137 describes:

⁷...All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God;

⁸ Also all that shall die henceforth without a knowledge of it, who would have received it with all their hearts, shall be heirs of that kingdom;

⁹ For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desires of their hearts.

Women have, throughout history, borne their obligation of motherhood and submission to husbands with considerable success.

It is rare, however, when men have been able to retain priesthood. Apostasy is a male failing, not a female failing. Nor are the women of the Church responsible for the lack of “power” within the priesthood discussed by Elder Packer in last General Conference. This is a male failing. Therefore, when the first two quotes are read above, the significance of the masculine phrasing ought not be overlooked. The whole subject is tied to a man’s completion of a task required of him in mortality.

Women who are good mothers, worthy wives and who keep the faith will suffer no loss because of a failing husband. HOWEVER, women are required to minister in love and righteousness even to a difficult husband, as did Abigail. Marriage to a “churlish” man did not stop her from showing her own nobility. Therefore, it is not enough for a woman to determine her husband is not likely to survive the judgment, give up on him, and await the next life to learn to serve in love and patience. She has an obligation to begin that service here and now. Indeed, the worse the man, the greater the opportunity to show Christ-like devotion. There is no man whose behavior is more offensive than those for whom Christ suffered. To be like Him, and to live where He lives requires a similar capacity to forgive, love, bless, serve and elevate.

This isn’t easy. Wasn’t meant to be. Do you really think any of us are worthy to be called “gods” without first descending below all things so as to be qualified to rise above all things? Christ is not merely our Savior, He is our example. We must “follow Him” if we want to be where He is.

COMMENTS:

Denver Snuffer · MAY 2, 2010 AT 9:56 PM

When it comes to conditions upon a husband’s ‘hearkening to the Lord’ as a condition of following him, I think the caution: “With

what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged” is in order. The absolute and unconditional support of a wife for her husband, and in a husband for his wife, is the only way in which they can find Celestial peace. Her flaws, if they exist, ought not to be noticed. His flaws, which undoubtedly will exist (because of the difficulty of presiding anytime, anywhere over anyone continually in righteousness and meekness), also ought not to be noticed.

We are talking about godhood. We are not talking about nice people. We are talking about perfection itself. Christ is the pattern. He didn't magnify His disciples' weaknesses; He strengthened them. He forgave them. He showed by His example what they should become. He asks, in turn, that we “follow Him.”

Anonymous · JUNE 8, 2010 AT 1:01 AM

Denver,

You said that “women are required to minister in love and righteousness even to a difficult husband.” I would change the word ‘required’ to ‘asked’ meaning if she didn't, it would not be a sin, for even women are allowed self-defense from abus. Though in leaving & marrying someone else, she may not reach Exaltation either, maybe just Terrestrial K., for she didn't have True Love for her difficult husband.

But may I ask you a question?

I know you are so busy but I would really appreciate your opinion on this; How far does your belief go ‘that a wife should minister in love to her difficult husband’?

What if he abuses her in some form & doesn't repent, or commits adultery by continued affairs or porn, or even forces her through a divorce unjustifiably & goes off & marries another woman, & even gets leaders to let him be sealed to her (seemingly) in the temple.

Until what point, if any, would you say a woman is ‘required’ as you say, to continue to love & stay faithful to & minister, when she can, to her wicked husband who might be even living with another woman?

Would you think such a woman should wait her life out alone &/ or seriously abused & still keep her covenants to him, til he repents & returns to her, in this life, but most likely not til the next?

How far does your belief go?

Thank you.

Denver Snuffer · June 8, 2010 at 7:17 AM

Once there is a divorce, she is free to remarry according to both the Old and New Testaments. If there is a breach of the covenant she made in her remarriage, the accountability for that lies with the husband, according to Christ. She is not accountable.

I would always and in everything say that the “rule” is the principle to follow until you receive further instruction from the Lord. As soon as the Lord instructs otherwise, as He often does, then the “rule” is no longer applicable and the Lord’s instruction is what ought to be followed.

In this post I’m speaking about the “rule” to be followed. But each woman is entitled to receive instruction from the Lord, and becomes accountable for following Him once it is received.

This is one of the reasons why we are not in a position to judge others. As soon as we use the “rules” to judge others, we risk finding ourselves at odds with the Lord’s instruction to another. This is always a mistake.

MAY 1, 2010

Two Ships Pass in the Night

Dialogue between two ships passing in the night. [Intended as humor, because so far as I know ships do not speak with one another]:

USS Saint: “I know the Church is true.” HMS Midevil: “Beg pardon, how’s that?” USS Saint: “I know the Church is true.” HMS Midevil: “Which? .. or is it all?”

USS Saint: “The Latter-day Saints, of course.”

HMS: “By that do you mean to suggest that the Printing Services Division of the Materials Management Department is somehow ‘true’ as you say?”

USS: “Um, well, yes I suppose.”

HMS: “In what sense. ‘True’ meaning that it exists? or ‘True’ in some other meaning of the word?”

USS: “I mean led by a Prophet of God, therefore imbued with the will of God Almighty in all respects.”

HMS: “So not that it is ‘True’ in a metaphysical sense of existence on a higher plane, or bearing some corporeality, but somehow inerrant. Is that what you are saying? And, if so, does that preclude printing errors? Because if it means avoidance of printing errors well, then they ought to take a larger role in the publishing industry than simply providing grist for the Materials Management Department.”

USS: “Since a prophet is only a prophet when acting as such, I would not attribute inerrancy to the truthfulness of the Printing Services Division of the Materials Management Department; but I would rather say that what they do is Inspired. I do suspect, however, there may be occasional printing errors.”

HMS: “Inspired in the sense of the word meaning that it’s output is somehow delightful and uplifting? Or in the sense of ‘perfection itself’? But, then again, you’ve conceded the possibility of printing errors, so ‘perfection itself’ seems not to be included then. So I presume that you mean when you read the output of the printing of this Division of that Department it somehow inspires you to be a better ship, then? Perhaps somewhat of a worShip?”

USS: “I can see that you are not prepared to grasp the truth of my testimony as yet. So let me just warn you that you’re going to hell.”

HMS: “Atlantic City, rather.” USS: “What?”

HMS: “I’m sailing to Atlantic City. Though it might be called ‘hell’ with some validity I suppose.”

COMMENTS:

Denver Snuffer · MAY 2, 2010 AT 9:24 AM

By the way, there really is a Printing Services Division of the Materials Management Department for the Church. I looked them up in the Salt Lake phone book.

MAY 1, 2010

Purpose of Teaching

I must clarify something very important for readers:

Giving answers to people apart from teaching how to get answers is wrong. Wrong because just giving an answer alone creates dependence upon the one answering. That is not the way in which I have tried to proceed. Instead, I have tried to teach **how to obtain your own answers**.

The whole purpose of teaching is NOT to create dependence. It is to make you independent from me, establish your own capacity to relate to and get answers from God.

I’ve tried to give answers and illustrations inside the greater context of teaching “**how**.” The answer is nothing. It is the “**how**” that matters.

Some readers on this blog have not read *The Second Comforter* and presume incorrectly that it is a book about me. It is not. It is a book about the reader. It is an explanation of how the reader can grow into the greater relationship which Christ promised to them. All the illustrations from my personal experience, with the exception of nine words only, are taken from my mistakes, errors, or setbacks. The personal accounts of mistakes then are followed by

chapters which explain how you can do it right. That is a teacher's role: to make the listener understand how they can do something.

It has become apparent that there are questions coming in from people who want answers completely separated from learning "how" to get an understanding of the basic process by which they can do it themselves. That was never my intention, never asked of me, and not something that I want to start.

Your development is your responsibility. I am trying to teach from my own experience how to grow. Some of you have demonstrated a remarkable capacity to grow, and have been directly benefited from my efforts. I view those people as such a triumph that I will always hold them dear. I look forward to eternal joy with these people. There are clearly others who have never realized what it means to be taught or how a true teacher is to proceed. I can help. But I cannot properly go beyond helping. I cannot be your guru, your answer-man, or your leader. Nor have I been called to preside. I teach. You must decide if you want to learn "how" to engage the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its associated blessings. You must avoid at all hazards becoming dependent upon me, or any man, as your guide. I am only here to help you in your own growth and development, and I am not here to tell you secrets, or amaze you with recitations of my personal experiences. That would be wrong for two reasons: First, it would do you no good, nor equip you with what you need. Second, it would be both prideful and arrogant, setting myself up as a light instead of pointing you to the True Light.

Questions that change the focus and which prevent me from teaching as a disciple of Jesus Christ cannot be answered. Therefore, if I cannot change the "*question*" into something I can use to teach, I will not answer the question.

MAY 2, 2010

The Same is Required of All

I was asked this question:

I am at a point where I do not know how to get past the fear to move on to faith. In my being I know that if I can get past this I can do all God asks of me, and I want to. Do you have any suggestions as to how I can accomplish to get over the hump? If you have any it would be greatly appreciated. I have always wanted to see my Savior from the time I was very small, but I know that I need faith to do it. Please help, if you can.

Everyone faces the identical challenge. It seems different only because of our individual strengths and weaknesses. The challenge is adapted to our own personality, capacity and life's history. Therefore, when you are asked to overcome something, it will fit in the framework of your life.

All are asked to make a sacrifice that shows they will not withhold anything from the Lord. It will come to each person based on what they value and would regret to their core surrendering. Whatever that is, you will be asked by the Lord to give it to Him. You must decide to do that when asked.

All are asked to do something that they view as wrong, evil or inappropriate and will seem to be inconsistent with the Lord's mercy, righteousness and perfection. The request will unmistakably come from Him. You cannot evade the request because you doubt He is asking. You will clearly know it is Him who asks, and that to all your understanding it will be wrong to do. You must do it anyway.

All are asked to take a step in faith beyond where they are at the time. Trust in Him, and only Him, as you take that step. You will be certain that if it were something you were undertaking on

your own, it could not be accomplished. But because you are doing as He has asked, you know you will have the strength or support to do as He bids.

All are asked to come to Him without guilt or shame, knowing you have done everything you understand Him to have asked of you. Without this knowledge, you will not be able to endure what He asks.

All are able to develop the faith to lay hold on eternal life only because they have been led by Him through this process. When they have the faith sufficient to lay hold on these things, the Lord will declare to them by His own voice, that they have been begotten of Him and have a place with Him in eternity.

This is universally the process. The specific form each of these will take will vary from person to person because of individual traits.

COMMENTS:

ML1321 · MAY 2, 2010 AT 11:13 AM

You said:

“All are asked to do something that they view as wrong, evil or inappropriate and will seem to be inconsistent with the Lord’s mercy, righteousness and perfection.”

After having read the tenth parable in your book, this statement doesn’t seem consistent with the sanctifying process you describe having gone through. Your 18-year lesson on charity and compassion, though apparently the greatest lesson to be learned (the final lesson, the great test), was not fraught with a lingering sense of “wrong, evil or inappropriate” -ness. The opposite seems true, in fact. Would you please explain how the principles taught in your post were manifest in your experiences?

Denver Snuffer · MAY 2, 2010 AT 1:24 PM

ML1321: First, “The Missing Virtue” is not intended to explain all there is to the Gospel and the challenges we are called upon to face

here. For that you would have to read and have before you everything I have written in one overall view.

That having been said, even in that parable there is a juxtaposition between perceptions of good and evil. The person about whom the parable is written believed in something which those who shared his Church membership did not believe, did not accept, and thought was entirely wrong. He was rejected as a “witless liberal” and a “fool” as well as a “gullible simpleton.” The truth will eventually bring you into conflict with those around you. Good is called evil and evil called good, and only the person who is in the right way can decide the matter. As they do they will be told they are deceived, wrong, evil.

You mustn't think, however, that all the principles of truth and all the requirements for exaltation are contained in that single account. It was about something “missing” because other challenges and understandings had been first acquired. Nevertheless, even in acquiring the final missing virtue there was active opposition in which good, religious people sharing a Church with the character worked actively to stop the progression. And he had to determine what was “good” and what was “evil” in a contradiction to the values of his Church peers.

All of us must do that. Issues will change, but the reality will not.

Anonymous · MAY 3, 2010 AT 11:06 PM

I left out one vital point in my lengthy posts above. (Sorry, I was trying not to make it too long) But someone mentioned Abraham, so I think we must clarify that if you are the Prophet, all bets are off, & you could receive something new & out of your realm of right & wrong, like Joseph Smith being told to live Plural Marriage or Abraham being told to sacrifice his son Isaac.

That is the one exception—The Prophet—the only person on earth who can speak for God & receive new revelation contrary to previous commandments. Otherwise everyone else on earth, from Apostles down to us, must make sure that their inspiration & thinking is totally in harmony with the Prophets.

This is the only way we can know that we aren't being deceived by a false Spirit or vision or dream, or someone's opinions & teachings or even the philosophies of men that most are accepting today as truth. God has promised us this fact over & over through his Prophets. That we can know for sure if what we feel to do is right because the Prophets will have talked about it enough to know it's right.

And remember, it's absolutely critical to never ever break your covenants for any reason, especially your marriage covenants. Elder Packer said they will keep us safe. Break them & we will not be safe he said. But do we know what we have covenanted? Especially to our spouse? How about 'True Love', as Elder Holland teaches.

Even what I am saying here you must search out & pray to know if what I say is true, you can't just believe me or anyone, except the Prophet. So we must search out what he & all the other Presidents say on certain subjects.

In order to not be deceived we must 1- Have the Holy Spirit as our guide (but even most of the wicked think they do).

So 2- is very critical too, we must compare our inspiration to what the President's of the Church teach, especially our living Prophet & make sure it matches.

Unless we have both 1 & 2 we will surely be deceived very easy & not even know it & still feel righteous.

Very few people ever do step 2, because it takes alot more work than just receiving promptings & praying or fasting about something. Thus countless people are led to do evil, while thinking they are doing right.

Remember, the Adversary is usually the 1st on the scene to answer your prayers & try to inspire you to do something that is much easier & pleasing to you, than what the Spirit would tell you to do.

Sorry this is so long. I hope it helps. I just see so many members, nice people, all around me being deceived by the worst of evils & yet they don't even realize it. So I feel I must say something when I can.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 4, 2010 AT 6:22 AM

With respect to Anonymous' last comment: The "Prophet" cannot receive revelation for every person in the Church, or world. His role is "macro" not "micro." Salvation is "micro" not "macro." That is to say, almost ALL revelation you're going to encounter in this life will come to YOU, be specific to YOU and will guide YOU. The "Prophet" will know absolutely nothing about the Lord's direction to and revelations to YOU. If you wait to have the "Prophet" tell you what to do, you're going to get general admonitions to pay tithing, keep commandments, avoid tattoos, not get more than one earring, not watch pornography, keep the Word of Wisdom, sustain the Church leadership, keep a current Temple recommend, do your Home and Visiting Teaching, attend your meetings, perform faithfully in your callings, etc. ALL of which are very good in their own right and should be done. But whether you make a sacrifice required of you by God, adapted to you alone, and calculated to produce the faith necessary for eternal life, well that is unlikely to ever be a matter of general concern to the Church. Generations will come and go without making the required sacrifice if waiting for some leader to tell you how and what to do. God alone will do that.

MAY 2, 2010

Clarification

I have not written any explanation for the Second Anointing or Calling and Election process. I do not think it is important or meaningful to ever write anything about it. What is important is to understand "how" someone would make changes in their lives to then be taught things directly from the Lord. He has a continuing ministry. You should be interested in having Him as your minister.

The books I have written do not ever touch upon Calling and Election, nor discuss the Second Anointing. But they will tell you what is required to go and learn from the Lord about these things directly. If you want answers about that, then follow the same path

as the ancients did, as Joseph Smith did, and as Abraham did. I'm only interested in helping you understand the path.

Beyond that, the details of such things are simply irrelevant to someone who is not invited to participate. It is pure voyeurism without any purpose. Rather like putting jewelry on pigs, which Christ recommended against. Not that the inquiry comes from a "pig" but the answer would be subject to public scrutiny by everyone on the web.

The fact you are aware there is more to the Gospel is important. The fact that you become entitled to receive things pertaining to a higher law by living that higher law is also important. What you should focus on is the living, not the curiosity about things which you are not yet prepared to receive. Prepare to receive them. Everything else will be answered to your entire satisfaction once you are.

COMMENTS:

The Zang Family · MAY 2, 2010 AT 9:00 PM

That is helpful because there are LDS writers who seem to capitalize on the dearth of info about the path and make it seem as if you need to know the details, or need to have your calling and election before receiving the second comforter, and i am just now realizing that I've been dupped by those sentiments. So are you in fact saying that the Savior will minister to you as the Second Comforter before you have your second anointing? I don't mean to get you to write what you said you wouldn't, just hopeful to find out what I can exercise my faith towards.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 2, 2010 AT 9:41 PM

To the extent I have ever commented to anyone about this I use the scriptures. There isn't any need to claim personal experience as a basis to explain. It's all there, if you will study the scriptures.

On this particular question we have the example of Joseph Smith. He had a visitation by Christ in the First Vision when only 14 (or as old as 17 in some accounts). His calling and election came some time

later as set out in Section 132. The ministry of Christ with Joseph included several personal visitations, events in Kirtland Temple, the vision in Section 76, and all of them preceded his calling and election in Section 132.

When Joseph spoke about the Second Comforter, he tied the two together. I put Joseph's quote on page 5 of *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*. Joseph's quote tied the two together as a cause-and-effect. He was correct in the sense that Christ's continuing ministry involves the exaltation of those to whom He ministers. Bruce R. McConkie's comment in *The Millennial Messiah* was that "the millennium is the great day of the Second Comforter" was right on point. That is, Christ's ministry is always to bring people to the Father. Elder McConkie also declared in that book (which I quote in *The Second Comforter*) that it should be "known here and now, that if you will separate yourself from the world and live a Millennial life, you can have Millennial blessings here and now." (That's a paraphrase because I don't have the book in front of me right now. But it's very close.) That is true doctrine.

Most people who spend time writing about second anointings and calling and election don't know what they're talking about. The best treatment of that subject is something which ought to come from the Lord directly. Or an angel assigned by Him to minister to the person who has prepared.

The challenge is preparation. I'm all about that. That is what I write to explain and what I encourage all to do.

MAY 3, 2010

Blessed are the Peacemakers

Christ's disciples were ever willing to use both priesthood and the sword to vanquish their opponents. Christ taught them restraint. There is this incident in the Luke Chapter 9:

⁵¹ *And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,*

⁵² And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

⁵³ And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

⁵⁴ And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

⁵⁵ But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

⁵⁶ For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

There is this incident in Gethsemane, a portion taken from John Chapter 18:

¹⁰ Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

¹¹ Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

¹² Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him,

The balance of the account is found in Luke Chapter 22:

⁵⁰ And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.

⁵¹ And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.

⁵² Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves?

⁵³ *When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.*

⁵⁴ *Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.*

Christ taught and lived this: “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt. 5:9).

There are too many willing to cry for revenge or justice in the world. Eventually the spirit of revenge and justice will be set free, and the earth will be filled with violence. As it was in the days of Noah—those days will return again (Gen. 6:11–13; Moses 8:28–30). Those who want to see *justified* and *unjustified* killing will have their fill.

In the days before the flood the earth was filled with violence. There was also a corresponding return of Zion. It would not be as it was in the days of Noah if Zion were not to return. For that, the pattern is set out in Moses Chapter 7:

¹³ *And so great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him.*

¹⁴ *There also came up a land out of the depth of the sea, and so great was the fear of the enemies of the people of God, that they fled and stood afar off and went upon the land which came up out of the depth of the sea.*

¹⁵ *And the giants of the land, also, stood afar off; and there went forth a curse upon all people that fought against God;*

¹⁶ *And from that time forth there were wars and bloodshed among them; but the Lord came and dwelt with his people, and they dwelt in righteousness.*

¹⁷ *The fear of the Lord was upon all nations, so great was the glory of the Lord, which was upon his people. And the Lord blessed the land, and they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish.*

¹⁸ *And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.*

¹⁹ *And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion.*

²⁰ *And it came to pass that Enoch talked with the Lord; and he said unto the Lord: Surely Zion shall dwell in safety forever. But the Lord said unto Enoch: Zion have I blessed, but the residue of the people have I cursed.*

Why was the fear of the Lord upon people who did not gather to Zion? It was because their own guilt prevented them from drawing near. It will be the same in the last days as it was then. Moroni explains it in Mormon Chapter 9:

² *Behold, will ye believe in the day of your visitation—behold, when the Lord shall come, yea, even that great day when the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, yea, in that great day when ye shall be brought to stand before the Lamb of God—then will ye say that there is no God?*

³ *Then will ye longer deny the Christ, or can ye behold the Lamb of God? Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with him under a consciousness of your guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to*

dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws?

⁴ Behold, I say unto you that ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell.

⁵ For behold, when ye shall be brought to see your nakedness before God, and also the glory of God, and the holiness of Jesus Christ, it will kindle a flame of unquenchable fire upon you.

⁶ O then ye unbelieving, turn ye unto the Lord; cry mightily unto the Father in the name of Jesus, that perhaps ye may be found spotless, pure, fair, and white, having been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, at that great and last day.

How much guilt we bring with us to that final day depends entirely upon the intent of our hearts, the actions of our hands, and the words we speak (Alma 12:14). Becoming a peacemaker and meriting the call as a child of God is measured by our acts, but includes as Alma warns us, our thoughts and words as well.

COMMENTS:

Kisi · MAY 11, 2010 AT 2:22 PM

A friend of mine read all the posts and comments on violence and the use of weapons, and then he wrote this back to me:

I'm reminded of a story about a unity minister who was withdrawing money out of an ATM late one night. As she turned around some thug stuck a gun in her face and said, "Give me the money." She handed it to him and said, "You really must be desperate to do this. I have a little more in my purse." She reached in and gave him another \$20 and said, "I'm really sorry I don't have more to give you." The robber looked at her and she said, "I love you." He turned and ran.

Ten years later the minister was in her office at church and there was a knock on the door. She opened in and the person

standing there looked vaguely familiar. He said, “You probably don’t remember me but I robbed you 10 years ago. You told me you loved me and that is the first time anyone has ever said that to me. I haven’t been able to sleep or get that out of my head for 10 years and I had to come talk to you. Here is the money I took and I’m sorry.” She invited him in, they talked, became good friends and he joined her church.

In the writings of St. John he says God is Love. If God is Love then as his children our essential nature is Love. Perfect Love casts out all fear. He who says he loves God but hates his brother is a liar.

The Sermon on the Mount is the essence of what Jesus taught and embodied. Love your enemies sounds as ridiculous now as it did then. Yet, if we really did what he told us to do the world would have truly been transformed.

When I go to some of these political gatherings I hear people whine about Brother Barrack saying we’re not a Christian nation and yet my observation is they worship their guns far more than the Lord of Love. I think we are a Christian Nation and that is unfortunate. When Christians took Jerusalem in 1099 AD they butchered every man, woman, child, Muslim, Jew and Orthodox Christian in the city. The inquisition killed thousands of innocent people. Christians justified slavery through their religion and engaged in systematic extermination of the native population of this continent. Hopefully someday we will become a Christ-like Nation that Lives the Law of Love. Only then will we truly become the shining light on the hill.

I think there is a place for defending yourself but If we really did what Jesus taught the world would be transformed and then it might not be as necessary.”

I like my friend’s comments.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 11, 2010 AT 4:48 PM

and I loved your friend’s comments...

MAY 3, 2010

Is it Your Hope to be a Part of Zion?

I was asked if I thought it was wrong to own a gun or kill in self-defense. My response.

I don't think there is anything wrong with owning firearms, hunting, or self-defense. But I do think we are too quick to presume we are authorized to take life. Therefore, I am reluctant to encourage that kind of thinking. I encourage a non-violent, non-confrontational way to solve a problem first, and violent action as a last resort. When violence or self-defense is used as the final option, then it is rarely needed. When it is viewed as justified and approved, it gets employed with the kind of recklessness that will condemn a person.

The Mountain Meadows Massacre is a hallmark event wherein aggressive "self defense" resulted in murder. No one in the local church leadership involved thought of it as murder at the time. In hindsight, everyone, even the church's Assistant-Historian, admits it was murder and that the blame went far beyond John D. Lee. It is far better to suffer than to react too quickly and to take life.

This is a separate subject from the creation of Zion. Currently, as a people, we don't possess enough basic understanding of doctrine to begin to organize Zion. Our current models would be warmed over Babylon with new names associated with it. Rather like the Historic Christian movement adopted "Christmas" to celebrate "Sol Invictus." Or the fertility rites of Spring renamed "Easter."

Our "Zion" would be a commercial enterprise, with private ownership and capitalist competition to form an economic basis from which to build a strictly regimented and highly controlled people. Something so foreign to what Zion was meant to be that I rather think it would draw tornadoes in a proportion greater than trailer parks currently do in Mississippi.

Zion will be cooperative, not competitive. They will be “one” in every sense of the word. No one will need to say “know ye the Lord” because everyone will know Him, from the greatest to the least. He will be able to dwell among them because He will have **already** been known by them.

Collectivist efforts are never going to work. **FIRST**, we must become *individually* the kind of people whom the Lord can visit. Then, after that, the gathering together of like-minded people will be a gathering of equals. It will not be an hierarchical gathering of “leadership” and drones. There won’t be a single drone in Zion. Everyone will be equal and no one will mind mowing the grass or taking out the garbage.

I envision this scene from Zion:

A man walks down the street early in the morning and notices that the bakery is unmanned. Its door is open, because there is no need for locks in Zion. So, on an impulse, he enters, looks about for the instructions left by someone, and begins to prepare bread. As the morning goes on, a few others join him. They make bread. Others come and take the bread to their homes. At the end of the day, the man goes home. This was his first time working in the bakery. He did it because he saw it needed to be done.

He returns to the bakery, because he enjoyed it. Day by day he works in the bakery for months, perhaps years. One day on his way, he notices that the grass needs to be cut and the mower has been carefully left beside a tree along the parkway. So he starts to cut the grass. He finds he likes it, and this is now what he does this day. And the next. And within a month he has cut all the grass needing cutting in his immediate neighborhood and starts over again where he began. He enjoys it.

Eventually he is asked by someone to help to move clothing and journals from one home to another. A couple whose children have all moved out no longer have need of the larger home they occupy, and are moving across town. So he puts the mower carefully beside a tree and begins to help move. Homes are occupied based upon need, and these people no longer have need of the larger space they once occupied.

Across town he notices that there is a new neighborhood being built. He decides, after finishing the move for the couple, that he will assist at the site. He returns there for over a year as he provides help with stocking and distributing materials, framing, installing shingles, painting and clean-up.

He has no job. He is never without work. He asks for no pay, because some labor to feed others. He has no need for housing, because what is available is shared.

Before I go on, I feel the need to interrupt:

How on earth is something like this going to work?

What about zoning laws and business licenses?

What about getting a building permit before commencing construction?

What quality control and food-handler's permits exist which will guarantee the bread the man makes won't make people sick?

This is chaos. Disorder. Anarchy. In short, how the hell will something like this WORK?!!??

Well, the answer is, of course, it won't. Can't. Not with the folks we have at present. We'll sit around arguing about the rules for establishing Zion and simply never get around to being Zion. Zion IS. It can't be organized, because it requires no organization. It can't be controlled because there is no need for control. It can't be governed because it is entirely voluntary and self-governing.

So for us, we imagine Zion to have a completely restrictive set of covenants on housing which will keep out those garish, bright colored stucco houses we see on the “west-side” in oh so many crowded cities. Right? We can’t have that. And we need a code to mandate a common language. We can’t put up with a polyglot society where we can’t make out what someone is saying, now can we? And we ought to make sure zoning keeps the commercial stuff on one side and not scattered throughout the neighborhoods. Crap like that attracts crime. And crime should require immediate expulsion, right? Can’t tolerate crime in Zion. We’ll need law enforcement to make that work, and a fence so the criminals don’t creep back in after dark.

And street lights, so we can see what people are up to after dark when they’re lurking about. And taxes to pay for the public improvements. And a cap on taxes. We can’t let taxation become punitive....wait—we’re right back in Babylon....

But you say you want to start Zion? OK. Go help your neighbor. This is where our hearts will need to be before the foundation will ever be laid. Studying so you can justify using violence if the need arises will not get you any closer to Zion. Nor will developing a street plan for Zion ahead of a heart plan for changing mankind. Men’s hearts have failed them (D&C 45:26).

COMMENTS:

DKD · MAY 3, 2010 AT 3:19 PM

Denver,

have you started John Pontius’s book *The Triumph of Zion* yet?

Denver Snuffer · MAY 3, 2010 AT 6:11 PM

I’ve still got to finish another book before beginning the new book by Pontius. So, no, I haven’t read it yet.

MAY 4, 2010

I Am A Fool

Joseph Smith once said about himself that if *“he hadn’t lived it, he wouldn’t believe it.”* What insight that provides.

I believe in the complete equality of all of us. God did not love Joseph Smith more than He loved Sidney Rigdon. Joseph remained true to the end, and Sidney fell away. That had nothing to do with God’s love for them. It had to do with their love of God and willingness to sacrifice to have the faith to trust in God.

I do not blame anyone who questions my right to give answers. I renounce any authority over anyone. Even those over whom I have a position as father are treated with respect and urging, not by demanding they see or do things to please me.

If, however, I have the power to answer a question by the power of Spirit, and the answer seems to you to be filled with light and truth, then it is the Spirit you should thank—not me. Such an ability will flee the moment I leave the path, seek to control others or become prideful. You can mark it down as true: No man who has his own self as his concern will be able to declare the truth in purity and with the approval of the Spirit.

I have said before and I repeat it again—I am a fool. You mustn’t trust me. If the Spirit does not ratify what I have to say, then I’m not worth the time to even consider.

This blog is an attempt to explain what I believe to be true. It is for those who are trying to find truth for themselves. Hopefully you will become acquainted with enough to begin to trust that God does exist, and that He will answer questions, and that He is no respecter of persons. Hopefully you will venture into asking and getting answers from Him directly. Then, when you have begun

that process, I hope to encourage you to follow through and receive from Him what He alone can provide to us. For salvation lies in “knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent” (John 17:3). It does not lie in following other men. Rather it is to be found as a result of you drawing near to Him. This will in turn cause Him to draw near to you.

He lives!

He answers prayer!

He cares about and loves you as much as He has loved any person who has ever lived on this earth.

MAY 4, 2010

The Process is Everything—The Answer is Nothing

Process is everything. Answers are nothing.

If you learn the process, you can develop godlike traits. That is, the very tools that are required for us to develop as disciples of Jesus Christ are, in fact, the tools used by God Himself.

Faith in God is necessary for us to develop. God extends His kingdom by His faith. Therefore, as we develop faith we are developing a characteristic that is godlike in its form and function. He knows we are unable to have faith in ourselves right now. Therefore, it is required for us to have faith in Him. Indeed at this stage of development it is necessary for us to concentrate all faith in Him because this whole creation belongs to Him. We are not self-existent yet. Our organization and continuation is dependent upon Him (See Mosiah 2:20–25).

Christ is our great example, and in this He showed the way as well. While here, mortal, and before finishing the course, He declared: “I can of my own self do nothing” (John 5:30). When

resurrected, however, He declared “all power is given unto me in earth and in heaven” (Matt. 28:18).

The rules of Celestial glory are the rules of the Temple. Obedience, sacrifice, Gospel, chastity and consecration are all the hallmarks of citizenship there. This is why peace, order, kindness and love prevail in that society. There is nothing to harm, threaten or break up families.

Why would an answer to a deep doctrinal question help someone who is not prepared to live in conformity with the Celestial standards? And contrariwise, if they live Celestial standards, how can you keep them from understanding the doctrine? (John 7:17).

Process is everything. A mere answer will not fill the empty soul. Those who have read my books should understand this. This blog is for them. Those who do not have a doctrinal basis to understand what is going on here will not be satisfied by this blog. It is not meant as a substitute for understanding what I've written. It is only a supplement to it.

That does not mean that you must read what I've written to understand the Gospel. There are many ways to obtain that understanding, the primary one being to **study** the scriptures. In my opinion the quality of what we teach now is so diluted, so basic and simplistic. It leaves by the wayside so much of what the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that you either have to read early church materials or else read what I've gathered (based primarily on the scriptures and secondarily on what Joseph Smith taught). If you have been a Latter-day Saint for longer than about 4 years, today's curriculum, in my view, is not adequate to inform you about the obligations devolving upon you as a disciple of Christ.

I labor to teach process. I want you independent of me and every other teacher, able to get answers for yourself directly from

heaven itself. I want to avoid today what Joseph cautioned us against in Nauvoo:

[I]f the people departed from the Lord, they must fall—that they were depending on the Prophet, hence were darkened in their minds, in consequence of neglecting the duties devolving on themselves. (*TPJS* p. 237)

Joseph did NOT want you dependent upon him for answers. He wanted to teach you correct principles and let you govern yourself.

Any man who tries to put himself between you and heaven, claiming that he alone should be the source of your religious beliefs and education, is practicing priestcraft and will in the end lead both himself and you to damnation.

MAY 5, 2010

Belief Becomes Knowledge

The post I put up with an excerpt from Lecture 6 a bit ago was deliberately chosen as a foundation for what was put up a few days ago. That Lecture included the fact that you “**know**” not merely “**believe**” that what you are doing is in conformity with God’s will. A person obtains “**actual knowledge**” that they are acting in conformity with God’s will.

Kisi asked a question regarding the idea of being asked to do something you regard as “wrong” or perhaps even “evil,” and how can a person avoid deception with such an idea. The answer lies within the doctrine taught in Lecture 6. You simply cannot proceed without knowing. You cannot know without following the correct course. You must make an acceptable sacrifice to obtain the knowledge. Without making that sacrifice you cannot obtain that knowledge. However, once you have possession of the actual

knowledge, then it is not a matter of conjecture, or speculation, or desire, or “hope” as the world uses that term. Rather it is an act in utter righteousness, in strict conformity with the will of God, whose will is known to the person because they have proceeded correctly in obtaining this knowledge.

To gain that knowledge a person keeps the commandments, pays their tithes, does everything they are asked to do to follow the will of God as understood by them. Such a person will be “firm in their minds” and not weak minded or given to flights of fancy (Moroni 7:30). They will have been qualified by the things which they have done in following God to possess this kind of knowledge.

The idea that a person would do something which they regard as “wrong” or to be “evil” is typified in the experience of Abraham (Gen. 22:2) and Nephi (1 Ne. 4:10). This is what the Lecture is talking about when it says:

a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things, never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things; it was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things, that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God.

Now I do not expect anyone to be asked to sacrifice their only child. Nor to be told to kill someone and take their possession. What I expect is that in the context of the life someone has lived or is living, they will be asked to do or not do something which is so specific to them that they alone will understand why it is a

sacrifice to them. If asked of another, it may be completely insignificant. But when asked of them, it will be exactly what the person will struggle to lay upon the Lord's altar. Hence the term "sacrifice" with its partial meaning of parting with something involving great value to them. However, it is not possible to rule anything in or out—the Lord alone will know you and what is required for you to obtain this faith.

The terms for obtaining this kind of faith are the same for every man or woman who has ever lived. Without making the sacrifice it is not possible to obtain the faith.

MAY 5, 2010

Conference on Chiasmus

The Conference on Chiasmus originally scheduled for May 15th has been continued to September. There will be a further announcement on date, time and location once things have been finally arranged.

MAY 6, 2010

Qualifying for the Blessings Under Adverse Circumstances

I was asked about someone who is an active, faithful man married to a non-member wife. The issue is their chances to receive all the blessings associated with an eternal family, despite the spouse's lack of faith.

From the question it is apparent that the person has first, has accepted and believes in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Second, is living everything they can at present. Third, would gladly take the spouse to the temple if the spouse were willing to go and enter into the covenants there.

This, once again, is a Section 137 issue in which the person qualifies for everything which they would have gladly received, had the circumstances permitted it:

⁶ *And marveled how it was that he had obtained an inheritance in that kingdom, seeing that he had departed this life before the Lord had set his hand to gather Israel the second time, and had not been baptized for the remission of sins.*

⁷ *Thus came the voice of the Lord unto me, saying: All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God;*

⁸ *Also all that shall die henceforth without a knowledge of it, who would have received it with all their hearts, shall be heirs of that kingdom;*

⁹ *For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts.*

By continuing to be loyal to, supportive of, and loving toward the non-believing spouse the husband is living an example which will, in the Day of Judgment, be credited him for righteousness. This is particularly true when the husband remains loyal and faithful to her when she does not share his faith. It reflects credit on his character to do so. I cannot help but believe the Lord is pleased with such a man.

Finally, who knows but what the spouse will, at the end, convert and all the blessings be sealed upon them while still here anyway. Life is not over yet. There is something compelling and convincing to even a skeptic of the Gospel when they see someone actually live it.

MAY 6, 2010

Go About Doing Good

You should not look directly into the sun. Whenever you do, your eyes are unable to adjust to the intensity of the light. It is possible to even do damage to your eyes by looking directly at the sun.

Everything in mortality is a type or symbol of eternal things. All things bear testimony of Christ and His great plan (Moses 6:63). The sun bears testimony of the Son of God. It is a great symbol of Him.

Our approach to gaining a relationship with the **Son** should be like that of our enjoyment of the **sun**—indirect. That is, entering into His presence is a by-product. It is as a result of the way you live. It is not the “goal.”

To approach Him, you must live as He did. You must “keep His commandments.” You must love others. You must live the way He lived. When you are walking in the same path He walked, you will find that He is walking there still. He will come alongside you, as you are “in the way” and will open to your understanding all things which He would have you know (Luke 24:13–32). I’ve written about this in the talk in the Appendix to *Eighteen Verses* and will not repeat it here. But I would remind you that the account of those two disciples is a type of how He appears to those to whom He will minister. He will see you as you are in the right way, and then join with you.

Go about doing good. You will find Him as you do. Do not think you will be able to find Him without setting about to do the things which He bid you to do. There is a law irrevocably decreed which governs these things.

The Nephites were keeping the appointed times with the Lord in His year-end festivals. In that process, He came to them. Set about doing what He bids you to do and He will likewise come to you. (This is described in *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*). Keep His ways. He will be able to walk with you as you walk with Him.

One clarification that I think needs to be understood by those who have not read what I have written. I have never revealed anything sacred that has been revealed to me. I have taught the path. It is not necessary nor desirable to reveal personal matters, and I have not. It is important to teach the right way. Read what I've written and you will find that nothing improper or even difficult is taught there. It is taken from the scriptures. The scriptures are sufficient to teach you the way to eternal life. I only teach what I find in them.

CHAPTER 12

Philosophies of Men

MAY 6, 2010

Philosophies of Men

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a great whole. It requires an overall harmony between all its parts to be understood. Without that overall harmony it is jarring and discordant.

The problem with apostasy is that it forfeits truths which are necessary in order to comprehend the majesty of Christ's teachings. Those truths which get retained are not kept in balance with the rest. Simple virtues are kept while overall righteousness is forfeited.

No one can argue with the virtue of tolerance. But it is constrained and governed inside a larger context that prevents permissiveness and sloth.

No one can argue with the virtue of obedience. Indeed, obedience is itself one of the bedrock requirements of the Gospel. But divorced from the other virtues inside of which it is regulated, obedience can become a terrible weapon used to separate people from God's Holy Spirit and drive them into submission to "Popes and Priests." (Any man believed to be incapable of leading you into error is a "Pope.")

No one can argue against the virtue of patience. But when it is urged to prevent necessary action to develop a god-like people, then it has become a tool for deception and error and not a virtue at all.

Take any virtue and remove it from its overall context within the great Gospel whole and you see how apostasy can warp a people. They retain the conviction that they are still God's chosen disciples, because the virtues they practice are in fact, godly. However, they have become distorted, bloated and swollen. They are without harmony, capable of great evil or neglect, all the while celebrating their fidelity to the "truth" as they understand it.

You MUST understand doctrine. You MUST study the scriptures. But more important than anything else, you MUST seek to gain further light and knowledge by conversing with the Lord directly. Harmony of the whole is dependent upon His direct guidance and blessings. You simply cannot move forward a piece here and a bit there, while neglecting the whole composite picture of the Gospel. He will open it to your view. He will show you how one part is related to another, and that to another still, so that it all moves forward together. It is not to all be comprehended at once. It is to be gained a little bit of the whole here, a further harmony of things there, until the whole moves forward together. Always moving in balance, in harmony and as a complete magisterial revelation of God's will.

Latter-day Saints are not immune from this problem of disharmony. Indeed, it is the great challenge which we have faced since the time of the First Vision. Joseph's recalibrating of his own life was constant. He wanted to reward Martin Harris for his support, petitioned for permission to let him take the 116 pages of manuscript, and when he was told "no" he persisted. When he finally got the Lord's reluctant permission it was not for Martin Harris'

benefit, but for Joseph's. Joseph was to learn a hard lesson about disregarding good advice from a superior Guide (D&C 3:1–8). This comprehension of the harmony of the whole is what provoked Joseph to teach:

the nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin; and like the ancients, arrives at that point of faith where he is wrapped in the power and glory of his Maker, and is caught up to dwell with Him. (DHC 2:8)

Choose your teachers carefully. None of them will neglect to emphasize a virtue. However, without the whole of the Gospel in harmony in their own lives, they cannot bring it into harmony for you. Finding that harmony is the great challenge in this lone and dreary world, filled as it is, with the philosophies of men mingled with scripture.

MAY 7, 2010

This is Why I Didn't Like it

I was asked by someone who liked the book *Odds Are You're Going To Be Exalted*, why I disliked it. My response is as follows:

I suppose first because it is filled with false doctrine and sentimental rubbish. It is unanchored in anything other than pure sentiment, contradicts the scriptures, and attributes motives to Heavenly Parents which are held by the author. It is worse than useless, it is misleading.

The numerosity argument takes groups who could not possibly be the audience for his book and makes them the statistical weight from which he reaches his conclusion. He takes folks who lived during the Nephite centuries of peace, the City of Enoch, and

those who will live during the Millennium (whose numbers he speculates to be in the billions), then adds to those numbers all who die before the age of 8 (also a speculative but big number), then, after claiming the speculative total of all these will be far, far greater than those who merely slog along in mortality like us, he concludes that the odds are you're going to be exalted. Here's the logical fallacy of that whopper: First, the Nephites in ancient history didn't read the book.

They're NOT in his audience. Neither was the City of Enoch's hosts; nor are the Millennial folk; nor are any of those who die before age 8. Meaning that the argument, IF it had validity, is an argument that THEY are going to be exalted. Not YOU. That is, the speculative total of those hosts are the ones who will benefit from their lives' condition. But none of them are readers of the book. So if the argument fits, then the title should have been: "*Odds Are They're Going To Be Exalted.*"

Second, the argument for the numbers is wholly speculative. We don't have a census for any of the prior Nephite, Enoch, City of Melchizedek, etc. populations. So without an actual number, we can't even make the argument. His conjecture for the Millennium is based upon Elder Bruce R McConkie's speculation about the numerosity of that group. Repeating what Elder McConkie admits is his conjecture does not reduce it to fact. We simply can't say what the final numbers will be for these other groups.

Third, he conflates the promise of "salvation" with "exaltation." So far as I know there are no children under age 8 who have been sealed in marriage—a condition required for exaltation. Without an eternal marriage they are separate, single and angels; NOT exalted (D&C 132:16–17). It is a quantum leap unsupported by scripture to conflate the promise of salvation for those who die before age 8, or

who were not sealed in marriage from any of the other populations about which he speculates, with the promise of exaltation.

Fourth, he gives one bit of caution in his *Introduction* which the average reader will not catch. That caution is: “What follows is my perception of God’s nature...” p. xiv. That caution should be in **BOLD** and capitalized. In other words, the whole book is based upon his sentiments about God. These unanchored sentiments are NOT and never will be doctrine. They are just some guy’s effeminate effort to avoid the rigors of confronting the narrowness, straitness and fewness of the Gospel’s takers.

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

There’s not a stitch of support for this awesome conclusion. How does he know that? How does he presume to speak about a “mother in heaven” about whom nothing has been revealed? How does he know that she is not the champion of the plan? How does he know that she isn’t absolutely persuaded that obedience to the laws of perfection are the only protection of her children who do obey? How does he not recognize that to dwell with someone living a higher law, when the person refuses to obey that higher law, is more miserable than being cast out? (Morm. 9:4). How does he fail to recognize that throughout nature from the hosts of animals born, relatively few ever reach adulthood and reproduce? Again, this natural process is a symbol of God’s own great plan, is it not?

(Moses 6:63). If so, why, if God cares with sentimentality about all His creations (i.e., that they fill the measure of their creation and have joy in their posterity), then why not let all them reproduce as adults? After all it takes about 10,000 sea turtles before you get a successful reproducing adult. Pretty much the case with frogs, sea life generally, and wildebeests—well, their young are essentially the roving McDonald’s menu for all the African meat-eaters.

When he doesn’t like a parable told by CHRIST, he attributes it to Matthew and dismisses it as Matthew’s conjecture about numbers (See footnote 2 on the top of page 133 of *Odds Are You’re Going To Be Exalted*).

He absolutely contradicts Christ when he claims, without any support other than his own sentiment, “God does not require perfection of us in order for us to gain exaltation” (page 13). But Christ commanded: “Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect” (3 Ne. 12:48).

He is a PhD in Theology. That education has done violence to his ability to see what the scriptures teach. Instead of using that education properly (i.e. to understand the fallacies of man’s reasoning as they apply their philosophy), he has instead become persuaded by it and decided to measure truth by this damaging set of errors.

He thinks that if “most” people are lost then the plan is a failure. The measure of the Gospel’s success does not lie in numerosity. It lies in the fact that if the whole of creation produces but one successful couple, then it will have all been worth it. Even then, if only one couple were exalted, then you still have an infinite number to follow, because they are by definition infinite and eternal as long as they produce seed.

I have marked up my copy for the first couple of chapters, then just relented and read it without a running commentary in the

margins. But the book was an insult to my understanding of the truth. It attempts to urge the Calvinist notion of “irresistible grace” in new clothes. It attempts to give life to “grace” as Martin Luther championed the concept in LDS garb. It is a litany of Evangelical/Protestant philosophy mingled with scripture. And most astonishing of all, this cacophony of error is published by the good people at Deseret Book, as if its creeds were not included among those denounced by the Savior in His first visit with Joseph in the Grove.

I keep running in my mind: “Perhaps you do not believe in this great being Alonzo Gaskill proposes, who is surrounded by myriads of beings who have been saved, not for any act of theirs, but by His good pleasure?”

And the response thunders back: “I do not! I cannot comprehend such a being!”

I cannot recall where that dialogue, which is now simply part of my consciousness, came from. But it seems somehow sacred to me, coming from some source I trusted. Something which goes back long before 1990. But, alas, when I try to pin it down it eludes me.

I could go on, but I think it would degenerate into incautious words which will offend the average reader. Given my upbringing in Idaho, I will soon be making scatological references to bovine feces, reverting back to the lexicon of my pre-conversion youth. So I will meekly stop and settle back into the day’s work.

I hope that answers the question.

COMMENTS:

Denver Snuffer · MAY 8, 2010 AT 10:09 AM

I think the criticism of my “tone” was well taken. And I agree that you wouldn’t like to spend one minute with a God who was critical or biting in His assessments of another’s foolishness. But you have to admit, at least I did not call him “Satan” as Christ did Peter (Matt. 16:23).

Anonymous · MAY 10, 2010 AT 2:22 PM

Denver,

Now that you have reproved this man with with sharpness, will you be showing him an increase of love, lest he esteem you to be his enemy?

Tim Oaks in Tennessee

Denver Snuffer · MAY 10, 2010 AT 5:27 PM

Tim:

I haven't "reproved him." Haven't even mentioned his name as I recall. I've commented on the thoughts in a book. So far as I know he neither knows me, has met me, nor has read anything I've ever written, let alone this blog. I was asked for my opinion about a book. I gave it. There wasn't a single personal thing involved from my perspective. So, lacking any direct contact with him and never having addressed a single comment to him, I do not feel any responsibility to show forth an increase of love to him.

Hope that clarifies my view.

MAY 7, 2010

Constantine and Correlation

I was asked in several ways how I reconcile some modern trends in the Church. One question was phrased this way:

Harkening back to Elder Poelman's talk on the differences between the Church and the Gospel. It's often stated (overstated?) that the church is the Kingdom of God in various meetings and most members conflate the Church with the Gospel (i.e. they are synonymous terms these days). Could you discuss the original differences (as intended in the scriptures) between "church" and "gospel"? Is church, as we currently know it (big meetinghouses, 3 hour blocks, weekly attendance, etc.), the same thing as "church" in the times of the Old and New Testaments?

Here's how I reconcile it all: I don't. What I do is reflect upon history. Here are a few of my ruminations:

Christianity became diverse quite early on. Almost immediately after the closing of the New Testament, the diversity began to metastasize.

There were those who viewed Christ as a normal man, who had been "adopted" by the Father at the time of His baptism. These were called "Adoptionists."

There were those who believed that Christ was just a normal man, but that He had a divine spirit inhabit Him temporarily from the time of His baptism until the time of His crucifixion, at which time the divine spirit left. It was incomprehensible to them that God would suffer and die. Therefore, they developed a theory in which He did not.

There were those who believed that Christ was a transcendent spirit, and never corporeal as other men were. They believed that He manifested Himself as if he were a mortal, but never truly was mortal. They did not believe it possible for God to become incarnate.

There were those who believed that Christ taught a secret Gospel to His insiders, and that the public teachings were misleading. It was the private "gnosis" that would save you.

There were those who believed that Christ was a separate and distinct being from God the Father, and that the result was that there were two gods and not one.

There were those who argued that if they were separate then it violated the idea of "monotheism" and therefore, God the Father, Christ and the Holy Ghost had to be one, single person. However incomprehensible that may be, there was only one being, manifesting itself in three forms.

There were those who believed priesthood authority was immutable, and once conferred it could not be lost no matter what the conduct of the person ordained. That is, authority was not dependent at all upon righteous behavior, and even a thoroughly wicked man, once ordained, held priesthood authority no matter what he did.

There were those who believed that priesthood authority was entirely dependent upon faithful living, and that a failure to live according to God's will terminated the authority of that man. This movement was named after a North African priest named Arius who remained devoted during the persecutions and was blinded and crippled by those who were seeking to destroy the Christian faith.

Well, by 324 AD the whole thing had become riddled with controversies and sects. Therefore, when King Constantine, who had battled his way into sole ownership of the Roman Emperor's seat, determined to adopt a state religion (he chose Christianity as that state religion) he presumed he was taking a harmonious, consistent faith. Upon learning that there were strong internal Christian disputes, some of which led to violence between professors of the various beliefs, he decided that he needed to put down the disputations.

In a fit of practicality, King Constantine convened the great council at Nicea, and summoned all the Bishops of Christianity to a single gathering. At the gathering he demanded they come to an agreement on what the Christian faith believed. He could not tolerate disputes leading to violence in the newly adopted Roman state religion.

This council at Nicea was the first attempt at correlation. The result had little to do with the truth. It had to do with peace for the Roman state. Constantine himself did not believe in the doctrine.

He believed in the effectiveness of the faith as a basis for political power, domestic security and ease of ruling a diverse population scattered about on three continents. When the results were achieved, he then exiled the handful of dissenters and 'voila, Historic Christianity began. That Historic Christianity remained correlated and of a singular view until the split between Constantinople and Rome at about 1000 AD. It became further uncorrelated in the 1500's with Martin Luther.

Once you start letting doctrinal disputes develop you wind up with a split empire, and internal loss of government. The original effort was imposed at the tip of a sword. When there were dissenters, they were exiled, or eventually made "heretic." When the final step was taken, and the intellectual buttress supplied by Bishop Ambrose's arguments, it at last became possible for "heresy" or "heretics" to be snubbed out by murder. The persecuted became the persecutors. They were justified by the change, having a correlated promise that the **faith** ratified the reasons that allowed you to persecute, torture and kill those who strayed from the "one true, Catholic faith." After all, if you could reclaim them merely by torture of the body, how much better than allowing them to lapse into eternal torment by being consigned to hell. An endless "Hell" also being an invention of the Historic Christian faith. So it was really good to do that burning, racking, thumb- dislocating, flaying, stuff after all. All in a day's work to convert the wayward soul back to Christ.

Elder Lee, while still a member of the Twelve, began the correlation process in the LDS Church. It was his crowning achievement when he became President. Now everything is in harmony.

That harmony has come at the price of developing the internal idea of "apostasy" based upon the doctrine we believe in. A test

which was altogether alien to Joseph Smith. Joseph said, when a brother Brown was being threatened with excommunication for his error in doctrine:

I did not like the old man being called up for erring in doctrine. It looks too much like the Methodist, and not like the Latter-day Saints. Methodists have creeds which a man must believe or be asked out of their church. I want the liberty of thinking and believing as I please. It feels so good not to be trammelled. It does not prove that a man is not a good man because he errs in doctrine.

The price we have paid to date for correlation is a fraction of what will ultimately be paid, if history informs us of anything. It is now possible to be a “Mormon heretic” for believing doctrine which someone else has determined should be discarded—a thing which was unimaginable at the time of Joseph Smith, even as a result of an actual error in doctrine. For Joseph, the way to reclaim some errant Saint was, well, confined to the means permitted by revelation: “only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile” (D&C 121:41–42). Today that has been expanded to excommunication for doctrinal errors. When such a thing takes place, years go by before such a person is re-welcomed into the church, and then only after receiving permission from the First Presidency. So the correlation of doctrine has slipped already into a coercive use of authority within the church. Instead of persuading using better doctrine to correct an error, we punish and silence them through a method that was alien to the original pattern.

History is an interesting thing to study. Particularly at the beginnings of any religious movement. It always progresses from

movement to institution. Once it becomes an institution, as King Constantine realized, the institution itself must protect itself against disorder. That protection comes, as history shows, at the price of contradicting the original premise upon which the movement began.

The ironies of this are always astonishing. But somehow those who live through it never realize the irony while it is happening. Only later, as it has taken its full bloom in torture, killing, flaying, racking and destroying the lives of people does the original, root moments in which the errors began to creep in get recognized. Those making the errors in the first place are celebrated for centuries as “Saints” and “Popes.”

The history of religion, generally, is a transition between the movement stage, where there is always a charismatic or gifted core from which it springs, to the institution stage. Unfortunately for the institution, gifted folks aren't usually good businessmen. (Joseph Smith, for example, had a pending petition for bankruptcy when he was killed.) Once the movement gets underway, it gets co-opted by businessmen, managers and captains of industry. Folks like Emperor Constantine, who if nothing else was a consummate manager.

Managers crave order. They dislike the chaos of the Spirit, which is always unstable, unpredictable, and uncorrelateable (John 3:8). As a result, they change a movement into an institution. Institutions require order. The nature of an institution requires managers, bankers, businessmen and generals. They consider their “product” to be religion, and they manage and sell their product as if they were General Motors, or the Roman Empire. The kind of freedom that gave birth to the movement must be disciplined, marshaled and controlled.

Our faith is in a complete internal opposition at the moment. To become a Mormon, if you aren't born one, you must go through

a conversion process which is grounded in the bedrock of revelation. You must pray and ask God if the Book of Mormon is true, and then you are to get an answer from God. We expect you to have a revelatory experience to join. But, once you have joined, then the scope of your revelatory experience is strictly limited. You must NOT question any leader, nor ever expect God to tell you something about any subject over which you do not preside, nor to ever realize through the inspiration of the Spirit that there are foolish, vain and wrong notions circulating about. You must NOT notice that Deseret Book has become a repository of false and foolish books parading sentimentality as if it were salvific. You should never consider God's revelations to you as something to be honored apart from what the institution says, does, does not do, or does poorly. Indeed, the voice of God will come to you solely and exclusively through the institution. If you need to know something, then the institution will tell you. Unless you hear your orders from it, then stay as you are.

We are at a cross-roads. At the moment the movement is ending. The institution is at its pinnacle of complete triumph. When the process concludes, it will not welcome converts who will challenge the basic assumptions that they, having received revelation to come on-board in the first place, must now quash the Spirit which raises so many questions about how things are proceeding. Then to be Mormon will mean to be correlated. Correlated body and soul. An institutional man. No longer distinct, unique, or creative. Disciplined, orderly, subservient, and under control. Then the institution will become a remarkably appealing tool for not only the captains of industry, but also the heads of state. It will become an almost irresistible tool to be employed as part of governing the world. And so history repeats itself.

Well, these direful lessons are ones which can be either relived or avoided. But to avoid them people who are inside the process must step outside their own times and context and to view everything within a larger picture. I don't think bankers, businessmen and lawyers do that often. Indeed, the well educated who lack inspiration are not qualified. Only the meek. Only the humble. As Nephi described us: "they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men" (2 Ne. 28:14). That was the group to whom I dedicated my book *The Second Comforter*.

Then I pull myself back into the present reality, and let it all wash over me like a wave. I take a deep breath and I realize how grateful I am for any bit of goodness I can find anywhere. And in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints I can find a lot of good. And I count my blessings and rise determined to remain a true, faithful, active Latter-day Saint throughout my life; and to die as an active and contributing fellow member. But reconciling everything, well, I'm told that's not my calling to do anyway. And I'm grateful to sustain other men to grapple with the management of this historic trend, fraught as it is with the damnation or exaltation of the souls of men. Particularly when they claim to speak in the Lord's name. For them there is only an "on/off" button. They can't have it any other way. Either they speak truthfully in the name of the Lord and with His authorization, or they use His name in vain. I certainly wouldn't want to be put into that spot. So I gratefully sustain those who rush to fill the offices when asked to do so. As one who is simply unfit to serve in such a call, I thank God for my disqualification.

COMMENTS:

Mark Peterson · MAY 7, 2010 AT 5:42 PM

Thank goodness the rank and file aren't as frustrated with the institution as you are or don't obsess over its flaws as you do. They simply are grateful to be a part of it.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 7, 2010 AT 6:10 PM

It's not that I obsess. I ponder. I notice. I find it quite interesting. Actual unfolding history under the very noses of a whole people who are completely without notice. Isaiah had some things to say about it all. I find it easy to identify with his message. It is such a spectacle that I love being here to witness it unfold.

MAY 8, 2010

Correlating the Chaos

Despite what I wrote yesterday about the process of correlation, there is of course another argument in favor of the process. That argument would be based on the exact same history of the transition from Primitive Christianity into Historic Christianity. That is, by the Fourth Century those claiming to be part of the original faith had become so divided that they were actually killing one another over doctrinal disputes. They had a riot in Antioch wherein competing congregations went to battle over possession of the synagogue where they met. An actual street fight, people getting killed and all.

So, rising from rancor of doctrinal dispute into a singular set of beliefs which could later become "orthodox" and all else be branded "heterodox" or, with time, "heretical" was essential just as Constantine knew it would be. Without there being a singular set of beliefs the faith which would eventually sweep the European Continent and beyond could not have brought any unity at all. So it was a good thing, right?

That is the argument for. It is quite compelling, actually. I do not underestimate its strength. However, it simply does not persuade me. Admittedly the violence was foolish and wrong. But the violent sects were never Christ's anyway. They never got what He was teaching. Let them run their violent course and, in time, they will never attract a large audience anyway.

Additionally, the definition of "orthodoxy" was not based upon truth or revelation, it was based only upon what was practical. Constantine never concerned himself with the truth. The legacy of that error lives on. The descendants of that original council in Nicea all condemn us as "Non- Christian" because we reject their creeds, beginning with the Nicene Creed, which defined God.

Inside the Restoration there was an order which allowed tolerance (as Joseph originally envisioned it) of divergent views of doctrine. A consensus wasn't necessary. Only knowing that we were united as a people was necessary. How we viewed different subjects or doctrines was to be left to each individual. The way such people became "one" is something I've already explained in this post (blog post "Becoming One" - February 27, 2010).

We've had healthy and meaningful doctrinal disagreements inside the Church without any ill effects. President Brigham Young believed that God knew everything, was not progressing in knowledge, and that if he were progressing in knowledge it would make God's plans vulnerable to overthrow by something which He did not understand. Elder Orson Pratt thought God was progressing in every respect, including gaining knowledge. He thought the principle of "eternal progression" was the greatest joy and happiness and God enjoys the benefits of that great joy. For him it was a principle of joy. These two never agreed.

Widtsoe was in disagreement with Joseph Fielding Smith. Publication of *Man, His Origin and Destiny* was nearly a seditious act by Joseph Fielding Smith and incurred the rancor of President McKay. President McKay shut the thing down at that point and wouldn't let either one publish further by adopting a rule that no-one who is a General Authority is permitted to publish without permission of the First Presidency.

We survived. We tolerated. There wasn't a group of violent Widtsoeites attacking the Smithites to overtake the Pioneer Ward building. We were civil. I do not think it did anything more than raise the blood pressure of the High Priests' Groups. Something I believe preferable to the somnambulism of that assortment we see today. Doctrinal differences sort themselves out by persuasion, pure knowledge and love. Eventually, when the problem or confusion becomes acute and we need an answer, then we can all unite and go to the Lord in prayer, seeking mercy from Him for the dispute we cannot ourselves solve. Then, through revelation, we can come to a consensus as we hear from Him. We don't use that model very often.

Right now the Correlation Department is actively polling to give updated information to the Brethren about what policies, programs and procedures are effective. I have a lengthy questionnaire at my home to fill out right now. I don't know if I'm going to do it. I've commented on that process and Elder Holland's reference to it before (blog post "Slippery" – February 22, 2010). I think it is more dangerous to use the polling and focus group approach to manage the diversity of opinions than it is to tolerate them.

What loss is it to us if the church simply refuses to take a position on the Gay Rights Ordinance; while some Saints believe it to be appropriate and others believe it to be the sinful prelude to Sodom and judgments of God. These opinions can be discussed,

debated and people can make up their own minds. Joseph's position of tolerance worked, when we tried it. When we had keen and publicly expressed disagreements on doctrine between the First Presidency and members of the Twelve it did not harm us at all. It made us more interesting.

Now that we have chosen to establish "orthodoxy" we are risking the freedom to be individually accountable for our beliefs before God. We have also lost doctrinal adventurism. This is because of our critics.

You see one of the harms of tolerating divergent opinions about doctrine is the clamor of the critics. They take a quote here and juxtapose it with another quote there, and say that Mormonism is a bundle of confusion. We targeted that in the Correlation process and have attempted to entirely stamp out the divergent or disagreeing doctrinal statements or positions. We want "oneness" in a different way than Paul suggested it in the post I referenced above. In doing so, we have conceded the point to our critics, and now make unity of doctrine a greater virtue than freedom to progress and develop our own understanding by degrees.

Sometimes what you understand at one point is not what you understand at another. Hugh Nibley, for example, said nothing he wrote ten years earlier would be binding upon him because he continued to discover and learn. We would be benefited from a similar approach all the way from the top to the bottom. New converts will, by degrees, leave their earlier faith traditions behind them. Or they won't. Instead they will bring with them an understanding from those traditions which have a resonance with the Book of Mormon or something in the Doctrine and Covenants which had escaped all our notice before. And we will all be "added upon" by

tolerating their view, even embracing their view. Freedom always pays dividends which control cannot.

Well, I'm not trying to solve the issue. I'm only trying to raise the issue. It is important.

MAY 8, 2010

Peoplehood

One of the very substantial differences in the way we are currently evolving is almost unnoticed. I've tried to capture the difference in what I've written by using the terms "movement" in contrast to "institution." Those terms help to explain the notion, but it is really something more than that. I'm going to use a different way to explain it in this post, and see if I can get a little closer to the real underlying process which is now underway.

The original development under Joseph Smith was something quite distinct from all existing faiths. It was not just a new religion. It was a wholesale resurrection of an ancient concept of "Peoplehood." It was radical. Its purpose was to change diverse assortments of people, from every culture and faith, with every kind of ethnic and racial composition, into a new kind of People. They were to be united under the banner of a New and Everlasting Covenant, resurrecting the ancient Hebraic notion of nationhood and Peoplehood. No matter what their former culture was, they were adopted inside a new family, a covenant family. Status was defined not by virtue of what you believed or confessed, but instead by what covenants you have assumed.

What returned through Joseph Smith was not a religion, nor an institution, nor merely a faith. It was instead the radical notion that an ancient covenant family was being regathered into a separate People. This return to ancient roots brought with it, as the hallmark

of its source of power, the idea of renewed covenants that brought each individual into direct contract with God. It did not matter what they believed. It only mattered that they accepted and took upon them the covenant.

Once inside the new People, there was a new culture where ancient ties returned to bind the hearts together. There was a dietary regimen where the People were reminded at every meal that they were distinct and apart from the world. There was the gift of sacred clothing, in which they were reminded of their separateness by the things put upon their skin. There were financial sacrifice of tithes, gathered from the People to help the People. The fortunes of all were intertwined with each other by the gathering of tithes and offerings into the Bishop's storehouse to help the poor and needy among the People. It was NOT a religion. It was a People. It was to become The People. And The People were required to extend to all others the same equal opportunity to become also part of the covenant.

This is different from a religion. It was cultural, personal, and as distinct as a Jew views himself to be from a Christian. To a Jew, religion is a part of the equation. They share blood with other Jews, and therefore even if a Jew is not attending weekly synagogue meetings, they retain their status as one of the Jews.

Religion on the other hand is merely a brand name for a sentiment. One can be a Presbyterian or a Lutheran and still belong to the same Elks Lodge. There is nothing really distinct between the two, other than where they meet for an hour or two on Sundays. Apart from that, they identify culturally as "Protestants" and brothers. There is no great distinction, and the theological differences which separate them are so trivial that a doctrinal disagreement between them is unlikely.

Mormonism has taken a direct course-change where the original elements of separate Peoplehood are now viewed as an impediment to wider acceptance. The distinctions are being minimized in order to undo the conflicts that marred the relationship between Mormonism and the larger American society. The lessons learned from those conflicts have led to the idea that we must become more actively engaged in public relations. Our commitment to the public relations process has informed us that we have to become less distinct to get along with others. We need to drop our misunderstood and offensive claims to distinctions that claim superiority, and urge instead the things that we share with the Presbyterians and Lutherans. The ultimate end of that process is to make it just as meaningless and controversial a thing for a Mormon to belong to and fellowship with the Elks Lodge as it is for the Presbyterian and Lutheran. This is one of the great goals of the Correlation process and the public relations effort of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The outreach at present is merely an attempt to get people to accept the church as another form of Historic Christianity, claiming equality among peers, without any desire to confront or cause conflict. The notion of Peoplehood is being suppressed. Any claims of superiority of the faith are suppressed.

Enthusiastic scholarship is working alongside the larger public relations effort. The work of Robinson at BYU, for example, in his reconciliatory book, (co-authored with a member of the Evangelical-based Denver Theological Seminary faculty) "*How Wide the Divide,*" made an attempt to discuss Evangelical Protestant notions alongside Mormon notions and to minimize any differences. The underlying presumption is that we are both merely religions. As

fellow religions we share an attempt to come to God through teachings we believe in and scriptural texts we share.

Reconciliation between what Joseph Smith restored and other religions should never have been a goal. Joseph's restoration was not a church. It was not a religion. It was not a bundle of beliefs. By trying to reach a common footing among other mainstream Christian faiths we have to first abandon the very different footing upon which Joseph established the Restoration.

The original Restoration could never be like any of "them." They were churches. Joseph restored Peoplehood. To go from what Joseph restored to a common footing requires us to first abandon the concept that we are neither a new form of Christianity, nor a return to Jewish antecedents. We are something quite different from either. We are an Hebraic resurrection of God's People, clothed with a covenant, and engaged in a direct relationship with God that makes us distinct from all other people.

When we view ourselves as a Christian faith, we deconstruct the very foundation upon which we began. We aren't that. We can never be part of Historic Christianity. And yet that has been our front-and-center effort through the focus on public relations and the scientific study of what words we should use to advance our acceptance in the world.

Read the earliest of Mormon materials and you will be shocked by how differently they viewed themselves from how we now view ourselves. They were building a separate People. They invited all to come and partake of the covenant, renounce their prior errors, and return to living as one of God's New and Everlasting Covenant holders.

To rid ourselves of that tradition, we need to assume the elements of a typical religion. Rather than defining ourselves as a

separate People, we turn to defining a set of beliefs. Establishing an orthodoxy and then insisting upon uniformity of belief to belong to the orthodox religion is the way of the Catholics and Protestants. They are bound together NOT by their peoplehood but instead by their confessions of faith. So as you de-emphasize our Peoplehood, you must then begin to emphasize and control an orthodox statement or confession of faith.

These dynamics are worth very careful thought. There is an actual consensus among church leaders that this is the right way to proceed. A discussion about it among Latter-day Saints has not even begun at the rank and file level. The transition takes place over decades, and unless someone first creates a vocabulary for the problem, we don't even have the capacity to discuss or notice what is happening and why.

This post has gone on too long. Not really a blog post subject. It's a book-length subject. I make fleeting comments about something that would take pages to develop. But I doubt I'll write the needed book. Instead I will try to bring the idea into the consciousness of you good people and let it percolate about. Surely some of you can do something about it.

COMMENTS:

Tom · MAY 9, 2010 AT 12:41 AM

Can you clarify something for me? You've touched on this elsewhere – way back when – when you noted that one of your acquaintances (?) had said that they whole world should be allowed to partake of the ordinances the Church offers, and then be allowed to practice/honor those ordinances as they please, inside/outside the confines of a church in whatever way they see fit/inspired to do.

If so, then it appears to be a similar chord you're striking on this write up when you say, "it did not matter what they believed. It only mattered that they accepted and took upon them the covenant."

Is that a fair understanding?

Denver Snuffer · MAY 9, 2010 AT 7:58 AM

Tom: Yes, I think the concept that joining in with us in covenant, accepting the ordinances, and learning that they have part in the great latter-day resurrection of the People of Israel should be what makes a Latter-day Saint. From that point it is merely a matter of education. And by education I mean persuasion, example, pure knowledge, the power of the spirit and inviting and enticing them to a higher plane. Not control. Not compulsion in any degree. Not strict rules and mandatory catechisms. Merely showing the light and inviting to move toward it should be the gentle spirit of the Restoration. It will produce independently converted, self-empowered, capable people who do not look to another to tell them what to do. The bar which will be raised will be wholly within the souls of members.

Anonymous · MAY 10, 2010 AT 10:39 AM

Brandon:

Well, in that respect, maybe the FLDS finally got something right! They don't compromise anything at all.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 10, 2010 AT 9:39 PM

With respect to the FLDS and their resistance to compromise: Except, of course, with respect to their obligation to comply with the law, as the Articles of Faith obligate them to do. As well as honoring and respecting a woman's right to be educated, make an informed choice and wait to marry until after she is of age. Such compulsion of child-brides as we saw at the YFZ ranch was criminal and resulted in the conviction of Jeffs, who is now in prison.

MAY 9, 2010

Micah Chapter 3

O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?

Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; Who

also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron.

Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.

Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him.

Therefore night shall *be* unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them.

Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God.

But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity.

They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity.

The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us.

Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed *as* a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

MAY 9, 2010

Mother's Day

Happy Mother's Day.

The single greatest institution is also the most successful one in all the earth's history. Mothers have kept civilization together from the beginning.

Fathers have been far less valiant in history than have mothers. Fathers have forsaken their responsibilities to bear priesthood and perpetuate the Gospel with such regularity that the history of mankind is predominately a history of apostasy. Mothers however, have continued to bear, raise, nurture and love their children.

God bless those who are our mothers or the mothers of our children. Today we should honor them in thought and deed. (I'm doing all the cooking today. And all the dishes, too. I think I'll use TGI Fridays to get them done...)

MAY 10, 2010

"Of Strong Faith and a Firm Mind"

Consider this:

[N]either have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men. For behold, they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness. And the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfil and to do the work of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men,

to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him. (Moroni 7:29–31)

Note that angels show themselves to those “of strong faith and a firm mind.” Also, that the visit will require them to whom such visits come to “bear testimony of [Christ]” as a result of those visitations.

From Joseph Smith:

A fanciful and flowery and heated imagination beware of; because the things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity—thou must commune with God. (*TPJS* p. 137)

Note that the “imagination” is not useful in gaining communion with God. Fanciful, flowery and heated imaginative thoughts will detract, not contribute, to knowing Him. The only way is to possess the same mental state as Moroni refers to—careful, sober, solemn, deep thoughts are required. The mind must reach into heaven as well as the darkest abyss. The opposition of things in this creation and the balance of those opposites will cause you to encounter the worst as you strive to enjoy the best. All is kept in balance throughout the process.

A person can't imagine they have salvation. They must “know” they possess it. The heavens should declare it to them. When the heavens bestow this knowledge upon a person, it is an anchor to their soul and they will never fall. But until then, a person needn't

suppose they possess something which God has not declared by His own voice to be theirs.

True teachers will labor to help you understand how real, deliberate, attainable, and necessary this process is to engage in. They will not ask you to follow them. They will teach you how to follow God, and obtain from God knowledge of salvation. False teachers will distract you. They will tell you all is right, that there is enough good being done in your life to merit God's favor, and that it is not necessary for you to do more than belong to a privileged group.

You cannot possess the knowledge which will save you until you have learned for yourself that God lives, and that He has promised to you eternal life.

MAY 10, 2010

Why Wait?

The question was asked as to whether receiving The Second Comforter is necessary before you die, or if the afterlife supplies an adequate substitute. This requires the evaluation of two separate concepts.

First, The Second Comforter means a visit or personal appearance to someone by Christ. However, the **appearance** is not as important as the ministry of the Lord. He "comforts" those to whom He appears. He will "not leave you comfortless, he will come to you" (John 14:18). Christ **and** His Father will "make their abode with you" (John 14:23). Meaning that the Son will bring you to the Father, and the Father will receive you as His son. This appearance is not merely "in the heart," but is an actual appearance or visit (D&C 130:3).

However, the purpose of the ministry, the reason for the "abode" with you, the "comfort" that is promised by the Lord, involves the

promise of eternal life. The promise of eternal life has been made an equivalency by the Lord in a revelation given in modern times. That is, the end or result of the ministry of Christ as The Second Comforter is to have the promise of eternal life. In a modern revelation the word of the Lord was given to a group of Latter-day Saints in which the promise of their exaltation was extended to them, and the Lord made this the equivalent to “another Comforter.” Here is what was said:

Wherefore, I now send upon you another Comforter, even upon you my friends, that it may abide in your hearts, even the Holy Spirit of promise; which other Comforter is the same that I promised unto my disciples, as is recorded in the testimony of John. This Comforter is the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom; Which glory is that of the church of the Firstborn, even of God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ his Son—(D&C 88:3–5)

Therefore, as a singular appearance, should the Lord appear to you, you have received The Second Comforter. However, His ministry is to bring you to the point at which you can receive the promise of eternal life, membership in the Church of the Firstborn, and the promise of the Celestial Kingdom as your eternal inheritance. In the fullest sense, therefore, the final promise of exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom can also be called The Second Comforter, since that is the result of His taking up His abode with you.

The second concept is really a question: Would it be preferable to have the promise of eternal life now than to die uncertain as to your eternal state? If so, then why would you waste your life now in hopes that some other opportunity may exist at some other stage?

If the answer to these questions are “yes” then the original question is simply unimportant. Why wait? The opportunity given to

you now should not be forfeited, nor should the work be delayed. Don't dismiss the Lord's offered assistance for what you can achieve in mortality for the possibility of something in the after-life.

COMMENTS:

The Zang Family · MAY 10, 2010 AT 3:51 PM

Can you comment on the definition and usage of such terms as salvation, redemption, eternal life, exaltation, and exaltations in the context of the Second Comforter? Thanks.

mckay · MAY 10, 2010 AT 8:32 PM

The verses in Section 88 that you quote have been very puzzling to us. The revelation does indeed make equivalencies, equivalencies between "another Comforter" AND "the Holy Spirit of Promise".

There appears to be a contradiction in what we have been taught on this subject. Most of "The Brethren" state the Holy Spirit of Promise is the Holy Ghost in one of his roles. You appear to be saying that it is the Lord himself, or possibly 'the Promise' itself given by the Lord in 'another', not the initial Second Comforter visit.

Is there any way to harmonize the two definitions or should I just toss out my copy of Doctrines of Salvation?

the Platt brothers

Denver Snuffer

I think the definition is provided in this equivalency. I find the scriptures have more answers in them than most people recognize. They are the standard against which all teaching ought to be measured. Only when they fail to give an answer should we be looking elsewhere.

As to dying without the experience, I would not be too hasty about concluding that was the case. Stephen had the experience in the last few moments of his life. Alvin (Joseph's older brother) as well seemed to have. The conditions in *The Second Comforter* include the obligation to keep what is sacred to yourself, and if someone is unable to do that they would need to wait until they are ready to part this life. Which

then leads me to another complaint I have about those who think they know what I have written before ever reading it. There are nine words in *The Second Comforter* about my experience. Nothing other than confirming I have seen Him is there. I've never failed to keep a trust or confidence with the Lord. I've been constrained to teach, and have done so despite my deepest apprehensions about all the misunderstanding which will follow. It is a burden, not a blessing, to be in this position. I do not blame anyone for disbelieving what I say. I doubt I would trust someone who is teaching as I do. But I do so because of a burden imposed upon me, and faith in the Lord whose I am.

That was an aside. Sorry about that. Here's the two points: First, you do not know what your departed relatives did or did not receive. Second, the judgment is based not merely on what you did, but what you intended or would have done had the opportunities been afforded to you. Such a standard makes it impossible for us to know. This post is suggesting that there is no reason to hesitate or refuse to make the attempt.

There will be another post in a few days (maybe tomorrow—that's up to my wife) which talks about the patience to trust timing to the Lord.

MAY 10, 2010

Charge to Twelve

This is really a “comment” in response to a question belonging to the earlier post on Elder Packer's Testimony. However, it was too long to put in there as a reply comment, so will be put up here as a blog entry. It is an interruption. Sorry. There is a fellow asking for it, and I delayed for so long that I feel I owe him a response. I am really writing this to him.

Taken from *Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*. (A good book by Quinn. He's written some bad ones, but this is not one of them. I think he was stinging from criticism and in this book proved he was still a good historian.)

In 1835 Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery emphasized to the newly organized Quorum of the Twelve Apostles that their calling was charismatic, evangelical and also institutional. Of the three, the charismatic definition of the apostleship was the earliest, going back to 1829.

Cowdery told the new apostles: 'It is necessary that you receive a testimony from heaven for yourselves; so that you can bear testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon, and that you have seen the face of God.' Then he continued: 'That is more than the testimony of an angel...Never cease striving until you have seen God, face to face.' Cowdery acknowledged that most of the new apostles had depended on visions of others for their faith and suggested that some might even be skeptical of visions. Thus it was not necessary to see Jesus to be chosen as an apostle. However, once ordained each man had a lifelong obligation to seek this charismatic experience: a vision of deity. Some apostles from 1835 onward reported having had such visions before their ordination. Apostles in the nineteenth century referred publicly to their visionary witness.

...some LDS apostles, including Orson Pratt and Heber J. Grant, felt inadequate because they had not had such encounters.

In the twentieth century, charismatic apostleship changed in several ways. First, the 'charge' at ordination no longer obligated apostles to seek visions. Second, the Presidency and apostles began down-playing the importance of these experiences. Third, apostles began speaking of a non-visionary 'special witness of Christ' by the Holy Ghost in terms which allowed listeners to conclude that the apostles referred to an actual appearance of deity. Fourth, apostles were reluctant to discuss their vi-

sionary experiences publicly. Fifth, evidence indicates that a decreasing number of apostles experienced visions before or after ordination.

The change in the apostolic ‘charge’ apparently began with the appointment of Reed Smoot as an apostle in 1900. General church authorities had long regarded him as ‘reliable in business, but [he] has little or no faith.’ President Lorenzo Snow blessed him to receive ‘the light of the Holy Ghost’ so that he could bear testimony of Jesus Christ and Joseph Smith. That was an extraordinary departure from the apostolic charge as given since 1835.

...Twentieth-century apostles began applying this ‘as if’ approach to their spoken testimonies. Usually this involved wording their ‘special witness’ of Christ in a way that encouraged listeners to assume the leader has had a more dramatic encounter with the divine than actually claimed.

The full discussion ranges from pages 1 through 6 and would require too much typing to do it here. But the above, taken only from pages 1–2, gives you some more particulars than my brief reference before. The whole discussion is documented with references from the Church’s archives where the writer reviewed the transcripts of the actual ordinations, etc. They are all set out in the footnotes, which are omitted from the quote I have excerpted above.

COMMENTS:

Denver Snuffer · MAY 10, 2010 AT 6:17 PM

I should add that this book by Quinn was the second of two books in the *Mormon Hierarchy* series. The first titled *Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* was NOT a good book in my view. In fact, I thought there were either lapses of good judgment or deliberate mis-characterizations made in the first volume and I would not recommend it unless the

reader is independently acquainted with the history and able to read critically. The second volume was published during the time when he was being roundly criticized and it reflects a significant improvement in his judgment and writing of history. I can recommend it to any reader. It is well documented, relies upon materials in the Church's archives, and shows a fair interpretation of the material so far as I have been able to tell. There has not been any significant contradiction of the sources he cites by anyone else having access to the archive materials.

Ben · MAY 11, 2010 AT 10:33 PM

I'm not sure I'd put my trust in Quinn as a source for anything. You probably don't agree with the FARMS review of this book, but one thing I did find interesting in the review was the mention of Elder McConkie's discussion of Oliver Cowdery's charge in his book *The Promised Messiah*.

Elder McConkie discusses the charge to apostles that they must also view the face of God as the ancients did. He not only finds this binding upon the apostles of our day (it was written in 1978, after his ordination), but considers that charge binding on all the elders of the church.

I'm not sure that a greater reluctance on behalf of the Quorum of the Twelve to speak openly of their personal experiences necessarily means that none are having them anymore. I find it more likely that the general membership of the church is not prepared to receive such testimonies. We seal the heavens with our unbelief and casual attitude about spiritual things.

I really don't like Quinn's accusation that the current Apostles adopt an "as if" approach to their testimonies to hint at things they know they haven't experienced. That is a charge of intentional deception that I do not believe. Are GAs, Apostles and Prophets infallible, no, but I don't believe they would intentionally mislead and attempt to deceive the membership of the Church as Quinn seems to indicate.

I just finished listening to the past General Conference again, and those fallible, institutional leaders giving correlated talks somehow

still manage to have the spirit of the Lord with them as they preach the simple gospel.

Are they perfect, are we perfect? No of course not.

Sometimes I wonder, though, if the discussions here sometimes make it seem as if the problems are really bigger than they really are and make some lose confidence that the Lord is still behind the general work (not every single particular) of his Church.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 12, 2010 AT 5:39 AM

I will add some quotes from the recent book on President David O. McKay and, of course, Elder Packer's General Conference talk I've referred to previously. Also the testimony of President Smith before the Senate. You needn't rely on Quinn alone. There are other sources. But that will be later, I don't have time this morning.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 12, 2010 AT 6:52 PM

The entry of March 28th on President Packer's Testimony explains what his testimony consists of. I do not think he was understating or overstating anything. I believe he was being absolutely candid and truthful. You can read anything miraculous into it you want, but he did not put it there. It was honest, plain and simple, and as he put it, 'much the same as you would hear in any fast and testimony in the Church.' I'm not going to repeat it here. You can look it up on this blog if you want.

From David O. McKay and The Rise of Modern Mormonism, p. 6: "He had misgivings that stemmed from unresolved doubts about the work he was being called to perform." (Speaking of his call to the Twelve.) Then, quoting Hugh Nibley on page 7 and referring to a talk to missionaries, including Nibley:

His whole talk was about how skeptical he had always been about the gospel. He said he had never believed it for most of his life and was very skeptical. And, of course, he was made an apostle, and he was an apostle at that time. He did believe it, we assumed. He showed a side of skepticism, at least different from all the others. I don't think the

others had ever been as skeptical as he was ... When he was made an Apostle, a lot of people were shocked. 'David O. McKay, an Apostle?' Because he had been quite open and honest in expressing his doubts about things.

I'll continue with another block.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 12, 2010 AT 7:02 PM

From President Joseph F. Smith's testimony before the Senate of the US:

Sen. Dubois: Have you received any revelation from God..?

Mr. Smith: Since when?

Sen. Dubois: Since you became president of the Church.

Mr. Smith: No sir; none whatever.

There is a dialogue about the meaning of revelation in which President Smith suggests it can be broad enough to include, when a person is living right, an "influence of his Spirit, his mind, and his will. That would be a revelation to that individual." After this dialogue the testimony included this follow-up:

Sen. Dubois: Have you received any individual revelations yourself, since you became president of the church under your own definition, even, of a revelation?

Mr. Smith: I can not say that I have.

Then a bit later President Smith adds this comment:

If I live as I should in the line of my duties, I am susceptible, I think, of the impressions of the spirit of the Lord upon my mind at any time, just as any good Methodist or any other good church member might be. And so far as that is concerned, I say yes; I have had the impressions of the Spirit upon my mind very frequently, but that are not in the sense of revelations.

The transcripts have been published in the recent book, *The Mormon Church on Trial: Transcripts of the Reed Smoot Hearings*.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 12, 2010 AT 7:06 PM

Now, I am only answering a question here and providing information I've been asked to provide. The raw information should not be, in a

stand-alone sense, used to reach any conclusion other than the fact that these men's personal experiences are not the endless stream of regular visits every Thursday in the Temple with Christ which some people have asserted. This does not mean they aren't Apostles. They are. They hold an office titled Apostle, with the associated duties and responsibilities. However, their testimonies should be taken at face value and nothing should be read into them.

The idea that an witness of Jesus Christ should never affirm He lives, and was resurrected from the dead, and that they have seen Him is, in my humble opinion, utter foolishness. I do not think the Lord makes Himself known to then have the fact kept secret. I disbelieve that notion completely. And the idea that such a witness ought to be coy, evasive, or unable to affirm directly that He lives, for the witness has seen Him is, in my view, utterly incredible.

I accept the testimony of the Twelve and First Presidency. I read absolutely nothing into them which they do not put into their testimonies. And I accept them as true.

Denver Snuffer · may 12, 2010 at 7:13 PM

Finally, Ben, yes I read the review and several others as well. I read it critically, meaning that I noticed what highly selective criticisms were made and how entirely evasive those selective criticisms in fact were. They were deliberately put in a way to make them seem to be more sound than they were, and left almost all of the text quoted by Quinn without any response. But if read uncritically (as FARMS often intends their readers to do), then you have the impression that they've actually answered Quinn's materials. They haven't. They haven't even started to undertake that. They found a few trifles, and roundly condemned them. Then left the overwhelming balance of the book completely un-addressed. In many ways, FARMS' reviews reveals a great deal more about them than the books they review. But you must read them critically, thinking as you go along, and with your own reasoning kept as you do.

dan · MAY 12, 2010 AT 9:39 PM

I don't agree with this Denver. I posted a visit Hugh B. Brown had from the Savior under your blog entry Elder Packer's Testimony. I don't recall him ever stating anything of the like publicly. He may have, but if he did, I haven't heard it. He shared the visit with N. Eldon Tanner and he said something after Elder Brown passed away. I think many of the brethren have had the visit, if not multiple ones. Either way, what happens to any of them has no bearing on me personally. My experiences depend on me and me alone. Anyone else's experiences should never be a sufficient substitute for our own.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 12, 2010 AT 9:46 PM

It is not at all necessary to agree with me. I am only explaining my view, not advocating to persuade.

MAY 4, 2010

What Lack I Yet?

I was asked this question:

“Do you know with surety IN ADVANCE of doing some incredibly hard sacrifice that it is the Lord asking it of you, or do you come to know that it is His will AS you do it?”

My response:

You will know with absolute certainty that the request came from the Lord. The request will be difficult, or a sacrifice.

HOWEVER, whether the person recognizes at the moment or only in hindsight that it was required for them to develop the faith necessary for redemption is not universal. Some know at the time, some only know in hindsight. What is absolutely universal is that when the test has been passed, the faith exists. When it does, it will be enough for redemption and the promise of eternal life.

Joseph knew he had the promise of eternal life (as recorded in D&C 132:49) before he went to Carthage to die. He knew he was

going to die. Death was not his great challenge, but the physical ratification of the faith which already existed in him. The earlier trials had been enough to prove him and put that power within him. His death was an extension of existing faith and knowledge.

The order of things is established and can be known. The details of how it unfolds in individual lives will be specific to the individual. Whether the person realizes the final great test is underway or not will depend on the person. I did not. I only came to realize in hindsight what was underway.

One of the parables in *Ten Parables* shows how the heavens can interact with man, but man be unaware of the full agenda conducted. I have referred to that tenth parable several times. By the way, that parable is NOT a description of the test required to obtain the faith for redemption. It is just a parable about how heaven works to provide missing virtue or grace to a life that is lacking something, but still worthy of preservation.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · MAY 12, 2010 AT 11:47 AM

Regarding sacrifice...will you speak to what the scripture means when it says...."and if ye bear it well...." I have heard so many lessons that equate that with bearing trials and sacrifice cheerfully with a smile with no hint of discouragement, depression, downheartedness, etc. Doesn't it mean more that despite all of the negative things you may feel you come out on the other side with faith in tact...even if it was possible to feel discouraged, sad and disheartened while going through your ordeal?

Denver Snuffer · MAY 12, 2010 AT 9:28 PM

With regard to sacrifice and "bear it well" my experience tells me that it absolutely does not mean cheerfully and with a smile. It only means in faith. The difficulty, the distress, the pain and the suffering which were necessary for me were not at all cheerful. I do not discuss my

personal experiences, only doctrine. But the true doctrine behind that scripture has nothing to do with an absence of distress, discouragement, disheartening setbacks or pain. Without purging everything, including your pride, my belief is you will not be ready. Stripped, broken, beaten and surrendering; you will be able to understand the Lord because you have tasted somewhat of that same “cup” from which He drank.

We are all different. We have entirely different make-up, strengths, capacities and needs. But within the context of your own life you will be improved by the things which He alone knows you must suffer to become refined and lose your vanity.

MAY 11, 2010

Be Careful What You Ask For

It was weird, really. This guy went to visit with God in His House, but when he got there he couldn't see Him. I mean he couldn't “see” Him. God was there. They both were there. But God, as it turned out, the guy was unable to detect His presence.

He went to the optometrist and got his vision checked. Everything worked. So he was left to wonder why it was he couldn't see God.

Some study later he concluded that although God was made of matter (Luke 24:39), He must be more refined or pure, and therefore not detectable by normal eyesight (D&C 131:7). Only “purer” eyes could see him. So he used Visine, returned to see Him, and still no luck.

Well, he decided to take up the matter in prayer and offered this supplication to the Almighty: “I'm beginning to doubt your love for me. Tell you what, you show yourself to me and I'll know you love me. But if you stay outside my field of vision then I know you're avoiding me and therefore don't love me.” God loves everyone,

see. And so the request was framed in a way to force God to make Himself visible. The man thought himself clever.

Well, God decided to take the fellow up on the request, as He always does. First the man's house burned down, then his business failed, then he got cancer. As he was in the hospital his family abandoned him, and his friends all thought he was cursed by God, and stayed away. So he waited out the final days of his mortality alone, in pain, and without possessions.

As a charity case the hospital treated him with some neglect, giving him many hours to suffer alone in his bed. Suffering brought about meditation and prayer.

It was during the last few hours of his life, as he lay fevered and in pain, that his burdens overwhelmed him and he sought in desperate humility for relief from God. His prayer was:

“Oh Lord, I know I have done less than I should have with the things I have been given. I long to part this life clean of my failings. Can you forgive me, a wretched sinner, for my many failings?” He expected little. Hoping only to save his conscious by this prayer.

The Lord, who had been in the room for days, suddenly came into view. Startled by this appearance, the man asked: “Is it you, Lord?”

“Yes” came the reply.

“Can you forgive me?”

“Oh, I've done that long ago. Yes, you are certainly forgiven. I'm here for you to see I love you. You asked for that in your prayer a year ago and I've been working so that your eyes could become more refined. Now, at last they are.”

Now the man could see what great love the Lord truly had for him. For in the extremity of his dying hour, he had a companion to comfort him.

He died in joy. The nurse thought it was the morphine.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · MAY 11, 2010 AT 11:00 PM

But why be careful? I would say, "be prepared for what you ask for". Careful gives thought that perhaps he would have refused what he received had he known the trial. Ask anyone who has been through a horrific trial but came to know their Heavenly Father through it. Not one I know would give it up. I wouldn't.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 12, 2010 AT 5:38 AM

Well put. Reminds me of the Willie Handcart veteran's remark about getting to know God in their extremity.

from the desk of
Denver Snuffer

VOLUME 2

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from the desk of
Denver Snuffer

VOLUME 2

MAY 12, 2010—AUGUST 1, 2010

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

A Note to the Reader:

This multi-volume series covers blog entries beginning in 2010. Scripture references in the text refer to the LDS versions of scripture found in the King James Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. Beginning about March 2018 the scripture cites change to the Restoration Edition of the scriptures. Cites of the Restoration Edition scriptures are typically denoted with OC, NC and T&C references e.g., (NC Matt. 8:10), or alternately (1 Ne. 1:22 RE) setting them apart from the former LDS scripture version references. For those interested, a scripture reference conversion tool that allows navigation between the various scripture references and versions can be accessed at: <https://scriptures.info/Scriptures/ReferenceTranslator>

CHAPTER 1
Isaiah 53

MAY 12, 2010

Isaiah 53:1

Isaiah 53:1 begins with the questions:

Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

These two questions remain as timely today as they were when asked 750 years before Christ's birth. As to the first question:

The report is Isaiah's testimony of the coming Messiah.

It is plural, although delivered by a lone prophet, because God Himself authorized the message to be delivered. Therefore it is not "my" but rather "our" report.

The question concerns the audience's "belief" in the report, because it contradicts the ideas held by them. It will tell them something remarkably different from what they thought to be true.

As to the second question:

"The arm of the Lord" is a symbol of His strength or might.

To have the strength of the Lord revealed to someone is to have them come into knowledge of Him and His ways.

His ways are not what men presume they are. They are directed to much higher, much holier ends. The strength of the Lord as it will unfold in the chapter which follows is based upon the suffering He undertook for us.

The chapter that follows this opening verse is framed in the past tense. This is called the “prophetic perfect” tense. To the prophet, the events have been seen. To him, they are in the past. Therefore, future events are framed as if they already occurred. Prophets to whom things are shown will often frame their message in the past tense, even though they speak of things in the future. You find it throughout prophecy.

MAY 12, 2010

Isaiah 53:2

Isaiah 53:2 states this about the Messiah:

“For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.”

The first “he” is a reference to the Messiah. The second “him” is either the Father in Heaven or Israel.

The Messiah will be a “tender plant” or a “root” that arises “out of a dry ground” because the barren, unproductive, rancorous people among whom He will be sent will not be producing redeemed souls when He comes. They will be racked with religious falsehoods; ambitious and controlling men who have obtained their leadership through political maneuvering, influence peddling and purchase.

The acquisition of religious status was so normal a thing in that day that the Apostles would later be asked by Simon if he

could purchase the priesthood from them (Acts 8:13–24). And yet the Messiah will find the way back to opening the heavens, receiving power from on high, and then go about preaching and leading other souls to redemption as well. For Him the barren, dry ground will be no impediment to salvation.

The Messiah will “have no form nor comeliness,” and have “no beauty.” Not because of His physical appearance, however. It will be due to the lack of position, absence of credentials, failure to hold a leadership position, and outsider status which makes Him undesirable. Those who recognize in His message the voice of the Lord will be required to overlook His obscurity and status. I’ve described this more fully in two chapters in *Come, Let Us Adore Him*.

This image contradicts the presumptions of the people who hear Isaiah’s report. They imagine themselves as followers of the true faith. They presume they would hearken to the voice of God no matter when it came. But they look for it in barren ground. Therefore, when the Messiah should come, they will be unable to find anything desirable, beautiful or comely about Him. Rather they will shout “crucify Him!” because He will have merited the charge of blasphemy.

For those who heard Isaiah’s report, this would seem altogether wrong. It is incomprehensible for the chosen people to fail to recognize the Lord’s own Son. And yet they will kill Isaiah, as well. So when the message of the prophet Isaiah came to pass, the generation in which it was fulfilled was entirely oblivious to how his prophecy was unfolding before their eyes.

This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

MAY 13, 2010

Isaiah 53:3

Isaiah 53:3 states:

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

The Messiah would be both “despised” and “rejected” by the very people who claimed to follow Him. The astonishing report of Isaiah was unbelievable. It makes no sense that the people who looked forward to deliverance would reject their Deliverer. Why expect them to “despise” and “reject” the very one they rely upon for their hope? It is little wonder that Isaiah’s report would not be believed.

Isaiah’s Messiah would be “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” He would mingle with the commonest of people, bearing with their infirmities, ministering to them. All the while, He will be a thorn to those who despised His ministry. Those in good society would “hide their faces from Him,” and refuse to associate with Him. He had nothing to offer them. For them to acknowledge Him would require them to condescend. Better for them to hide their faces.

He warned them that if they were ashamed of Him, He would in turn be ashamed of them (Mark 8:38). He also counseled them to be careful about their standard of judgment, because it would be applied to them (Matt. 7:2).

Despite the coming Messiah’s teachings, and Isaiah’s testimony of Him, the chosen people nevertheless “despise” Him, and “esteem Him not.” It would simply be too difficult a task to confront Him in the flesh and find it possible to recognize Him for what He was.

We presume we could have recognized Him. However, the test He set up was one that He cautioned was coming. Our unflattering views of Christ's contemporaries may, in turn, leave us without excuse should He choose as He does so often, to send us a message from an obscure or un-credentialed source.

I wonder how many of us would recognize the truth, if it came only with the power of veracity behind it. Forgetting all the messenger is lacking, could we be starving ourselves from truth by again rejecting the open hand the Lord extends us? Whether by His own voice or by the voice of a servant, it will always be the same (D&C 1:38).

COMMENTS:

jds · MAY 13, 2010 AT 1:48 PM

Denver,

From various posts written, I am seeing what I believe to be important basic doctrine that you have posted:

1. The Savior should be our personal minister, not the institution of the church.
2. To receive Christ as our personal minister, we should actively follow the light of Christ which invites us to be kind and good in all that we do and say.
3. As we become of strong faith and a firm mind and give heed to the specific promptings of the Holy Ghost and faithfully do all things we are invited to do, our light will grow and we will continue to receive more light.
4. Sources of greater light that are available to those of strong faith and a firm mind include the Holy Ghost, Angels, Celestial Beings, and the gift of Seership.
5. The Church through its presiding officers are endowed with the keys of the priesthood and control the rights to the saving ordinances of the Gospel of Jesus Christ here on earth.

6. We should consider all counsel provided by the church, magnify any office given to us within the church and strive to follow all general counsel (i.e. family and personal prayers, scripture study, service, family home evening, regular temple attendance, and so forth).
7. We are not to look to the church for our primary source of light; rather, as Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and other prophets have taught, we are to faithfully heed and obey invitations of the Holy Ghost and to ultimately receive the Savior as our personal minister.
8. A part of the path of receiving Christ as our personal minister includes an Abrahamic test that we know of assuredly comes from God and it will include doing something that for us personally will run counter to what we believe to be right. Passing the test will lead to greater faith and blessings.
9. We should spend our study time with literature that teaches pure doctrine—which alone has the power to lift us unto exaltation. We should cease to support or create literature that does not teach pure doctrine.
10. As individuals and as a church, we cannot fulfill our destiny by covering up sins and mistakes, but must become fully transparent (confession) if we hope to continue to progress.
11. The church is not adequately emphasizing pure doctrine as readily as it once did.
12. The church no longer follows the charge of Joseph Smith for apostles and prophets to receive the Second Comforter.
13. Historically correlation has always led to a dilution of pure doctrine and to apostasy. We face a similar risk.
14. Isaiah 53 teaches a pattern that occurs in Israel whenever Israel becomes barren through political or financial considerations.
15. God raises up and sends forth messenger(s) who are empowered with no credentials other than “pure truth” to call Israel to repentance, as needed.

JDS · MAY 13, 2010 AT 1:53 PM

I would amend one of the previous summary statements to say that correlation leads to a dilution of pure doctrine, to stagnation in the ability to gather Israel, and to a spiritual weakness that leads to greater apostasy.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 19, 2010 AT 9:46 PM

JDS: That was a brilliant summary.

JDS · MAY 20, 2010 AT 8:36 PM

Thank you Denver, I cannot adequately express my appreciation. Reading *The Second Comforter* and these blogs have helped ground me with a greater sense toward the reality and the eventuality of the process. Have you ever read, "The Three Lights," by Marion G. Romney. I found and read that talk in a stack of Old Ensigns when I was a missionary back in the 70s. You are the first person I know of to write about this topic since that time. It has helped me connect the dots to much that has happened in my life since then. Thanks again.

MAY 13, 2010

Isaiah 53:4

Isaiah 53:4 states:

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."

This Messiah of whom Isaiah testifies will bear "grief" and "sorrow," but these will belong to us. They will be ours. In His suffering will be found our own shortcomings and failures. He will assume them for us.

As He suffers, we will think it is His own deserved punishment. We will think it is God's doing. God will smite Him. God will afflict Him. After all, He was not truly God's Son.

We miss the point of Isaiah's message when we confine it to the Lord alone. His messengers will also come "as a thief in the night" to warn again before His coming. They, too, may fit the same pattern. If so, then we should be careful when we think another person's grief and sorrows are inflicted upon them by a God who has smitten them. Such an assessment may, like those

who lived and rejected the Messiah, put you on the wrong side of the confrontation.

The Lord's doings are ever the same. The pattern simply does not change.

MAY 13, 2010

Isaiah 53:5

Isaiah 53:5 states:

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

Those wounds He suffered were not His, they were ours. Those iniquities which were laid upon Him were never His to bear. He volunteered to take them. We were relieved of them, and He took them. He purchased our peace by what He suffered to reconcile us to God. His infirmity was to heal us.

Our rejection of Him was the means by which He became fully acceptable to His Father. He bore our abuse to make His compassion perfect.

What we lacked we put on full display in our anger at Him.

What we held in our hearts we poured out upon Him, shouting to kill Him! Crucify Him! Away with Him! He took it to allow our rejection to become His bridge back to the Father for us all.

When the outcast makes intercession for those who despised Him, there can be no crime which He cannot forgive. Having suffered the guilt of all, He holds the keys of death and hell. He suffered both. It was perfectly unjust for Him to have suffered anything. Yet He suffered it all.

How can the gates of hell be opened? It requires someone upon whom death and hell could have no claim to go there. When justice itself requires Him to be released, then death and hell are conquered. This is what He would do. He would suffer the wrath of the guilty and vile, fully assume their punishment and abuse, and bear their penalty of death itself. When the fury relented, and the wrath ended, He could reclaim life. His captivity ended the captivity for all. Having then returned to life, because it was just for Him to do so, He acquired the keys of death and hell. Now He can open those gates for any and all because it was unjust for Him to have been put through either. He can now advocate for others by virtue of what He suffered and the injustice of that suffering (D&C 45:3–5).

MAY 14, 2010

Isaiah 53:6

Isaiah 53:6:

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

The Savior referred to those who would follow Him as His “sheep” (John 10:27). However, Isaiah’s use of “sheep” here is not about those who would follow Him, but rather those who would scatter, find other shepherds, or lose their way altogether. Isaiah’s “sheep” are disorderly and have gone “astray.”

The bookends of these two messages—Isaiah’s sheep, who are astray, and Christ’s, who “hear His voice”—are two sides of the same coin. Until “ALL” of us have been, or to some degree, have gone “astray,” we are unprepared to “hear His voice” and be gathered by Him.

We have turned away from the True Shepherd and gone into our “own way.” That errant “way” is appealing to the ego, the mind, the imagination, or the traditions we need to control us because they are safe, tested or handed to us by those whom we trust. Whatever the reason for choosing our own way, it is nevertheless ours. We must leave it, respond to the True Shepherd’s “voice” and gather again to Him.

It is His “voice” whenever He sends a true messenger, empowered with a message from Him. It is not His “voice” when the messenger has not been sent or empowered with a message from Him.

The “iniquity of us all” in finding ourselves in these strange paths has been laid upon Him. He has found His way back from every error man can make. He has solved every dilemma, confronted every error, overcome every false and tempting doctrine the devil has thrown at you. He can solve your imponderable problems. He knows the answers. He has overcome the iniquities of every false, evil or prideful teaching ever given to any man or woman.

He can lead you back to the light, because He has remained true to the light throughout. Therefore look to Him.

CHAPTER 2

The Scriptures Have Answers

MAY 14, 2010

Patience

Christ was prepared eighteen years prior to the time His ministry would begin. He stood by ready, and “waited upon the Lord for the time of his ministry to come” (*JST* Matt. 3:24–26).

Prepared and waiting.

Patience.

Even the Lord, who was “more intelligent than them all,” waited (Abr. 3:19).

The Lord’s counsel to all is that they must not “run faster than they have strength” (Mosiah 4:27; also D&C 10:4).

There is no rush to receiving an audience with the Lord. When it happens it is always in His own time, His own way, and according to His own will (D&C 88:68).

We must ask. Then we wait upon Him. If He waited, what makes you think you are entitled to rush ahead without paying a similar price to develop the necessary patience in waiting on the Lord.

Abraham was promised children, but waited decades to receive the promise. Anna and Simeon were promised they would behold the Lord's Messiah, but were both well stricken in age before He came (Luke 2:25–38).

Patience.

Recognize the Lord alone will determine the timing. Our responsibility is to trust in Him and await His will. We can ask, seek and knock. He cannot respond **unless** we ask, seek and knock. But having done so, then we trust in Him to decide when He will make Himself known to us.

MAY 15, 2010

Isaiah 53:7

Isaiah 53:7 states:

“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”

These three references to Him refraining from “opening his mouth” and being “dumb” (meaning silent) are referring to more than His failure to respond to Herod's inquiries (Luke 23:8–9). This is a reference to Christ's “Word,” which if employed, could have moved mountains, held armies at defiance, and summoned “twelve legions of angels” to His defense (Matt. 26:52–53). Pilate was told that he may have been the Roman Procurator, but he had no power over Christ which Christ did not permit (John 19:7–11).

Christ remained silent, choosing to exercise meekness in the face of the threat aimed at Him. (“Meekness” as explained in *Beloved Enos*, which is really a great power.) It was in this sense that Isaiah found His silence to be prophetically remarkable.

One of the great signs of the Messiah. He would be the One whose words could have exercised power to defy armies, but who refrained from speaking those words. He would, instead, voluntarily submit to the abuse and scorn of those who hated Him.

As to our Lord being shorn, Isaiah also foretells His beard being plucked by those who would smite, abuse and strike Him (Isa. 50:6). Surely our Lord was indeed “shorn” as a “sheep” before His sacrifice.

COMMENTS:

Kisi · MAY 15, 2010 AT 10:26 PM

I have never heard this before (the interpretation, I mean). Of course I've read the Isaiah passage, but never knew what it meant. Did they actually pluck out his entire beard?

Denver Snuffer · MAY 16, 2010 AT 10:14 PM

Yes. It was intended by His persecutors as a symbol of degrading or humiliating Him.

MAY 15, 2010

Isaiah 53:8

Isaiah 53:8 states:

“He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.”

The idea of our Messiah emerging from “prison and from judgment” was a bit shocking to his listeners. There is little wonder at Isaiah’s original question about who would believe the report. Should not the Messiah emerge from a palace? From a university (center of learning)? From a recognized hierarchy? From a notable family? From respectable circles? We would think so, wouldn’t we?

Because of the presumptions, we do not look for Him as a prisoner, or one against whom judgment has been rendered. Nor do we expect His messengers to come, as they have so often in scriptures, from obscure places, bearing obscure names and having no credentials.

When Isaiah adds that the Messiah will be “cut off from the land of the living” he made a startling point. The Messiah will die! The Redeemer will not avoid death and the grave. He will lose His life. What follows adds to the wonder of it all: “For the transgression of my people” will the Messiah be cut off into death.

Now the focus has changed. Isaiah’s message shifts from the suffering of the Messiah into the transgression of Israel. It is Israel’s responsibility that their Messiah must suffer so. They will need a Messiah who will undertake this suffering, for they will not abandon their transgressions and will need a sacrifice made for them. They will need to confront love so great that it will die to redeem them. The proof of the Messiah’s devotion to them will be shown by His humiliation, suffering and death. This is His proof. This is His credential. This is the record which will show for all mankind what great lengths God will go to reclaim His beloved people. They transgress, He atones. They sin and wander off as lost sheep, He pays to re-gather them with His blood.

His suffering may surprise them, but their surprise should be astonishment at the great love He holds for them.

MAY 16, 2010

Isaiah 53:9–10

Isaiah 53:9 says:

“And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.”

He died among two thieves, as a common criminal, along the road leading into Jerusalem. He would have been regarded as a criminal, worthy of the death He suffered, by any passer-by. His grave came as it would to any “wicked” and convicted criminal.

It was a rich man, member of the Sanhedrin, who begged for the body and buried it in a new tomb. His death was common, terrible, and worthy of the lowest member of society, but His burial would be in an honorable tomb worthy of the rich. His honorable burial was testament to the fact He had done no violence, nor had there been any deceit come from Him. Those wishing for a sign to confirm His honor will find it in the juxtaposition of the death He suffered and the burial He was given. Isaiah 53:10 says:

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

God will be “pleased” at the Messiah’s suffering. His grief will be joyful to the courts of heaven. As odd as the comment may seem, it was nevertheless the case. We have a witness who was there, and saw the rejoicing for Christ’s suffering. Enoch reported:

And it came to pass that Enoch looked; and from Noah, he beheld all the families of the earth; and he cried unto the Lord, saying: When shall the day of the Lord come? When shall the blood of the Righteous be shed, that all they that mourn may be sanctified and have eternal life? And the Lord said: It shall be in the meridian of time, in the days of wickedness and vengeance. And behold, Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, even in the flesh; and his soul rejoiced, saying: The Righteous

is lifted up, and the Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world; and through faith I am in the bosom of the Father, and behold, Zion is with me. (Moses 7:45–47)

Christ's death and suffering caused Enoch to "rejoice" at what He had accomplished. It was joyful. It was triumphant. It was the victory that would make it possible for Zion and Enoch to be redeemed. Therefore it did please God to bruise Christ, to put Him to grief. And the pleasure of God was in the fruits of that suffering. It was necessary to garner the victory over the fall of mankind. It was holy. It was cause for great joy.

His "seed" include all mankind. For in His triumph all who die have part. Victory over death means resurrection will come as the shared inheritance of all those who are descendants of Adam and Eve. As in Adam all die, even so in Christ are all made alive again.

MAY 16, 2010

Isaiah 53:11

Isaiah 53:11 states:

"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."

The One who shall see the travail is the Father. The Father will be "satisfied" that the suffering of the Son, the payment made for mankind's debt of errors, has been sufficient to then inform the Son about salvation. Without descending below, the Son would have been unable to comprehend what mankind needs to overcome. Therefore Christ's suffering needed to be complete.

Upon receiving the full "wrath" of sin, Christ was then able to know how to overcome all that mankind must overcome to

return to the presence of the Father. It is “by His knowledge” that Christ is able to “justify many.” He possesses the knowledge, has the experience and suffered “for all” so that they might be instructed by Him (D&C 19:16–17). He knows. He comprehends. By the things He suffered, He gained all that is needed to redeem, comfort and succor any man or woman in their extremity (Heb. 2:18).

This great burden was, however, merely His preparation; and not His completion (D&C 19:19). He now uses His “knowledge” to “succor” and tutor each soul who will permit Him to minister to them (Alma 7:11–12). The most complete description of what He suffered and what He gained is set out in my testimony in *Come, Let Us Adore Him*.

Christ has gained “knowledge” which will save each of us, no matter what we are called to pass through, if we will come to Him, heed what He tells us, and follow His encouraging counsel. There is no depth we descend to which He does not already comprehend, having been there before us (D&C 122:7–8).

To overcome all sin ourselves, we must accept His guidance and counsel. His comfort alone will rid us of our guilt. He knows how to shed the pains of sin, because He has first shed them, and therefore knows what must be done. Only in this way can we relieve ourselves of the suffering which is felt when an unclean person is exposed to God’s presence (Mormon 9:4–5). He can lead you to cleansing, because He has been made completely filthy and covered with the wrath of God (D&C 19:15–18).

His “preparations” are complete. He can “succor” you back to God’s presence. But you must choose to allow Him to use this hard won “knowledge to justify you” before the Father. He has borne your infirmities before you bear them. He knows how to

heal from them. There is nothing which you are called to pass through that He does not already comprehend. It is this great “knowledge” which renders Him the greatest, “most intelligent of them all” (Abraham 3:19). He now has no perplexity from sin.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · MAY 16, 2010 AT 8:40 PM

This was beautiful. Denver, as I was pondering about one of your Isaiah posts this morning after waking up, I marveled at all of the scriptures references that accompany your expounding on the verses. So, dumb question perhaps, but are all of those scripture references just in your head, or are you doing cross referencing. I sincerely want to make my scripture study more effective. Just want to gain more insight to the “how to” study the scriptures more effectively....and why did you only teach at Education Week for a couple of years? Would love to have you teach there again.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 16, 2010 AT 9:56 PM

In my head. I've read the scriptures for so long, and listened to them on cd while I drive about, that I find my mind reverts to their language when I have idle time to think. I've also put about 15,000 cross references into my scriptures which are not included in the current editions or Topical Guide. I've added a few additions to the Topical Guide in my set, too.

I forget the name of the fellow who was in charge of Education Week at the time, but he lived in my stake way back when. (I lived in Pleasant Grove then.) Anyway, I got signed up to teach through his efforts, and he's since retired and I never attempted to return. I was busy. Still am. I have no ambition to return.

DKD · MAY 16, 2010 AT 9:56 PM

Denver, I noticed in our Sunday School class today that in Joshua 1 Moses was called “my servant” several times by the Lord.... do you suppose there is any parallels with that ‘servant’ and ‘my righteous servant’ in verse 11?

Denver Snuffer · MAY 17, 2010 AT 6:21 AM

Yes, I do. Isaiah may be speaking of the Messiah, but all of those who serve the Lord are His “servants” and entrusted with the work of redemption. Even though the Messiah’s ministry was singular, that service is only effective in saving His sheep when the Lord sends other “shepherds” to continue crying repentance. Without an authoritative and entrusted servant serving at all times, there is no redemption actually taking place.

To the extent a servant has been sent, they will also share in some extent with the “suffering servant” description found in Isaiah’s prophecy here. As they treated the Master Servant, so they also treat in a lesser degree the other servants whom He sends.

MAY 17, 2010

Isaiah 53:12

Isaiah 53:12 states:

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Isaiah’s report ends with the Messiah’s triumph. Hard won as it was to be, it will qualify Him to receive a “portion with the great.” Although the Messiah may be greater than them all, He is only to receive “a portion.” For the suffering He endures will be to redeem others and bring them back with Himself. There is to be no hoarding. There is to be no selfishness. Though He may earn it all, He will take only “a portion” and leave a “division” with others who may share in His joy. He abased Himself, and taught all others to do the same (Matt. 23:10–12).

This is nothing akin to the faithful son complaining about the Prodigal (Luke 15:29–30). Christ will not only willingly share

with His lesser brothers and sisters, but He will go further and “make intercession for the transgressors.” He is neither jealous of their sharing in His triumph, nor resentful to “divide the spoil” of His great victory.

Here is a Messiah indeed! Here is a Redeemer indeed! “Truly, this Man was the Son of God!” (Matt. 27:54). Despise Him and His servants, He will still condescend to succor you so far as you permit Him to do. Turn your face from Him and His servants, He will still plead for you to listen.

Forsake and abandon Him and His servants, they will still forgive and make intercession for your errors.

Those who follow Him will be misunderstood, reviled, persecuted. It is in the nature of things for this world. He anticipated that, and gave instructions to you when you encounter it (Matt. 5:10–13). The entire prophecy in Isaiah 53 is a description not only of the Messiah, but also of the Messiah’s children. They will not be welcome here, for the ruler of this world has nothing for either Him or His children (John 14:30).

Surely Isaiah knew His Lord.

COMMENTS:

lc · MAY 17, 2010 AT 7:22 PM

Denver, since you are writing to those of us who sometimes “know not where to find it” (the truth) and since we are all seekers of truth, I’m soliciting your help in making sense of some things from Gerald Lund’s Book, *Hearing the Voice of the Lord*.

In light of all of the last week’s discussions about the Savior not being recognized or followed/believed because He didn’t fit the “mold” the following are a couple of the more specific quotes I need to sort out from his book – particularly question #2:

1) pg. 201 “When something that is supposedly for the whole Church comes to us through any other source (First Presidency and

Quorum of the Twelve), we can know that it is contrary to the order of God. Unless we have a specific stewardship that is, a priesthood or doctrinally based responsibility, over someone else, we do not receive revelation that seeks to direct them or correct them.”

2) pg. 204 Joseph Fielding Smith, “Let me add that when a revelation comes for the guidance of this people, you may be sure that it will not be presented in some mysterious manner contrary to the order of the Church. It will go forth in such form that the people will understand that it comes from those who are in authority....it will not spring up in some distant part of the Church and be in the hands of some obscure individual.”

Also, would you mind giving me/us your opinion of Gerald Lund’s book, *Hearing the Voice of the Lord*.

Denver Snuffer · May 17, 2010 at 9:24 PM

I haven’t read anything written by Gerald Lund. I think my wife has copies of some of his writings, but I haven’t read any of them; so I simply cannot comment on what he has written.

To the specific questions you ask, I’d say that it is the Spirit of Truth, Holy Ghost, or the Lord who is the only source I’d trust. Not a man; no matter what office he may hold. I believe the obligation is to seek for a spiritual confirmation no matter who is speaking.

The Lord was “outside the hierarchy” and didn’t fit the mold you propose. Abinadi was outside the hierarchy, and didn’t fit the mold you propose. John the Baptist was outside the hierarchy and didn’t fit the mold you propose. Saul was so feared and hated by the hierarchy that they needed a revelation to even meet with him, because he was outside the hierarchy and didn’t fit the mold. Samuel the Lamanite was outside the hierarchy and didn’t fit the mold you propose. (You need to read *Come, Let Us Adore Him* for the full explanation of the doctrine as I understand it.)

I recognize these teachings you ask about. I have heard them. I do not expect anyone to direct the church and its affairs apart from the President and other presiding authorities. I do not expect anyone to

direct the affairs of my stake apart from my Stake President and his counselors. I do not expect anyone to direct my ward apart from my Bishop and his counselors. I do not think the Lord's house is to be directed by someone other than recognized and sustained authorities.

But I do not think the Lord's hands are tied when He has directed everyone to bear testimony of Him, everyone to learn of Him and everyone to gain further light and knowledge by inquiring from Him. There simply is no faucet which controls the light and truth which the Lord is able to pour out upon those who seek after Him.

Read D&C 93:1 again and show me where the hierarchy or President or any man stands between the faithful Saint and her Lord. It isn't there.

This is how I understand the subject. I've proceeded with this understanding, with the conviction that I alone am responsible for learning what is necessary for my salvation and exaltation. No one else can be imposed upon to accomplish that for me.

MAY 17, 2010

Promise vs. Appearance

I was asked:

I've wondered about this for a long time. In the blog post about 'Why wait?' there is a phrase that says '*This appearance is not merely "in the heart," but is an actual appearance or visit.*' The 'in the heart' is my question. Once in a while this concept doesn't contradict but at the moment it seems to. In D&C 88 it says: 'Wherefore, I now send upon you another Comforter, even upon you my friends, that it may abide in your hearts, even the Holy Spirit of promise.' So how can it be a false sectarian notion about God the Father and Jesus dwelling in a man's heart (D&C130:3) and yet a few sections later in the D&C when referring to The Second Comforter it says contrary. [Also Eph. 3:17 says: 'That Christ may dwell in

your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love.}] I at one point saw how this worked—but can't seem to at the moment. How do those two seemingly contradictory things work?

My response:

To have the promise “abide in your heart” is to keep inside your heart the knowledge there is a promise given by God, who cannot lie about such matters, that you have the promise of eternal life. This is referring to the promise, and keeping it dear to you, or in your heart. This, of course, is not the same thing as the appearance of the Son in the form of another Comforter, as promised by Christ in John, Chapter 14, verse 18, where Christ declares: “*I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.*” It is the promise that the Lord will come or appear or take up His abode with you which Joseph declared to be literal. He is saying those who believe or teach this to be merely a feeling “in the heart” are teaching an “old sectarian notion” because they deny its literal possibility (D&C 130:3).

The culmination of the Lord's ministry is the promise of eternal life, as I explained in an earlier post. But the actuality of that ministry as an appearance to a person is not merely “in the heart.” When His ministry does culminate in the promise, then the promise should “abide in the heart” of the person to whom the promise has been given. They ought never let it pass from within their hearts that they have obtained a promise from the Lord assuring them of life eternal.

These are two different subjects. But the question is quite a good one. Thanks for asking it.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · MAY 17, 2010 AT 7:19 PM

Is it sin to share the promise if it has been received? Is there forgiveness and can one remain in the path if he has ignorantly let it pass from within their heart by his lips to another? How do you handle someone who wants to talk openly about this?

Denver Snuffer · MAY 17, 2010 AT 9:10 PM

I've explained in *The Second Comforter* that someone who is unable to keep a confidence is unlikely to be entrusted with information by the Lord. I've never talked about any personal experience, beyond affirming that I have a witness of the Lord. Every other comment, teaching and statement I have made is taken from scripture or from the teachings of Joseph Smith or another trusted authority in this dispensation. There simply is no need to do more than explain doctrine based upon scripture. Why would someone's personal experience be important to reveal? If the doctrine is capable of being explained in existing scripture, then the scriptures ought to be taught.

MAY 18, 2010

Most Answers are in the Scriptures

I've been reflecting upon a conversation I had with a self-described "tax protester" who has not paid income taxes and is now facing legal issues as a result. After a couple of days of reflection I had this considered response to this dilemma:

I use a particular method in determining what issues I need Divine direction to resolve and what issues I need no direction from the Lord to resolve. If there is an answer in the scriptures, contained in the teachings of Christ, then I simply do not ask the question. Instead I assume Christ's teachings are intended to govern my conduct and I comply. On the tax issue, for example, Christ did not resist paying taxes (Matt. 17:24–27). Nor did

Christ teach anything other than to pay taxes (Matt. 22:15–22) Therefore, it would not occur to me to even ask the Lord about whether or not to pay taxes.

When it comes to asking the Lord about something on which His teachings are already clear, a person risks receiving permission to do what will ultimately instruct them by sad example that they ought to have followed His earlier teachings. The best example of this is when Joseph requested he be allowed to let Martin Harris take the 116 pages and was told “no.” He persisted, and despite having been told “no,” he asked again and was then told “yes.” The “yes” was not because God had changed His mind, but because Joseph simply refused to learn by anything other than sad experience to respect God’s counsel (D&C 3; D&C 10:1–30).

Therefore, when there is already an instruction on point from the Lord, and we ignore it, the answer we receive may be for our benefit. We may need to learn by sad experience what we might have learned instead by precept and wisdom from the Lord.

It is this kind of experience men repeat by failing to follow God’s counsel. Then, when they might have avoided the sting which follows, they choose instead to suffer. Oftentimes they will blame the Lord for the hardships they brought upon themselves, when, if they had hearkened to the Lord’s counsel in the first place, they would never have had to suffer.

This is why it is so important to study the scriptures. If the answer is in there (and almost everything is in there) and we do not choose to find it, but to inquire for a new revelation instead, we oftentimes doom ourselves to a sad experience. His counsel should be heeded. When we don’t heed, and ask instead for new or different guidance, we may be given permission to do what

He has already told us to avoid. This is one of the great lessons from the lost 116 pages.

COMMENTS:

The Zang Family · MAY 18, 2010 AT 2:10 PM

Hi Denver, in one of your books you said we never outgrow the programs of the Church. I think that may be true for some Church aspects, but I also have a different viewpoint: what about programs that are designed to help us outgrow them? And when we “graduate” if you will, and learn the lesson intended by the ordinance, that doesn’t mean we should stop going or practicing it. I’m just trying to fine tune your statement and also consider something else you said about the 10 lepers. Couldn’t you say the 1 leper “outgrew” his need to see his bishop for every little thing because he found the person bishops are the symbols of, the true Bishop? I realize you have to be careful not to rationalize and truly have to find the Savior before realizing this maturity level, but what do you think? Could your statement do with some revising?

Denver Snuffer · MAY 18, 2010 AT 4:26 PM

I see your point and wouldn’t necessarily disagree. But even if I don’t like Sunday School, for example (and I don’t by the way), I still want Sunday School to be available for my children, and for investigators I bring to Church, and for my grandchildren, etc. So even though I don’t use it, I still haven’t outgrown it.

Also, just because I may not get something out of a meeting or program, that doesn’t mean I won’t support the program. Nor does it mean I won’t get something out of it for a friend, neighbor, investigator, child, grandchild, etc. as mentioned above.

I’ve come to see some things in an entirely new light. But even then, I don’t completely discard the things seen in a different light. They just take on a different relevance.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 18, 2010 AT 4:32 PM

I should probably add (because I think it goes without saying, but I realize sometimes others need me to say it before they know I think

this), I want to pay tithes. The Church allows me to do that. I want to partake of the sacrament. The Church allows me to do that. I want to attend the Temple. The Church allows me to do that. So in many ways, I won't ever outgrow it.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 18, 2010 AT 4:34 PM

And, oh yeah, I never gave any judgment about the tax protester. I explained why I could never join in protesting taxes. It was my reflection. It had nothing at all to do with judging the fellow who decided he would protest. I'm not in a position to begin to do that, and therefore made no comment about that subject.

MAY 18, 2010

Debate is Not Necessary

I am not trying to make my mind up about Mormonism or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I have long ago sorted out my views. They are not going to change.

Although my views are explained in this blog, I do not debate them. You are welcome to have contrary views, to disagree and to think I am altogether incorrect. But you shouldn't waste the effort to try and persuade me to change my own view.

My testimony of Christ is informed both by what I have studied and what I have witnessed. It has taken decades of devotion in study and living to obtain a stable, firm view of the Lord and His role in my life. No one should expect to acquire an unchanging view of the Lord without paying a significant price in their time and effort. I can try to help, give advice and make suggestions. I can explain my views. But, in the end, every person must determine for themselves what Christ means and how they intend to relate to Him.

I believe the truth exists independent of your view or my view. Just because someone believes a false notion does not make it so. Eventually we will all come into agreement by the things which we experience. For most of the world, that will be some time after they are dead.

Debate is not necessary. And I am just a lay member of the Church, without any reason for you to consider what I have to say. Therefore, you ought to measure my views against the scriptures and the Spirit, and let the truth be the single standard for deciding to accept something.

I quoted a few ideas from Mark Twain in a post a while back. You ought to re-read them if you don't remember them. They were chosen with some care. They summarize ideas which I believe to be important.

MAY 19, 2010

Presiding Authority

When Joseph Smith died, the crisis in succession produced arguments from various contenders who claimed it their right to lead the Church. Although no one argued that Section 107:22–24 controlled the decision, ultimately the decision was that the Twelve Apostles held keys to lead the Church. A few years later the verses in Section 107 just cited became the rationale for why the Twelve would lead.

This decision was further clarified by adoption of the rule that the senior (one who held office longest) Apostle would be the presiding authority and by virtue of that seniority would be the President. Initially he was President of the Twelve. Then when Brigham Young reformed the First Presidency after a few years, he became President of the Church. Then in 1955 he became the living “prophet” as well.

Since the system has now reached a stable, orderly manner of choosing and recognizing whose right it is to preside over the church, what happens if another, more senior Apostle happens along? Whose right is it to preside if **you** are required to choose between direction that comes from the presiding authority of the church or direction that comes from John (who tarry in the flesh), (D&C 7:1-4), or Peter, James and John? (D&C 27:12). Everyone presumes the messages from those who preside over the church on the earth and those who “tarry in the flesh” will be congruent, and that there is no conflict between the messages. But query what choice should be made if there is at least some inconsistency? Upon whom does the seniority rest?

A simpler question is what choice should be made between the Lord and those who preside in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I think all would agree that all church authorities are inferior to the Lord. However, we also presume that there will be no conflict between the two. What if there is at least some inconsistency?

It is an interesting question to ponder. Not that I have anything to add to your reflection on the matter. Sometimes it is just interesting to consider a question. Like I’ve said elsewhere, answers are less important than a good question to ponder from time to time. In the pondering, new and important ideas can occur to you.

COMMENTS:

Kisi · MAY 20, 2010 AT 3:38 PM

Great post! Along these lines, notice these scriptures:

D&C 49:8 “Wherefore, I will that all men shall repent, for all are under sin, except those which I have reserved unto myself, holy men that ye know not of.” This can’t be referring to John the Beloved nor the

three Nephites nor Enoch and his people, because we know of them. So, the Lord has “holy men” whom we know not of that He has “reserved”.

Next, we know from the scriptures that He has always given the righteous a chance to be led out before a people were destroyed. The entire Book of Mormon is an example of this — three examples of this, actually: Lehi’s group, the Mulekites, and the Jaredites. We seem to automatically assume that just because the Nephites were destroyed, that no one was led away first. Moroni 7:1–4 shows that this is not true. Mormon says in those verses that he was permitted to speak to a group who, if I understand correctly, had all received the Second Comforter — as they had “entered into the rest of the Lord” in this life. This seems to suggest that he was talking to people who had already been led away before the destruction of the Nephites.

Now read D&C 86:8–11

⁸Therefore, thus saith the Lord unto you, with whom the priesthood hath continued through the lineage of your fathers —

⁹For ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh, and have been hid from the world with Christ in God —

¹⁰Therefore your life and the priesthood have remained, and must needs remain through you and your lineage until the restoration of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy prophets since the world began.

¹¹Therefore, blessed are ye if ye continue in my goodness, a light unto the Gentiles, and through this priesthood, a savior unto my people Israel. The Lord hath said it. Amen.

So, we have people living on the earth who have never lost the priesthood, and who will be a light to the Gentiles, and ultimately a savior to Israel. If they already have the priesthood from God Himself, and it has been passed down to them through the lineage of their fathers, who can say what authority they have?

What if they, or one, or some of them are sent forth to call us to repentance?

Denver Snuffer · May 20, 2010 at 5:57 PM

There's a lengthy discussion about this in *Beloved Enos*. The Lord is not powerless, nor incapable of providing salvation to people today, no matter what goes on among us. I'm putting up a new post probably tomorrow on related questions.

Line upon line.

Precept upon precept.

Helps if you've studied what I've already put into books. There's a systematic reconstruction of what Joseph restored in them. (Kisi I'm saying that to people who haven't read what I've written and not to you.)

MAY 19, 2010

WWJD

Stopped shaving a few weeks ago, except for the neck. Now I've got a bit of face hair, which feels like spiders are crawling all over my face. I took a poll, figuring I'd get a vote to return to the orthodox visage. To my surprise all the kids said "keep it." Even my wife says to leave it for a while. So I'm going to keep the spiders for a while.

I've done this before, back when I made the annual trip to Sturgis. I know that eventually there isn't any feeling to a beard. In fact, when you shave it off then you can feel the air movement on your face and that's quite weird for a few days. But I haven't been to Sturgis for about 5 years or more, and so I hadn't grown a beard for that long.

As an aside, when you go to Sturgis you ought to look the part. The "brethren" there expect some effort to blend in. Consequently, I have managed a fairly true 'scooter-trash' look when I make the effort.

As long as I have the chin-hair I need to dust off the Harley, get it inspected and licensed, and start riding again this summer.

It is, of course, the answer to the question: “WWJD?” (What would Jesus drive?) It’s environmentally friendly, leaves a small carbon footprint, quick, high-mileage,fun as hell, and pretty badass, too. All the ingredients needed for transcendental transportation.

Steppenwolf sang the theme song to it all:

Get your motor runnin’
Head out on the highway;
look’in for adventure
and whatever comes our
way...

I like smoke and lightning
Heavy metal thunder
Racin’ with the wind

And the feelin’ that I’m under...

It’s a biker thing. Can’t be explained. Can be shared, though.
You start with face hair;...then let it take you to its logical extreme.

Hmmmm...no wonder missionaries are clean-shaven.



COMMENTS:

Denver Snuffer · MAY 19, 2010 AT 9:43 PM

My wife put that YouTube link in. I liked it. She’s gifted that way...

That takes me back to when I was in High School. I was in a garage band that used to play that tune. I can still remember the drum bit. Was just playing it on the office desk while I listened.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 20, 2010 AT 5:34 AM

BTW: The term “heavy metal” comes from the lyrics I quoted above. Steppenwolf coined the term in this song, and it became applied to an entire genre of music thereafter. So in Trivial Pursuit you now have an answer to the question: “Who coined the term ‘heavy metal’?”

Denver Snuffer · MAY 20, 2010 AT 5:39 AM

Oh, yeah; “am I serious?” Well, I own a Harley. I’ve been to Sturgis seven years. “Born to be Wild” is an adopted theme song for bikers. Even got used in the soundtrack for “Easy Rider.”

I suppose it’s the question “WWJD” that you’re actually asking then. Lemme think... Since He went out of His way to be common, to fit in among the least, to be welcomed among the taxpayers, the harlots and the sinners, I suppose I am serious. In our day that means He would fit in among the tattooed, the pierced, the promiscuous, the drug-addicted and the outcast. So why wouldn’t He drive a Harley? I am certain He wouldn’t be driving a Toyota Avalon, if that’s what you’re asking.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 20, 2010 AT 5:41 AM

Make that “tax collectors” instead of “taxpayers.” He made friends of the former and He was the latter.

Anonymous · MAY 20, 2010 AT 6:33 AM

Damn!! Snuffer don’t you know anything?? A white shirt with “CONSERVATIVE” neck tie, missionary hair cut and clean shaven is the only way Jesus would dress!! As to WWJD, well we all know the only thing Jesus would ever drive is a proper American-made SUV! The bigger the better!

:) Great post I loved it! :)

Tim

db schroeder · MAY 20, 2010 AT 8:02 AM

In the 2nd Comforter, I remember the Harley part/Sturgis w your son. My question is:

What about some Priesthood holders that own Vespas? Does that make us Sadduces? *%#@!

Denver Snuffer · MAY 20, 2010 AT 5:52 PM

Priesthood holders that own Vespas have no power...

MAY 20, 2010

Books for Sale – used

A friend of mine brought to my attention that there are “used” copies of my books available on the web for sometimes hundreds of dollars. I was surprised. Let me give some warning to people so no-one takes advantage of you.

First, there is absolutely no reason to pay anything more than what the Amazon.com book charges are to anyone anywhere. The books are all still in print and you do not need to resort to buying them used. Buy them new from Amazon and you’ll get a newly printed copy at the lowest price, other than shipping which they add on to the cost.

Second, if you live in Utah, you can buy copies at the same reasonable prices from either Benchmark Books on about 3300 South Main Street, or from a place called Confetti Books in Spanish Fork (whose address I do not have at the moment). Neither of these stores mark the books up, and they don’t charge you shipping. But you have to drive there to buy them.

Third, I am not trying to make money from book sales. I work as an attorney for a living and writing is not a commercial endeavor. Whatever royalties I earn are donated to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. So you buying a book I’ve written does nothing financial for me.

CHAPTER 3

Speaking Plainly

MAY 20, 2010

The Sealing Power

I've explained the sealing authority in the last three chapters of *Beloved Enos*. An example of the Lord and His servant Enoch conversing, and the Lord requiring the sealing authority to be used is found in Moses 7:6–7, which read as follows:

And again the Lord said unto me: Look; and I looked towards the north, and I beheld the people of Canaan, which dwelt in tents. And the Lord said unto me: Prophecy; and I prophesied, saying: Behold the people of Canaan, which are numerous, shall go forth in battle array against the people of Shum, and shall slay them that they shall utterly be destroyed; and the people of Canaan shall divide themselves in the land, and the land shall be barren and unfruitful, and none other people shall dwell there but the people of Canaan;

Enoch was shown the events, but the Lord required the voice of Enoch to speak and “prophecy” what was to happen. The voice of one holding this authority is the same as the Lord’s own voice

(D&C 1:38). The “Word” needed to be employed, because it is by the “Word” that all things are established.

The “Word” comes through Christ, who has in Him all power and authority. It was and is through Him that others are called upon from heaven, given authority, and commissioned to speak and make the Word of God live again on the earth.

Therefore, in the beginning the Word was, for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation— The light and the Redeemer of the world; the Spirit of truth, who came into the world, because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men. (D&C 93:8–9)

It was by employing the “Word” that the creation of this earth rolled into order at the direction of the “noble and great” souls who were the “Gods” or the “Elohim” in the beginning. As Abraham recorded:

And they (the Gods) said: Let there be light; and there was light. And they (the Gods) comprehended the light, for it was bright; and they divided the light, or caused it to be divided, from the darkness. And the Gods called the light Day, and the darkness they called Night. And it came to pass that from the evening until morning they called night; and from the morning until the evening they called day; and this was the first, or the beginning, of that which they called day and night. And the Gods also said...(Abr. 4:3–6)

It is through the Word, or sealing authority, spoken by one sent from God, that salvation and exaltation are made available to mankind. It was intended that this authority to speak in His name might belong to every man in this dispensation: “But that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the

Savior of the world; That faith also might increase in the earth; That mine everlasting covenant might be established;” (D&C 1:20–22). This was not to be a time when there would be a famine in hearing the Word of the Lord (cf. Amos 8:11). Rather it was to be a time of great abundance, when every man would know the Lord (Heb. 8:11; D&C 84:98). This was to be the day when all would see visions and dream dreams, beholding the Lord (JS-H 1:41; Joel 2:28).

For some, this is a day of great plenty. For others it remains a time of famine. The Lord spoke truly that in our day two shall be together, and the one taken but the other left (Luke 17:34–36; Matt. 24:40–41; JS-M 1:44–45). And why are they not taken?

Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson— That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man. (D&C 121:35–37)

Whenever men possess the “word” from God, they necessarily speak it in plainness. When men do not, history tells us they will assert the right to control, dominate and exercise authority over others to prevent the “word” from being spoken by anyone. This is the consistent pattern found among the Jews at the time

of Christ; among the Catholics when they obtain political dominance; and it is the pattern that we must **not repeat** in our own dispensation. For we all share responsibility for how this turns out. Nephi's view of how we would perform was quite pessimistic (2 Ne. 28:20–29). However, the group outcome needn't ever be the individual's outcome, even in Nephi's prophetic "word" about our day (2 Ne. 28:14).

COMMENTS:

mj · MAY 20, 2010 AT 8:53 PM

Doesn't the sealing power or the authority to speak God's words for Him have to be conferred by ordinance? Can't men who have this power on earth regardless of their church office, confer it or give the rights to it to another (like an apostolic ordination)? Do we actually need an ordination to receive the sealing power or ability to speak and record for the Lord here on earth? Or maybe it's conferred on many and we don't know it? And can there be more than one priesthood group operating in the last days? Why?

Answer to above comment: I think the elements hear and obey the word of God as spoken thru His servant. That's why it is so important to get on a level where the Lord can speak thru us... actually using us to do His work here on earth... which is what the priesthood is for.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 21, 2010 AT 6:12 AM

A strange thing in the land, indeed. A wild man is among us...

All scriptural examples show the sealing power comes from beyond the veil. There is one exception, but even there Elijah was in the process of being caught up and, therefore, was also beyond the veil when he conferred it upon Elisha.

The church claims it can be conferred and passed about by mortal to mortal.

Anonymous · MAY 22, 2010 AT 9:09 AM

I was wondering if sealing power can be given without any ordination from man who has it or an angel or the Lord (i.e. can it be conferred without a man receiving laying on of hands). angels can also ordain, or you can be ordained on the other side of the veil. But can one who actually has the sealing power upon him, confer it to someone else if the spirit directs? Like the 2A, but I guess you can be given the “office” of K&P, but it’s still up to the man to fulfill his office or appointment.

Indeed, those in the KNOW are usually cast out as a strange thing in the land! Many times by your own loved ones.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 22, 2010 AT 9:41 AM

So far as the scriptures explain the process, it comes from the voice of God or an angel sent by Him. D&C 77:11 also ties it to angels who hold the keys to this ministry.

We are practicing in the Temple to receive the real thing. We are not receiving the real thing there. We are told that directly as part of the ceremony. We are cautioned that if we are true and faithful to the covenants we enter into, the time will come when we will be called up, chosen and anointed, whereas now we are only anointed to BECOME such. The realization of these blessings is dependent upon our faithfulness, not upon our holding a recommend and getting our names enrolled in preparatory, practice ordinances. The ordinances are a revelation about the real process. They are symbols. They point the way. But we have to follow the way and receive the blessings, promises, etc. from heaven. The Holy Spirit of Promise, as explained in Section 132 is involved. I’ve explained this in The Second Comforter.

DKD · MAY 22, 2010 AT 10:06 AM

When you say “sealing power” are you talking about “sealers” that do ordinance work in the temple? or are you talking about the fullness of the priesthood....with the ability/power to control even the elements? (Like Nephi son of Helaman.)

Denver Snuffer · MAY 25, 2010 AT 8:56 PM

I've explained the subject of sealing in the last three chapters of *Beloved Enos*. I'm speaking of that authority which seals on earth and in heaven, which comes from heaven.

MAY 21, 2010

Be of Good Cheer

In Luke 22:54–62 there is this account of the night when Christ was taken captive:

Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaeen. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

President Kimball cautioned about “judging” Peter’s motives and even suggested that no cowardice was involved when he denied Christ three times. (See Peter, My Brother.) <http://emp.byui.edu/marrottr/GenlAuthorities/PeterMyBrother.pdf>

I'm not interested in judging Peter. But I am quite interested in this incident, the Lord's actions, and the implications for us.

The hall in which this took place was large enough to have separate groups and conversations in it. But it was still intimate enough that Peter's raised voice in the third denial could be heard across the hall where Jesus was being held. Matthew added that Peter not only denied Christ, but also cursed as he did so (Matt. 26:74; see also Mark 14:71). When, therefore, the Lord heard this loud outburst accompanying Peter's final cursing denial in that raised voice, "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter."

It was that "look upon Peter" that provoked Peter's response. Peter did not remember the Lord's earlier comments until His "look upon" him. Then promptly "Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

Now consider this—Here you have Christ's chief apostle and leader whose entire demeanor changes from gruff, loud cursing and denial of the Lord into bitter weeping, because the Lord "looked upon" him.

If you can get this picture firmly in your mind, then you may understand this scripture:

Then will ye longer deny the Christ, or can ye behold the Lamb of God? Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with him under a consciousness of your guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws? Behold, I say unto you that ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell. For behold, when ye shall be brought to see your nakedness before God,

and also the glory of God, and the holiness of Jesus Christ, it will kindle a flame of unquenchable fire upon you. (Mormon 9:3–5)

Peter literally experienced the bitterness of hell in that disappointed glance from the Lord. It came from recognizing of how great a disappointment he was to the Lord. It was produced by a mere glance from Christ. He who loved all of us the most was the One whom Peter in return cursed and denied. When he saw himself through the Lord's disappointment, it made Peter bitter, filled with remorse, and caused him to retreat to weep alone.

We do not want to disappoint the Lord. None of us want to see that same look from the Lord that He showed Peter. We have opportunities to do what He asks us every day. All of us do. Little things, moment to moment, particularly if you look for them. They matter. Every thought, every word, every deed. They matter. Let them reflect credit upon your faith in Him.

I'm not saying be dour, long-faced or stoic. Quite the contrary. "Be of good cheer" was His oft repeated expression, even using it as a greeting on many occasions (See Matt. 14:27; Mark 6:50; John 16:33; Acts 23:11; 3 Ne. 1:13; D&C 68:6, among others). Cheerfully go about doing good, and trust in Him. He will guide you. He was happy. He was cheerful. So are those who know Him best (See, e.g., *JS-H* 1:28).

There isn't a single thing you do for His sake which He will forget or fail to credit to you. Nor is there a single mistake which He will remember and hold against you, if you repent (D&C 58:42).

You should let your thoughts be such that you will be confident in His presence (D&C 121:45). Be of good cheer.

MAY 21, 2010

Prophet, Seer, Revelator

I was asked this question:

If the first presidency and the twelve really operate much like the lay members do, how then do you reconcile the MEANING of the words: Prophet; Seer; and Revelator. Aren't these gifts unusual and set apart for the highest positions of the church? Wouldn't one necessarily receive visions and dreams to qualify as a Prophet, Seer, or Revelator? How else would one SEE into the past, or the future, let alone clearly understanding the present? How do you reconcile the current revelatory state of the leadership with the meaning of the words, prophet, seer, and revelator?

Inside the Church the current interpretation is that the "office" has associated with it a "title" set out in scripture. The "office" of the President of the High Priesthood (D&C 107:65–66), who is the President of the Church, also bears the "title" of "prophet, seer and revelator" (D&C 107:91–92). The current interpretation of these verses is that the possessor of the office is entitled to the title of "prophet, seer and revelator" by virtue of office alone. Therefore, nothing more is needed in current church usage other than possession of the office, which alone gives the possessor of the office the title accorded to the office. So, no, our current terminology does not require something other than office.

It is possible to read the words of the verses differently, of course. First, the words we have adopted as they appear in scripture are not actually "prophet, seer and revelator" but are instead: "a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet."

Those are different words and include in the phrase “a translator” in addition to “seer, revelator and a prophet.” We have dropped the word “translator” from the title we now use.

Second, it is possible that the following words may be viewed to mean something different than the way we currently read them, “to be like unto Moses—Behold, here is wisdom; yea, to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet,” (D&C 107:91–92). They could be read to mean that before you fill the office of President of the High Priesthood you must first locate “a seer” who is also, by definition, “a revelator” and “a translator” who is undoubtedly therefore “a prophet” and, having found such a person, you are to sustain him into the office. The office doesn’t make the man, but the Lord makes a man into such an instrument, and having done so then the church is to put him into the office. There are of course those who have these gifts. Many of them have no church office involving priesthood, because they are female. They may possess gifts, but they are disqualified for office. Then there are men who possess such gifts, but they may be living in South America, serving in a small branch, and completely unnoticed by the leadership, and therefore, never called.

The problem with the second point is that it invites near chaos. You would have dozens, hundreds or perhaps thousands of people who would step forward and make the claim that they are entitled to the office. Ambitious men who are either deceived or, worse still, cunning and dishonest, would seek to gain the office to further their ambitions. Such a parade of the deluded or the dishonest would be foisted upon the Saints every time the President died.

Therefore, no matter how much merit you may think the second interpretation holds, it would be far more problematic to implement than the current interpretation and method.

The advantage of the current system is that the man who fills the vacancy is distinguished by how long he has held the church's office of Apostle. Generally that means an elderly man, often suffering from the decline of advanced years and poor health. That means you are likely to have a man whose ambitions and exuberance are tempered by the maturity of age and the wisdom that comes from long life's experience. It gives stability to the decision, as well as the person chosen.

If the second approach were to be adopted, then the choice would need to be made by the serving President before he left office (died), by making the choice of his successor as part of his official service. This is the method that the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith (D&C 43:3–4). Joseph attempted this, but the one he chose to succeed him died with him (his brother Hyrum). So the office was left vacant and we had to sort it out.

There is another method that we haven't tried, so far as I know. That would be to use "lots" to choose from every male in the church. This method was used to fill Judas' vacancy in the original Twelve in Jerusalem (Acts 1:21–26). The description there is ambiguous, but was intended to be random, unpredictable and not just a vote. It was a recognized way to choose someone (See, e.g., 1 Ne. 3:11). It has been used to sort through the entire nation of Israel when all twelve tribes were assembled. Someone had stolen an idol, resulting in the withdrawal of the Lord's Spirit from them in battle. The result was defeat for Israel and the death of many men. They needed to find the one who committed the offense. So they had to choose from the entire gathering of all

twelve tribes. Beginning at the tribe level, they sorted through to find the right tribe (Judah). Then proceeded to sort through the tribe to locate the larger family involved (Zarhites). Then went through the family to find the individual involved (Achan). The whole thing is in the scriptures (Joshua 7:13–23).

Such a system was uncontrolled by man, done by lot, completely random, but produced the right person. Left to God, it obtained God's answer. Did with the sons of Lehi, and with the vacancy in the Twelve in the Book of Acts, too. There is no reason why such a system wouldn't generate the Lord's choice today.

If the President died without a successor having been designated, then random choosing using a lot system would put the choice in the Lord's hands. But I suppose we don't have the stomach to try it, particularly when we already have a system that seems to work for us.

Your question raises the issue of "authority" or office on the one hand, and "power" or gifts of the Spirit on the other hand. You should read President Packer's talk in last General Conference for a recent statement by a respected church leader on that subject. I think I've commented on that talk enough already. As I re-read it this week I was again stirred by President Packer's sagacity. I believe he is being candid, honest and giving the Saints the absolute best advice and counsel he can at this time.

Interesting subject. Something worth contemplating. Perhaps there will come a time when we are able to implement the system in D&C 43. Or when we put the Lord's hand to work by using lots to choose a President. Though I do not expect to see any change made during my life.

COMMENTS:

Kisi · MAY 22, 2010 AT 7:19 AM

Wow, it would be amazing to see the Church use “casting lots”. That is so out of the box of our paradigm today (as are many other true things). One thing that is refreshing in this post and in being able to discuss this subject is that it is basically never acknowledged in “normal circles” in the Church that the way we choose our Presidents is policy and not doctrine.

It seems to me that there is another interpretation of D&C 107:91–92 than what has been presented here. “the duty of the President ... to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church.” It sounds like this could mean that God “bestows” these gifts upon the President, the head of the church. (This interpretation doesn’t seem like much of a stretch since that is what the words actually say :) Historically, we have many examples of kings and rulers having revelation and dreams for their people, which seems to be something God gives to people about their stewardships. “The mantle of the bishop” can be an example of this. It seems to be almost without exception that men called to be bishops experience something new and different which they refer to as the “mantle of the bishop” and which they have until the minute they are released. Is it not possible that there is a “mantle of the President of the High Priesthood” which brings with it the gifts mentioned in verse 92? (I’m not saying that righteousness or the lack of it would not have an effect. But even unrighteous kings have historically received messages from God.)

Denver Snuffer · MAY 22, 2010 AT 8:09 AM

Yes, this is the view of the church. The office gives entitlement, therefore just filling it produces the desired effect.

Also, you’re right also about the tradition that God works even through unqualified kings and high priests. Such was the case in John’s view even when it came to Caiaphas. See John 11:47–51.

Anonymous · MAY 22, 2010 AT 9:17 AM

How can we govern the temple ordinances without being valid (with spiritual gifts) K&P's? Without obeying all the laws of the gospel (as found in our standard works) as we promise in the ritual? If we don't have the connection with heaven that is necessary, how can our priesthood sealings be effective in the next life? Even Emma had to accept and agree with plural marriage before getting endowed and being sealed to Joseph in 1842. Though she seemed to quickly go against it there after.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 22, 2010 AT 9:36 AM

If I understand the question, this is something I addressed in *The Second Comforter*. The Temple ordinances are not the real thing. They are preparatory only. They tell you they are merely practice. If you are true and faithful, the time will come when you will be called up, chosen and anointed kings and queens, priests and priestesses, whereas now you are only ordained to **BECOME** such. The realization of these blessings are dependent upon your faithfulness.

Nothing done in the ordinances are controlling into the next life unless and until sealed upon a person by the Holy Spirit of Promise, just as Section 132 explains. Heaven is going to control admission. How heaven decides who is chosen is something I've tried to illustrate in *Ten Parables*.

Doug · MAY 23, 2010 AT 10:41 AM

QUOTE: "The Temple ordinances are not the real thing. They are preparatory only. They tell you they are merely practice."

Just connecting the dots here... then this would necessarily mean that the "new name" that we receive in the temple is just a warm-up too...? I never quite got how we were supposed to feel a sense of personal connection when we were given a name solely based on the day we showed up to do our individual endowment. This helps explain that. Thanks.

—Doug

Denver Snuffer · MAY 23, 2010 AT 2:16 PM

The new name is only a key word used during the ceremony. It is a symbol and it means something. And it is a test to see if you will keep a covenant to never reveal it. If you are true and faithful, can be trusted with ceremonial confidence, then you qualify to learn and know other things which are also to be kept from the world and not disclosed to those who are unprepared to hear them.

The temple is quite an accurate ceremonial depiction of the real process by which God initiates a person into salvation and exaltation. But it IS NOT the actual initiation. Nor is the new name more than a ceremonial necessity to be used here to complete the ceremony.

Do you have other names? Yes, we all do. You had them before this world was framed. And you will be acquiring yet other names as you pass through here. God reserves the right to bestow the greatest name upon you, as Psalms 2:7 suggests; and as the tenth parable describes in *Ten Parables*.

MAY 22, 2010

Infallibility's One-way Street

[This is about foundational, indispensable, bed-rock doctrines involved in salvation. It is not about trifling changes which can come and go at any time. I'm talking about the big stuff, in the big picture, which will make-or-break salvation itself.]

Here's the destructive course that inevitably follows from the notion that the President of the church cannot lead us astray when foundational changes are made to the doctrine—we can only subtract from our body of principles. We never can add back what we have subtracted.

To illustrate the one-way street problem you need only look at the changes to the endowment. The endowment is considered indispensable for exaltation and therefore part of the required,

correct, bed-rock doctrines. In 1990 it was changed to drop a character, eliminate dialogue, alter the manner of covenant-making and delete things considered distasteful. I will not discuss details, although others have and you can find them if you look. That isn't important to understanding the problem. It is only necessary to know some things were deleted.

Suppose that in 2015 there was a consensus that the deletions were wrong and should be returned. If you were to attempt to return them into the endowment, you would immediately raise these questions:

- Do all church members who received their endowment between 1990 and 2015 have to do them over again?
- Do all the vicarious ordinances performed on behalf of the dead between 1990 and 2015 have to be redone?
- If not, then why would a change be made, since it isn't necessary to redo the work already done?

Now suppose that you reach a satisfactory resolution to these questions, and as a result you change back and redo ordinances — immediately critics and others then raise these questions:

- Why did they change them if it was wrong to do so?
- How could they have been “inspired” if they made a mistake?
- Does this mean that the President wasn't a prophet; or, worse, a false prophet when he made this mistake?
- How can we ever trust the President again?

So, even if there were a consensus, a change that returns what was subtracted would be such a set-back to the institution that it could never be seriously entertained. It could not happen without shaking the very foundation of the premise (inerrancy of the President) upon which correlation relies to control the church.

It would take a very different group of people, having a much higher tolerance for changes, and a greater capacity to tolerate human failings, before it would be possible to add back what has once been deliberately subtracted. Such a radically different kind of Saint is unlikely to be produced without some rather dramatic changes to the population. Of course, dramatic changes are what the Lord has always told us will come as a part of preparing the earth for His return. (He calls it “calamity” in D&C 1:17.)

Now I’ve used the endowment to illustrate the point, but the same principle works across the board with any bedrock policy, ordinance or teaching which has been deliberately discarded or adopted in place of something else by the church. Once it has been set into place by the correlation process, it is put into concrete and cannot be moved without demolition. Therefore, if we have made any mistake, discarded anything we should have retained, or neglected or opposed any teaching which the Lord wanted us to keep, He will use demolition to prepare us to receive it back again. We can only subtract. Fortunately for us, a caring God can (and will) add upon us still. ‘Gotta break some concrete first, of course. But He cares enough to do that. (Psalms 94:14.) He’s determined that we are to be added upon. (Abraham 3:26.) Even when we prefer subtraction to addition.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · MAY 22, 2010 AT 12:44 PM

Was indispensable doctrine removed from the endowment in 1990?

Can you give us other examples of indispensable doctrine that is currently lost?

Surely, this topic is important enough that it deserves elaboration.
Thanks.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 22, 2010 AT 3:00 PM

It is not for me to say.

I'm only raising an issue and illustrating a point by using an example. It is up to each person to learn for themselves, by conversing with the Lord through the veil directly and learning for themselves what He would have them know and do. And I've written a book that provides that guidance.

The process is more important than the answer, as I have already explained. It is through the process that you learn what you need directly from God. And when you learn from God you have salvation.

MAY 22, 2010

Obeying God, Not Fearing Man

As the voice of the Lord conferred the sealing power upon Nephi in Chapter 10 of Helaman, this statement was made:

And now, because thou hast done this with such unwearyingness, behold, I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will. (Hel. 10:5)

This is not a commandment, but a statement. It is a description of what kind of person Nephi was. The Lord knew that even endowed with that power he “shall not ask that which is contrary to [the Lord’s own] will.”

How did the Lord know this about Nephi? Because of what Nephi had done with such unwearyingness: “for I have beheld how thou hast with unwearyingness declared the word, which I have given unto thee, unto this people. And thou hast not feared them, and hast not sought thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments.”

Nephi's prior assignments from the Lord had been done consistently, without letting criticism or threats deter him. He said what the Lord asked him to say, without fear of those who opposed, threatened, or belittled him. He had been "proven" and found worthy (Abr. 3:25). Therefore, even though he may have been misunderstood or resented by his peers, he was approved and trusted by the Lord.

How much better is it to be trusted by the Lord than to be popular with mankind! (Proverbs 29:25). What a remarkable relationship this man Nephi must have had. It makes one think that such a thing can only happen when a person is willing to follow in those exact steps (D&C 121:20–21).

Obedying God and not fearing man is so rare a thing that when we do encounter it, we're likely to either misunderstand such a person or be offended by him.

MAY 23, 2010

Schism

Right now there is such a diversity of views among the political groups in the United States that there is potential for a national breakup. States are talking about seceding from the Union. Texas, which was an independent nation before it joined the United States, has always retained the right to secede. Other states have discussed departing, and the reasons are diverse. Taxation and profligate Federal spending motivate some. Liberal issues motivate others, like Vermont, to want to leave in order to avoid conservative backlash. Conservative issues motivate others, who believe the Federal agenda is just too reckless.

The problem of national politics is its "one-size-fits-all" approach to governing. There is no room for diverse local pop-

ulations to make independent decisions about their course of political development. Originally the nation was intended to be loosely governed from the national level, where such minimal governance as was necessary would be provided. National defense and interstate commerce were to be controlled to prevent invasion and internal warfare between the states. But the states were to govern their populations as independently sovereign states whose authority sprang from their people.

When you move power to the national level alone, you then create a distant and oftentimes disconnected government which will take so much upon themselves in taxation and regulation that they alienate local populations throughout the country. Taxes which would never be assessed at the local level are levied to impose policy decisions and programs which are not wanted by the local populations. That continues until, as we see now, there is resistance from both sides of the political spectrum and talk about how oppressive the national government has become.

There's a lesson there about how humanity will react when they are forced to accept a one-size approach to a divergent local circumstance. When there is only one approach tolerated, and others suppressed and controlled, then people will eventually rebel. They will simply walk away from the benefits of national programs in order to pursue their own course freely.

It is always better to leave room for divergent approaches to divergent problems. That was what the separate states were originally intended to accomplish. A problem could be experimented with at the state level. Kentucky could try one approach, Florida another, and Maine yet another. If Kentucky's worked better, and Florida's was a disaster, and Maine's somewhat of a success but nothing like Kentucky's; then the populations of the

various states could learn from what worked and what didn't. They could debate based upon the outcome of various experiments they conducted in their sovereign territories. Every one of them would benefit from the conduct of the other. Now, with only a national approach to social issues, tax issues, educational issues, and health issues, failure is not acceptable. When there is failure, the failed program is given more money, more personnel and more rhetoric to justify it. It becomes a matter of political-correct thinking and speaking; because if you don't believe in supporting some failed program then you are uncharitable, or racist, or bigoted, or ignorant, or worse.

Experimentation is not permitted and therefore failure is national in scope and expensive to endure.

It is always best to "control" as little as possible and to interfere with development of separate ideas as little as necessary. This is true of government, and it is true of rearing children [after you have instructed them in the foundational truths], as well. It is also true of churches, civic organizations and any cooperative human endeavor. Cooperation through persuasion, meekness, kindness, pure knowledge and love unfeigned works, whenever it is tried (D&C 121:39–42).

MAY 23, 2010

Housekeeping

I'm going to do a bit of housecleaning. Here's responses to questions I've been asked "off blog" so to speak:

I don't recall the Know Your Religion instructor. He taught in a chapel on Creek Road in Sandy. I went back to my journal and his name is not recorded there.

Covenant making requires cutting. All covenants are made with cutting or blood involved. God's covenant with Abraham, for example, involved a ceremony in which the animals which were cleaved apart were symbols of death as part of the oath for the covenant (Gen. 15:8–18). The ceremony essentially referred to God proclaiming that the sacrifices or cutting should be done to Him, if He breaks the covenant He entered into with Abraham. Paul referred to this as God swearing by Himself, since He could swear by none greater (Heb. 6:13). Eliminating the gestures of cutting was significant in the sense that the necessity of sacrificing all things, (blog post "Lectures of Faith No. 6" - April 21, 2010) including life, is necessary to lay hold upon eternal life. Therefore although the principle remains the same for all, those who are not acquainted with that principle will never develop the faith necessary for salvation. The ceremony used to include direct reference to it, but removing it from the ceremony does not remove it from the Gospel.

The opinion poll taken was of active LDS families in Canada and the US and involved approximately 3,400 families. Hugh Nibley was on the committee, but he withdrew after attending only one meeting.

I do not expect plural marriage to be revived in the church.

Not every question should be answered by me. Go ask the Lord. They are legitimate and He will answer.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · MAY 23, 2010 AT 4:38 PM

So if you believe the church will not go back to the law of Abraham, and I doubt we will ever go back to the order of Enoch... does this mean the church will never repent and will go on the say it is, or possibly worse until the Lord comes? Will there be anyone on earth with

a fulness? These are 2 everlasting covenants we have treaded upon and broken, and procrastinate the day of our repentance.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 23, 2010 AT 5:28 PM

I think it is more complex now than ever before. The “fulness” is here. But it is related to, but unregulated by, the church. D&C 77:11 tells you the church never was the way in which the sealing was going to occur. I expect those who are church members to be the ones who will be included. As for establishing Zion, that is not even an ambition of the church at present. We aren't looking to find the remnant, who are to build the New Jerusalem. We are putting ourselves, who are identified with the Gentiles, as the center, instead of the remnant who have the primary responsibility.

Sorting it all out is something which would take a volume to make clear. It is in the Book of Mormon and D&C. It is in Joseph's teachings. You can follow the subject through the revelations and you will see the picture.

Yes, there will be those with a fullness on the earth.

Yes, there are some here now with it.

God will not forsake any, in any generation, who seek for Him. But they must come to Him in the manner in which He has revealed. Study the scriptures. They are able to make you wise unto salvation. It is your study; your obligation. It is not anyone else who must do this.

I've tried to make a coherent description available in the books I have written. They aren't something which you should read without careful, solemn, and ponderous thought. They are filled with the scriptures and explanations which connect the revelations together in a simplified whole.

Nephi did the best single job of writing the process in his books. I've shown that in what I've written. Believe in the scriptures; particularly the Book of Mormon. The fullness is set out there. If you can't see it, then read what I've written and it will show it to you using the scriptures.

MAY 24, 2010

Be Firm and Steadfast!

I've said **several** times in **several** ways that we have an obligation to support the church's leaders and the programs of the church. I believe that with all my heart. The Lord is going to hold us all accountable. No one is going to be relieved from their respective responsibilities.

Pay tithes, attend your meetings. Keep a current temple recommend and use it. Serve when asked to do so. You will have a great influence on others for the good when you provide service. Not merely by what you say, but by the example you provide.

There is a great deal of unrest in the church. Oftentimes the result is inactivity. I believe that is a mistake. If all those who continued to care about the Gospel persisted in attending meetings and serving, it would do more to help the church than drifting into inactivity. Those who are sensitive to the troubles which beset the church need to be there, faithfully serving. If only those who are blinded to the troubles remain active, then the organization becomes narrower and narrower, less and less aware of its situation, and prone to continue in a course that will discard yet more of what matters most.

I wish I could inspire thousands of inactive Saints to return to activity. I know I have helped hundreds to return. Those who are most troubled are the ones who the church can use right now. Those who keenly sense that all is not well with Zion are the ones who need to be filling the pews. Until they fill the pews they won't be filling the leadership positions. And until they fill the leadership positions, there won't be any changes made to the course we are on at present.

If you love Zion and want her redemption, then serve her cause. Faithfully serve her cause. Don't sever yourself from her.

There is no question the Lord will hold accountable those who are in leadership positions for every word, every thought, and every deed (Alma 12:14). They aren't spared. This is why we should pray for them, uphold them, and do what we can to relieve them of the terrible burdens and consequences of being accountable for their callings (D&C 107:22).

When you withdraw from the church you cut yourself off from necessary ordinances, including the sacrament. You imperil your capacity to keep the Sabbath day holy. You limit your capacity to serve others. Even a bad lesson makes you consider what the teacher and manual is ignoring, misstating or mangling. You needn't be argumentative or unpleasant. But by being there you have a time to reflect upon the subject being addressed by the class and to contemplate what that subject means to you. Use it meditatively and gratefully. It is a gift. If you see more clearly than others, then thank the Lord for that and stop being impatient with your fellow Saint.

You are a gift to the church. Your talents and your abilities belong to and were intended to be a part of the church. Serve there. Patiently and kindly. You needn't start an argument in every class to make a difference. Quietly going about serving and occasionally providing a carefully chosen insight is important and will garner you far more blessings than withdrawing and letting your light grow dim.

We're all in this together. This is our dispensation. You are responsible for helping it be preserved and passed along to the rising generation. Do not grow weary in this fight. We share a

common enemy, and **it is not** the leadership of the church. It is the one who stirs people up to anger (2 Ne. 28:20).

I'd like to open people's eyes only so as to permit them to save their own souls and those of others. I would never want anyone to walk away from the church as a result of seeing its weaknesses. Be wise, but harmless (Matt. 10:16). Be patient with anyone's shortcomings, no matter whether they serve in the nursery or in the presidency of an organization.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · MAY 24, 2010 AT 11:11 AM

Just to put some of your comment in perspective, I need to say this: when you attend and continue to be constructive and faithful—and you are effectively shunned—well, it's hard to remain. Those people you mention, who are steadfast, strong but who recognize the perils that are increasing in the church are generally NOT called to any positions of authority. Those who say, "All is well in Zion" are called increasingly.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 24, 2010 AT 4:51 PM

No, no, no, no, no. That's not right. IF enough of those who have voted with their feet returned, and they filled the pews, it WOULD change. You add another 30% to 50% back in and they will outnumber the 30% who are there pretending to be content. You get the majority of those who are active in the church there, attending and speaking up and you will change the church in a fundamental way. I'm saying this is the cure to what ails the church itself. Then you'd have to call a different breed of leader to cope with the pews filled with people who know Zion is in disarray and that there are pretensions and foolishness going on. Imagine a Gospel Doctrine class with such a group in it! Imagine F&T! Glorious.

Anonymous · MAY 24, 2010 AT 8:12 PM

DS: I'm hearing you preach publicly... would like to hear you speak plainly. If you have spent enough time with HIM, you will know that our org stopped listening intently to the Lord back when we decided to

can His marriage system HE restored, the new and everlasting covenant of marriage in full.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 24, 2010 AT 9:05 PM

I've already addressed this in *Beloved Enos*. Not going to repeat it here.

Ben · MAY 24, 2010 AT 9:35 PM

If the reference to *Beloved Enos* was in response to my question, thanks for the pointer. I've just put the order in.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 25, 2010 AT 6:12 AM

No, Ben, it was in response to those who want to continue to have plural marriage. I've spent some time explaining why they are in error in *Beloved Enos*, and am not going to take the subject up again here.

I was planning on addressing your question in another post. But it will come up in a few days, because my wife already has some stuff coming up first planned.

Anonymous · MAY 25, 2010 AT 7:01 AM

I'm so tired of men pining away for polygamy to return, pretending they want to live a higher law cuz they're so awesome. Oh, I know, their wives want help with the dishes, too... everyone's on board. I know, it's all about caving in to the world... it's just no fair I have to live in 2010... I just want to be more righteous than I already am... I don't want to be lumped with the rejectors in the next life, I'll do it right now!!! whine whine whine....

Denver Snuffer · MAY 25, 2010 AT 7:38 AM

Amen, Sister!

Denver Snuffer · MAY 25, 2010 AT 1:00 PM

Anonymous: Amen, Sister!

No. This was not posted by sister snuffer. This was posted by DS himself. If and when I post a comment it will say . . .

Posted by the CM (or goddess)

Anonymous · MAY 25, 2010 AT 10:56 PM

You did enter it... in part. According to our previous prophets. Of course it needs to be actually sealed by the Godhead for that sealing to be effective in and after the resurrection. Our sealings are a promise that one day based upon our faithfulness, we are both sealed up to eternal life with each other. You also covenanted to live all the laws of the restored gospel and to build up Zion on the earth. You call a celestial order lived by the Gods, and restored to this very church early on... a dead horse? Also, you probably should study all of the revelations given to John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff during the 1880's, and search for the BYU professor's research on the 220+ plural marriages that were authorized by the Presidency and Apostles after the 1890 manifesto/press release (not even called a revelation and doesn't even mention the Lord in it and just says to not do PM's within the USA). Much of our factual history has been swept under the rug. Seek and ye will find. I started my research and quest for truth to find out why we lived the celestial law of marriage in full then, and why we don't now. I have been shown why... and this very blog of Denver's is more proof. We are not the celestial people that we think we are. We have not the love of the truth to even understand it or receive anything new, let alone pray to one day live what has already been restored. And I do mean all of the celestial orders and principles we were taught during the 1800's and in our scriptures that we do not care to return to. I am not advocating living it right now. I am just helping others realize the truth, and the blessings that would come... that are predicated based upon our love and obedience to the celestial laws that our Gods live.

Another poster above is also right... finding one good wife is hard enough in today's world... let alone a few. Even harder would be to find a worthy man who 7 or so women would want to be part of His kingdom. Yes, these things are reserved for a pure and holy people... wish we were such.

After the tribulation and redemption of Zion, thanks to angels coming to set us back in full celestial order, at least those who will...

these things will be had again. I will always defend the truth, even if I stand alone in it... even if the hard hearts in today's modern church don't care to understand or love the truth of these celestial laws we seek to forget or are embarrassed by. I preach the truth as I obtain it from our prophets who communed with the heavens. It is up to our church membership and leadership to seek it, love it, then go back to live the things already given us, things we have neglected or discarded. Or we can wait for the cleansing effect of tribulation and the fury of the Lord to turn us around, which more than likely will be necessary.

I'm just here to help others dig in and learn historical facts and the history of God's dealings with the priesthood for 6,000 yrs. You'd think we'd get it after so long... :)

Denver Snuffer · MAY 26, 2010 AT 6:06 AM

I've read all of it. Met with plural marriage advocates. Written about the subject (if you'd read what I'd written already you would know this). I am completely confident that the obligation to live plural marriage and the keys to do so are not available to volunteers or interlopers today. No one is authorized to undertake a practice, engage in conduct or strike out on their own, for now. The Lord's House is a house of order.

MAY 24, 2010

Blood Crying for Vengeance

I was asked about blood crying for vengeance from the ground. The question was how this reconciled with charity or forgiveness.

Blood "crying from the ground" is not the same thing as a person crying out for vengeance. Keep the context in mind: It is the blood which was shed upon the earth which cries out for vengeance or fairness or retribution. Something unfair has occurred, and the cry of the blood "upon the ground" is a reminder of the injustice of it all.

The ground is a reference to the earth, which has a spirit, intelligence, and is able to communicate if a person were capable

of listening. It is a female spirit, and she regards herself as “the mother of men.” This earth is offended when the men who are upon her kill one another or engage in any form of wickedness upon her surface. Below is her lament as she beheld the disorder and murder caused by that generation upon whom the flood was unleashed:

And it came to pass that Enoch looked upon the earth; and he heard a voice from the bowels thereof, saying: Wo, wo is me, the mother of men; I am pained, I am weary, because of the wickedness of my children. When shall I rest, and be cleansed from the filthiness which is gone forth out of me? When will my Creator sanctify me, that I may rest, and righteousness for a season abide upon my face? (Moses 7:48)

Even if the person whose blood was shed departed this earth forgiving those who made offense against him, yet would “the ground” cry out for vengeance because the earth has become filthy by reason of the killing which took place upon her. She, as the “mother of men,” regards the killing of men upon her as an abomination. She cries out. She is offended. She wants righteousness to appear on her, as has happened before. She longs that it be brought about again. When, instead of Zion, she has the murder of men upon her face, it is so great a lamentation by her spirit that “the ground cries out for vengeance” because of the atrocity.

MAY 25, 2010

Just a Reminder—posted by the comment moderator (goddess)

The content of this blog presumes you are already familiar with Denver Snuffer’s books. Careful explanations given in the books

lay the foundation for what is contained here. If you read this blog without having first read his books, then you assume responsibility for your own misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the writer's intent. Please do not presume to judge Mr. Snuffer's intentions **from a single blog post** if you have not first read his books. His ideas and beliefs are not fully laid out in a four paragraph post on a blog.

MAY 25, 2010

Men's Hearts Will Fail Them

Luke records Christ's first public sermon that occurred after His baptism, temptation, wedding and commencement of the public ministry. He read from Isaiah about the commission He had received from God to preach (Luke 4:17-19). After reading the verses, He proclaimed that **He** was the fulfillment of those verses (Luke 4:20-21).

He expounded on the verses adding that not only were they fulfilled, but He pressed on to explain how He would fulfill them in comments that were unrecorded. However, those who heard could not help but be persuaded at His gracious words (Luke 4:22).

He moved from these verses in Isaiah to add His own prophecy about what they would eventually do to Him. You will tell me: "Physician, heal thyself," He added (Luke 4:23). He will be asked by them to do miracles among them as He will do in Capernaum, but they will not be given such a witness. He explains that not all of a prophet's works will be put to display before all people. That some will see Him, but only have the testimony of others to learn of His works (Luke 4:24-27).

They were indignant at His comments. It filled them with wrath. They thought they should be given the same signs, the same proof, of His claim to Messiahship as He would put before others (Luke 4:28–29). However, He explained to them that He would be without honor among those closest to Him. (Luke 4:24.)

The attempt of the congregation to kill Him failed. He departed and went among more believing people, who heard Him speak with power from heaven (Luke 4:30–32).

What an interesting commencement of His public ministry. Telling the truth among those unprepared to welcome Him did them no good, persuaded no-one of the truth, and resulted in His forced departure.

What can be said of those who would cast out of their congregation He who was greater than them all? They thought they were making a bold statement about their fidelity to their religious traditions, and holding fast to the truth. Instead, they were cutting themselves off from the lifeline sent to save them.

Irony is not a strong enough word to describe this singular scene. It would be repeated throughout Christ's ministry among the hierarchy and leadership of His day, ultimately culminating in His death at their hands. These were the only people who would kill their God (2 Ne. 10:3). They were devout. They were misinformed. They were very religious, but entirely mistaken.

What happened on that first day of teaching was a microcosm of His entire ministry. It is often the case that those who regard themselves as the “most religious” and “most correct” are capable of missing the truth sent to them by the Lord. They prefer the Lord package the truth in one way, coupled with a written guarantee that the package will never fail them, while the Lord

is always sending it in another, and requiring them to receive it when only their hearts can guide them into recognizing it. It is little wonder, then, that our day is when “men’s hearts will fail them” because they fear, and trust not the things sent to them (Luke 21:26).

MAY 25, 2010

Broken Souls

I’m hoping to solve Ben’s perplexity (raised in a recent comment), and give all those who come here something to reflect on at the same time.

There are those who are kept from active church attendance because they have read something about history or doctrine which has alarmed and/or discouraged them. There are those who, because of their circumstances, are embarrassed to come to church. There are those who are poor and ashamed, or they are living with the heavy burden of sin and choose to stay away from our meetings. Perhaps they suffer from depression or anxiety, have addictions and feel unclean and unworthy.

I have home taught or spent time with people with all of these issues, concerns and experiences, and more. They stay away because they do not feel welcome among us. Many feel judged, some feel like they just can’t abide hypocrisy, some are hurting and the church makes their hurt worse.

From the time I joined the church until today, I look for these people. I volunteer to go and visit with them in every ward I have attended, in every stake where I have served, and across the Mission when missionaries have asked me to come help teach. I was honored just a few days ago to meet with a man and his wife who are inactive, but who have a towering understanding of the

church, gospel, its history, the scriptures and doctrine. They have figured out a great deal more than either their bishop or stake president. As a result, I think the local church authorities are somewhat intimidated by their understanding, and the leaders cannot answer their questions. It was, for me, a joyful visit and I hope to return again and talk with this wonderful Latter-day Saint couple soon.

I have met with people whose son committed suicide while attending a church-owned university because he was so lonely and isolated that his last desperate act was intended to end his life and rebuke those who had dismissed his pain. I loved these people who spoke with me about their son's life and death. They possessed a sensitivity to the feelings of others which can only be purchased at the price of enduring great personal pain.

I have close friends who struggle with addictions. Some of these people struggle with things so haunting, so terrible a force in their lives that rising each day to face the coming fight takes greater courage than I can even imagine. They are acting in faith at every waking breath, as they fight against a foe I do not comprehend and could not face.

I have helped women whose husbands are esteemed as church leaders, but the husbands' private actions are hellish and abusive. Women who have nowhere to turn, because their husband is the leader with jurisdiction over them. No one will believe them because their "righteous" husband says they have mental or emotional illnesses. These women somehow manage to continue to serve their children and remain steadfast despite the hell they find themselves in.

It is not possible to set out all the different ways wherein the men and women I have met struggle. It is a great privilege to

know these people. People whose insight into life and difficulties is far greater than I can begin to comprehend. People whose strength is not even recognized, because others are too busy dismissing, belittling or judging them as “a thing of naught” (2 Ne. 28:16).

I have marveled at how very much these broken souls, these discouraged people, these victims of our judgments who we have discarded or neglected are the very ones with whom I feel the Lord’s presence and love as I have the honor of meeting and talking with them about the Gospel. These are the ones He loves the most. These are the ones with whom He associated during His ministry. He associates there, still.

We have driven many of them away from activity in the church because of how *we* behave. In turn, the Spirit does not dwell with many of the “righteous” and proud active Latter-day Saints because hearts have not been broken nor spirits made contrite. We are made to think God favors us because we have worldly successes. We prosper. It is the successful, the financially well-to-do, the educated, the bank president, the lawyer and doctor whom we hold up as the model of a true Saint. Read the resumes of those who are called to lead the stakes and missions of the church in each week’s Church News. We draw from a very narrow social gene-pool to find those who serve. They come from among those who have the financial resources in place to spare the time it takes to serve. In the process we get a ‘Gospel of Success’ mentality, right out of one segment of the Evangelical movement.

I am NOT saying that nothing good can come from the Stanford Business School. I am NOT saying bankers are damned (though they are in truth damnable). I am not talking about them. I am talking instead about those broken souls whom I know the

Lord loves, but who are not among us because of our own pride and haughty attitudes.

If we were to flood the wards of Zion with those whose hearts are broken, who mourn because of issues that weigh heavy upon them, and who feel that there is nothing in the church for them, but who look to Christ to lift them from their torment, we would be enriched by their homecoming. In much the same way as the Prodigal was worthy of a feast, but the resentful but faithful son who stayed behind was not, so also are the riches of eternity reserved for the poor, downtrodden and broken hearted.

We are the poorer because of their absence. Our wards are not informed by hearing of their dilemmas and struggles. We are not what we could be if we were to make such people welcome—throwing our arms open to greet them. We do not hear their struggle to keep a testimony after learning about some serious failing of a past leader. We are not informed, as we should be, in our meetings and discussions.

This is a lamentation, and not an explanation. This is not the fullness of the subject, but merely a hint of what I know displeases the Lord about us. It is not my responsibility to define fully the Lord's displeasure with us at the moment. I can, however, assure you He is not pleased. Some of what we think ourselves best for doing is not what He would want us to take pride in. Our Lord's heart is broken still. His ways are higher than ours because He values the least more than do we.

I cannot say more. But I am left amazed at the hardness of the hearts of this generation who claim they are the Lord's. Many, many will be told by Him to depart from His presence at the time of Judgment because they never knew Him. They speak today in His name, yet they know Him not. It would be better

for them to not speak at all, than to toss about His name as the author of foolish, vain, proud and evil notions while claiming He agrees with such things.

MAY 25, 2010

Why the Occasional Reminder (and she will probably do it again)

I can see my wife put up another reminder (blog post - “Just a reminder” —posted by the comment moderator (goddess) - May 25, 2010) about the stuff I’ve written previously. I can tell you why she did that.

Some folks presume that a brief post contains all of an idea that I have spent many pages setting out a full explanation for elsewhere. They comment, challenge, criticize or contradict in a reply comment as if the whole of what I have to say about some topic is contained in the briefest of posts. It is apparent that if the person had read what I’ve written elsewhere they wouldn’t be making the comment they make here.

An example is the plural marriage notion. I’ve spent pages and given both history and scripture to explain what my explanation is for the position I take in the book, *Beloved Enos*. There are persons who are obsessed with the whole plural marriage subject, and very well may be practicing plural marriage. My comments and views probably threaten them, because I do not believe it appropriate to practice plural marriage now that it has been banned by both the law of Utah, law of the United States, confirmed by the United States to be prohibited, and abandoned by the church as a practice.

The keys which allowed the practice are addressed at length in *Beloved Enos*, and it would be too long a discussion to take

the subject up here. I anticipated that there would be those who practice plural marriage who would read what I have to say, and so I addressed their concerns in that book. So when they want to have a discussion about the topic, this isn't the forum for that. I've written my understanding before and it becomes apparent that the person(s) replying do not understand my position because they haven't read it.

I think my wife as Moderator gets somewhat exasperated with these comments, because they are something which she necessarily has to read before putting up and seem so contrary to the intent of doing this blog. I get vicariously frustrated as well as we discuss it.

I worry that some very good folks, with great comments, are thinking that their comments are not welcomed. That isn't true, of course. What is true is that it is unfair and inaccurate to reach a conclusion about what I think or understand based upon the briefest of comments made on this blog. The comments would need to be read in light of lengthy explanations provided elsewhere and fit into the context of what I've already explained, before it is fair to react as if you understand my position. Some of you have taken the trouble to read what I've written and do understand a comment made here. Some clearly have not. Everyone is welcome to put a comment up in response to a post, but I'm not going to respond to all of them when the explanation is already provided elsewhere.

I hope that clarifies again the reasons behind the periodic reminders put up here.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · MAY 26, 2010 AT 12:05 PM

Denver,

Please explain what you mean by “Keys to Practice Plural Marriage”, I don’t understand.

Do you mean the keys to practice “celestial marriage”? (which I would define as being plural marriage with the promise of an eternal sealing between partners and sanctioned by the Lord).

Seems to me like “plural marriage” is simply a lifestyle choice that consenting adults decide to live. Are you saying that you believe that by making that choice the adults are inherently living incorrectly or are they living incorrectly only because the action is currently disallowed by the laws of this land? If you agree with that then would you say that if plural marriage were to become de-criminalized that you would see no problem in choosing to live that lifestyle?

I know this question is almost perfectly what you said in the post you are not interested in discussing but I think getting your viewpoint on it might actually work to slow down the number of comments that others send you, not increase the number.

By the way, I am not a practicing polygamist and I am a current active member of the church.

T.N.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 26, 2010 AT 7:26 PM

Keys to seal multiple wives with the Lord’s approval. They aren’t in use today.

Should they decriminalize bigamy (which is probably inevitable at some point) and people decide to have multiple spouses, that would still not be the same thing as a celestial marriage, no matter who and how they arranged their relationship.

CHAPTER 4

A Message of Warning

MAY 26, 2010

A Message of Warning

The Jews thought themselves favored of God. They trusted that the land they occupied had been promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They were the descendants of these patriarchs. The land had been promised to them. They had the priesthood, the temple, God's promise and a true religion. They knew nothing could molest their peace.

The Lord commissioned Zechariah to deliver this warning to them:

Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord

of hosts. Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts: But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate. (Zech. 7:9-14)

We can look at the Jews to whom this prophecy was delivered and see with clarity how they failed. We can see through their false presumptions, foolish beliefs and evil ways. We know how to correctly weigh them in the balance.

Imagine, however, if you lived among those people and shared their false presumptions. Imagine that you believed, as they did, that they were chosen, promised that nothing would molest them. Imagine you possessed a temple of God, true priesthood, and descended from prophets. How would you react when a prophet came among you crying that you were wicked, oppressed the poor, the fatherless and the stranger? Wouldn't you think Zechariah was wrong while all of you were right? How can a message from a single person hold an entire nation of people accountable for how they respond?

I suspect it wouldn't be any easier for us to see our plight as it was for the Jews to see theirs. I suspect our own harsh assessment of the failure of the Jews will be the very standard against which we will be measured in how we react to truth when it is declared among us. I doubt we can distinguish between truth and error any better than they did. But we pride ourselves on condemning them, and justifying ourselves.

The irony in all this is so thick you can hardly move.

How grateful I am to live at a time when there are messages received again from the Lord which can lead us to salvation,

despite earth and hell, false messengers and fools, pretenders and charlatans. Yet will the Lord keep His promise that before He does anything, He will commission a message of warning. (Amos 3:7.)

MAY 27, 2010

The Arm of Flesh

When the church commissions an opinion poll and then, as a result of that poll, concludes that some program or position is popular, or would be accepted by the Saints without complaint—and then adopt that position in a public statement—has a “revelation” been received? I do not think so. I think an opinion has been obtained, and a policy or statement has been adopted. Therefore, I do not think there is one thing wrong with disagreeing with the policy or statement.

When the church endorses something or some position, I do not think it is right to simply “fall in line” behind the statement without also thinking the same issue through and reaching my own conclusion. The first question I ask myself is what the statement is, and does it imply a revelation from the Lord.

I can think of two examples. One was a public announcement that was heralded in the press. The other was the subject of a letter from the First Presidency read in sacrament meetings.

The public announcement was regarding the housing and employment of homosexuals in Salt Lake City, using the force of government sanction to prevent an employer or owner of property from refusing to grant equal access or rights to homosexuals. I’ve previously commented here in a critical way about that announcement. This is an example of how I view things.

Since the church's position on the matter had absolutely nothing to do with revelation, and the church did not make any attempt to claim the position came through revelation, I do not believe it is immune from question or criticism. Indeed, the defense of the policy to the press involved a public relations/opinion poll driven justification. It was expected to "resonate on the basis of fairness" with all those in the middle, and only offend those at the two ends of the spectrum. This is opinion gathering to inform a position, then announcing the position because of the results of opinion gathering. It is what a politician or a marketing firm would do. It is not at all akin to a revelation, and should not command my respect. I am under no obligation to alter my view based on what the church's opinion gathering has concluded. If that were the case, then the church's ability to control everyone's thinking would be based only upon prevailing opinion at the moment. This is the "tossed about by every wind" concern which Paul addressed in one of his letters (Eph. 4:14.) Shifting opinion is not revelation. I am free to point it out, disagree with it, and explain my contrary view.

Another example is the letter from the First Presidency asking speakers in sacrament meetings to no longer ask those in attendance to open their scriptures. No explanation was provided in the letter. It was just an instruction to the Saints to no longer let sacrament meeting speakers tell those in the meeting to open their scriptures and read along. Perhaps it was as a result of someone being irritated by the noise of rustling scriptures. Perhaps it was someone with a hearing aid, whose aid frequency was tuned to pick up the rustling so well that it drowned out the rest of the speaker's voice. Perhaps it was because the meeting got delayed and disrupted by the folks struggling to find their scriptures, and

open them up to the relevant page. I can't say for certain. But I did raise my eyebrows when the letter was read in advance to the High Council.

My candid reaction to that letter was that it diminished the office of those who signed the letter by the petty micro-managing of opening the scriptures during a sacrament gathering. I wondered in amazement that someone in the Church Office Building got the First Presidency to sign such a letter. I wondered at how, with all that threatens us today, opening scriptures in order to read along in sacrament meetings managed to become so important that the First Presidency would write and send a letter worldwide to be read in the stakes and wards. It was perplexity on stilts.

Beyond that my approach has been twofold: First, I have NEVER asked anyone to open their scriptures in a sacrament meeting since then. However, I have said in talks during sacrament that "I cannot ask you to open your scriptures and read along" in order to call attention to the policy. I have also said, when teaching outside of sacrament meetings, that I was free to ask them to read along in their scriptures "because we are not in a sacrament meeting." I do this to call attention to the policy. I think to call attention to it is to cause people to wonder at the pettiness and inconsequential nature of a letter from the First Presidency addressing the opening of scriptures in sacrament meeting.

These are just two examples. There are many. As I have said before, I pay very close attention to the church, what is said and done, and how relevant or irrelevant some position, letter, emphasis or program is in an absolute sense. I try to take it all in and reach my own conclusions. Looking at it all, I am quite

concerned. Faithful, tithing paying and active, nevertheless quite concerned.

I believe if enough people were similarly concerned that eventually the “opinion polling” might obtain reasonable results. That is, the top would hear about reasonable concerns and learn of reasonable opinions, and then promulgate policies and send out statements accordingly. That, however, will require a great effort to call attention to the things that matter most, and clarity in pointing out the things that do not matter at all. We fret over trifles while things are burning down all around us. I wonder how long it will take for the polling to inform the Saints of the fire burning around them.

COMMENTS:

DKD · MAY 27, 2010 AT 11:29 AM

I was in a bishopric meeting when the letter from the FP (about scriptures) was read. Our thoughts/opinions at the time were that the intent was to help improve the spirit of our meeting.... and not distract from the spirit.

DKD · MAY 27, 2010 AT 2:00 PM

Perhaps we should re-read the letter?

DKD · MAY 27, 2010 AT 2:09 PM

“In order to maintain an atmosphere of reverent worship in our sacrament and stake conference meetings, when speakers use scriptures as part of their talks they should not ask the congregation to open their own books to the scriptural reference. Also, members should not use visual aids and their sacrament meeting or stake conference talks. Such teaching methods are more effective in classroom settings and leadership meetings.

“We believe these adjustments will enhance the spirit of our worship services.”

Denver Snuffer · MAY 27, 2010 AT 3:33 PM

Thanks, DKD. I have the same reaction. It strikes me that opening the word of God up could not possibly detract from the Spirit of Truth. Though, perhaps, it may detract from the “spirit of our worship services” which I do agree may be disrupted by the intervention of the scriptures being opened.

It continues to amaze me that the letter was sent.

DKD · MAY 27, 2010 AT 3:43 PM

Denver.... I too was a little puzzled at the letter when the bishop read it.... there were a few raised eyebrows in our meeting too. :)

MAY 27, 2010

O That I Had Repented

National debt is nearly the entire annual gross domestic product.

The banking crisis in Europe is threatening to spread, and the US has committed billions to help prop up the imbalanced European socialist-democracies.

The money supply is shrinking at a rate comparable only to the years leading into the Great Depression. I am reminded of the Nephites when they were denounced with these words:

O ye wicked and ye perverse generation; ye hardened and ye stiffnecked people, how long will ye suppose that the Lord will suffer you? Yea, how long will ye suffer yourselves to be led by foolish and blind guides? Yea, how long will ye choose darkness rather than light? Yea, behold, the anger of the Lord is already kindled against you; behold, he hath cursed the land because of your iniquity. And behold, the time cometh that he curseth your riches, that they become slippery, that ye cannot hold them; and in the days of your poverty ye cannot retain them. (Hel. 13:29–31)

As our own riches become “slippery” so that we cannot hold onto them, I think we get a taste of what the Nephites were allowed to experience because they could not distinguish between those who taught the truth and those who merely led them about while blind.

The prophecy continued with these additional words of wise, and still relevant counsel:

And in the days of your poverty ye shall cry unto the Lord; and in vain shall ye cry, for your desolation is already come upon you, and your destruction is made sure; and then shall ye weep and howl in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts. And then shall ye lament, and say: O that I had repented, and had not killed the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out. Yea, in that day ye shall say: O that we had remembered the Lord our God in the day that he gave us our riches, and then they would not have become slippery that we should lose them; for behold, our riches are gone from us. Behold, we lay a tool here and on the morrow it is gone; and behold, our swords are taken from us in the day we have sought them for battle. Yea, we have hid up our treasures and they have slipped away from us, because of the curse of the land. O that we had repented in the day that the word of the Lord came unto us; for behold the land is cursed, and all things are become slippery, and we cannot hold them. Behold, we are surrounded by demons, yea, we are encircled about by the angels of him who hath sought to destroy our souls. Behold, our iniquities are great. O Lord, canst thou not turn away thine anger from us? And this shall be your language in those days. But behold, your days of probation are past; ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation until it is everlastingly

too late, and your destruction is made sure; yea, for ye have sought all the days of your lives for that which ye could not obtain; and ye have sought for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head. O ye people of the land, that ye would hear my words! (Hel. 13:32–39)

As always, the Book of Mormon remains the keystone of our religion. A person can get closer to God by abiding its precepts than through any other book.

I don't think Joseph Smith wrote it. I think he translated it. I think it contains wisdom from an earlier, failed civilization that once inhabited this land. I think their lessons should not be forgotten by us. Because when we fail to learn them by precept, then we get to learn them by experience. And some of their experiences were quite difficult.

MAY 28, 2010

Catch, Hold or Cling

There are two different words used by Nephi regarding contact with the “iron rod” or word of God. Joseph Smith translated the two words as “cling” or “clinging” for one, and “hold” or “holding” as the other.

The different word use raises the question of meaning. If they meant identical things, then the same word would have been translated. Therefore, there must be a reason for the different words.

Below are examples of the different words in the context of the record:

1 Ne. 8:24, 30:

²⁴ And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught **hold** of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, **clinging** to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree.

. . .

³⁰ But, to be short in writing, behold, he saw other multitudes pressing forward; and they came and caught **hold** of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press their way forward, continually **holding** fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree.

Some catch hold, then cling. Some hold, then hold fast.

So the question becomes why the different description. Both of these different approaches result in the persons reaching the destination, then partaking of the fruit. But they are situated differently as they move along the process. Some are “clinging” and some are “holding” as they move toward their destination.

To “cling” implies something frantic, something charged with emotion, and something more desperate than to “hold.” “Holding” seems calm, thoughtfully committed and more methodical than does “clinging.” From this, I conclude that there are at least two kinds of people who will make their way to partake of the fruit of the tree of life in this world.

For one group, the process is unnerving, fearful and emotionally wrenching. They cling on despite earth and hell. They fight to retain their grip, and they make heroic efforts in the opposition they face. They cling because they cannot relent, cannot relax, and know they face peril as they live their lives daily. For them

their hopes are kept despite all their fears. They cling because they desire more than the opposition can deter them.

For another group, the process is less emotional, but nonetheless filled with determination. They are not as charged with fear, but face what comes to them calmly and with the assurance that the Lord's word is in their hands and will be a refuge that will bring them to eternal life.

I think there is another, more likely possibility, as well. There is not two groups, but only one. From time to time everyone faces moments of difficulty. The only way to stay with the rod is to cling. Then the seasons change, the storm relents, and calm returns. During those times when life improves, the person can continue to hold and move forward, but they have purchased the season of calm by the things they have endured in faith. Now they know it is only necessary to hold on, and all things will come to them.

I do not know of a life that gets lived without challenge, difficulty and seasons of despair. I believe all of us will at times be required to cling, and at others have the ability to hold the course. Whether it is the one season or the other, however, at the end of the journey you will lay hold on eternal life. Press on.

MAY 28, 2010

I Am the Lord That Smiteth

The people among whom Ezekiel lived were filled with sin; public and private. The prophet was inspired to deliver a serious warning to them inasmuch as they could not learn by being taught correct precepts, but only by harsh judgment. His warning included this statement:

The morning is come unto thee, O thou that dwellest in the land: the time is come, the day of trouble is near, and not the sounding again of the mountains. Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee: and I will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense thee for all thine abominations. And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the Lord that smiteth. (Eze. 7:7–9)

I had a few thoughts about why and how such “judgments” could be easily be poured out upon us, as well.

From drug abuse to carnality, we are less civil and more dangerous as a population each year. If you would like to see the Lord “pour out [His] fury upon [us]” you only need to shut off the electrical power in Detroit or Los Angeles at night. We are filled with the savagery that will bring about our own punishment. When the electrical grid fails in larger metropolitan areas of the United States, it will be Americans killing Americans, without any need for an invasion by an enemy. God will not need to send a plague upon us. We become our own plague because of our wickedness.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, when the New Orleans Police Department was unable to keep order, and the National Guard had not arrived yet, there were days filled with violence, rape and murder. It did not take anything more than a brief lack of police authority before the population was plagued with criminal misconduct, violence and killing.

What more fitting a way to “judge thee according to thy ways?” What more apt a manner for “recompensing thee for all

thine abominations?” It is our own choice to become our own undoing. Amazing, really.

Are our sins any less than that generation to whom Ezekiel spoke? Americans have killed 40 million unborn (innocent) children. Hitler, the great genocidal monster of the last century, only killed 6 million in his perversity. We have selected the most innocent, and ended 40 million of their lives. As Christ put it: Truly we deserve a millstone hung around our necks and to be drowned in the depth of the sea for this wanton shedding of innocent blood (Matt. 18:6).

This great perversity is what we call a “right to choose,” thereby clothing an atrocity in the words of virtue. We call evil good and good evil, and never take time to notice we fulfill prophecy as we do so (2 Ne. 15:20, using Isaiah 5:20 to describe us and our time). Freedom of choice, right to choose, tolerance, diversity, open and free are all words implying virtue. They justify suppression of truth, sexual misconduct, killing innocent unborn and curtailing freedom of thought and expression. We are hardly able to recognize good from evil, because everything destructive or debasing, advocated by those addicted to a perversity, is called by them good. And any who oppose these abuses are called evil, intolerant, oppressive, haters and ignorant.

It should not surprise any of us if the Lord should shortly pour out His judgments upon us. All it would take is a prolonged failure of the power grid and we would unleash on ourselves our own direful judgments.

MAY 29, 2010

Personal Revelation

On the 13th of November, 1835, Joseph was instructing, and made the following comment (which has been often repeated:

“[I]f God gives you a manifestation, keep it to yourselves” (*JS Papers; Journals* Vol. 1, p. 98).

This statement has been quoted as a basis to support the position that any person’s revelation should NEVER be shared with another person; other than of course a revelation given to the church president. The statement needs to be understood, however, in light of later statements recorded by Joseph in the same volume of the *JS Papers*.

On page 170 Joseph recorded that “angels ministered unto them, as well as myself.” A little further down on the same page: “My scribe...saw in a vision the armies of heaven protecting the Saints in their return to Zion.” Still on the same page:

The vision of heaven was opened to these also, some of them saw the face of the Savior; and others were ministered unto by holy angels, and the spirit of prophesy and revelation was poured out in mighty power.

On page 171 Joseph recorded that those who were present “spent the time in rehearsing to each other the glorious scenes that transpired on the preceding evening, while attending to the ordinance of the holy anointing.”

On page 174 Joseph recorded that his brother, William, “saw the heavens opened and the Lord’s host protecting the Lord’s anointed.”

On page 182 Joseph recorded that Zebedee Coltrin “saw a vision of the Lord’s House—and others were filled with the spirit

and spake in tongues and prophesied.” Later on that same page, in footnote 361, this is included: “Oliver Cowdery also recorded that ‘many saw visions, many prophesied, and many spake in tongues.’” citing to Oliver’s Diary for 6 Feb. 1836.

It is apparent that Joseph’s comment did not result in these early Saints not speaking of the manifestations they received. Nor did Joseph exhibit any disapproval or concern about hearing of others speaking of their spiritual manifestations. His comment, therefore, needs to be understood in the context of the overall manner in which spiritual experiences were experienced and shared among the early church, even within a couple of months of the statement used to justify criticism of any person saying anything about any manifestation they received.

Oddly, I do not think anyone should share anything with anyone else unless the Lord, who gives manifestations, directs. When He does, then I think objections are made at the peril of disrespecting the Lord’s command (See e.g., Alma 8:25; 3 Ne. 23:9—where the Lord required some of what Samuel had said to be added to their scriptures which the Nephites had neglected to record).

COMMENTS:

Russ · MAY 29, 2010 AT 3:29 PM

Knowing how busy you must be, I try to limit my questions (and am appreciative of the ones you answer). That said, I have a question for you.

You have mentioned having a scale of how important things are and that sometimes you move things from one place to another on that scale. Some things are essential to our exaltation while others are not. Could you give us an idea of the things you feel are of the utmost importance as far as our exaltation is concerned? Obviously we should know most of these things, but I’d like to hear your thoughts on this matter.

db schroeder · MAY 29, 2010 AT 3:32 PM

This comment has been removed by a blog administrator.

Denver Snuffer · May 29, 2010 at 4:30 PM

DK: Thanks for pointing out the typo. It's been corrected.

Russ:

1. Faith
2. Repentance
3. Baptism
4. Gift of the Holy Ghost
5. Second Comforter which then leads to:
6. Fullness of Gospel

ldsanarchy · MAY 30, 2010 AT 12:29 AM

“Oddly, I do not think anyone should share anything with anyone else unless the Lord, who gives manifestations, directs.”

My understanding and experience is just the opposite. Whatever the Lord tells us can be freely shared with anyone (Matt. 10:8), unless He commands us otherwise (Alma 12:9). Without a command to withhold information, the Lord leaves it up to us to decide whether it is wisdom to share or not. There are other times, though, in which information is communicated to us and we are commanded to share it.

I have had experiences in the latter (being commanded to share) and in the first (it being my decision whether or not to impart the information), but never have I been put under a commandment not to share, except as it pertains to the things of the temple.

Personally, I wouldn't give advice to people not to share what the Lord has told them if they haven't been told by Him to keep their mouths shut. Each person on their own can make the determination of the wisdom of sharing, based upon their own, personal situation. A general rule, such as the one you recommend, if followed, may actually work against the work of the Lord. These days are, after all, those in which sons and daughters are supposed to be prophesying, etc. (Joel 2:28).

LDS Anarchist

Denver Snuffer · MAY 30, 2010 AT 8:33 AM

LDS Anarchist (a name I like, by the way), the line I draw relates to what someone has received. Once they have crossed a point involving things which are “most sacred” (as I define in *Beloved Enos*) then the rule I suggest is appropriate. Bearing testimony about truths learned for the most part would be appropriate as you suggest.

MAY 29, 2010

Answers to Prayers

I was asked why it seems there are seasons when a person can't get an answer from God. Even when they have previously had wonderful contact, revelation, insights and blessings, there are times when nothing is coming from God. It appears to be unrelated to faithfulness or activity. Why, then, does God remain silent from time to time?

There are multiple reasons why this happens. It is unrelated to God's love for the person.

The first and most common reason I have discovered is that you are already in possession of the answer. It was given to you by God and you have it, but you don't recognize it. It would be better to stop asking for an answer and instead ask to be able to see what you have already been given.

The second reason is that you need to struggle and make your own decision first, then to petition to know if the decision is right. It is not always appropriate to defer all decisions to the Lord. You must develop the capacity to make sound decisions on your own. The Lord will, of course, ratify the correct decision and warn you about the wrong one. But you need to develop the ability to decide first (D&C 9:7-9).

Another reason, and perhaps the least common, is that the Lord knows that in your struggle you will eventually reach the correct decision. He must let you proceed on your own because the process is important. Even Abraham endured this process (Abr. 2:21). After he made the decision and traveled to the border, just prior to his entry into Egypt the Lord returned to him and prepared him for what he would encounter there.

There are also occasions wherein the Lord has determined to give you the answer, but you are not prepared for what is coming. Therefore, you are put through experience to develop. During this time, you are moving toward the answer that you are being prepared to receive. Once the preparation is over, the answer follows. It is possible that so much transpires between the request and the answer that you forget it was your petition to the Lord that set things in motion. Nevertheless the Lord was working to give you an answer all along.

There are occasions where the answer lies before you, and your path will intersect with the answer in the normal course. The apparent silence from the Lord is really the answer—Stay true and you will find it as you move along. These moments are what develop necessary patience.

We are tempted to show ingratitude when these happen, thinking that it was our own ability which secured for us the answer, instead of the mercy of the Lord. That is a mistake.

The final reason is that you are mistaken about your worthiness or standing before God and you need to alter what you are doing. In this instance it is likely that you get an answer, but the answer is that you are in need of repentance or change. The change needs to precede an answer. Never ignore a warning that you are out of the way; it may be the kindest response of

all. Get your life in order first, then the answer you seek will follow. Ingratitude to the Lord is often the first reason for needed repentance.

These are the reasons I have found for those seasons in which an answer is not forthcoming from the Lord.

MAY 30, 2010

Developing Your Faith

I've been thinking on the different kinds of questions I get, and what those questions reflect about the one asking. There are two conditions that cannot be overcome by me or any other person by answering your question. The first one is your insecurities. The other is your curiosity. Your insecurities about whatever is going on in your life will not go away because you received an answer to a question. Your curiosity will not be satisfied by hearing a spiritual experience recounted by another person.

Insecurities are a result of a lack of faith. You deserve them. You have not acquired knowledge yet. You have them as a gift, as a warning that you have not yet received what you need. Nor have you developed faith yet. I've given you a post that repeats very important and true doctrine from *The Lectures on Faith*. It is a blueprint for how you develop faith. I cannot do it for you. Neither can Joseph or Jesus Christ. Faith comes from within you, developed by the same process through which every man who has ever had faith developed it. There are no shortcuts, no independent conferral by sprinkling something on you, and no method different than what has always been required. To the extent I am able to explain the process, I have done so in *The Second Comforter*. If you are still insecure, then you have not done

what that book teaches you to do. Getting an answer from me, or from any other man, will not replace the hollow feeling inside you springing from the absence of saving faith.

The scriptures are filled with spiritual experiences and doctrine. Adding another account to those already there will not benefit you nor bring you closer to developing faith. It will not fill you. That is why my experiences have never been told. (Only in my testimony of the truthfulness of what I teach have I touched briefly upon my experiences.) The focus of all I have done is doctrine. Teaching correct principles will allow you to both govern and develop yourself.

Asking for details from my experiences will add absolutely nothing to you. Those experiences will only weaken you. It will also weaken me. It will make me seem more than I am. It will cause you to surrender to another the responsibility devolving upon yourself. You will only err in thinking that having another “spiritual story” to retell has made you closer to the Lord. It doesn’t happen that way. Get your own spiritual experiences. Then, if you want more, keep them sacred. That is what I do. I teach principles. I do not reveal experiences.

I read many years ago about Abraham being the “friend of God.” I read also in the D&C about the Lord calling some early Saints His “friends.” As I reflected upon that word (“friend”) I thought about what it meant (“friendship”). After pondering the word for many days, and observing the people around me, thinking about what I saw in society, and considered the sermons I heard in church, I reached the conclusion that there wasn’t a “friend” of God upon the earth any longer.

As I considered the conclusion, I thought about it from God’s perspective. What must it mean to a Heavenly Father who has

no friend upon the earth. How must He sorrow over His children who have departed from friendship. The thought grew in me until I determined I would become the “friend” of God; not for my sake, nor for any benefit which may come to me because of it. I thought of it only as a way to honor Him; to show Him that despite earth and hell there would yet be another “friend” of His upon the earth.

I have remained true to that determination from that time till now. It defines the choices I have made, the opportunities I have forfeited, the places I have been, and the doors which have opened. I may not be much of anything in this world, but I do have a Friend whose love I value and whose companionship I cherish. If I were to tell you all the details of that it would do you no good and would betray trust.

Asking about it is the clearest indication that you have misunderstood both the process and what I am trying to do to help others.

COMMENTS:

DJones · MAY 30, 2010 AT 9:40 AM

For me, what you have written in this post makes perfect sense...however, this particular forum (Blog) lends itself to a certain type of intimacy which many of your readers and students of the scriptures and the teachings of the Prophet Joseph long to receive at the feet of one “who teaches with power and authority”, as described in Alma 17:3. This type of closeness to a teacher in GD class or Priesthood/RS classes is all too rare. Your blog lends itself to a much higher level of thinking than that which is presented in our other classes, (which in itself is a very sad commentary on the level of teaching that occurs nowadays).

There is a closeness and a level of security when likeminded individuals converse about or seek the advancement of another’s understanding of a Gospel truth...isn’t that what teaching is all about? Isn’t the goal

of a Teacher to assist in enhancing the faith of those who are truly seeking, as distinguished from answering idle questions of no substance?

This post led me to search out something I remembered Joseph to have taught:

TPJS: Section One 1830–34, p.11

Search the scriptures—search the revelations which we publish, and ask your Heavenly Father, in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, to manifest the truth unto you, and if you do it with an eye single to his glory nothing doubting, He will answer you by the power of His Holy Spirit. You will then know for yourselves and not for another. You will not then be dependent on man for the knowledge of God; nor will there be any room for speculation. No; for when men receive their instruction from Him that made them, they know how He will save and learn what portion of them belongs to you and the people of the nineteenth century.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 30, 2010 AT 12:04 PM

I'm distinguishing between questions which are good, appropriate and I try to answer on the one hand, and questions which essentially want to know about things which could not be of any of any benefit to someone on the other hand. Hearing another "inspirational story" is NOT what people need. They need to obtain their own inspirational, profound and intimate knowledge of God. They need to develop capacities within themselves which the Gospel requires everyone to develop.

I will answer questions which I think will help people, elevate them, and bring them closer to God. I will not entertain or profane by putting something on display with is purely personal.

The idea that spiritual messages were all meant to be shared with everyone, all the time, has somehow become associated with me. I have been one of the most discrete teachers in the Church. The subjects about which I write may be sacred, even holy. But I do not discuss them in an inappropriate way. I know the difference and never cross the line.

Questions which ask for answers which would be over the line show that some who ask here simply do not understand the difference.

This post was intended to help them become aware such a line exists. Maybe they might then go back, pay more attention, and discover what and how it is I teach.

I am trying to be of benefit to others. That is succeeding in a few cases. But it is not understood by another significant number of people. Hopefully things become more clear as they read more.

MAY 30, 2010

Constitutional Forum

At the invitation of the American Heritage School, I am going to participate in a forum this coming Thursday. The school is located across the street from the Timpanogos Temple. The announcement reads as follows:

Understanding Our Times Constitution Education Series
Community Forum, Thursday, June 3, 2010, 7:00 p.m.
American Heritage School, North Auditorium
736 North 1100 East, American Fork, Utah

Join us for our inaugural Community Forum, to be held this coming Thursday, June 3, at 7:00 p.m., free and open to the public. We have confirmed four very special guest panelists, including attorney and author Denver Snuffer, Marriage Law Foundation Director Bill Duncan, Professor David Moore of BYU Law School, and AHS Family Education Center Committee Member Larry Hilton. Come listen and ask questions on critical constitutional topics that are impacting our homes, communities, and nation. To have even one of these individuals for an event like this would be worthy of an entire evening. To have all four of them on a single panel is extraordinary and has the making of truly thought-provoking and life-changing experience. For more information on our panelists, please see below. The format for

the evening includes brief opening statements by each panelist member, followed by open Q&A from audience members, on the three topics of “Sovereignty”, “Freedom of Conscience” and John Adam’s statement that the Constitution was intended only for a “moral and religious people.”

If any of you are interested in this subject matter, the forum is free to the public.

COMMENTS:

The Zang Family · JUNE 5, 2010 AT 1:46 PM

It was nice to see you in person. I’ve thoroughly enjoyed your comments and writings!

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 5, 2010 AT 2:01 PM

Good to see you, too. I’ve appreciated your comments.

I thought the forum was interesting and the comments were short, quick paced and relevant. The contrast in views was also illuminating.

MAY 31, 2010

Memorial Day

Memorial Day was established to show respect to our war dead; those who died to protect the freedoms and lives of others. Now it has become a “Hallmark” (as in the card company) day for florists and balloon shops to sell junk to decorate the graves of anyone and everyone. It is now only a national day to remember deceased grandmothers and grandfathers.

Adding to the event does not make it better. Instead, it changes the focus from those whose self-sacrifice and devotion to others is remembered, into a general day for the dead. That’s too bad. I wish the focus remained narrow. Those whose lives are currently in jeopardy should know that should they pay the ultimate sacrifice of their lives the nation will honor them.

I lost ancestors who fought in the American Revolutionary War. Two great-great uncles (Owen and Paul) died during the first weeks of the Civil War in Northern Virginia. My father fought and survived D-Day, and served during the Korean War as well. He died in the 1990's, but is a veteran of combat and was honored at his burial by an honor guard and a flag- draped coffin. I still have the folded flag presented by the honor guard to my mother.

There is someone in my home town who goes to my father's grave and puts an American flag on it every Memorial Day. I do not know who it is and have never been there during Memorial Day. However, I know it happens and I appreciate that someone knows he served his country while under German fire.

There is a family tradition that one of my ancestors was in Valley Forge. I have not been able to confirm that. They didn't keep good records, but after the nation was established it was possible for veterans to apply for land grants to honor their service. Those who applied for land grants were better documented. Still, I haven't been able to confirm the tradition.

All in all we owe a debt to those who have given us freedom that we cannot repay to them. Sometimes when I contrast the devotion of those who sacrificed, to the profligate use of the freedom we have inherited, it worries me that we are squandering what took so great a price to confer. We owe more to those who died to give us freedom. We have an obligation to preserve it and hand it down to others as payment to those who sacrificed their lives. Instead we are more interested in government becoming a tool to create financial benefits. Freedom is being purchased away from us using both taxes and debt. When it is gone, you have neither the freedom sold nor financial benefits promised in the sale; as the recently failed Soviet Block has proven for all history.

COMMENTS:

DKD · MAY 31, 2010 AT 11:00 AM

I'm guessing the VFW or American Legion put a flag on your Dad's grave each Memorial Day.

Denver Snuffer · MAY 31, 2010 AT 9:22 PM

DKD: You may be right, but it is a small town and I would like to know who it is. I'm grateful and would like them to know.

DKD · MAY 31, 2010 AT 9:52 PM

My Dad (nearly 80 now) has done this with his American Legion group in a small little town in Idaho (Albion) for a number of years now. I'm glad someone has been kind enough to do this for your father too.

Anonymous · MAY 31, 2010 AT 9:52 PM

I have lived in Korea, and Germany while my husband served in the military, been to war memorials honoring brave soldiers all over the world who fought protecting our freedoms, and been moved by stirring patriotic Memorial Day services on the foreign soil our troops died defending.

You can pick your flowers or buy them, place a flag on a grave or not, visit a cemetery or not, but in my mind appreciating the sacrifices of veterans is not diminished by remembering our other dead ancestors and family. Other cultures have special days to remember the dead and memorialize them but we make do with Memorial Day. Having a son who died in infancy I appreciate a day when I can visit my beautiful grave site, bring flowers and flags. remember my great country in which God has provided me with blessings that I am continually indebted to Him for. I see nothing wrong with a memorial day that encompasses the memory of all our dead.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 1, 2010 AT 6:10 AM

The sentiment that honors all dead is why Memorial Day has lost its unique respect for those who sacrificed their lives for our freedom.

JUNE 2010

JUNE 1, 2010

Destroyer Rideth Upon the Waters

A study by the Harvard Business School has concluded that government spending does not stimulate an economy. It stifles. You can read the study here:

<http://www.people.hbs.edu/cmалloy/pdffiles/envaloy.pdf>

This was not the conclusion the study was expected to produce. It is not a welcomed study during a time when the whole commitment of the federal policy is predicated upon the opposite conclusion. Simply put, we're pursuing a course that won't/can't work.

It shows again, how foolish it is to trust in the opinions of men. I'm utterly convinced that opinions are misleading. I believe the scriptures counsel against using opinions as a basis for determining truth.

The Great Whore, which deceives the world, sits upon "many waters" (Rev. 17:1). The definition of "waters" is given in verse 15 (Rev. 17:15). These unstable waters are the "peoples, and multitudes, and nations." It is again a reminder of the original blessing given to Reuben, in which instability is compared to "water" (Gen. 49:4). Great wars, overflowing armies and unstable political movements have all been compared to a flood of water (See, e.g., Isa. 28:2; Jer. 46:8).

Opinions of peoples, multitudes and nations are as "unstable as water." They flow, and ebb and move about in dangerous currents. Finding an opinion and adopting it as the basis for a church decision or policy is a study in learning which cannot bring you to the truth (2 Tim. 3:7). Before this latest study, it

was common wisdom that government spending was NEEDED in order to combat the recession. Now, it appears the solution will only mire the country in a more prolonged downward economic cycle. Opinions were gathered carefully before the commitment was made. Now, we have accepted only foolishness as our wisdom.

I have always thought the tools of industry have no place in a church which claims to be guided by inspiration. To the extent the church elects to employ opinion polling and focus group gathering to inform its decision, it will reach the wrong conclusions, make the wrong decisions, and go backward.

Inspiration does not lie within the opinions of the great and unstable waters. Indeed, the Destroyer rides upon the waters (D&C 61:19).

JUNE 1, 2010

Keys and Assignments

...For the benefit of a worthy inquirer, who has the right to know:

Keys are related to assignments given. When the church gives someone an assignment, they receive the keys associated with performing the assignment. For example, when an Elder's Quorum President is called, he receives the keys to preside over the Quorum. With those keys the President has the large assignment (making the Quorum function) and is entitled to the smaller or more detailed assistance from the Lord to serve each quorum member's needs.

If the President neglects his duties, despite the fact that the authority is conferred upon him, he lacks the power associated with the assignment. His keys become thereby wasted or lost.

Keys, however, are not limited to the church giving an assignment. When the Lord gives an assignment, commission or commandment to a person by His own voice, then the Lord similarly gives to the person the keys to accomplish the assignment, commission or commandment. By acting consistent with the duty devolving upon him, the man receives not only the larger assignment, but also the inspiration to accomplish the smaller or more detailed activities related to the assignment given to him.

An example from Nephi illustrates the point. Nephi was commanded to build a ship (1 Ne. 17:8). Nephi needed direction and instruction to accomplish the task given to him. Since he possessed the keys to accomplish the work, the direction was forthcoming from the Lord as it was needed and as Nephi inquired to obtain it (1 Ne. 17:9–10). In the process of asking and receiving direction as he fulfilled the assignment, Nephi learned other, greater things as well (1 Ne. 18:2–3).

Nephi saw in the assignment (keys) he had been given a direct relationship between fulfilling the assignment to build a ship and Moses' commission (keys) to deliver Israel from bondage. He used Moses as an example to his brothers to justify how the Lord could assign someone as untrained as Nephi to build a ship (1 Ne. 17:23–43). It was an appropriate example. It illustrates how once the Lord gives an assignment to a man, the Lord entrusts the keys and provides the inspiration to accomplish the assignment.

Similarly, all the prophets who have been sent to warn Israel in any generation have been given the keys from God to accomplish their assignment. Even among people who no longer held such authority, the Lord would directly ordain those He commissioned during the Old Testament times (*TPJS* p. 181).

When the church builds a temple and calls a temple president the one called to preside over the temple is the only one who can organize and run the temple. He has the keys and should be respected. Anyone who has an assignment or keys conferred upon them, by the church or by the Lord, has an assignment that should be respected.

Nephi's brothers and the royal court of King Noah all learned that it simply wasn't possible to terminate the mission of someone holding keys before they finished their assignment (For Nephi, see 1 Ne. 17:48–55. For Abinadi see Mosiah 13:2–5). Of course, once the assignment given the man has been completed, they are as vulnerable to destruction at the hands of enemies as anyone else (Mosiah 17:20; D&C 135:4).

When someone receives an assignment, and fulfills it with honor, they hold the keys of that assignment to all eternity (D&C 128:21). They are expected to come to the great meeting when keys are returned to Adam and then, in turn, to Christ, preliminary to His return as the One whose right it is to preside over all things (*TPJS* p. 157).

I suppose the best way to be invited to that meeting would be to obtain a key from the Lord, perform in strict conformity to the assignment He gives you, and become thereby entitled to return that key in the great assembly.

...For the rest, I'm not sure if this post will have any meaning.

JUNE 2, 2010

Gifts Come from God

Question:

In these days there are many holistic healing arts that area coming forward. EFT (tapping), angel therapy and readings, chakra

work, Reiki, aura work, energy work, etc., etc. Are these gifts of the spirit? Are they gifts of the “right” spirit:?) When someone is working with you on correcting old belief systems from childhood and they say they had a dream that might be relevant, should you trust that.? What do you feel about people who do angel readings? How can you discern so as not to be deceived or lead down an incorrect path. Many people who do this kind of work are not LDS...are they entitled to gifts of the spirit? Sometimes I have seen LDS people get involved with these modalities and leave the church or become inactive...others remain very faithful. I sometimes feel that people should be able to go to the source of all healing directly...Christ... and bypass these types of healings. But then again, sometimes I think perhaps people need these modalities to help remove blocks of low self-worth and self condemnation that block them from going directly to Christ for feelings of unworthiness and believing that Christ can heal them. I remember Jeffery Holland in a conference of the last couple of years say, “Christ can heal you and he can do it now!” (not his exact words). Anyway, I have wondered about this for a long long time. I hope you give me your opinion.

First, as to gifts:

I believe there are “gifts” given (or acquired) by people which are based on real sensitivities or talents. I believe they exist as part of the talents brought into this life. Some people have talent to sing, compose music, or create art. There are those who have developed spiritual gifts. There are many kinds of gifts, but they all come from God (Moroni 10:8).

Possession of a gift, however, does not mean a person will use that gift in conformity with God’s will or plan. If a person

does not seek to follow the Lord's will, they can be misled and use gifts for improper ends. People who fail to remain obedient, who begin to use their gifts to gratify their pride or to achieve their ambitions can drift away from the light and take others with them. Just because a person possesses a gift does not mean they live their lives in conformity to truth. Nor does it mean they will not mislead you. Proper use of a gift should show gratitude to and promote faith in God (D&C 20:27).

Second, as to modalities:

I do think that there are aids to faith that can help someone who is weak to still act in faith. Modalities that focus thought, bolster confidence and assist in believing the Lord can heal can aid in the process. In the end it is the authority of God and faith in Him that allows good things to follow. It comes from Him. If an act helps focus thought and confidence in Him, then the act is worthwhile.

The problems creep in when the modality is regarded as an independent authority apart from God. As soon as a person begins to view God as uninvolved, or that they can control the outcome independent of God's will, there is an opening for evil or deception. Gifts were not intended to produce a monetary profit and should not be practiced for money (Acts 8:20).

Gifts belong to the body of believers and should be used to promote faith in God (D&C 46:10, 26).

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · JUNE 2, 2010 AT 5:32 PM

Denver,

I am the one who asked the original question. I just wanted to say thank you for your response. I was pondering your response today and actually received quiet thoughts that entered my mind that further clarified my

question. I was excited because I have always been one of those “God answers others, but not me”, people.

I also want to say thank you for your little journal excerpts that introduced the chapters in *The Second Comforter*....for now, especially the one at the beginning of Chapter 4. I have reflected on it often and found myself asking questions and paying more attention to my thoughts (especially in the quiet hours of the morning) and the responses that could have easily been mistaken for my own...

In those quiet hours, I had the impression to stop working so much. Although working has been helpful financially, it isn't essential for me. So, I am doing as I felt directed to do and cutting way back. I want my faith to grow. I am tired of depending on others and not having the confidence that I can really get my own answers. Depending on others doesn't bring a feeling of peace and calm....only more questions. Thank you for your example and that which you have shared in your books and this blog. It has given me hope, courage and confidence that I really can get answers. I am beginning on the path. It feels good. My sincere, heartfelt gratitude goes to you for being willing to share a tremendous amount of time to instruct others, and heartfelt gratitude to the Lord for commissioning you to share what He directs. Thank You.

Kathy

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 2, 2010 AT 6:17 PM

Kathy: I wish all people would use the material exactly like you are. That is the whole reason for this work. It is not to call attention to me, but to let others develop themselves.

I am a private person. This work I'm doing is NOT easy for me. It invades space I never would voluntarily surrender. If I were not doing this to benefit others I simply would never undertake it at all.

JUNE 2, 2010

Be Still and Know That I am God

It is apparent from emails sent to the blog that some readers refuse to study carefully either the scriptures or what I have written. I will make yet another attempt to explain some important distinctions.

There is a difference between testifying that some principle is true and teaching others how to follow the principle, and discussing details of personal experiences which are not going to be meaningful and are not appropriate.

There are reasons why intimate details of temple ordinances are guarded by covenants they will not be revealed. It is true those covenants have been violated by many people. Some people have decided to reject what was offered, make themselves liars, and treat with contempt what should have been treated with care. All of that is between them and the Lord, with whom they made the covenant. Their violation of a trust does not detract one bit from the power of covenants kept by others.

We are not responsible for how others behave when they receive something that ought to be treated as sacred. We are all only accountable for how we individually treat such things.

It is appropriate for anyone to testify to the truth, that the Lord lives, and that He has and still does minister to men in the flesh. It is appropriate to explain that those blessings are predicated upon the same conditions for **any person** who will follow the law upon which such blessings are predicated. It is appropriate to explain what those conditions or laws are. It is appropriate to gather together in one continuous discussion the diverse elements scattered throughout the scriptures and put them into one convenient discussion of the whole. I have done that.

What is not important for anyone to know is the details of what goes on in a meeting between God and one with whom He deigns to appear. Joseph Smith for example remarked, concerning the First Vision, “**many other things did he say unto me, which I cannot write at this time**” (*JS-H_1:20*).

Repeatedly the Book of Mormon draws a line and says that things were “**not lawful**” for man to write (See, e.g., 1 Ne. 14:28; 3 Ne. 26:16; 3 Ne. 27:23; Ether 4:1, Ether 13:13). A person who does not understand the difference between the line that must be drawn and why it exists simply is not prepared to receive with gratitude what the Lord is offering.

The riches of eternity are offered by the Lord to you and each of you **directly**. It does not come from learning “secrets” from someone else. It comes by following the path. You do not need anything more than a description of the path. Follow it. Until you follow it, the heavens will remain shut against you. As soon as you follow it, you will have the results you would like to have.

Curiosity about sacred details that the scriptures repeatedly warn are not lawful to put into writing here in this fallen world, reveals an immaturity that should be overcome. If you want the details, learn them from the Lord. **Directly**. Without an intermediary. Teachers are commissioned by the Lord to reiterate the path by which they are to be obtained. He does not send someone to do the work for you. Indeed, you either do the work for yourself or it remains undone—forever.

It is clear that some who want the most revealed to them are the ones who have not yet read what I’ve written. You simply continue to ask and ask again. **Study** what I’ve written **carefully** and **anyone** will find it is all there. Several people have done so, and have received the promised results. But they took care and

devoted careful, solemn and ponderous thought to the matters set out in what I have written. That is what the writings were intended to produce, and why they were commissioned to be written by the Lord. I know that the process is true, because I have lived it. I know that the descriptions provided in my writings are sufficient, because they have produced results akin to my own. You do not need more details from me.

You need to take seriously what I've already written. Actually, you don't even need that. What I have written is taken from the scriptures, primarily the Book of Mormon. If you understood the scriptures you wouldn't even need what I've written. I have only been instructed in how to bring the process together in a convenient single narrative, building line upon line to a whole.

Careful, solemn and ponderous thought is what is needed. Not frantic, exasperated and impatient demanding that someone tell you something right now that will fix what is amiss in your life. Such frantic conduct is likely to yield nothing.

I hope this aids in understanding what is appropriate and what is over the line. If you want to know all the mysteries of God, He is willing to reveal them. Not to the impatient, demanding and immature. But to those who develop a firm mind in every form of godliness, including patience, persistence, faith and sacrifice (Moroni 7:30). These things are not won cheaply. But they are won.

I think the words "be still and know that I am God" are more than just an admonition to 'shut-up' (D&C 101:16). I think it is a formula. Let your anxieties pass over you. Leave them. Be calm. In the great calm of pondering over what He has given to you, you will "know" Him. Therefore, if you would like to know God, then ponder deeply and meditate on the things He has

already given to you (See e.g., D&C 138:11; *JS-H* 1:12; 1 Ne. 11:1 and Helaman 10:2–4.). This is how Joseph Smith received the First Vision, Joseph F. Smith saw the Vision of the Redemption of the Dead, Nephi saw in vision the Lord, and Nephi son of Helaman would receive his calling and election. I can't give you a formula, I can't recite any additional vision and I can't tell you about any visitation I have had that will absolve you of following the process by which God has become known to all those who have come to know Him since the time of Adam. All I can do is testify that the same path is open to **everyone**. But only on the same condition as it is available to all.

JUNE 3, 2010

Christ's Ministry

We have an account of Christ's "ministry" to the Nephites beginning in chapter 11 of 3 Nephi and continuing through the 28th chapter. During the ministry Christ instructed, performed ordinances, (including the sacrament) blessed, healed, taught from scriptures, provided prophecy, and extended the promise of exaltation to many, including the Twelve He called. The full extent of what He did became so sacred that the account is interrupted and we are told that it was not lawful to put it into writing (See, e.g., 3 Ne. 17:15–16; 26:16; and 27:23).

Now, if you can take all that in, (and it is worth careful consideration to make sure you get the point) then you can begin to understand this statement recorded by Moroni about the visit between Christ and the Brother of Jared:

And now, as I, Moroni, said I could not make a full account of these things which are written, therefore it sufficeth me to say that

Jesus showed himself unto this man in the spirit, even after the manner and in the likeness of the same body even as he showed himself unto the Nephites. And he ministered unto him even as he ministered unto the Nephites; and all this, that this man might know that he was God, because of the many great works which the Lord had showed unto him. (Ether 3:17–18)

When Moroni wrote this it was nearly 400 years after Christ's ministry to the Nephites. When he wrote this Moroni:

1. Had the records of Christ's ministry before him.
2. Had been personally visited by Christ (Ether 12:39).
3. He also had personally been visited by the three Nephite disciples who were there when Christ appeared and called them as His witnesses (Mormon 8:10–11).
4. Had the entire Jaredite record before him, including the portion that he would not translate due to its sacred character (Ether 4:5–7).

When Moroni says that Christ “ministered” to the Brother of Jared “as He ministered unto the Nephites” this is more than just an appearance. It is more than just a conversation, with the Lord showing Himself to the man. It is more than merely giving the man an understanding that He lives, that He is the Redeemer and Savior. It would include the same kind of ministry as was had among the Nephites.

I believe the Lord's ministry in any age is the same. As the Redeemer, determined to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man, (Moses 1:39) it would only make sense that He would be determined to have those who receive Him be redeemed, promised eternal life, and instructed sufficiently to enter into their exaltation. This is why Christ says that He and

the Father will “take up our abode with” such men (John 14:23). That “abode” is the Father’s House. More plainly, it is the Father’s family. It is to become His son, begotten by the Father. Sonship requires initiation, and Christ’s ministry would include all the required promises, rites and teachings to allow the person to lay claim upon eternal life.

JUNE 3, 2010

**“For these are they who are of Paul,
and of Apollos, and of Cephas”**

It has become very clear to me that there is an intangible and almost inexpressible difference between truth and error.

Satan quotes scripture to make a point in an argument with Christ, showing how he wants to justify his ends by resorting to scriptural/true principles (Matt. 4:6).

The accusations brought against Abinadi were scripture-based (Mosiah 12:19–24), So were those brought against many others, including Christ. Indeed, the most frequent accusation against Christ related to the commandment to “keep the Sabbath day holy” and Him healing on the Sabbath.

I can see how people are almost completely taken in by the use of scriptural arguments or scriptural language, when they have never encountered the Holy Spirit, not received light and truth from God, and have not accepted guidance from a higher source.

Those who have light, and who use what light they have to accept more light, are going to find their way. Those who do not, and therefore, cannot have their path illuminated by a higher source, will be lost. They will be unable to distinguish between truth and error. Indeed, they will call good bad, and believe the truth to be a lie. It is inevitable.

This is why no man can be the guide for another. Everyone must stand on their own, acquire their own oil for their lamp, and stop leaning upon others to lead them.

I do not see that happening in any great numbers. Instead, I see fools loudly and stupidly proclaiming that it is always guaranteed safe to be led by men as long as you are careful about the men you follow.

No man will save you. **No not one.** You either follow them into the Telestial kingdom in wherein you presently reside, or you figure out how to get out of here (D&C 76:98–101). Notice that these people followed TRUE or authentic messengers, yet they remain captured in a Telestial existence for worlds without end.

They receive not the testimony of Jesus which is the spirit of prophecy.

I see benighted arguments couched in the language of scripture all the time. The clarity with which I can detect the errors made is not because I am smarter than other people. I am not. I can see clearly the difference between truth and error by the light given to me. I can't give that to you. Only you can acquire it. I can tell you how to acquire it. But in the end, you alone will either follow the pattern and obtain the results, or continue to live in the dark.

COMMENTS:

DKD · JUNE 3, 2010 AT 8:49 PM

I hope I have not done or said something wrong in your blog Denver. If so, I apologize.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 4, 2010 AT 1:22 PM

DKD:...not to worry... I'm getting stuff "off the blog" and responding to them here. Some are comments which are "not for posting" and they

don't go up, but I put a post up reflecting their input. So I'm not always commenting on something which appears here.

That having been said, look at the one earlier today about “Why Stand we in Jeopardy Ever Hour” and you'll see that there are reasons why every one of us should continually be reminded to consider deeply the Gospel and our thoughts and behavior.

Doug · JUNE 4, 2010 AT 2:31 PM

“...and some of Thomas S. and some of Denver and some of Joseph...”

It's very possible that this post was for me. I am certain that Heavenly Father has a sense of humor as he watches us, like puppies chasing our own tails, and excitedly running to anyone that hollers, “Here boy!” The challenge is listening for and staying loyal to the True Master's voice. Obviously, I have a lot to learn here.

Even though I've never thought the true messengers were the end-all, I will admit that I often seek personal acknowledgment, which could be considered the praise of man. Perhaps any messengers along the way are meant to be mostly “hands off,” so that the culmination of the audience with the Lord will be all the more special.

Anyway, your rebuke is well-taken (consider it a whack with a rolled up newspaper) It gives me more determination to set my sights on the Master.

JR Morgan · JUNE 5, 2010 AT 10:40 AM

I'm a personal acknowledgeable seeker as well, Doug. It has made me shrink when I should have stood on very many occasion. Though it has also made me a deep seeker of the Lord's light and approval.

I know I will eventually purify out the need to please other men, or seek for their attentions and rather stand in light and truth. It is a processes. A scary one, but one I know I will accomplish with Christ's mercy and grace for he knows the fears and intents of my weak human heart. He knows my trauma he knows my need for validation and love and He will be kind to me as I seek to be kind but stand in truth with Him.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 5, 2010 AT 8:59 PM

Most of what we believe are insurmountable character flaws are actually “gifts” of weakness given to us to keep us humble and penitent. When we grovel about with guilt and shame, the Lord views us with benign and non-condemning eyes. He urges us onward. He is in the middle of working to redeem us. He is instant with forgiveness, ever eager to invite us forward.

JUNE 4, 2010

“And Why Stand We in Jeopardy Every Hour?”

Every one of us needs to be challenged. None of us should be complacent about how we live, the words we speak or write, and the thoughts we entertain. If this blog does not stir you up and make you reconsider what you are doing and how you are living your life every day, then it is a waste of time. If I am not personally challenging you, then I am not worth taking the time to read.

It is a doctrine of the devil to tell you that “all is well” (2 Ne. 28:20–21). The obligation of any true messenger is to continually cry repentance. Satan employs ministers to satisfy itching ears with a smooth message (2 Tim. 4:3). They lead people carefully down to hell. The Lord commissions His messengers to deliver the opposite message. If I am really engaged in working for Him, then the words should challenge, even offend you.

Only fools think there are institutional prerogatives that entitle people to God’s favor. There is no magic ordinance. There is no certificate that can be issued to you or your group, by any person or institution, that entitles you to enter heaven. It does not exist. Those who believe there is some institutional voodoo that will guarantee you entrance into heaven are sadly mistaken.

Assume for a moment that you have indeed been given by the Father the promise of eternal life, what then? Are you entitled to

rest while all around you the world is filled with unsaved souls? (Alma 13:12). Does such a promise remain yours if you do not labor all your remaining days to cry repentance and bring others to the tree of life so they may partake? Having entered into the Lord's "rest," does not the heir then owe it to everyone else they meet for the remainder of their lives to bring them with them? (D&C 18:15.)

There is no hour here when we are not in jeopardy. (1 Cor. 15:30.)

So when you read something on this blog or in a book I have written which challenges you, brings you up short, or makes you think that I may be speaking about you, then I have succeeded. On the other hand, if you believe you are justified by what you read here, then you miss entirely the obligation incumbent on both of us.

We all need to repent. If the Lord has extended to you the promise of eternal life, then you have moved to another plane of growth and challenge. That great promise opens the door for you to struggle and grow in your comprehension of what He has done. You still must learn how to exercise the new prerogatives given to you in the proper way. The challenges will not relent. We are designed for growth. It will not come to an end in this life. It is to prepare us for something far greater (D&C 132:20). We must become as He is to be like Him (1 John 3:1-3).

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · JUNE 4, 2010 AT 6:16 PM

Sometimes I get a little bogged down...the need for continual striving because we are imperfect, unworthy creatures makes me struggle with finding a balance with that and "man is that he might have joy." My mind easily flips into perfectionism and then when my family isn't

perfect and my children aren't perfectly obedient and doing what I feel they should (young adult children at home), I become very discouraged and down hearted about my life. Any comments?

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 4, 2010 AT 7:25 PM

See the humor in it. We are all quite amusing. To say Latter-day Saints are a "peculiar people" is an understatement. I have a difficult time not finding too much humor in how we act.

Everything is more tolerable when you see humor in the predicaments we get into.

This life is serious stuff. But we all have a much more difficult time getting through it without a sense of humor.

Children require patience. Despite how much we parent them, they still turn out. I've discovered that children thrive with benign neglect. The softer the guidance, the more responsive the child becomes. It also helps if you can figure out a way to have the child believe "it is always their own idea," when you're trying to get them to do something.

Finally, everyone needs a break from time to time. No matter what it is that you're responsible for, you need to lay it down and take a break sometimes. Don't forget that your own rest is needed, on occasion, to let you face the burdens of life.

JUNE 4, 2010

"Power" or "Authority"

In the church we have a regular system for ordination to give someone priesthood authority. It requires the candidate to be interviewed, found worthy, recommended by the presiding authorities (Bishop or Stake President) to a congregation who sustains the ordination before it is performed. The ordination takes place by the laying on of hands, is recorded, and a certificate is issued to the one ordained.

In contrast, the Lord's ordination among the Nephites required only His word to be spoken, and power was conferred:

And the Lord commanded him that he should arise. And he arose and stood before him. And the Lord said unto him: I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people when I am again ascended into heaven. And again the Lord called others, and said unto them likewise; and he gave unto them power to baptize. And he said unto them: On this wise shall ye baptize; and there shall be no disputations among you (3 Ne. 11:20–22).

It is interesting that the word used in His conferral of priestly right was “power” and not “authority.” Consider the difference. Consider what it means for the Lord to speak unto a man and tell him that he has “power” from the Lord.

Is there a difference between having the “authority” to baptize, as we spread it about in the church today, and having the “power” to baptize as conferred by Christ? If there is, then what is that difference?

Good questions to ponder. Particularly as you consider President Packer’s timely reminder of the general lack of power in the priesthood of today’s church in his recent General Conference address, “Power in the Priesthood.”

<http://lds.org/conference/talk/display/0,5232,23-1-1207-2,00.html>

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · JUNE 5, 2010 AT 8:21 PM

JR,

Another thing about these “priesthood weenies”... I’ve heard one say he didn’t need food storage because he could by his PH power call down manna from the sky to feed himself and family with some raven food on the side. That’s amazing. I’ve heard one even say he’d hold up his hands and the oncoming bullets would drop out of the air if he were

ever fired upon by the Zion-haters. That's fantastic. These little things like blessings for old barren women are just beneath them, I suppose. They need to save their power for the really awesome stuff. Oh, and don't forget the ones who recognize you from the pre-existence. That's super-duper power.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 5, 2010 AT 8:56 PM

Or the priesthood power which lets a young man know that God has given to him a young lady as eternal wife, even if she isn't necessarily persuaded he would make a good husband for anyone. "I bear you my testimony, sister, you belong to me." Sort of a Taylor Swift lyric, I'm thinking. Might be better put: "I bear you my testosterone..."

JUNE 5, 2010

Have a Joyful Saturday

I have a dear friend whose daughter is getting married this month. I look forward to driving out to the wedding. We're planning to take my wife's Mini-Cooper and leave the top down. A day's worth of driving to and from the wedding is about as delightful a thing as I can imagine at the moment. I don't care if we're driving at night, the seats have electric heaters and the stars overhead are as interesting as the daytime sky. More so in fact.

The greatest things we possess are our families and friends. They matter. They can endure to all eternity. Nothing will come with us from this fallen world other than the friends and family we acquire, the lessons we have learned, the covenants made with and ratified by the Lord, and the kind acts we have done. Everything else will dissolve back into the dust of this world.

Have a joyful Saturday. Do something kind for someone who dislikes you. Do something generous for someone who loves you. Go to bed tonight knowing that if this day were the one

day chosen to judge your character that it is your best. Make the day holy by the way you live, the words you speak and the thoughts you entertain.

Heaven is stirred and Hell itself is shaken when even one soul lives such a day.

JUNE 5, 2010

Weep for Zion for Zion Has Fled

It may as well be a dream. It involves our collective slumber. We get pictures in our head when we are taught some truth and presume that the picture is accurate. Then after we have repeated the “truth” often enough, we go on to believe the picture must be all-inclusive.

Once we’ve arrived at that point, the truth no longer matters. Our minds are made up. We’ve decided the answers, and no further evidence will be considered.

This certainty is reinforced when more people reach the same conclusion because they share the same picture in their head. You get together with others and testify that you are all in possession of the truth; not only **the** truth, but **ALL** of the truth. Before long every one of the group can pass a lie-detector test about the truth as they explain it.

As a result, this herd is incapable of ever seeing the picture differently. They cannot open their minds to the idea that their picture is skewed or off. It is most certainly incomplete. It is, in fact, so far short of the whole story that when any part of the remaining, missing information is shown to them they are certain it is a lie.

It is painful to part with our suppositions and the traditions we hold dear. It is painful to admit there may be much more of

the picture we have not yet considered, much less seen. It causes anxiety and fear. So much fear in fact, that when it comes to “eternal truth,” people literally put their lives in jeopardy if they denounce the falsehoods of the herd and proclaim the truth to those whose peace of mind and self-identity is tied to the incomplete and misleading picture they believe holds all truth.

Latter-day Saints are not immune from this process. We have wanted a complete, well defined statement of our faith since the time of Joseph Smith. We crave an “orthodox” faith so we, like the Historic Christians, can proclaim what is true and right and what is error and heresy. It gives us security. It is false security, purchased at the price of closed minds. It gives us hope. It is false hope, based on the foolishness of the deluded.

As we water down even further the true principles of what our faith contains by requiring Relief Society and High Priests to labor over a Gospel Essentials Manual as the sole fodder for our spiritual fare, we strain every particle of solid food out of the diet. The remaining gruel is so thin, lacking in substance, that we become universally malnourished. Yet in that emaciated state, as our bellies distend from the bloating of starvation, we all proclaim how well fed we are. Our bellies are swollen! We have enough of the word of God! We need no more of the word of God! All is well! Better than well, we prosper in the land of promise!

When you surrender your superstitions and arrogance and read the scriptures for the first time with an open mind, they will astonish you. They will condemn you. They will demand you repent, open your heart, and receive more. They will offer you the bread of life, a living fountain of revelation from which, if you draw, you will find not only sustenance, but also the capacity to recognize that there are those who are starving.

We still weep for Zion; for Zion has fled.

Try reading Alma Chapter 13 and take **LITERALLY** every word there. Don't bring any pictures in your head and read them into the text. Forget every popular and correlated notion ever spoken about the priesthood for a moment and just look at the words. You will be shocked. If you can bring yourself to do that, then read the Book of Mormon again. It was written for our day, testifying **against** us. A former group of inhabitants who failed and were destroyed wrote their best advice and sent it to us. We are the ones being warned. We are in a great deal of peril. Our church, if the Book of Mormon is true, is filled with corruption and priestcraft.

Or, on the other hand, just chant that "you know (*insert the subject of choice here*) is true" and throw about the "name of Jesus Christ" as you do. It is a tried and true mantra, which when repeated often enough, can dull the senses and reinstate the slumber we are so often wrapped. So relax. Hum to yourself a hymn and you will soon be back asleep.

COMMENTS:

Ben · JUNE 5, 2010 AT 3:48 PM

Good grief.

I didn't even get past verse 1 before I saw something I never had before.

Gotta keep going.

I add my voice to those other that have expressed gratitude. This blog is heaven sent.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 5, 2010 AT 8:52 PM

I really ought to respond to Ben's comment. What is amazing about the verses, when taken literally, is that the literal interpretation fit much better than when it is overlaid with "interpretations" we are urged to

adopt. In fact, many other scriptures are saying the same things. And Joseph Smith was saying the same thing, too.

It is not so much that the truth is hidden from us, as it is that the truth is ignored by us.

The verses in that chapter offer a radical re-definition of what is going on here. One which is seconded by Paul, Joseph, Abraham and Christ, too.

I am struck all the time by the amazing insights which begin to emerge from taking the Book of Mormon as the plain, simple statement of truth that it is.

Steve · JUNE 5, 2010 AT 5:02 PM

As we water down even further the true principles of what our faith contains by requiring Relief Society and High Priests to labor over a Gospel Essentials Manual as the sole fodder for our spiritual fare, we strain every particle of solid food out of the diet. The remaining gruel is so thin, lacking in substance, that we become universally malnourished. Yet in that emaciated state, as our bellies distend from the bloating of starvation, we all proclaim how well fed we are. Our bellies are swollen! We have enough of the word of God! We need no more of the word of God! All is well! Better than well, we prosper in the land of promise!

While I cannot disagree with any of this, I do wonder/worry that such words might lead to your expulsion.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 5, 2010 AT 7:52 PM

Steve: We still get to have opinions. And that opinion about the manuals is so universally shared that you hear it spoken in every candid conversation in this area of the church.

I suppose there are sycophants who would never breathe a word of that to the higher-ups. But surely many people have told the 'manual committee' members just how dreadfully the current curriculum is being received by those who have studied the Gospel for years.

JUNE 6, 2010

Spring

Spring is nearly gone (the equinox is coming soon) and we didn't get a garden planted until yesterday. We've had snow on our yard within the last three weeks. Late start.

The result of the abiding winter is nature has just begun to wake up. The evergreens are shooting out their new season's growth. I've been noticing again how even the most prickly evergreens, like the Colorado Blue Spruces, are so soft and fern-like in their new shoots. Pretty, and very soft and agreeable, in addition to being fragrant. We still get glimpses of Eden in the Spring, even in this fallen world.

Just before dark takes over the neighborhood each night the quail are hooting to get back together again. They get separated during their daily foraging and then want to regroup as a family before nighttime slumber. They will get in a tree or on a rooftop and begin to hoot. They make a funny little call. You can tell by the answer coming back which ones belong together. They hoot, get closer, re-call again, get closer, until finally they wind up together and quiet.

Deer have been wandering through the neighborhood all winter long. They seem to be clearing out now because the valley is getting warmer, and there's new growth on the foothills from the melting snow. The mountain tops are still under many feet of snow, so the deer won't really return to the high ground until another month or so.

There's an order to all this stuff. Wild and uncontrolled nature is organized, orderly, intelligent and the animal kingdom is divided into families. They feel joy at their companionship with one another as they fill the measure of their creation.

I am grateful each night, too, as my family gathers together to see each of us has made it through the day safely. There's a Divine hand that can be seen in family life. Even when there is difficulty and disappointment, the family is tied together by God and nature.

COMMENTS:

Taylor · JUNE 6, 2010 AT 5:20 PM

Loved it.

You said the equinox is coming soon in the first line. Did you mean solstice?

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 6, 2010 AT 5:29 PM

Taylor: Yes. Good catch.

JUNE 6, 2010

Preaching the Gospel to all Who are Here

When I was over missionary work for my stake we would meet with the Mission President quarterly. The "Spanish Language Initiative" was where the primary missionary success was taking place in an area from Idaho to Wyoming and throughout Utah. The justification for the Spanish Language Initiative was rather an excuse. The stated reason was: "Can you imagine what will happen to the home base of the church with so many moving in if there isn't an effort made to convert them?"

Criticism has been leveled at the church for the eagerness with which the missionaries are being sent to teach illegal aliens. There are full time Spanish language missionaries being called to teach all over the United States. My wife has a friend living in Texas whose son was recently called to a Spanish language mission in Pocatello, Idaho.

Criticism has been based upon the Article of Faith which states we believe in “honoring, obeying and sustaining the law.”

The criticism is that there is some hypocrisy in seeking out and baptizing those who are illegal. The process seems to be lawless rather than sustaining the law.

At one point the church announced that law enforcement officers, judges and State prosecutors would no longer be called to be Bishops or Stake Presidents because it presented a conflict of interest for them to be a presiding church official over those who they were required to enforce the law. I do not know if that policy still exists, but it was the policy for some time while I was on the High Council.

I’ve thought the church’s position was poorly articulated and deserving of criticism. The church ought to make a well-publicized statement justifying what is happening by adopting a straight-forward explanation that everyone can understand and agree is true. I wish they would announce the following, or something close to the following, as their reason for the Spanish Language Initiative:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has an obligation to proclaim the Gospel. We believe in inviting all to come to the Gospel and be baptized. We would preach the Gospel to anyone, regardless of their race or nationality, wherever situated. Today there are millions of people welcomed into the United States by a national government that has refused to enforce any significant deterrent to cross-border crossing. Although such entry is nominally “illegal,” even the current President of the United States, the country’s chief law enforcement official, has proclaimed it is in the best tradition of the American people to welcome immigrants to the country. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is

not a law enforcement agency. It is powerless to make or enforce any immigration law or policy. If the national government does not prevent migration into the United States, we believe it is altogether appropriate to offer all who will receive the Gospel an opportunity to be taught and baptized here, just as we would do for the same people if they were located in another country.

This puts the responsibility upon the Federal government, where it belongs. It shows the church is powerless to affect the outcome of the migration. It also avoids the “can you imagine what it would be like if we didn’t work to convert them” excuse, and puts it into a positive and reasonable light.

I do not think the church’s actions deserve criticism. I do, however, think they ought to be more forthright about justifying and defending the effort to convert those whose presence here is nominally illegal. There’s nothing wrong about preaching to such people.

COMMENTS:

AV · JUNE 6, 2010 AT 9:25 AM

You make a good point, this immigration problem should be placed upon the Federal Government.

But I sense that many people are more concerned with the ‘worthiness’ issue of these so-called illegal converts & members to even join the Church.

But the way I see it is that the current immigration laws we have, even if they were enforced, are unconstitutional. For it should not take 10–20 years to gain access legally to our country. My ancestors 100 years ago were just allowed to walk off the boat & live & work wherever they wanted & were given citizenship as time went on.

I don’t believe God or our Founding Fathers would want us to make it so hard & take so long for immigrants to come here, as our present laws do.

Thus, I do not believe Heavenly Father considers good self-supporting immigrants as 'illegal', at least not according to 'his laws', which are always 'supreme' to any that men may make. Our laws must be just & fair to really be legal, according to God. Otherwise God does not obligate us to usually follow them. Thus I believe these immigrants are worthy & even 'legal' in God's eyes.

Of course, what I do have a problem with & who I would wonder about their 'worthiness' & consider 'illegal', are those who come here (or any US citizen here) & take what is not there's to take (even that which is not the governments to even give) & that which they have not paid for like education, food, medical, etc. or those who commit crimes & do not respect our good laws. These people are in a different group than the good immigrants that come as my Ancestors did, who are willing & able to take care of themselves & work hard to support & better themselves & our country.

Steve · JUNE 6, 2010 AT 4:39 PM

You used the phrase nominally illegal. I guess the sense of this is that it is not really illegal or trivial at best.

I think the experience in Arizona, for example, shows that the problem of illegal immigration is not trivial, but real and potentially deadly, both in a physical sense and in the financial one.

Regardless if the one who nominally occupies the seat of the president enforces the law or not, it is still a law. And should missionaries be baptizing those who are known law breakers before they repent of their wrong doings – in other words at least leave the country?

Steve

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 6, 2010 AT 5:29 PM

That's the whole issue. Since the Church CAN'T enforce the law, and the national government won't; the burden to forge a checker-work attempt to compensate for a national failure really should not be shouldered by the Church.

JUNE 6, 2010

D-Day

On this morning 66 years ago my father landed on Omaha Beach in the first wave of the invasion. He was a combat engineer, with the responsibility to blow up obstacles on the beach to let the tanks and equipment move about unimpeded. The battle, however, changed plans. He and everyone else there that morning needed to focus on the incoming fire and staying alive.

It didn't matter that the obstacles were left. No tanks arrived on Omaha Beach that day. The explosives were better used to clear away a path to the German emplacements on the top.

As my father was dying, nearly 50 years later, he wondered why his life was spared when so many of his friends died that day. A few years later when *Saving Private Ryan* was released it very much reminded me of my father.

I think of him every June 6th. It seems more clearly a day tied to him than either his birthday on February 20th or the day of his death November 20th. What a great man he was. Possessed with profound insight, tempered by the things he suffered, living in obscurity, quick to laugh, never angry and capable of giving wise advice. In all my life, I only saw him angry one time. But I think I heard him laugh every single day; oftentimes at himself.

JUNE 7, 2010

If You Love Me, Receive Instruction from Me

John Hall and I were recently discussing the Gospel of John. He pointed out that Christ's words: "If you love me, keep my commandments" appear several times in the Gospel. He thought the

words could be better translated to mean: “If you love me, act as a sentinel (or guard) ready to receive further instructions from me.”

The current King James translation was based on the recognition that the canon of scripture had closed and revelation had ended. Therefore they took those things into account as they rendered their translation.

For us, at least in theory, the canon of scripture is not closed. Also, in theory, revelation is still possible.

There is an effort underway to redefine revelation and circumscribe its acceptable bounds. The coming view will be that revelation should only be expected which confirms that the church’s authorities are speaking for God, and anything direct from God has ended. God has finished His work, and now given His authority to man (2 Ne. 28:5). If Nephi was a prophet (and he was) then that will become the church’s position at some point.

It is our responsibility to receive revelation. It is also our responsibility to keep the narrowing boundaries as wide open as possible. Whatever the line is, you should live at that line to prevent it from drawing even tighter.

If you love Christ, stand as a sentinel ready to receive further instructions from Him.

CHAPTER 5
Alma 13

JUNE 7, 2010

Cite Your Minds Forward

A few days ago I directed you to Alma 13. I suggested that it be read without preconceptions and you let the words just acquire whatever meaning they appear to have in the chapter itself. Some of you have begun that process and have raised questions. I thought I might revisit the chapter to open up a few ideas for those who haven't begun the exercise.

Here's the first verse:

And again, my brethren, I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children; and I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people.

Why “cite your minds forward?” Especially since it was talking in the past tense? Why is this idiom in the verse? How would Joseph Smith know about this kind of word usage? (Perhaps this is an indication the text is translated from another language rather than being composed in English.)

Why “the Lord God ordained priests?” Were they ordained by God indeed? Was there another man involved in conferring that authority? Did it necessarily come from God alone? What priesthood is it that is referred to?

What is “after his holy order?” Is this Aaronic? Is this Melchizedek? Or is this something different? There are three orders of priesthood, the third being “Patriarchal” as explained in *Beloved Enos*. Which one is this verse referring to of the three?

What form of priesthood is “after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son?” Are all three? Or is there one that is distinguished by being uniquely after the order of His Son?

What “things” are these people to “teach.. unto the people?” Is there something associated with what is contained in the chapter that alone is the province of those possessing the “holy order” to teach? If so, why is that?

What is going on here? Is this deeper doctrine than we normally encounter? If so, why has it eluded our attention? If our preconceptions have blinded us to this material, then why would we want to ever read scripture through the blinding lens of the notions we have inherited? Is this part of the wicked “traditions of our fathers” that the Book of Mormon warn us against?

Oh ye Gentiles...

Now I’m missing the weekly Book of Mormon class I taught for so many years. There I could go ahead and discuss all the answers. My home was too small for the crowds and I wasn’t going to export it to a less sacred place where the Spirit would not permit me to teach. Well, the questions are better than merely giving answers, as I have said before. If you can learn to ask good questions, then you can go to the Lord and get the answers. Who knows where that dialogue will lead you.

JUNE 8, 2010

Alma 13:2

Continuing with Alma 13:2:

“And those priests were ordained after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption.”

Now this is important stuff here. We are really being told something quite amazing. Look at these words!

To be “ordained after the order of his Son” it must be done “in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption.” Did you get that?

Think about these words carefully.

The “manner” must be in a way which will let people know or understand how to “look forward to His Son for redemption.”

So, let’s clear away the institutional garbage that surrounds our thinking.

Christ WAS NOT ordained by being sustained by a congregation.

Christ WAS NOT ordained by having hands laid upon Him by another man.

Christ DID NOT carry a credential with Him or a certificate of priestly authority.

Christ WAS NOT part of the established priestly hierarchy.

We have no record of His ordination at all. We only have established, priestly class officials asking Christ about where He got His authority from. And we have Christ simply refusing to answer their question.

Christ showed that He in fact held priestly authority by His demonstration of power. More importantly, He taught profound truths with such passing simplicity and convincing prose that His

message necessarily came from a higher source. In word and deed He put on display His power and authority.

But what is the verse in Alma speaking about? How does one become “ordained” in such a manner that people learning of it will then know how to look forward (or back) to the Savior and understand His redeeming power?

Do they put on display, by the words and precepts they speak, the profound simplicity and convincing prose of the angels themselves? Are they able to show their ordination by speaking words of eternal life, as He did?

How does this “ordination” acquire or show redeeming power?

How can obtaining authority by ordination to this priesthood be something which will let people know their Lord better?

What is really going on for those who hold actual priestly authority, being ordained in the required manner? Do they acquire more than administrative authority from an institution? Do they receive power from on high? Can you get it anywhere other than from on high? Is this why the power of the priesthood is inseparably connected with the powers of heaven? What have we Saints been doing? Practicing? Holding ourselves forth to possess?

Where can we get this ordination after the order of the Son of God?

Forget what you’ve been taught. Read the Book of Mormon and remove the condemnation under which this people labor. Really study its words. They are alien to your prejudices and presumptions. But they ARE in fact the words of life. You really can get closer to God by abiding its precepts than through any other book! Amazingly, this is one of the very precepts which necessarily forces you to draw closer to God!

What a marvelous work and a wonder! Will the wonder never cease? (Only if you reject it.) It is a font of living water which constantly renews and floods forth more and new information endlessly, until at last we are also caught up in the visions of eternity and know our Lord. Then we needn't ask another to know the Lord, for all shall know Him.

I labor to help you know Him; to bring you to Him. The primary means to accomplish that remains the Book of Mormon. But only if you actually let it speak to you and reveal its many hidden secrets.

I'm only asking questions here. You'll have to figure out the answers.

JUNE 8, 2010

Alma 13:3

And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such.

It is too much! Too great of words for men to possess! Consider what they refer us to. Called and prepared FIRST! From the foundation of the world!

So here priesthood has its beginning before this world even was organized. There is a necessary link between those hallowed days and power here. No person has authority here unless it was first obtained there.

How was it obtained first—before the foundation of the world?

It was because of the foreknowledge of God. And what was God's foreknowledge based upon? Their "exceeding faith and good works!"

How can a person have "faith" when they stand in the presence of God? Do they now have knowledge? This was before the mortal estate, right? If so, then how can there be faith? What good works were involved?

Then, too, the "faith" and the "good works" were done as a result of the person having been "left to choose between good and evil." Now this is surprising! You mean that before Adam partook of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (i.e., before the foundation of the world) that some people had already obtained a knowledge of good and evil, been tempted, exhibited good works and acquired faith? How so? When and where did they do that? What does that tell us about them? Is this why Joseph said there were "sons of God who exalted themselves to be gods before the world was made?" (*TPJS* p. 375). When and where and how did they do this? And was this required for any person to be able to claim they now have priestly authority here? Or is it only those who have the "holy order after the Son of God?" Is there something about these men's "holy calling" that distinguishes them from others here? If so, what is it? Who are these men? Are they always going to be from unlikely sources and places, so that people can know how to recognize the Lord?

Then, too, we have them in a class of people who had been through a "preparatory redemption" already. What does that mean? What does it imply? How did they qualify? How long have these souls been working on the process of redemption and thereby

qualify through their faith and good works to hold authority in this estate? Who are they?

Oh, now my head is spinning. Can this doctrine really be true? Why do we know so little about it? Why did Joseph talk about it, but we have simply nothing to add? Indeed, we deny it exists... why is that?

This is certainly an interesting chapter. Fearsome and interesting. What a threatening, terrible, majestic, holy and challenging book this Book of Mormon turns out to be after all.

COMMENTS:

JDS · JUNE 8, 2010 AT 5:56 PM

Thank you for helping to “raise the bar.” Recently a friend who works in the missionary department shared a problem missionaries are experiencing worldwide. They seek out and find scattered Israel; they teach the “Preach My Gospel” discussions, yet scattered Israel is saying, “I already serve my neighbors, my community, and my church; I already believe in being good and kind always; why then do I need to join your church?” It seemed that he believed the problem lies with scattered Israel rather than with the church.

There are really good people out there who are filled with the spirit of truth and live according to that spirit. I proposed the idea that unless Israel’s light far exceeds scattered Israel’s light, we will not be very attractive to scattered Israel. I suggested there exists a dire need to “raise the bar” and to come out from under condemnation as a church.

Christ prophesied of those who would follow Him who would raise the dead, heal the sick, cause the blind to see, who would walk on water, cause rivers to move out of their courses, or mountains to flee, and who would do all things He did and even greater. I asked my friend if he knew of anyone in the church today who fulfills this prophecy, or if we consider this prophecy to be a folk tale or a feel-good story. We might well ask ourselves the same questions Joseph Smith asked the Father as he was seeking truth and we may hear the Father say about

LDS Today, “They draw near unto me with their lips, yet their hearts are far from me and they deny the power thereof.” Who truly possesses the power of the priesthood today? Very few.

Finally I suggested that until we truly “raise the bar” and go over that bar ourselves and teach others to do the same, our power to attract scattered Israel will be severely limited by our anemic state.

I believe we must readjust our hope, beliefs, and applied faith sufficiently that the norm is to become the very people Christ spoke of. Thank you for leading a discussion to this end.

I’m enjoying a re-read of *the Second Comforter* and am taking copious notes, seeking to better raise the bar in my own life. I so much appreciate this book.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 8, 2010 AT 6:09 PM

The only real reason to become LDS is doctrine. If we don’t offer doctrine which will save, then we are just another church.

We are de-emphasizing doctrine at our peril. Eventually people will just drift away. Every one of us will drift away in search of doctrine which will save us.

The whole “public relations” effort is a profound waste of time and resources. It is taking us downward in every meaningful way. It will continue to do so until we rediscover doctrine and begin to proclaim the truth again.

JUNE 9, 2010

Alma 13:4

And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren.

The result of what went on before is the reason for the ordination or calling. That is, “thus they have been called.” Meaning

that all of what went into the earlier experiences i.e., being left to choose between good and evil, and having chosen good, having “faith” and good works, is the reason for their ordination. These souls are not novices. They are not getting authority here for the first time. They come with power from beyond this earth, bringing it with them to this earth. They qualified before and elsewhere.

All of this is “on account of their faith.” All things are obtained through faith. That is explained in the Sixth Lecture, quoted here. Faith is a principle of power. It is capable of making things happen. There must be a connection between faith and power; between faith and priesthood.

Others reject the Spirit of God and, therefore, do not have this power. These others may claim to have authority, but they do not really receive power from the Spirit of God. They are animated by a different source.

What, then, causes someone who has a little authority “as they suppose” (they don’t really have it, you see), to attempt to use that pretense to control and dominate others? The answer is contained in revelations already in print. It is their pride, their insecurities, the need to control, to be praised and celebrated, the need to gratify their vain ambition. These are character flaws. They cover up these flaws by claiming to have priestly authority from God (D&C 121:34-44).

They are the world’s Pharaohs, not the world’s Abraham’s. Their hearts are hard, their minds blind, they do not hear the Spirit of God, and therefore none of the powers of heaven are with them. This was/is their choice. They could have had the same privilege. But, alas, they prefer instead their own aggrandizement. They prefer monuments built with their names engraven on them. There is no message of truth and hope coming from them. Their words (the

only things which really endure), will fall to the ground unfulfilled. They will not be remembered. They will return without a saved soul.

What stunning doctrines we have stumbled upon here! I'm getting worried about things as I look about. This Book of Mormon is alarming...

COMMENTS:

Kisi · JUNE 10, 2010 AT 7:43 AM

That is huge! What in the heck does it mean?

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 10, 2010 AT 4:07 PM

Patience. We'll get somewhere before we finish this.

JUNE 9, 2010

Alma 13:5-6

Or in fine, in the first place they were on the same standing with their brethren; thus this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would not harden their hearts, being in and through the atonement of the Only Begotten Son, who was prepared—And thus being called by this holy calling, and ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of God, to teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest—

So there wasn't some great advantage for these people who hold actual priestly authority. We learn that "in the first place they were on the same standing with their brethren." Where was that "first place?" Is it also "from the foundation of the world" referred to earlier?

What does it mean that they were "on the same standing with their brethren" while in that first place?

What was it about these who receive authority that qualified them to receive the “holy calling” from the foundation of the world? What does it mean that they “would not harden their hearts” in the first place? If they didn’t do it then, will they do it now?

Is foreknowledge about these individual’s qualifications based on prior performance? Can you determine that since they did not harden their hearts in the first place, they will not begin to harden their hearts now?

What about the “atonement of the Only Begotten Son, who was prepared” made them qualified? Did they accept Him there? Did they soften their hearts there toward Him? Are they capable of having redeeming faith in Him here because they first acquired it there?

Is all this necessary to have preceded ordination here? If it was not acquired there, can an ordination here have any effect?

What, then, do those who qualify do? What does it mean “to teach his commandments unto the children of men?”

Is there something different between teaching commandments on the one hand, and “that they [who are taught] also might enter into his rest” on the other hand? Are the two linked together? Is it necessary to both “teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest” to show such priestly authority? That is, can anyone, regardless of their true ordination to authority teach commandments? But does it take something more, some higher ordination in order to bring those taught “to enter into His rest?” If so, what is the difference? How can you recognize such teachings if they are ever put on display?

Did Joseph Smith exhibit such powerful teachings?

Did Enoch?

Did Melchizedek? Abraham? Elijah? Elisha? Nephi? The Brother of Jared? Enos? Others?

Do we see that today? If so, where? Does anyone have the audacity to presume they can bring another soul back to the Lord's rest? Maybe Joseph Smith's comment on this point is appropriate:

The things of God are of deep import and time and experience and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind O man if thou wilt lead a soul into salvation must search into and contemplate the darkest abyss and the broad expanse of eternity, thou must commune with God. (DHC Vol. 3, p. 295)

I'd like to meet such a man. They seem to be rather infrequent residents of this fallen world....

I'm only asking those questions which arise in my own mind as I read these words. You'll have to figure out your own answers.

JUNE 10, 2010

Alma 13:7

The record continues in Alma 13:7:

This high priesthood being after the order of his Son, which order was from the foundation of the world; or in other words, being without beginning of days or end of years, being prepared from eternity to all eternity, according to his foreknowledge of all things—

Now we encounter comments that everyone seems to use about this priesthood. It is "without beginning of days or end of years." It is "from the foundation of the world."

It is "prepared from eternity to eternity." When did eternity end and mortality begin?

When does mortality end and eternity begin again?

What does the phrase "from eternity to eternity" really refer to?

Do we pass “from eternity” then back “to eternity” as part of this mortal experience?

What went on before, back in the first “eternity?” We read elsewhere of this peaceful existence during “millennial” conditions, which end with rebellion, disputes and a war. Was Satan loosed in an earlier eternity after some season of peace to stir the hearts of men to anger one with another? (See Rev. 20:7–9). Was he cast out to hell, or the Celestial Kingdom, where we presently reside? What went on? How often would the Lord have gathered us as a hen gathers her chicks, but we would not be gathered? (I suppose His asking and the lack of an answer implies a great number.)

What is it about what went on before, in the earlier “eternity,” that allows God to possess His perfect “foreknowledge of all things” now?

What is this strange doctrine and the implications which flow from them? Was Joseph Smith trying to tell us this in the later Nauvoo talks? (Maybe we should read them again...)

How is one to take it all in? How is the priesthood tied to this prior eternity? Why do we get side-tracked into the subject of “from eternity to eternity” when we learn about this endless priesthood which is without beginning of days or end of years?

What is really going on? How can we learn of the truth? Is there no prophet who can declare it to us?

The suspense is killing me. I’m hoping to get answers. I’m hoping you want them too. I’m confident if you ask the Lord, He will answer you. He intends to pour out knowledge upon the heads of the Saints. If we will stop making others accountable for what we learn, and go to Him to receive what He offers, by the power of the Holy Ghost you may know the truth of all things. I read that somewhere...But the words are mine, now.

COMMENTS:

David Christenson · JUNE 10, 2010 AT 8:58 AM

Strange Doctrine indeed. Not sure we will find the answers in the next month's *Ensign*. :).

Another observation:

It is not just eternity to eternity...but from eternity to ALL eternity. A good question to ask would be...What is the difference between eternity and ALL eternity?

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 10, 2010 AT 2:13 PM

Randy has left a new comment on your post "Alma 13:7":

From David Christenson (the institute instructor) he mentions that instead of eternity being like "this ring" (a wedding band). It is more like a slinky :) without beginning of days or end of years. Something like "One Eternal Round" being one full round of the slinky, but never coming back on it's self.

The mysteries of Godliness leave me in awesome wonder! and some interesting quotes....

There is no change in the eternal and everlasting priesthood. It is without beginning of days or end of years. It is from eternity unto eternity. By the power of that priesthood God, our Eternal Father, has organized all worlds and redeemed all worlds that have ever been redeemed. (Wilford Woodruff, *Deseret Weekly News* 38:450, March 5, 1889)

The priesthood of the Son of God is from everlasting to everlasting; it is without beginning of days or end of years, or time. It is without father, without mother, without descent; it is the power by which the worlds are and were created and the power by which they are now held in existence and by which all that are yet to come will be organized, governed, controlled and sustained. (Brigham Young, *Brigham Young* by Nibley, p. 453, October, 1869)

[Reposted by the CM because I deleted it on accident]

JUNE 10, 2010

Alma 13:8

Now they were ordained after this manner— being called with a holy calling, and ordained with a holy ordinance, and taking upon them the high priesthood of the holy order, which calling, and ordinance, and high priesthood, is without beginning or end—

The manner of such person's ordination is described but-

What does it mean to be "called with a holy calling?" Is there something about the nature of this "calling" that is different from an interview and being "found worthy of advancement in the priesthood" as we commonly see? What is a "holy calling" anyway? Why does this kind of priestly calling get described exclusively as "holy" by its nature? Is there some contact with God required (who is the source of all holiness) as part of this "holy calling?"

Then we have the description of their ordination. What does it mean to be "ordained with a holy ordinance?" Does our practice of laying on hands, conferring the Aaronic Priesthood and ordaining to the office of Priest answer to this description? What is the "holy ordinance" that is done to confer this priesthood?

Can we automatically rule out the entirety of Aaronic and most of the Melchizedek priesthood offices when we see the words: "taking upon them the high priesthood of the holy order?" Is there some office we are aware of which is appropriately described as "taking upon them the high priesthood of the holy order?" Think about that for a moment.

If this is a "holy calling" and it results in the person receiving it "taking upon them the high priesthood of the holy order" isn't this something perhaps quite different from what we do to disseminate the priesthood? And if all the Aaronic Priesthood and most of the

Melchizedek Priesthood offices are not what we would appropriately call “the high priesthood of the holy order” then are we talking about either of these two commonly held priesthoods anyway?

Then we have the interesting addition that the “calling, and ordinance, and high priesthood, is without beginning or end” for those involved. That is, without reference to mortality. It was held before coming here, it will endure after leaving here. It is “endless” in the sense it comes “from eternity to eternity” as set out in the preceding verse.

This is potentially quite different from the manner in which we practice priestly ordinations in the church today. I suppose that some will want to confine all this description to our practices. They are free to see it in that way if they choose. I’m just asking if it is more likely that the words have a different meaning than we have associated with them before. If that is possible, then perhaps we ought to be asking the Lord to inform us more about the matter, rather than presuming we already possess what is being described here.

It may just be that our hopes for some great, eternal reward hinge upon getting to the bottom of this matter. It may just be that God’s control over and involvement with the “holy calling” and “holy ordinance” of having the “high priesthood after the Son of God” is immediate and direct. It may be that this “holy ordinance” will only come from that God who employs no servant at the gate, but is Himself the gatekeeper (2 Ne. 9:41). Wouldn’t that be wonderful. Think about it—no flawed process. No fooled bishop or stake president letting someone obtain an office for which they are completely unsuited. It sort of makes sense.

COMMENTS:

The Zang Family JUNE 12, 2010 AT 2:15 PM

JDS — Thanks for sharing, that was uplifting. Why are so many scared of the doctrine of translation? It is made fun of so often.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 12, 2010 AT 10:19 PM

There are a lot of people who write about the subject without really understanding what the subject involves. The result is a whole lot of error gets incorporated into people's thinking. It would be a lot better if those who know nothing about translation would not try to expound on the subject. I haven't tried to straighten the subject out, and may not. But it is apparent to me there is a great deal of confusion about the topic.

JUNE 11, 2010

Alma 13:9

“Thus they become high priests forever, after the order of the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, who is without beginning of days or end of years, who is full of grace, equity, and truth. And thus it is. Amen.”

Several things about this formulation are interesting. Most interesting is the closing declaration, “**And thus it is. Amen.**” It is iconic. It is as if the statement were an authorized, serious message, intended to be accompanied by the requisite formalities to let the reader know that this is serious stuff. This is “most holy.” This is not just a passing description. It holds terrible, eternal significance. So the material that preceded it holds important keys to understanding. Important warnings and knowledge. Perhaps, as a result of the concluding punctuation, we should be very, very careful about the words that preceded it. [This is why I'm conducting this exercise.]

Now look at the beginning—

“Thus they become...” These individuals have become something. The “high priests” about whom this material has been writ-

ten have been in the process of becoming something holy from before the foundation of the world. This is pre-earth or pre-mortal existence stuff. The history, or background leading up to finding a holy high priest in mortality is eons in the making. It goes back to before this world had been reorganized.

“..high priests forever...” This priestly authority and holy order is not mortal. It is without beginning in this mortal phase of existence.

Now comes the formula of the authority: “after the order of the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, who is without beginning of days or end of years, who is full of grace, equity, and truth.” Look at it in pieces.

- After the order of the Son
- After the order of the Only Begotten of the Father
- After the order of Him who is without beginning of days or end of years
- After the order of Him who is full of grace
- After the order of Him who is full of equity
- After the order of Him who is full of truth.

What does it mean to be “begotten” of the Father? (Psalms 2:7).

What does it mean to be a “son” of the Father? (1 John 3:1-3).

What does it mean to be full of “grace?” (D&C 93:11-20).

What does it mean to be full of “equity?” (Proverbs 2:9).

What does it mean to be full of “truth?” (D&C 93:24).

This is interesting. What are we to make of such “holy” men who are “high priests after the order of the Son of God?”

Do you think we make a man such a thing by sustaining him in Ward, Stake and General Conferences? Can we make one of them at all?

If we never realize who they are, does that mean they don't exist? Does it mean they weren't ordained before the foundation of the world?

If they come, minister in obscurity, never hold high office and never have a single building at BYU, BYU Hawaii or BYU Idaho named after them, are they any less?

Does our recognition of them make them any more?

Are they here to be recognized? Are they here just to teach so that others may be brought back to God by learning His commandments and enter into His rest?

This is quite different than what I've been told in Gospel Doctrine class. It is beginning to look and feel a lot like what Joseph Smith was saying right at the end in the Nauvoo period. I wonder why we neglect this today?

JUNE 11, 2010

Alma 13:10

Now, as I said concerning the holy order, or this high priesthood, there were many who were ordained and became high priests of God; and it was on account of their exceeding faith and repentance, and their righteousness before God, they choosing to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish;

Immediately following the formula, the explanation continues that "many" were able to become ordained as such "high priests of God." But the way they did this was through several specific actions.

They had "exceeding faith." What do you suppose "exceeding faith" means? Why not "faith?" What is the difference between "faith" and "exceeding faith?"

They went through "repentance." So we know they made the same kinds of mortal mistakes as we do. They experience the bitter

and then are able to prefer the sweet. They knew what it was like to feel the bitterness of hell, because they felt the sting of sin. So they repented. These great souls are NOT perfect, after all! They “repented” because they didn’t do it right the first time. What a refreshing idea. They weren’t fake. They didn’t feign virtue. They had failing. They were filled with life, made errors, and needed to repent. They were not immune to the circumstances of this fallen world.

More importantly, do the terms “exceeding faith” and “repentance” go together? That is, do you necessarily have to possess “exceeding faith” in order to become one who fully “repents?” If so, why? How is it done? This may be an important clue to the process of “keeping the second estate” and “proving” that you are ready to move on. Perhaps it is in this manner that some will then have “glory added upon their heads forever” (Abr. 3:26), and in another cycle of existence and eternal progression then also join in the ranks of those belonging to the “holy order after the Son of God.”

These called persons are, despite everything, “righteous before God.” God measures differently than do we. Being “righteous before God” may not mean the same thing we think “righteous” means. We want outward signs, symbols, dress, grooming and conformity. God looks at the intent of the heart.

Interestingly, they “choose to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish.” What do you suppose that means? First, they “repent,” then they “work righteousness.” Because of this, they do not “perish.” So do these things all go together? Can a person “repent” but then not “work righteousness?” Does a person have to “repent” and “work righteousness” in order to not “perish?”

COMMENTS:

Taylor · JUNE 11, 2010 AT 3:45 PM

Denver:

What do you mean by “another cycle of existence and eternal progression”?

Another cycle? Is it repeating?

Doug · JUNE 11, 2010 AT 7:14 PM

So just to be clear... if these things happened before the foundation of the world, it would necessarily mean that there was another probation, possibly similar to this one... in order to have faith, good works and repentance. A previous poster said that it could be faith in the Plan, but that doesn't make sense when there is repentance involved.

But then you said, “They were filled with life, made errors, and needed to repent. They were not immune to the circumstances of this fallen world.

So now I'm confused. Is it this fallen world or another... or the same at an earlier time??

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 11, 2010 AT 7:40 PM

They obtained it before coming here. They came here, sinned again, repented, realized who they were, and obtained the high priesthood after the order of the Son of God. They renewed who they were, resumed the authority they held before, and entered into the Lord's rest. Then began to seek and bring others into that same rest.

Kisi · JUNE 12, 2010 AT 10:09 AM

I notice that Alma and all the sons of Mosiah spent the rest of their lives preaching repentance and bringing souls to Christ, but I believe this to be the fruits of repentance and not the process. Alma was “born again” while still lying paralyzed on his cot. King Lamoni, his household, his father — the big King of the Lamanites, and all his household were baptized by fire and the Holy Ghost while lying on the floor of their homes in what looked like comas or death. They were forgiven and

maybe even entered into the Lord's rest before they had any chance to make restitution.

Having been forgiven, though, it was their greatest desire to share what they had received with everyone they could, and they all spent the rest of their lives in righteous service to God and His children.

I don't think we typically teach repentance correctly. But rather, we hold people hostage, waiting for the fruits of repentance from them as though the fruits are the price. Jesus paid the price. We show forth the fruits of His gift unto us.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 12, 2010 AT 10:45 AM

The church cannot forgive sin. Even when they are entrusted with judgment, it is carefully circumscribed so as to make it the Lord's and not theirs (3 Ne. 27:27). They DON'T have discretion and don't have power to forgive sin. That is the Lord's.

He forgives freely. Confess your sins and He is faithful to forgive. All that is required is real intent. The process is essentially immediate. Read the scriptures, the Book of Mormon in particular, and you see how immediate it is.

Fruits follow.

The church's use of the concept gives them the authority to exercise control and dominion and compulsion over others, it is true. But it does not grant them repentance. The Lord does that.

If a person feels compelled to confess their sins, it would be better to do that to a victim, accompanied with expressions of regret. Telling a bishop may only get your "permanent record" annotated. Which may in itself be a very good thing, but it isn't repentance.

That is not to say that a good, caring and loving priesthood leader can't help someone. I've known some great men who have helped others by using the church's processes. But in the end the forgiving comes from the Lord. And it needn't take long.

JUNE 12, 2010

Alma 13:11

“Therefore they were called after this holy order, and were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb.”

If you understand these phrases, this verse clarifies the matter.

Being called into this holy order requires a person to be more than a church member, or a follower, or a believer. They need to be “sanctified.”

“Their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb.” No small feat!

To have white garments is to have the blood and sins of your generation removed from you. To be purified. To be sanctified by the Lamb—removing from you, and taking upon Himself the responsibility to answer for whatever failings you have.

This is not ritual purity. This is purity in fact.

The person described by this phrase is qualified to stand in the presence of God without sin. Clean of all blood and sin—righteous forever. He is Christ’s, and Christ is the Father’s, and all that each of them will be is the same; for we shall see Him as He is, because we will be like Him. To be like Him is to be sanctified.

I can use the words, but I am powerless beyond that. This is more than you think it is. Words are inadequate to explain it. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered **into the heart of man** what great things the Lord has in mind by inheriting these promises. Indeed, to receive an understanding is **to cease to be a man and become something else altogether**. A stranger and sojourner here, but a resident with God in another condition altogether. It is written by the Lord concerning them:

These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all. These are

they who have come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn. These are they whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are the judge of all. These are they who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood.
(D&C 76:66–69)

Such persons are still in this world, but they are also associated with innumerable others who are not present here. Although mortals associate with each other, these individuals obtain a higher order. They connect with a higher plane, because a more sure word has been spoken to them. As a result they belong to an order of holy priesthood. That priesthood is an order without beginning of days or end of years, from eternity to eternity. This new, higher order, when it occurs can be the spark through which heaven itself can return to the earth.

To others looking in from outside, these are words without meaning, or definition. To those who hold this priestly position, these words are a perfect fit. The gulf between the two positions is so great that even a common vocabulary won't make meanings connect.

We proclaim we “have the truth” but we do not preach it. We claim to have authority, but we have no power to redeem and exalt. We pretend it is unlawful to preach mysteries, yet Alma is preaching the deepest doctrines to the non-converted. If we preach the truth, it will attract those whose lives are empty. Why would they join us if what we offer is as trite and superficial as the false religions they already believe?

Is there no need to cry repentance to this generation with power and authority? With the tongue of an angel? To cry out as the Book of Mormon declares the message to the non-believing and skeptical?

It does raise some troubling concerns as we claim to be the “true church” but do not act the part as shown in these scriptures. How are we justified in masking the fullness, hiding the mysteries, putting away deep doctrine that will save, and still proclaim that we are the “only true and living church upon the earth?” Does “living” require us to create sons and daughters of God who are “come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn?” If so, why do we hear so little about it in our day?

I suppose our audacity springs from our history? If we have lost something vital that conflicts with our current understanding of the history that GUARANTEES us that we are perfect, and that we cannot be misled, then we wouldn't want to acknowledge that. Thank goodness for these guarantees. It does let us relax a bit, doesn't it? Broad and wide are the guarantees we have inherited. We don't need to worry about that narrow and strait fringe who rummage about in the mysteries.

COMMENTS:

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 12, 2010 AT 9:27 AM

I didn't want to put this in the above post, but I did want to put it up: When I wrote *The Second Comforter*, I was persuaded that the church's cautions about speaking of mysteries was well taken and I accepted their definitions. Now I am persuaded of the concept still, but I do not agree with their definitions. As a consequence, I believe *The Second Comforter* is a book which ought to be given to non-Mormon investigators. They ought to learn these truths as a part of investigating what our faith includes.

I believe the idea that deep truths must not be taught or understood is a sign of atrophy in faith, loss of light, and rejection of the fullness intended to be ours. It is a damnable notion because it will damn people who might otherwise be brought to partake of eternal life. Therefore I reject it.

That is not to say that my idea is right. But it is in conformity with the Book of Mormon, a text which condemns us as a church for failing to accept and do what it teaches. I am always willing to be persuaded that I am wrong about this question involving teaching doctrine freely, openly and often. But to my core I do not think I am. I have seen apostates return to activity, inactives become reactivated, and non-Mormons convert as a result of hearing doctrine. I have also seen those who drift away, lose interest and become critical when they are malnourished by doctrinal trivia in church manuals, classes, conferences and talks. Therefore my experiences tell me I am right.

Brian Bowler · JUNE 12, 2010 AT 10:18 AM

Denver,

Thank you for showing the Light of Christ on a Hill. I know its not easy to be a target for others, as I am sure you are, but I know that the Lord places watchman on the tower to cry repentance and to warn of the coming Storm.

I LOVE Doctrine, I love The Truth, and feel the same regarding teaching doctrine. To often member use the Milk before meat principle to keep everyone on a diet of Milk. How slow do we need to go? I have learned its important to keep a grasp on the "Basic" principles, as they steady the mind in times of difficulty, but the Deep Doctrine gives me much Hope and Energy to go on to Higher Ground. Without the Deeper knowledge I have received I would be REALLY Depressed, thinking I have all that life and eternity has to offer.

I am teaching the lesson in EQ tomorrow on the Life of Christ, Any Suggestions?

Hope you have a wonderful wet weekend, and thanks again for sharing your Testimony and the Light.

Brian B

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 12, 2010 AT 10:39 AM

If you haven't read *Come, Let Us Adore Him*, then I'd suggest you look at it. There are many things in that book which ought to find their way to the attention of all the Elders.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 12, 2010 AT 7:14 PM

DKD has left a new comment on your post "Alma 13:11":

I don't know lots about ancient alchemists. I think about them when words like "purity" are mentioned. The ultimate goal (as I understand it) of the alchemist was to transform the human body into an eternal being. The first step in the process was to see if they could transform lead into gold.... to do that, it was essential that they make the lead as pure as possible.

My battery is running low... gotta go for now. :)

JUNE 12, 2010

Alma 13:12

Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceedingly great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God."

If the earlier verse were not clear enough, the point is reiterated again here. These people are "sanctified by the Holy Ghost" as a result of "having their garments made white." They are "pure and spotless before God!"

This is the reason they can enter His presence. He has accepted them because just like Him, they are without sin. They were not perfected by their own acts. The earlier reference to their repentance makes that clear. They become pure and spotless before God because they have done what was asked of them to become clean. They have repented.

Now, measure the effects of their repentance. It has been so complete, so heartfelt, and deeply prized that they “could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence.” It is this notion that underlies the mistaken idea that once someone’s calling and election has been made sure they are required to suffer for their own sins, because they have knowledge they are redeemed. This is a twisted view, designed by the adversary to discourage those who might otherwise seek and find.

It is not that the atonement ceases to operate for the redeemed. The atonement continues to cover the on-going sins of these redeemed souls which arise from their foolishness, mistakes, errors of comprehension, and the things they don’t understand yet. Christ does not require them to do what they don’t know is a requirement yet. As the gentle and kind Lord, He will forgive all they do that is wrong, while He reveals through greater light and knowledge a higher path. As He unfolds to their understanding more light, they can measure their conduct according to that greater light.

As they gain greater truth and light they see things how they really are. Right and wrong are seen differently. What once was “right” is now wrong as greater light and truth is received. What was once “wrong” is now seen clearly, without all the errors of understanding held before.

The spotlessness is because their heart is right. They WANT to please their Lord. They WANT to be like Him. Sin is not tempting because it is contrary to Him whom they love.

The abhorrence they feel at sin is not within them. It is not the temptations they struggle against. That is not the meaning at all. It is what they see all about them. The lost souls are the object of their compassion and care. They WANT to have others redeemed and saved from this lost and fallen world. The fruit they tasted is some-

thing they desire to share. They WANT many, an exceeding many, to share with them in the hope that can be won by repentance.

They would shout “**flee from Babylon**” if they thought it would do any good. But shouting does no good among a darkened and benighted people. They may speak the words of an angel to others, but it is up to others to decide whether they will listen. It will be a still, small, quiet pleading they make to others. Within their entreaties will be found the Master’s words.

Many may claim to speak in His name, but only these few have the ability to speak with His approval. These are holy men, possessing words of eternal life. In them will be found truths that come from eternity and that will save to all eternity.

Only a few will listen. That won’t detract from the power of the message delivered by those who are after the holy order of the Son of God, for their words can save any who will listen.

What an interesting chapter we have found here. And we are only a dozen verses into it! We should press on.

COMMENTS:

the weaker sex · JUNE 13, 2010 AT 1:08 AM

Ms. Anonymous...it’s because we are ‘under the men’, ‘obedient to the men,’ a ‘helpmeet.’ We’re here to help ‘them’ meet ‘their’ potential. And just so we don’t get our noses too out of joint, occasionally they’ll give their condescending talks about how special a woman’s role is. Aarrgh!!!! This is something I’ve struggled with since I was a young teenager!

And yet, would you believe. I love and worship and have faith in God. Somehow, years ago, before I would even consider worshiping and following God, He let me know that we are valued and loved by Him as much as His sons. It was at that point that I let myself learn of and follow Him. It is sooo hard for me sometimes and yet I have to trust that He truly is no respecter of persons, that He truly is full of equity — without which He would cease to be God.

Men, you don't realize the great extra challenge we women carry in this church. (Not all women, to be sure; many of my sisters and friends don't seem to struggle with this.) What if everything in the scriptures referred to 'women?' What if the order of everything put your gender in 2nd place? Can you, even just a little, understand how we must humble ourselves — even more than you — to willingly follow such a plan? Can you imagine what it is like to 'cover your face,' submit, stand in 2nd place — especially in today's world, (where we don't have to), where women have emerged (seemingly) from oppression?

At the same time, I am so ashamed at how the female population today thinks it is okay to bash and belittle men and I have fiercely taught against that. I firmly believe that women are treated with more regard by the good men in this church than anywhere in the world. I look at the men who sit in the chairs at the head of our ward each Sunday with great love and feel that many of them would lay down their lives in our preservation. (I know my husband and sons would.) And yet, it is only with the firmest faith and HOPE and love in a God, whom has shown me, countless time, that He values and loves me, that I can continue to follow this path.

You would never recognize me in a congregation. You would never know I struggle with these feelings. I have seven children, serve and strive to bring my husband a joyful life, and am very respectful to my priesthood leaders. It is all because I love the Lord. (And the Lord in His GREAT mercy, kindness and wisdom, blessed me with a husband who holds me in the highest esteem.)

The problem is this fallen and blind world, filled with misunderstanding, in which we find ourselves; not, in God's plan. Of this I have to have hope.

The Weaker sex!

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 13, 2010 AT 8:05 AM

See how quickly someone who is not prepared to understand what I am teaching manages to distract others. See how quickly some rise to the bait.

The comment by the anonymous poster was put up by the comment moderator after first showing it to me. I wanted it up only to show how little some people comprehend these things, not to ask you to respond to charges of sexism. This is about sanctification and receiving the highest and holiest of messages. Not about sexism.

Critics are everywhere. They will dog every message, criticize every thought, mock every truth. They occupy a necessary role. You mustn't give any heed to them. Nor must you exclude them. They are entitled to hear the truth, and to put their reaction on display for others to witness as well.

All of that is good, even desirable. To allow them to distract you from your purpose is to become snared. Don't do that.

What I have to say will not be affected by such comments. But if those who have actually read what I've written, and prepared themselves to understand the message are so easily distracted, then perhaps it would be best to speak of less important matters here.

The comment was from someone who is not prepared to hear the message. So let the comment pass without any argument and stay on the much more important scriptural message.

the weaker sex · JUNE 13, 2010 AT 11:16 AM

Wow, Denver...that response came as a bit of a shock. I've tried to look at my comment and see what made you feel that I was 'taking the bait.' I realize that it's maybe because, at the end of the first paragraph I didn't make the distinction that these are 'misconceptions and perceived truths' that I, and many women have to learn to see through.

I know that you, personally, don't believe those things. I know many men who don't. I do, however, know many men who do believe these things. As a 16 year old, I had to listen to a seminary teacher expound several times that women's whole existence was their focus on their husband and that all their thoughts were to him. While men, on the other hand, needed several women to fulfill them. (I am not making this up!) I wouldn't go back the next year and didn't attend any seminary as a Senior. Also, while my dad was a gentle and great man,

he was a chauvinist. (ie, thinking it was a waste for girls to get any higher education.) Also, I had to listen to a brother who is a brilliant surgeon, ‘prove’ that men are superior because, in his words, ‘where are all the great women composers, artists, scientist’ and on and on. So, while many of you have not had these stumbling blocks to climb over and get to the bottom of, I have. And, I know many other women have too. I was attempting to bare testimony to “anonymous” that I know that God holds us in equal regard with His sons and that I have had to come to that knowledge so that I can get past the apparent inequality that is sometimes apparent in our church/world. (When I read anonymous comment, I felt like I could so understand what she was feeling. I wanted to reassure her. Obviously I did a poor job. But, I guess it doesn’t matter since it wasn’t real.)

Coming from where I’ve come from, and recognizing the truth and God’s love for His daughters, when I was once so angry about it all, has actually made me able to bare testimony often to other women who have felt like God doesn’t value them. Denver, while you are a great man and have been chosen by God to do a great work, maybe this is one area you can’t personally relate to.

Also, I’m truly sorry to anyone who was offended by what I wrote. It was just, an apparently poorly written, but honest attempt to explain how I’ve overcome some of the hurdles placed in my path.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 13, 2010 AT 11:37 AM

The topic is not sex related. To bring up the notion of improper sexual domination of women by men, which is a sin, as part of this discussion is to change the subject.

I agree with the issue. But it is not part of this discussion.

If that is more important than understanding the doctrine contained in Alma 13, then perhaps that ought to become a separate line of posts. It certainly can. But it is off-topic here.

Still, I’ve put up your comment.

Your pain, your legitimate complaints, your experience with disappointing “priesthood” leaders are all relevant. But not in the context of

discussing this doctrine of the holy order after the Son of God, with its attendant cleansing power. Unless, of course, it is as an example of how one fails to qualify. But the comment you made was not in that light.

JUNE 13, 2010

Alma 13:13

“And now, my brethren, I would that ye should humble yourselves before God, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, that ye may also enter into that rest.”

Think about what you’re reading here. Alma is essentially declaring himself as one of those possessing this priesthood because he is inviting others to enter into the rest which these people enjoy. That is, “come, join in the rest of the Lord.”

Alma has just revealed something profound about himself. It is subtle, but nonetheless true. In meekness he has proffered an invitation. He has not set himself up to be admired. He does not consider himself better. He has delivered the invitation to those to whom he is ministering, just as you would expect someone possessing this great, holy calling to do.

All the more remarkable is that he extends this invitation to an unredeemed, critical, reproachful audience of unconverted. He does not shield them from these great mysteries.

He does not flinch or hold back because it would be to “cast pearls before swine.” He knows where the line is drawn, for in the preceding chapter they have explained to an audience that there are mysteries withheld from the public (Alma 12:9–11). There are things kept from public knowledge and obtained only by heed and diligence. The line involves sacred ordinances, NOT higher knowledge. You give that and you make converts. You withhold

it and you blend into the morass of churches who teach merely a form of godliness without any power to save (*JS-H 1:19*).

It was the same during Christ's ministry. The line is drawn as sacred events turn to ordinances. They are withheld. NOT the teaching of deep doctrine.

So when we refuse to discuss "mysteries" and limit our correlated curriculum to an approved list of 52 subjects, recycling them endlessly, we are not in conformity with the pattern shown in the Book of Mormon. The "most correct book" condemns us. But, then again, so does the word of the Lord precisely because we are not following the Book of Mormon (*D&C 84:55-57*).

The highest form of acceptance and redemption is to have your calling and election made sure; to be washed and cleansed from sin every whit. Alma is preaching this to unconverted, investigating, potential converts. Today we won't even permit the subject to be raised in adult Sunday School, Priesthood, or Relief Society meetings because it is considered to be "too sensitive" for the members to consider. Have we, the Gentiles, rejected "the fullness of the Gospel?" (*3 Ne. 16:10*). Not as long as any of us (like salt or leaven) keep these doctrines alive.

If you want to know about this fullness and how to obtain it, then read the books I have written. That is what they are about. Alma was right! His message was true!

Let all come and partake. Everyone is invited. No institutional control should be used to prevent your search into this matter. It is right in the Book of Mormon. Though the institution may be condemned for neglecting it, you don't need to be.

So, let's turn to the next verse and see what wonders continue to unfold before our eyes....

JUNE 13, 2010

Staying On Topic

Straying from the topic is a universal defect in the blog/comment world. My goal, and it is a goal I take seriously, is to stay on topic. I don't wish to offend anyone. I am trying to be very careful and methodical in my discussion of doctrine and the Book of Mormon. I want to keep the topic limited to the scriptures/topics under scrutiny.

There are certainly worthwhile side issues. I just don't think this is the appropriate blog for them.

JUNE 14, 2010

Alma 13:14

“Yea, humble yourselves even as the people in the days of Melchizedek, who was also a high priest after this same order which I have spoken, who also took upon him the high priesthood forever.”

We have named a portion of the priesthood after Melchizedek. (It is not, however, the form which Melchizedek held. That is another topic I am not going to address here now. This area is complete mush in the minds of Latter-day Saint writers and commentaries. I can't straighten that out on this blog. I might take it up in a book and go through it methodically there.)

What is important is that the great events of Melchizedek's time began when people humbled themselves and accepted the teachings of this “high priesthood” holder and were, thereby, saved. Not only saved but also led into a fellowship which eventually turned into a City of Peace, or City of Salem, or Jerusalem, which was taken into heaven.

This prototype was so influential in the thinking of all who followed, that the high priesthood was named after Melchizedek. Even though he held Patriarchal Priesthood with its associated sealing power, he was the one after whom Melchizedek Priesthood was named in the form it was later transmitted which lacked sealing authority. (Again, another topic.)

What is important in this verse is the connection between the existence of the one holding this authority (Melchizedek), and a humble people who would accept and follow those teachings. The result of the combination of the two was that God came and dwelt among them.

This is a pattern that followed the previous pattern with Enoch. This was the pattern Joseph wanted to return through his teaching and ministry. Joseph wasn't able to accomplish it. We now hope to see it someday occur in the unfolding history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The most recent book on this subject, now on sale at Deseret Book (unfortunately a red-flag for me) urges the idea that the only Zion we should expect to see will come when the church president allows or directs it to happen.

This verse suggests what is needed is: 1) humble people willing to accept teaching from a high priest after the ancient order and 2) a person having that authority who will teach.

What does this do to our current accepted model?

If Zion is to return, how will it return? Will it mirror what the Book of Mormon is teaching here? Is the church president the one who will bring this gathering to pass?

Is the church president teaching doctrine about the fullness which will bring others into the rest of the Lord?

Has the church president brought a company into the Lord's presence? Attempted to do so? Taught or written about how that

will happen? (If so, can someone point that out to me so I can read the talk, get the book or watch the video.)

How can I know I would actually have followed Melchizedek and become a part of his city by what I do today? (I'd like to be among them, you see.)

COMMENTS:

DKD · JUNE 14, 2010 AT 9:34 AM

Denver, have you read *The Triumph of Zion* by John Pontius?

If so, any reactions?

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 14, 2010 AT 12:53 PM

DKD re: *The Triumph of Zion*

Yes. I thought it was OK. It persuades me that I will need to address the topic in a book at some point. There is a great deal of compounded misunderstanding which has plagued the subject. It will take some effort to sort it out. I'm not prepared to attempt that on a blog, however. There is too much to address.

The Zang Family · JUNE 14, 2010 AT 9:14 AM

Hi Denver, referring to your staying on topic post, were you speaking about how you plod along and leave some of the conversations to move forward to where you want to go with something? Just wondering if you're hoping us commenters to do the same thing, or if you appreciate when someone takes up a tangent and suggests a few thoughts or resources for others who are interested, or if you'd rather they do that somewhere else. For instance, there are some thoughts that Melchizedek was Eber, and not Shem like some think. That Paul wrote his letter to the "Hebrews" meaning Melchizedek Priesthood holders, and hence wrote so much about their protege, Eber, or Melchizedek (probably trying to get them to move beyond the preparatory Melchizedek Priesthood and to emulate the Patriarchal part instead). Also that Eber, Shem's great-grandson, gathered a people at the time of the confounding of the languages, prayed that their language would be preserved (like the

brother of Jared), and he became the official turning point for when the Patriarchal Priesthood phased out of being handed down by lineage and was opened up to others being adopted into it, like Abraham, for instance. Also, that Eber's wish of the Savior was that this be so and his faith was answered just like Enos's in your book with his request. Thus it was Melchizedek who came to Peter, James, and John on the Mount as Elias (not John the Baptist, because Melchizedek had a translated body with which to confer keys and John didn't at that point) and also the Elias who committed the gospel of the dispensation of Abraham in the Kirtland temple. So that is semi-related, but still a tangent as you say. Would you prefer that to be my last post of that sort to help keep your blog more focused? I'm tending to think you were just excusing yourself from taking up too many questions from these types of comments, but you don't mind them.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 14, 2010 AT 1:02 PM

Zang Family:

I think that's fine when a post provokes related discussions. Adds, even. And I do not have any problem with other ideas which contradict or offer a different explanation. I am just not going to respond. And I am concerned when a "hot-button" current cultural idea takes over and distracts from the topic. What you've said, however, is directly on-point and adds to the discussion. I've considered and rejected the idea you propose, but that doesn't mean that others haven't heard it, or won't be persuaded by it. It is all good, even worthwhile, when the material is related.

JUNE 14, 2010

Alma 13:15

"And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes; yea, even our father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all he possessed."

Abraham, father of the righteous, paid tithe to this Melchizedek. Not the reverse.

I've already commented that I believe Melchizedek (whose name means "king and priest") was in fact Shem. I believe those who disagree (McConkie and Joseph Fielding Smith) base their conclusion on the words of D&C 84: "Which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah;" (D&C 84:14). I believe the lineage referred to there is from the fathers who preceded Noah. But Noah was Shem/Melchizedek's father.

Abraham received the priesthood which had been promised to him by God, from Melchizedek. He (Abraham) already had the records of the fathers (Abr. 1:31). He already had the promise of priestly authority (Abr. 2:6-9). So the question should be asked as to why Abraham would need to be ordained by Melchizedek when the Lord was speaking directly to him and could have taken care of that directly. It is an important question. It is necessary to understand why the question should be asked and also what the answer is.

First, why would Abraham, who was directly in contact with God, be sent to another to receive the priesthood? What sense does it make the Lord would make him wait and send him to another? Particularly when Abraham had understanding that stretched into heavens and also possessed the records of the fathers, back to Adam. Why do that?

You should struggle with this question yourself. I feel like I'm robbing you by answering. Nevertheless, Abraham needed to be endowed and Melchizedek was set up to provide to Abraham the endowment. Therefore to receive the ordinance (Abraham was raised by apostates who had not provided that for him), he was

sent to Melchizedek from whom he received necessary ordinances. As long as the ordinances needed to be performed and there was an officiator there to accomplish it, the Lord sent Abraham to Melchizedek.

Abraham also received the accouterments of kingship that descended from Adam. Melchizedek was the reigning high priest on the earth, Abraham was to replace him at his passing, and Melchizedek had awaited the promised successor's arrival for years. When at last Abraham arrived, Melchizedek was able to provide ordinances, answer questions, minister as was needed, then turn over the accouterments of kingship and withdraw from this earth. No sooner had Abraham been prepared than Melchizedek and his city also withdraw to join Enoch's people.

Second, why were tithes paid to a great high priest who would shortly be translated? What need was there for tithing?

The form the tithing took was not a check or bank draft. It was animals, food and usable material. What was provided would be used in sacrifices, feasts, celebrations and decoration of the temple maintained by Melchizedek. In short, Abraham provided material through his tithing that could be incorporated into the celebrations to which he was invited and from which he derived his own blessing and endowment. He gave, in turn he received.

Now, if you do not understand the concept of meekness and its importance for one who should hold this holy priesthood, then you do not understand either Melchizedek or Abraham. Each was a minister who served others. Each was a faithful guide because neither sought to be greater than another. They were great servants, who could be trusted with great authority because they did not seek their own will. They were interested in following the Lord's will. Even at the price of great inconvenience and sacrifice to them.

They were willing to sacrifice all things, and were therefore called to the work.

COMMENTS:

Doug · JUNE 14, 2010 AT 3:47 PM

QUOTE: You should struggle with this question yourself. I feel like I'm robbing you by answering.

It is a struggle, an area of confusion for me. Denver said "Each was a faithful guide because neither sought to be greater than another."

But he also said (in a different post), "This is why no man can be the guide for another. Everyone must stand on their own, acquire their own oil for their lamp, and stop leaning upon others to lead them."

Which would mean that A) they were not "men," B) there is an exception when it has to do with transferring this type of authority, C) that second quote was taken out of context and is not applicable here, or D) something else.

Thanks for giving us the chance to struggle. My rusty brain is starting to creak back into shape (ever so slowly).

— Doug

DKD · JUNE 14, 2010 AT 4:42 PM

have you tried an air popper? :)

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 14, 2010 AT 5:14 PM

"Faithful guides" point to the Lord, use His words to convert, and put people directly in touch with Him through what they teach. No man can substitute. When men begin to put themselves between the Lord and the ones to whom they pretend to minister, they are no longer true messengers sent by the Father. They become lights unto themselves; which is no light at all.

Good analogies in some of these comments. (DKD just couldn't resist, though. But it made me smile.)

JUNE 15, 2010

Alma 13:16

Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his order, or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord.

Notice the shifting back to “ordinances” from the discussion of priesthood. What ordinances? What manner? Why would what happened with Melchizedek and Abraham be something pointing to the Son of God?

Why would such an ordination and ordinance always be something that would prepare people to understand and accept the Son of God?

How was it a “type” of the Son of God’s order?

What is this referring to in plain language? Is it that the ordinances will reveal a pattern that will unmistakably point back to the ministry of Christ? How?

What is there in conferring priesthood and endowing with understanding that points to Christ? Was Christ endowed with knowledge? Power? Authority? From on-high? When? What account do we have of it? Was it at His baptism when the voice of God declared, “thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” (which wording was deliberately changed during the Fourth Century Christological debates to read instead: “this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”)? How does this identify both the holder of this holy order of priesthood and confirm Christ’s ministry as the Son of God?

More importantly, why are these things not being taught to us today? This is such basic and important doctrine that Alma is

teaching it as introductory material to a potential group of converts. But as faithful members of the Church we aren't even familiar with them. What have we been doing with the Gospel we received?

Why was the "manner" something which would let those who learned about it know and identify the Lord?

Do we expect to follow Christ? If so, why aren't we anxious to learn about this holy order? Can we follow Him unless we do what is necessary to take upon us that same holy order? If so, then how are we to find it today? Who teaches about it?

It is interesting to read this chapter of Alma. It reinforces that the Book of Mormon is still being neglected. We cycle through it every four years. Perhaps we are still neglecting its true message? I think this chapter gets lumped in with three others and covered in a 50 minute class every four years. Maybe that is what is meant by "neglect." Oooops....

COMMENTS:

Steve · JUNE 16, 2010 AT 10:30 AM

Denver,

You wrote that the scripture we have was changed from "thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee". How do you know that?

Steve

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 16, 2010 AT 5:20 PM

Scriptures were altered in the Fourth Century because of the "adoptionist" arguments/heresy. For information about the form of the alterations, including that one, Bart Ehrman, a Christian researcher and scholar (not a Mormon) has written a book on the changes which these debates made. His book is titled:

The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament

It is available from Amazon. He uses this as one example of the change to the text, and shows how an underlying controversy directly caused the change to be made.

JUNE 15, 2010

Alma 13:17–18

Now this Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem; and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination; yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness; But Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore he was called the prince of peace, for he was the king of Salem; and he did reign under his father.

He was a king over people who had “waxed strong” in both “iniquity” and also “abomination.” Keep in mind that “waxing strong” means to be increasingly determined or committed. “Iniquity” is generally evil practice, but “abomination” involves the **religious justification** of wrongdoing. That is, something becomes “abominable” when it is motivated out of a false form of religious observance or is justified because of religious error.

The people to whom Melchizedek would minister were not simply in error, they were motivated by a false set of religious beliefs and errors. The result was that “they had all gone astray.” They were “full of all manner of wickedness.” This was a challenging audience for this man to minister to and try to convert to the truth.

Melchizedek began by “exercising mighty faith” in order to understand the truth and discern the difference between truth and error. Remember how difficult it is to be taught truth. It is more

difficult to learn truth than it is to perform miracles (3 Ne. 17:2–7). Despite this, Melchizedek was able to set aside all he beheld and through faith acquire an understanding of the truth for himself. Conferred upon him as part of this education was the priestly authority with which to minister to others.

He “did preach repentance unto his people.” This required him to expose the errors, show them they were involved in iniquity and to expose how their religious errors had made them abominable. This preaching is always most difficult because it confronts the audience with a challenge to their mistaken beliefs, and false religion. There is a risk of violence when this happens. People who entertain abominable religious practices are more often moved to violence than to repentance. The Lord was greeted with violence. So was Lehi, Isaiah, Nephi, Samuel the Lamanite, Abinadi, Peter, Paul, Stephen, James, Zacharias and too many others to mention. To their credit, and to Melchizedek’s, the preaching resulted in repentance.

The serious errors, iniquity, and abominations of these people did not prevent Melchizedek from establishing a Zion. These people were able to acquire “peace in the land” because of their repentance. As used here, however, peace means more than the absence of violence, it means the presence of the Lord.

The statement that he established peace as the King of Salem (Shalom means peace) and “he did reign under his father” is a play on words. Which “father” is being identified in the statement. Was it Noah, or Gabriel? (A man who would also be translated and have a ministry as the Lord’s herald before the birth of John the Baptist and Christ.) Or was the “father” Him who would declare that Melchizedek was “begotten” as a “son of God?” It likely meant both. But it is also likely written this way to let those who do not

understand what is being said to read it in a way that conceals the dual meanings. The scriptures are filled with such dual meanings.

What is hopeful for us today, is that no matter how much “iniquity” and religious error we engage in that results in our “abominations” in our pride and foolishness, we still may be candidates to receive something similar to what befell the City of Salem. The first step is to acquire the presence of this priesthood through individual repentance.

We envy these ancients. But we do nothing to try and follow the pattern revealed to us in their course. The Book of Mormon is a course in ancient failure and ancient success. We just do not respect what we have in that volume.

Well, let us press on...

JUNE 15, 2010

Denver's Books—In case you haven't read them yet

Someone mentioned in a comment (I don't remember who or which) that they had not read Denver's books nor did they know how to get them.

For anyone that applies to—here you go . . . Happy reading.

COMMENTS

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 16, 2010 AT 9:19 PM

You don't need to buy a copy if you live in Utah communities whose public libraries have copies. Check them first, before you make a purchase. I have driven from Sandy south to the border stopping and donating copies to libraries in Utah towns as I went down. Now the Salt Lake Library system wouldn't accept them (they have a complicated system that doesn't allow you to walk in a give them a book). Some of the town libraries said they would have to review them first, and I never followed up to see if they accepted them or not. However, they were

donated and I assume many of them are available free at the libraries to check out and read if you live in Utah.

Also I know both the Harold B. Lee and Law Libraries at BYU have copies which can be checked out. Therefore if you have access to those libraries you can read them there.

If the only choice is to buy a copy, then you should know that I do not profit from the sales. All royalties paid to me are donated to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Anonymous · JUNE 17, 2010 AT 3:02 PM

Denver you also named a local bookstore in an earlier blog that sold them and I can't remember which bookstore or find the blog. Amazon can't get copies here in time for Father's Day so would you remind me of the bookstore please.

Thank you

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 17, 2010 AT 3:31 PM

benchmark Books

<http://www.benchmarkbooks.com/>

3296 South Main Street, #250

Salt Lake City, UT 84115

801-486-3111

(CM)

JUNE 16, 2010

Alma 13:19–20

Now, there were many before him, and also there were many afterwards, but none were greater; therefore, of him they have more particularly made mention. Now I need not rehearse the matter; what I have said may suffice. Behold, the scriptures are before you; if ye will wrest them it shall be to your own destruction.

The “many before him, and also...many afterwards” in this sermon is not just a reference to believers, but to those who held

this “holy order after the Son of God.” It is a reference to those who were made clean and pure by their repentance. It is those who, having been called by the Lord, chosen to this holy order, having their calling and election secure, hold power as a result of this relationship with God.

But none of these, before or since, (at the time of the writing by Alma) who held authority were greater than Melchizedek. As a result, he merited particular mention to identify those who held the holy priesthood after the order of the Son of God. It was merited because his example and his ministry illustrated perfectly what the “holy order” was intended to accomplish.

It is designed to save others.

It was not to exalt the man.

It was not to bring attention to the man. It was not to amass praise or a following.

It was not to make the man a ruler over others. It was not to gain control or domination. It was not to subjugate or force compulsive obedience upon the souls of men.

It was to serve and exalt those to whom he ministered. His greatness was derived by the fruit of saved, exalted souls whom he saved. There is no record of a single sermon preached by Melchizedek. We have evidence of the following things he did with his authority and power:

- He received tithes from Abraham (Alma 13:15).
- He ordained Abraham (D&C 84:14).
- He saved an entire population from iniquity and abominations, and converted them to the truth (Alma 13:18).
- He made those he converted qualified to behold the Lord’s presence (Alma 13:11).

- He performed a form of ceremony with Abraham involving breaking bread and wine (Gen. 14:18–19).

He served. He blessed. He produced exalted souls. He was not great by what he received, but by what he did with what he received to bless and exalt others.

We would see this if we understood the scriptures. We would not be following a false tradition wherein men are famous, celebrity-like, fawned over, held up to acclaim and given the authority to exercise control over men. This is a false model that the Gentiles follow, and not the way in which true priesthood holders operate (Matt. 20:25–28). No-one possessing power from heaven will do this (D&C 121:36–37).

Now, if you make this mistake and follow in this false tradition, it will be to your own destruction. Alma has warned you.

What a marvelously relevant book this Book of Mormon is for our own day! It is almost as if they saw our time, knew what we would struggle with, and had teachings designed to let us see the error and repent. I truly believe that we can get closer to God by abiding the precepts of the Book of Mormon than we can from any other book! Joseph Smith was right.

COMMENTS:

DKD · JUNE 16, 2010 AT 6:31 AM

<http://scriptures.lds.org/en/jst/4>

JST Genesis 14:

²⁷ And thus, having been approved of God, he was ordained an high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch,

What is the “covenant which God made with Enoch?”

... those who are ordained after this order have power to be translated and stand in the presence of God?

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 16, 2010 AT 5:13 PM

The covenant God made with Enoch dealt with preserving the righteous, rather than destroying them in the flood, marking the covenant with the sign of the rainbow in the sky, and a promise that truth would remain on the earth to preserve mankind thereafter; including a return in the last days.

Enoch's City was translated because it is contrary to the order of heaven for God to slay the righteous. The wicked can slay them, but God cannot. Since Enoch had faith sufficient to hold at bay the armies of the wicked, and God could not slay them because it would be wrong for Him to do so, the solution was to give them an assignment which would allow them to be translated. Translation only happens when it involves a calling. Enoch's City was called to minister, and ultimately accompany the Lord at the time of His return. They were likely also the choir which announced His birth, just as they are the "angels" who will accompany the Lord at His return.

Without a calling requiring it, men are not translated. If the Lord offers, and a man asks for it, the result will be an assignment which will require translation to be fulfilled. It is not a generally occurring event, commonly available. It is not available at all without an accompanying calling necessitating the translation.

Brian Bowler · JUNE 16, 2010 AT 10:13 PM

Denver,

You said that Translation only comes with a calling, which is my understanding until I read some of James Custer material. I may be mis-speaking, but Consider this, James Custer states that after the Baptism of fire comes translation. To make it through the Tribulations that are coming (and bring ones own family through)he states translation will be necessary. Though he also states some will make it through without translation, but will suffer much, then join ZION. It sounded right when I read it, At least that a High Priest of the Holy Order of the Son would receive this to fulfill the calling of bringing his family through.

I think I may have answered some of my own questions writing this, as I feel that any translation would have a mission as you stated associated with it.

Thanks again for sharing, and if I am off please let me know. I am so hungry for Christ and his Light. I feel that without Him I will perish in this harsh wilderness. I know I must go on or I will sink.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 16, 2010 AT 10:24 PM

Joseph Smith said that “Translated bodies are designed for future missions.” *DHC* 4:425.

To conflate translation to another circumstance (i.e., Second Coming) is to mistake the notion that translation is an often available transition. It is confined to those who need a body to minister, deliver keys, function in some call, provide some necessary service assigned to the minister. It is not merely some portion of normal progression of a mortal which would be available to all without regard to the Fall, which brings the promise that “ye shall surely die” as a consequence of this current state.

Translation is not done without a calling requiring it. It seems undesirable to me; based upon the totality of the plan of salvation.

JUNE 16, 2010

Alma 13:21–22

Now we see this startling continuation in Alma 13:21–22:

And now it came to pass that when Alma had said these words unto them, he stretched forth his hand unto them and cried with a mighty voice, saying: Now is the time to repent, for the day of salvation draweth nigh; Yea, and the voice of the Lord, by the mouth of angels, doth declare it unto all nations; yea, doth declare it, that they may have glad tidings of great joy; yea, and he doth sound these glad tidings among all his people, yea, even to them

that are scattered abroad upon the face of the earth; wherefore they have come unto us.

Now we get to some things which the record does not fully disclose, but does allow those with eyes to see behold it. Be careful how you respond to this, because some correct answers are not going up if they cross a line. But think of the answers to these questions:

Why does he “stretch forth his hand?” What does that signify?

In what way would that become significant, even a sign that he is a true messenger?

Why does he now “cry with a mighty voice” to make the call?

What is a “mighty voice?” Is it distinguished by volume or is there something more and quite different about it? Importantly, it is not “loud” but instead “mighty.” Is that significant? How? Why?

What does it mean that “**the Lord**, by the mouth of angels, doth declare it?” Who is really speaking? Who is He speaking through? What person is delivering the message? How is Alma identifying himself in this “mighty cry” he makes?

Who are these angels sent to all nations?

What is the difference in this statement by Alma and the others who can speak with the tongue of angels? (2 Ne. 31:13–14 and 2 Ne. 32:2).

If one should possess such a right or commission, then whose words are they actually speaking?

Why do His sheep hear HIS voice? Even when spoken by another man or empowered priestly minister?

What does Alma actually say about his own authority as he delivers this warning? What can Alma lead you to inherit if you will heed his counsel and warning? How can we know he is a true messenger sent by the Lord?

If the Lord sends these messages and messengers to all His people, have they been sent to us? If so, where would we be able to find them and hear their message? How are we to know they are true ministers? Should I just trust that some institutional office and office holder is a guaranteed place in which to locate such a true minister? If it is always that convenient, why hasn't the Lord implemented that system before, instead of letting people have their free agency and permitting them to make mistakes? Why did the Lord allow Eli, Caiphus and Annas become High Priests? Why didn't He come up with this neat system before? [Clearly our system makes it so much easier. It throws God's fairness into question, since He made it so much harder for earlier Israelites to figure out where the truth was being proclaimed. I think the Lord must owe them an apology.]

Well, more can be said, but I leave it to you to reach your own conclusions about this startling comment coming from a true messenger. It makes one wonder why we've been missing it, as it has been before us for so many years.

COMMENTS:

JRB · JUNE 16, 2010 AT 9:12 PM

I think that when Alma 13:22 states "the voice of the Lord, by the mouth of angels, doeth declare it unto all nations" it does not necessarily mean that heavenly angels from God's presence come down to earth to declare the words of Christ. While the scripture certainly would encompass that definition, I believe it is generally referring to God's mortal messengers, like Alma, who are speaking with the tongues of angels. In other words these messengers are speaking the words of Christ; i.e., they are saying what Christ himself would say if He were present. This is more clearly set forth in Alma 32:2-3:

² Do you not remember that I said unto you that after ye had received the Holy Ghost ye could speak with the tongue of angels? And now, how could ye speak with the tongue of angels save it were by the Holy Ghost?

³ Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold the words of Christ will tell you all things what you should do.

The angels sent to all nations are, in my opinion, God's authorized mortal servants, who have received the Holy Ghost and live such a life as to make them worthy to speak with the tongue of angels. Not all who are sent forth to teach God's word among all of God's children "speak with the tongue of angels". However those that do are speaking for Christ as his authorized messengers and say what Christ would say under the same circumstances. They therefore are angels according to Alma 32:3.

In D&C 130:4–5 Joseph Smith was giving instructions and asked the following question: "Is not the reckoning of God's time, angel's time, prophet's time, and man's time, according to the planet on which they reside?" In response to the question he responded:

"I answer, Yes. But there are no angels who minister to this earth BUT THOSE WHO DO BELONG or have belonged to it."

This answer seems to indicate that some angels of God are mortals who presently belong to the earth. It appears from Alma 32:2–3 that you fit within the definition of an angel if you "speak the words of Christ" by "the power of the Holy Ghost".

Jim Boud

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 16, 2010 AT 9:21 PM

I regard the missionaries who taught me the Gospel as ministering angels, who spoke the words of Christ to me.

Anonymous · JUNE 16, 2010 AT 9:37 PM

I agree with the reference to the temple and the stretched out hand.

Mighty voice....mighty can be powerful, but also dignity or perhaps even divinity. So when Alma speaks with a mighty voice he is actually

speaking for the Lord. There is a different authority here than just speaking the “words of Christ”. An authority in which he is commissioned to speak as though he were Christ, perhaps. A missionary can speak the words of Christ (tongue of angels) by the power of the Holy Ghost and it is the Holy Ghost who carries it to the hearts of those prepared to hear.

True minister...not only recognized for the signs given, but also the ability to do the work and minister to the people just as Christ did during his ministry.

Anonymous · JUNE 17, 2010 AT 2:40 AM

Thanks for all the comments. My question is why would Alma choose to reveal a sacred sign publicly to this group of people? What’s the lesson to be learned? JM

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 17, 2010 AT 4:34 PM

“Why reveal a sacred sign?”

First, “reveal” may not be the case because: 1) it was not in connection with covenant-making, 2) it was accompanied with warning of judgment, not ceremonial in a Temple setting, 3) the audience may already know the meaning, in which case nothing is being “revealed”, though they may be reminded, and if not, then 4) if the audience did not know the meaning then nothing is “revealed” to the audience who, in ignorance, will not associate keys or meaning to it.

Further, even you do not know the sign used unless it has been shown to you by revelation. You can know that a sign was used, but which is not stated.

JUNE 17, 2010

Alma 13:23

And they are made known unto us in plain terms, that we may understand, that we cannot err; and this because of our being wanderers in a strange land; therefore, we are thus highly favored,

for we have these glad tidings declared unto us in all parts of our vineyard.

This doctrine contained in the scriptures was understood by this audience. The same audience who was full of iniquity and abominations because of their false religious traditions. It was in “plain terms” in the scriptures, if one doesn’t “wrest” them to their destruction.

To “wrest” means to apply such twisted reasoning that the philosophies of men are mingled with scriptures so that the result is error.

The object of the scriptures is to make matters “plain” and prevent people from “erring” in their effort to follow God.

What is the difference between someone who with their scriptures before them, finds their message sufficiently “plain” and “understood” that they “cannot err,” and someone who has the same set of scriptures and engages in “iniquity” and “abominations” because of their false religious ideas? How can someone who is religious be certain they are not among those who err, but is instead among those who find holiness and develop faith to repent?

How do we know which side of this line we are on?

Both sides are religious. Both sides have their traditions and teachings. Both sides are sincere and following what they believe to be true. However, one is engaged in “abominations” because of their false beliefs, and the other has entertained angels and received such cleansing that their garments are white before God. One side does not understand their awful state. But the other is certain of their promise of exaltation and purity before God.

So, how certain are you? Do you know you are pure before God? Holy? Having entered into His holy order after the order of

the Son of God? Or do you entertain some doubt about whether the traditions which you value are actually based on the truth? Is it possible that you “err” or “wrest” the scriptures as part of your religious tradition?

According to Alma, all of this care by the Lord is because they are “wanderers in a strange land.” Meaning that they are in this spot at this time because they have been taken from Jerusalem, the land of their forefathers, and placed in a new, promised land. They have been persecuted and evicted from land by their aggressive cousins. All of this to stir them up to repentance. It is God’s care for them, God’s careful tutelage of them, that leads them to receive this profound understanding. They are on God’s errand, and therefore entitled to God’s guidance. God is providing the “glad tidings” which will permit repentance to occur.

So, applying Alma’s teaching to us, we should ask ourselves if we have repented? If we have received a message from angels declaring glad tidings? If we have received what we would recognize as a message from the Lord by someone declaring repentance? Or do we have a weak tradition which assures us that we are right, while letting us entertain abominable (false, religious-based) errors in our beliefs?

These are troubling questions. Worth careful, solemn and ponderous thought. Perhaps even prayerful thought where we ask the Lord if these things are not true. And if we ask with real intent, He may make the truth known to us. At least that is what He has said through past messengers. I see no reason why it would not work for us. It’s at least worth a try, isn’t it?

Powerful teachings from Alma. But then again, one should expect nothing less from a true messenger bearing a holy order of power and authority after the order of the Son of God. A weak and

vacillating voice telling us all is well and we're going to be fine just seems wrong by comparison. At least I would think so.

COMMENTS:

Doug · JUNE 17, 2010 AT 1:31 PM

Anonymous — In regards to your question about foolish traditions... there are several posts from Denver.

“The traditions of men”, part 1 (Continue this post for parts 2 and 3)

“Weep for Zion for Zion has fled”

There are other hints scattered throughout the blog. Also, if you search “traditions” you will find all sorts of relevant stuff. Hope that helps.

—Doug

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 17, 2010 AT 4:30 PM

I'd add to Doug's comment:...also look at “Constantine and Correlation” as a post.

JUNE 17, 2010

Alma 13:24

“For behold, angels are declaring it unto many at this time in our land; and this is for the purpose of preparing the hearts of the children of men to receive his word at the time of his coming in his glory.”

If “angels are declaring it unto many” at the time of Alma's remarks, why are they not declaring it unto many now? Are we any less important than they were? If we are as important, then why are we not hearing of this now?

What is the definition of “angels” who are doing this “declaring” to “many?” Was Alma included? If so, what is it that turns a man from a mortal to ministering angel? Can a mortal become a ministering angel? How would that occur? What would it require? Can we thereby entertain angels unawares? (Heb. 13:2).

If an angel comes to visit with a man, gives him a message, and the man then declares it, are they both made “angels” by this message? Are “angels” always either deceased or unborn? If they are, then why did Joseph teach that “there are no angels who minister to this earth but those who do belong or have belonged to it?” (D&C 130:5). If angels “do belong” to the earth are they still mortal?

How would you recognize such a person? Would it be the same way the Lord was known before He showed Himself to the disciples on the Road to Emmaus? (Luke 24:32).

If it is the “hearts” which are to be prepared, then does this relate to the disciples “hearts burning within them” as the Lord spoke to them while in the way? Why do His sheep hear His voice? How do they hear his voice?

Why is preparing “the hearts” enough to prepare a people to “receive His word?” Is it more important to “receive His word” than to receive His person? Why would that be so?

Why are we unable to receive Him in His glory until after our hearts have first “received His word?”

It is more difficult to be taught than to have faith for miracles (3 Ne. 17:2–8). Even should you behold the Lord “in His glory” just as the Nephites, it would still be more difficult for you to have the faith to be taught by Him and accept what He has to teach than for Him to perform a miracle.

How alike all the generations of men are. How very relevant, therefore, these words remain for us!

JUNE 18, 2010

Alma 13:25

And now we only wait to hear the joyful news declared unto us by the mouth of angels, of his coming; for the time cometh, we know

not how soon. Would to God that it might be in my day; but let it be sooner or later, in it I will rejoice.

This comment is made in expectation that the Nephites will be told by heaven as soon as Christ is born. "... we only wait to hear the joyful news declared unto us by the mouth of angels..."

Angels declared it to the shepherds near Bethlehem (Luke 2:8–15). Alma expected a similar announcement.

"We only wait to hear the joyful news." He EXPECTED the news to be shared. He knew they would have the announcement. He EXPECTED the angels to declare the arrival. He knew heaven would not leave these people without a herald of the news.

Imagine that. A prophet confident that the Lord will do nothing without first making known to the people His secrets! (Amos 3:7). It is one thing to teach this concept. It is another to live it. Alma is living it. Therefore angels did come and did make things known to him.

What does it take to have faith like this?

If you do not possess this kind of faith, can you be saved? Moroni taught that the absence of such faith condemns the people who no longer have such things happening among them (Moroni 7:36–37).

Do we expect the Lord to tell us about things by the mouth of angels before they happen? Or do we expect the Lord will tell someone inside the bowels of an organization, and we will get some announcement through the prescribed channels, thereby relieving us from obtaining the ministry of angels? Then why is the visitation of angels an Aaronic (lowest) priesthood key? (D&C 84:26). This is the right of young people beginning at age 12, mind you. Should we expect the angelic heralds to come to everyone, 12 year of age or older? Why or why not?

Alma knows it will happen. But he does not know when it will happen. He would like it to have been in his day. It was not. But whether it was to happen in his life or afterwards, he nonetheless had faith, knew angels, awaited the message, and rejoiced at the idea of His coming.

How meek! How faithful! No wonder such a man possessed and knew the details of this holy order from God. No wonder he could teach with authority about it. How great the lesson he has left for any who will take seriously the message he taught.

Faith of this sort should be the common heritage of the Lord's people. It was never intended that an elite, distant hierarchy would be put between God and His people. If you are His, then you should KNOW Him. If you do not know Him, then you are not His. Heed His voice when you hear it. No matter how surprising a place or person from which it may come. If it is His voice, then you have heard Him.

COMMENTS:

EC · JUNE 18, 2010 AT 9:55 AM

Couldn't this verse be applicable to us, in our day?

There are websites, books, seminars not a few devoted to discussing, studying, speculating and arguing LDS prophecy and when/what events will precede the Lord's coming in glory.

IMO, they miss the point entirely. Instead, we should be pursuing (and expecting) our own "second coming" so to speak and not solely wait to see the Lord with everybody else.

I suspect the Lord is much more anxious for such an event to happen in our personal lives than we are.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 18, 2010 AT 3:39 PM

EC: I agree. This is why I spend so little time on the subject of the Second Coming and so much time about the fullness of the Gospel. The more important doctrine is that which will save your soul. The

less is the unfolding history we're currently seeing and shortly will see. It is comparatively so far less important that it merely diverts attention from the real challenge before us.

JUNE 18, 2010

Email addresses

For anyone who has asked for the paper discussing Joseph Smith's King Follett Discourse, I need email addresses. The email addresses will not be published nor used for anything other than sending the paper.

Thanks.

CM

COMMENTS:

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 18, 2010 AT 10:19 AM

If you send the email in your comment, I will get the email and not publish the comment. That way your email stays private.

CM

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 18, 2010 AT 1:29 PM

Brandon,

That is the paper.

CM

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 18, 2010 AT 1:43 PM

GM

I need an email address.

CM

PS — EVERYBODY

This is not JOSEPH SMITH's discourse. You can all find that yourselves. This is a paper about Joseph's King Follett discourse.

CM

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 18, 2010 AT 7:02 PM

Some have been sent the talk. It uses comments which Joseph began in the King Follett Discourse, then revised a few days prior to his death (interrupted by rain), to set out the doctrine involved in the pre-earth identities of mankind.

— Denver

JUNE 18, 2010

Alma 13:26

And it shall be made known unto just and holy men, by the mouth of angels, at the time of his coming, that the words of our fathers may be fulfilled, according to that which they have spoken concerning him, which was according to the spirit of prophecy which was in them.

Here is a simple, but compound thought. Alma is saying this: There were “fathers” who recorded words of prophecy.

The “fathers” had the “spirit of prophecy which was in them.”

These words of the prophetic fathers promised that “the mouths of angels” will declare Christ’s birth into the world. The declaration of Christ’s birth will come to “just and holy men” by these angels.

So, Alma is assured that the promises will be fulfilled. He knows this because the fathers who revealed the promises were trustworthy and had the spirit of prophecy.

Now comes the real question: What does it mean that “just and holy men” will be the ones to whom the angels will come and make the declaration?

Is this a description of those who hold the same priesthood as Melchizedek discussed by Alma? If so, then does access to that priestly order after the order of the Son of God put the possessors into contact with heavenly messengers? Can a person hold that

authority and not receive messages from angels from time to time? Who is it among us who begins an address by referring to the angel who visited them the preceding night? (See, e.g., 2 Ne. 10:3; also 3 Ne. 7:15).

I have to assume that this is the kind of information that would be generally known among faithful followers of Christ's Gospel. After all, Alma is speaking to apostates, non-believers and critics who hold a false and abominable religion. One would expect that such things are not really so sacred that they can't be preached. Why would it be "off limits" to us and be something freely declared as part of a missionary effort in the Book of Mormon? So assuming it ought to be known, *if it is occurring*, is this among us? Where? Who has received these angelic messengers? Where are these "just and holy" men who entertain angelic ministers?

Or is it that we don't expect angels, so we don't entertain them? Perhaps they come and we don't notice them? Perhaps we are blind that we cannot see, deaf because we will not hear, and our minds are darkened because we will not abide the teachings of the Book of Mormon? What is going on with us, when we compare and measure ourselves against this message from Alma?

Should I be concerned?

Is all well?

Will we endure sound doctrine? (Cf. 2 Tim. 4:3).

JUNE 19, 2010

Alma 13:27

And now, my brethren, I wish from the inmost part of my heart, yea, with great anxiety even unto pain, that ye would hearken unto my words, and cast off your sins, and not procrastinate the day of your repentance;

This is the reality of those who hold this holy order. They feel absolute charity toward others. It causes them “great anxiety even unto pain” to consider how others might be lost. This was exactly the same charity that motivated the born-again sons of Mosiah to perform their missionary labors at great personal peril (Mosiah 28:3).

When you hear such a man after this order speaking in plain, even blunt words, it is not because they are unkind. It is not because they are uncharitable or brash. It is because they are filled with care, concern, and longing to share eternal life with those who would otherwise be lost.

Look at his words. What does it mean that Alma’s motivation now comes from “the inmost part of my heart?” How is it possible that Alma can have such concern that it causes him “great anxiety even unto pain?” Why does he long so for others to “hearken unto his words?”

Is this motivation for Alma the same as he described Melchizedek having?

Is the plea to “cast off your sins” the same plea which Melchizedek made to his people?

If this is the plea of both Melchizedek and Alma, and it is a burden which causes pain for fear that the mission would fail, where do we find such souls today crying repentance? Are they among us? Do we have ministers using the words of angels, declaring a message from heaven, who suffer anxiety and pain at the thought we will not repent?

Are you one of them?

If you are not, then why procrastinate? Why not also join in the process? All that is required is repentance to make yourself clean, followed by keeping the word of God until you entertain angels,

receive your assignment, and having been commissioned to then proclaim repentance to others.

Alma is inviting people to join the order after the Son of God, becoming thereby sons of God themselves. This is the great message of the Book of Mormon. I've discussed in six books the mysteries of godliness, using primarily the Book of Mormon as the scriptural source to explain these doctrines. It is the most correct book we have to set out these doctrines and inform us of the process. It is interesting how little of that message we've uncovered as yet.

So let us proceed...

JUNE 19, 2010

Alma 13:28

But that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, and thus be led by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering;

Alma's formula is quite direct and clear:

"Humble yourselves:" Without humility you are not teachable. Humility and the capacity to accept new truth are directly related. This is the character flaw that prevents the Lord from teaching the Nephites when He appeared to them. They THOUGHT they already knew things. Therefore nothing that contradicted their false notions would be accepted. Christ advised the Nephites who saw Him descend from heaven to go prepare themselves for His teaching. "

Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again. (3 Ne. 17:3)

This was the Lord telling these witnesses that they were not humble enough to be taught—even by Him! So the first requirement is no small matter. Are you really humble? Can you accept truth if it is taught to you? Even if it contradicts your traditions? Even if it alienates you from family, friends, comfortable social associations, your neighbors? (Matt. 19:29). See, humbling yourself is not just some droop-faced, hang-dog expression to wear on your countenance. Rather it is opening your heart up to higher things.

“Call upon God:” Not just prayer. Call upon Him. To call is to invite Him to come. How do you call Him? By devoting yourself, in humility, to living every principle He has taught to you through His messengers and in His scriptures. It’s not a laundry list of “to-do’s.” It is meekness and prayerful watching; humbling yourself and accepting what His spirit will advise you to do. When He testifies to you that you are hearing a true principle, accept it. No matter the effect it may have upon your life. Change your life, but never abandon His truths. Call, listen, and obey what you are told. Never close that line of communication. Don’t trust a message which does not come from Him.

“Watch and pray:” Answers may come in many ways. Be watchful so you don’t miss them when they are given to you. Pray that you might be seeking, preparing your mind to behold what He sends. Stay tuned, and stay attuned. Without such diligence you will miss His messages, that come sometimes frequently, but from unexpected sources.

“That ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear:” Implicit in this is that you may be tempted beyond what you can bear. So how do you avoid falling? Does humility and calling upon God and watching and praying insure that you can avoid an excess of temptation? How would they all go together? In particular,

how would being “humble” be a protection against this kind of temptation?

Alma connects all this together with the word: “thus.” Meaning as a consequence of the foregoing. As a result of what he’s just told you. As a product of this approach, you will then “be led by the Holy Spirit.” You can’t do what comes next without being so led. It isn’t in you. Not without help from within through the Holy Spirit.

So, if you do all the above, and then acquire the Holy Spirit to be your guide, then it follows that you will “become humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering.” You won’t be imitating humility, but you will be humble with the Holy Spirit’s assistance. You won’t feign meekness, but you will acquire the power to be meek (in the sense it is explained in *Beloved Enos*). You won’t pretend to submission, patience, love and long suffering, but you will be these things as a result of the Spirit within you. This will be your character. Not as the world understands such things, but through the power of the Spirit to lay hold upon such things.

Formulas like this one are inspired statements, providing a road map to the Lord’s methods of changing lives. Alma is making such a declaration and invitation in this sermon. It is amazing, really. How succinctly he cuts to the core of the matter.

COMMENTS:

AV · JUNE 20, 2010 AT 2:39 PM

I agree this is an amazing & wonderful verse. It teaches us so many vital truths.

For it is so true that unless we do humble ourselves & actually plead for God to stand beside us & teach us all things that we should do through the Holy Spirit & fill our hearts with his perfect love, so we are able to suffer long, we will surely be tempted more than we can bear.

And without God & the Holy Spirit & perfect love, we will heed & listen to the mocking of those around us who do not have the Spirit & who are deceived & we will succumb to the temptation to break our sacred covenants & take the easier & even forbidden path, without even knowing we have.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 21, 2010 AT 9:46 PM

JDS has left a new comment on your post “Alma 13:28”:

AV, I am sure that some who you believe to mock you actually feel Alma-like pain in your behalf and are only interested in your happiness. If I believed a person was suffering from misunderstanding and unnecessary pain and suffering, I would do all in my power, in the spirit of Alma, to preach repentance to that person, which really means, to persuade that person to receive God’s perfect light on the subject. Do I know what that light is personally. No!

In no way would I want to see anyone’s pain be mocked; however, I would like to better understand from someone who has experienced this, the doctrine that supports his experience. Wouldn’t you want to, if it is true? Perhaps that truth alone offers hope and relief that only God can offer.

JUNE 20, 2010

Alma 13:29

“Having faith on the Lord; having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life; having the love of God always in your hearts, that ye may be lifted up at the last day and enter into his rest.”

Here you have faith, hope and charity (or love). You only have a fraction of the understanding of what faith in the Lord means until you have done as Alma is explaining here. True “faith” which is a principle of power, is acquired by the method Alma is preaching.

Hope that one can receive eternal life is not the vague optimism that it might happen—it is a certitude. You have the promise. You

know you will have eternal life. You haven't died and entered into the resurrected state yet. Between the time of the promise and the time you leave this sphere, you have hope. (The way it is used here is defined in *Eighteen Verses*.)

When God has promised you eternal life then you have "the love of God always in your heart." It is there through the indelible promise He has made. He has changed your status. He has declared through His own voice what great thing you have become. Therefore it is by knowledge alone that such love resides in the heart of man.

This life will end. But you will be raised up. You know when you are lifted up in the last day it will be the power of God that raises you. Such power as God employs to lift a man up confers upon such a person eternal life. The promise alone is a power, conferring the right to lay hold on eternal life when the moment comes. No power in earth or hell can rescind God's word (D&C 1:38). It cannot be done. Therefore, you have knowledge that you will not only be raised from the dead, but "lifted up" as well. Powers, principalities, dominions, exaltations are all promised as yours.

This is how you attain to "rest." It is the "rest of the Lord" as soon as the promise is made by Him. It is His rest when you inherit it in the last day. The words of the promise are enough to guarantee the inheritance. Therefore once the promise is made it is true enough that you have entered into the rest of the Lord. However, until you depart this life, you remain subject to the difficulties of mortality. Graduation is assured, but you must tarry for a little while here.

As one possessing this hope, being filled with faith, hope and charity, it becomes your responsibility to raise up others. Hence the ministry of Alma, and Alma's exposition on the ministry of

Melchizedek. God does send true messengers. They can lead you in the way of life and salvation.

JUNE 21, 2010

Alma 13:30

“And may the Lord grant unto you repentance, that ye may not bring down his wrath upon you, that ye may not be bound down by the chains of hell, that ye may not suffer the second death.”

Alma’s closing remark here is a prayer. He is asking that the Lord “grant unto you repentance.” This is an interesting cause-and-effect way to state the proposition. We cause it by our desire and willingness to become humble and repent. The Lord causes it because without His atoning sacrifice it could not be done.

We receive the effect because we are cleansed by our acts, humility and willingness to accept what is offered. The Lord receives the effect because He has allowed us to join Him in being pure and holy. He acquires a brother (or, more correctly a son). But He has no jealousy, allowing His brothers/sons to sit upon His own throne (Rev. 3:21). He wants to have “all things in common” with us.

Alma’s petition goes further to ask that the wrath of God not be poured out upon these people to whom he is preaching. There are, of course, two levels of wrath. One is temporal—here and now. The wicked are often punished here by letting them pursue their own evil course until it destroys them. Repentance in that sense relieves them of the physical, emotional, social, military, economic, and interpersonal disasters they bring upon themselves by their ruinous pursuit of destructive behavior.

The other is eternal—meaning coming after this life. That second “wrath” is a result of leaving this life with accountability

for what happened here, and the lack of preparation for the moment when “judgment” is rendered. That “judgment” consists of you finally facing reality. When you are in His presence you can accurately measure the difference between what you are and what He wanted you to become—i.e., like Him. The gulf is so great that you would rather be in hell than in the presence of a just and holy being when you are stained with the blood and sins of your generation (Mormon 9:4).

I have been in the presence of President Ronald Reagan. I met with President Spencer W. Kimball at the law school at BYU when he would come to visit with his son, who was a criminal law professor there. I shook hands and spoke with Chief Justice Warren Burger for about a half hour in the law library at BYU. I have appeared at the US Supreme Court, the Utah Supreme Court, argued before Federal and State courts in Utah, Idaho, Arizona, Texas, California, Virginia, Washington DC, New York, Oregon, Nevada, Montana and New Mexico. I have seen Congress in session. Although a boy at the time, I was there when President Kennedy came to Berlin and spoke at Checkpoint Charlie, giving his *“Ich Bin Ein Berliner”* speech. I have seen many other men who have shaped history. But there simply is no comparison between these mere children, these insubstantial and powerless creatures, and the holiness, power, majesty and glory of the one True Man, clothed in light. You may see what the world reckons as a “great man” and think he was impressive. But you come from the presence of glory with only one conclusion: Surely man is nothing, which I had never before supposed (Moses 1:10).

It is awful, fearful and dreadful to be in the presence of God. You realize the horror of your own darkness (Gen. 15:7–18). You cry out with the realization that you are unclean, living your life

among the unclean, and you are not ready for His presence (Isa. 6:5). You are not prepared, and all your careful pretensions dissolve until you stand naked, revealed, hollow and unworthy to stand in His presence.

How, then, does a man stand in His presence? Through the merits and mercy and grace of this, our Lord (2 Ne. 2:8). If your mouth is unclean, He will use an ordinance to cleanse your lips (Isa. 6:6–7). If you are covered by the blood and sins of your generation, He will cleanse them (John 13:5–13). If you cannot stand, He will raise you up with His own hand (Daniel 10:5–10). He is the God of mercy. Your discomfort is relieved by what He does, and this not of yourself, lest you should boast. There is nothing in you from which to boast other than the merit and mercy and love and sacrifice given to you by Him.

How can He love so? It defies explanation. Words fail. You can search your lifetime through every word you have ever seen or heard—nothing comes close to being able to describe it. It cannot be spoken.... Too sacred for language to capture. Beyond our power. So, you are left saying only: “Come, see.”

How, then, can a man come to the judgment and not feel the wrath which they might have overcome by His grace and mercy? Through the merits of Him bestowing upon a man the power to stand in His presence.

Alma’s pain at the thought of these people perishing was real. He was powerless to bring them to Christ. That power consists only in the authorized and truthful declaration of an invitation to come to Him. But the choice remained in those who, having heard, must decide for themselves whether they will repent. They were free to choose iniquity and abominations. Alma was only able to invite.

The invitation, if rejected, will cause those who die to die yet again. The way is broad which leads to such eternal deaths (D&C 132:25).

JUNE 21, 2010

Alma 13:31

“And Alma spake many more words unto the people, which are not written in this book.”

This is often the case. John’s Gospel ended with this observation:

“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written (John 21:25). Records are incomplete. We do not have the full account of Christ’s acts and words. We don’t have Alma’s either.

Mormon was the editor of this portion of the Book of Mormon. He was the one who determined to omit portions what Alma said to these people on this occasion. From what Mormon left for us to read, his intent is clear. He wanted us to understand the bigger picture of God’s dealings with man, man’s possession of priestly power, and the importance of repentance and defeating religious error. Mormon had seen us, and included specific warnings addressed to us, the Gentiles. He cautioned us about the Book of Mormon as follows:

And then, O ye Gentiles, how can ye stand before the power of God, except ye shall repent and turn from your evil ways? Know ye not that ye are in the hands of God? Know ye not that he hath all power, and at his great command the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll? Therefore, repent ye, and humble yourselves before him, lest he shall come out in justice against you—lest a remnant of the

seed of Jacob shall go forth among you as a lion, and tear you in pieces, and there is none to deliver. (Mormon 5:22–24)

Mormon knew the book would initially be in the hands of the Gentiles. So you can know we are identified as “Gentiles” in the Book of Mormon. Also, Joseph Smith declared in the dedicatory prayer for the Kirtland Temple that we are identified with the Gentiles (D&C 109:59–60). Although Brigham Young and President Joseph Fielding Smith taught that Joseph was a “pure blooded Ephramite.” (*Doc. Sal.* Vol 3:253–54).

The selected materials that Mormon gave to us were targeted to the purpose of the Book of Mormon. The title page (written by Moroni) tells us the purpose:

Written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile—Written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation—Written and sealed up, and hid up unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed—To come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof—Sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the Lord, to come forth in due time by way of the Gentile.

Gentiles would receive, translate and disseminate the Book of Mormon. But the Gentiles are prophesied to fail in their faith. They are to become full of their own abominations. When they reject the fullness of the Gospel, then it will be taken from them and given back to the remnant (3 Ne. 1:10–11).

Mormon is using the message from Alma to provide to the Gentiles (who will reject the invitation), an opportunity to understand the fullness which was offered to them. It was intended to remove from them the excuse that they were not given an oppor-

tunity and did not understand. Therefore, the Book of Mormon's primary purpose, to make the Gentiles aware and accountable for their failure, is accomplished by Mormon including this portion of Alma's teachings. The fact that other portions were left out mean that they would not have contributed to the task before Mormon.

A few of the Gentiles happily may be numbered with the remnant (3 Ne. 16:13). That is conditioned upon their repentance. The degree and completion of that repentance is shown by this portion of the sermon by Alma which Mormon preserved for us.

We are on notice. We are accountable for how we react to that notice. For the most part, the expectation is that we tell one another in reassuring words that "all is well." and that "Zion prospers," and to generally allow our souls to be cheated while we are led carefully down to hell (2 Ne. 28:21-25). Still, some few will follow Christ, despite the leaders' teachings that will cause them to err (2 Ne. 28:14).

The Book of Mormon is a record that will be used as evidence we have been warned. In plain language and with sufficient truth to hold us all accountable, this is the standard by which we are to find our way back to the Lord in this last dispensation before His return. We remain, of course, under condemnation because we are unwilling to do that (D&C 84:57).

What a great and terrible book. What an alarming message. It is no wonder we neglect it so.

CHAPTER 6

3 Nephi 16

JUNE 22, 2010

On to 3 Nephi

To put Alma's teachings into a larger perspective you need to understand the pre-earth life. The "picture" you have in your head about that is quite skewed. I've tried to unravel it and reconstruct the correct picture in a 42 page long paper. Because of its length, it is not appropriate to post it here. However, I am willing to let readers have a copy. It is copyrighted to prevent it from being changed and then attributed to me in an altered form. I am willing to be accountable for every word I speak, write or even think. I am not, however, willing to be accountable for what you think I said, think I wrote, or interpret on your own. Therefore it is copyrighted to prevent an alteration from becoming attributed to me.

If you want a copy, send a comment with a return email address to any post on the blog and you'll get a return email with the attachment. If, after you have read the paper, you want to comment, then the comments should be put on this blog entry.

The pre-earth life did not just consist of spirits who were born to a single set of heavenly parents, living happily before coming

here, followed by a rebellion led by an older brother. It was far more complex than that. There were those who had exalted themselves before they were born. The definition of exaltation is given in D&C 132. Joseph Smith had the definition of exaltation, as well as the Book of Abraham, when he made the remark. He knew that to be exalted required they be sealed in a marriage.

There were those who were “exalted” and who are called “Gods” in Abraham 4. The wording of the scripture is set out in detail and explained in detail in the paper you can get if you ask. You read that to finish off the missing pre-earth gap in Alma’s teaching.

The word “Elohim” is plural. It is plural for reasons explained in the paper.

As I have said in a comment on the Alma 13 materials, I do not think that deep doctrine is what is covered in the caution to not “cast pearls before swine.” I think that comment is reserved only to ordinances. Those are to be kept from being profaned. Deep doctrine is meant to be preached, proclaimed and understood. Without it, men’s souls are not saved. And by “men’s souls” I mean mankind, **men** and **women**. All must hear the fullness and be offered it in order to make this life meaningful and fulfill its purpose. When the doctrine is ignored or suppressed, then those who had a responsibility to proclaim it will be damned for their refusal to sound the alarm.

Generally the gentiles are expected in the prophecies to reject the fullness of the Gospel and walk away from it. Therefore, as a gentile, you should be concerned that you do not.

Because we need to understand our precarious and limited opportunity as gentiles, I am going to move to Christ’s words in 3 Nephi Chapter 16, beginning at verse 7. That will be the next series of posts.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · JUNE 22, 2010 AT 8:41 AM

I guess I don't see the importance of knowing one's pre-earth status when the risks of mortality are unconditional. I can see some pride popping up with those who may think to themselves, "I was a god before! No wonder ... (this or that) ... No wonder my wife does not understand me... no wonder my ward does not appreciate me, etc. etc."

There is a reason for the veil. My pre-earth status is irrelevant as far as I am concerned. All are now on equal footing with equal opportunity for exaltation or damnation.

Anonymous · JUNE 22, 2010 AT 9:57 AM

Anonymous,

Just a thought... If you were a God before this life, your wife would have been a Goddess, for you can only become a God together, so instead of looking down on your wife, such knowledge may help you see her in a higher light.

I know that many of us made covenants to our spouse & God in the life before, to do certain things, like save our spouse & children if they need it.

How unthinkable to get back to heaven & not have kept those covenants & to have to watch our spouse or children doomed to a painful eternity alone in a lower kingdom because we were not valiant to our covenants we made there or here to help them like we promised.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 22, 2010 AT 10:18 AM

In one sense it does not matter at all. That is, once you are in mortality the challenge and responsibility is exactly the same for everyone here. We all must get back on the same terms and same requirements. Therefore nothing which went before matters.

In another sense it matters a great deal. Without altering the burden we have to follow the Gospel of Christ, we are permitted to understand context, understand a greater setting and a more distant view of just

how long, how great and how involved the salvation of men's souls truly is as an eternal commitment from those who love us.

We appreciate the condescension of Christ. We need it to return. However, there were others such as Abraham who also condescended. Christ rescued Abraham, to be sure. But Abraham's role and condescension, Abraham's love and generosity, are also reason to take particular note and have gratitude.

This greater context would only make a fool proud. It would make a wise soul grateful and humbled. I write for wisdom's sake. I cannot, however, prevent fools from also reading what I make publicly available.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 22, 2010 AT 4:33 PM

There's a comment from the Moderator early on in which it was explained that the comments are not selected based upon doctrinal accuracy. They are just comments. I don't vouch for their truthfulness. Sometimes a comment is worth considering, even if it is rejected by the reader. I only put into a post what I believe or know to be true.

There are a lot of questions which don't get put up on the blog, but produce answers which restate the question and then respond. That is an often-occurring event, if you read from the beginning of the blog to the present. Some later posts are driven by earlier discussions or comments. Therefore, some of the later things are best understood by reading the blog from the start forward chronologically.

Personal comments or inappropriate praise is not put up, or if my wife puts it up I will ask her to later take it down. Some have praise (which I dislike) but also have some other important comment and make it onto the blog—as a result of which I grit my teeth and defer to my wife, who is the one mechanically maintaining the blog. If not for her efforts, the blog wouldn't exist. I don't have time to do it—apart from writing the posts which she then puts up.

It is my wife, by the way, who always puts in the links.

JUNE 22, 2010

The Talk

“A talk about the first three words spoken by the players in the Endowment”

This is the talk. This is the talk referring to the King Follett Discourse and this is the talk discussing the pre-existence. If you have received this then you are good to go. If not, be patient, you will. Now go forth and read—and discuss.

CM

COMMENTS:

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 22, 2010 AT 3:26 PM

Annette,

I need an email address. Thanks :)

CM (comment moderator)

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 23, 2010 AT 7:49 AM

Joshua,

Leave your email address in the comments. I will not post the comment, but will then have your email address and will send the talk.

For those of you who don't have it yet, it may be a few days. Please be patient.

Thank you,

CM (comment moderator)

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 24, 2010 AT 9:11 PM

Michael A. Cleverly,

I keep getting a delivery failure notice for your email address. Could you send it again? Or another one?

Thanks,

CM

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 29, 2010 AT 8:33 AM

Sarah,

Could you send your email address again, please?

Thank you,

CM

JUNE 22, 2010

3 Nephi 16:7

Behold, because of their belief in me, saith the Father, and because of the unbelief of you, O house of Israel, in the latter day shall the truth come unto the Gentiles, that the fulness of these things shall be made known unto them.

This is a teaching from the first day of Christ's visit with the Nephites. It is a quote from Christ.

The time frame in which the Gentiles were to have "belief in [Christ,]" and merit a special blessing as a result, was the time immediately following the Judean ministry. The Gospel would be taken to the Gentiles and they would believe. The Jews were going to reject Him and oppose His faith, the Gentiles would welcome it and have belief.

Now the words Christ spoke and Nephi's record preserved were from "the Father." Christ's explanation of these prophecies originate with His Father.

Gentiles will believe. Moreover, the "house of Israel" will not believe in Him. The result of that acceptance and rejection is the juxtaposition of the roles of Gentiles and Israel.

Whereas, the Gospel came to the Jews first, and by the Jews it was transmitted to the Gentiles, later the opposite will occur. The pattern will reverse. It will go from the last back to the first. (It is an historic chiasm.)

Accordingly, the Gentiles will be the ones to whom the restoration of the “fullness” will come in the latter day. The reward for earlier faithfulness is later recognition and reward.

Now, it should take no amount of brilliant insight to realize that the restoration involved Joseph Smith. A man of English descent. May have some Israelite blood in him from the earlier diaspora of the Lost Ten Tribes, but he is nevertheless the one through whom the restoration was brought. He is necessarily identified as a “Gentile” in this prophecy by Christ, given by the Father. If Joseph Smith is NOT a Gentile, then the whole promise of the Father and word of the Son is defeated. Therefore, you may know for a surety that the Gentiles are not those nasty non-members. It is US. WE are the Gentiles who receive the first offer in the last offering.

So it was that the Father determined and Christ taught that the Gentiles would be the ones to whom the Gospel message would first come in our day. Now we have it. (Or had it anyway.)

This movement from Israel to Gentile and from Gentile to Israel is evening the playing field. This is balancing out the record of history. It is not that one is more favored than another. Rather it is that each one will have a suitable turn and opportunity to receive what the Lord offers. In the end, no people will be able to say the opportunities were unfair, unequal, or more challenging for one than for another. [I leave it to you to determine why that is so when lives come and go across generations and one dispensation may include different people than another. It raises the question as to how certain we should be about some of our premises. That, however, is too far afield at the moment. And it may not matter anyway. Today is the day of salvation, not yesterday or tomorrow. So we should confine ourselves to solving the problem we face at the moment.]

The promise is that the “fullness of these things” will come to the Gentiles. What things? What does it mean that the “fullness” will be coming to the Gentiles? Have the Gentiles in fact received it?

If we received it, what have we done with it? Do we still have it? If not, how do I know that? What will happen if we have not retained that fullness?

Fortunately for us, Christ will answer all those questions as He moves along in the message He delivers here.

COMMENTS:

Michael A. Cleverly · JUNE 22, 2010 AT 4:23 PM

“Therefore, you may know for a surety that the Gentiles are not those nasty non-members. It is US. WE are the Gentiles who receive the first offer in the last offering.”

I completely agree that WE (Latter-day Saints) are the Gentiles who have received and accepted the first offer in the last offering.

But you seem to be saying that “non-members” are not to be classified as gentiles. A Venn-diagram would not show overlap.

Is Gentile/House of Israel not an either-or (or at least an either-and-or) condition?

Clearly modern Jews and Lehi’s descendants are properly considered House of Israel. What are the masses of historic-Christians of American & European descent (who are neither Jewish nor Lamanite) if they are not Gentiles? Is there a third group they can be classified as?

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 22, 2010 AT 4:36 PM

The “others” are not necessarily a focus for the Book of Mormon prophecies. They inherit the blessing of being here, as Nephi foresaw. They are blessed to be on the land, but they are not given anything other than a conditional possession. They are those who get offered the restored Gospel when it returned, and if they accept it they become part of the prophetic subject. When, however, they reject the offered restoration,

then they are background and will be swept away just as the Saints who reject the fullness of the Gospel will be swept away.

We'll be discussing some of that in upcoming posts.

JUNE 23, 2010

3 Nephi 16:8

But wo, saith the Father, unto the unbelieving of the Gentiles—for notwithstanding they have come forth upon the face of this land, and have scattered my people who are of the house of Israel; and my people who are of the house of Israel have been cast out from among them, and have been trodden under feet by them;

So now the time frame is the latter day when the Gentiles have been given this restoration of the fullness. This comment moves forward from the reasons of the restoration to the Gentiles (earlier faithfulness) to the time when the Gentiles have received the fullness.

To make the time frame abundantly clear to both the Nephites and to us, the Lord explains in passing that the Gentiles will come to “this land.” The full description of them coming is set out in the earlier prophecy of Nephi as set out at length in First Nephi (1 Nephi 13 & 14). But here Christ reminds the audience that when the Gentiles come, they will “scatter my people who are of the house of Israel.”

Gentiles certainly did come. They did scatter the remnants who were on the American continent. Not only did they scatter them, but they also “cast out” and “trodden down” those populations who were here when the Gentiles arrived. Smallpox wiped out the Great Plains Indians. There were an estimated 20 million plus Plains Indians when Columbus arrived. Smallpox all but annihilated them.

So few survived that by the time of the western push of the United States, it was believed the Great Plains had never been populated.

To say they were “trodden underfoot” is descriptive. The native populations were destroyed. They were conquered. They died. Their remains returned to the earth upon which the Gentiles trod.

You must keep this image in mind as you read about the future of the Gentiles being trodden underfoot. We will get to that later in this same prophecy by Christ.

“Wo” is pronounced upon those Gentiles who are ‘unbelieving’ toward the Gospel. This is confirmed again in Section 76, describing those who are Telestial. They are religious, and follow even true messengers. However, they follow, believe in, trust and hope for salvation from the messenger, but fail to have faith, believe in, trust and receive salvation through Christ. They even claim to follow Christ. But they fall short of having a saving testimony of Him. It warns:

And the glory of the telestial is one, even as the glory of the stars is one; for as one star differs from another star in glory, even so differs one from another in glory in the telestial world; For these are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas. These are they who say they are some of one and some of another—some of Christ and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch; But received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenant. (D&C 76:98–101)

There is a great gulf between those who claim they follow Christ and those who receive the “testimony of Jesus.” There is a difference between claiming to follow a recognized authority such as Paul, Apollos, Cephas, Moses, Elias, Esaias, Isaiah, John or Enoch on the one hand and “receiving the prophets” on the other.

How easy it is to quote a dead prophet. How unlikely it always is to recognize a living one.

What is meant then by saying “they are of Christ” on the one hand, and saying, “receive not the Gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus?” on the other. How do you reconcile these two things? One damns to the Telestial Kingdom, the other exalts.

How perilous it is for the latter day Gentiles!

JUNE 23, 2010

3 Nephi 16:9

And because of the mercies of the Father unto the Gentiles, and also the judgments of the Father upon my people who are of the house of Israel, verily, verily, I say unto you, that after all this, and I have caused my people who are of the house of Israel to be smitten, and to be afflicted, and to be slain, and to be cast out from among them, and to become hated by them, and to become a hiss and a byword among them—

Notice once again the Lord’s motivation for speaking these words: The Father’s “mercies” and the Father’s “judgments” are what drives the coming events in history. The Father is in control and Christ does not question or gainsay the results. The Father’s mercy is not questioned by Christ, nor is there any degree of shame shown for the terrible circumstances which follow from His “mercies.” Nor does Christ hesitate to announce the Father’s “judgments” despite the anxiety which some may feel at hearing the future.

Truth should be delivered in a forthright and plain manner, whether the result is fearful or vindicating; whether you take joy in the news or you cower at what is to come.

Notice, however, that when the Father’s judgment has been given, then the Lord assumes personal responsibility for the pun-

ishment to be inflicted. He does not say it is the Father's punishment. It is His own. Christ will personally be the one who "caused my people who are of the house of Israel to be smitten." Christ will personally "afflict" and "slay" the people. The Father decides, Christ fulfills. He seeks no cover, looks to no-one else to be held to account, He does as His Father judges.

Why would Christ assume responsibility to "smite" to "afflict" and to "slay" when it is the Father's judgment? What does this tell us about Christ's acceptance of the Father's decisions?

Is (or has) there been some good result from those whom Christ calls "my people" (i.e., His people) being smitten, afflicted, slain, and cast out by the Gentiles? If so, what good has come to the Lord's people? How can these things that have lasted now for over two hundred years have been beneficial to the Lord's people? What can we learn about the Lord calling afflicted, smitten and outcast people as "His people" despite their centuries of subordination?

What does the Gentile "hatred" of the Lord's people do to diminish the Lord's plans for them? What does casting them out and making them a "hiss and a byword" by the Gentiles do to remove the Lord's promised blessing and covenant to "His people?"

What foolish pride allows the Gentiles to measure the Lord's people as stricken, smitten of God and afflicted? (Isa. 53:4).

Why would the Gentiles be put in this position? Why would Israel? What does it do to the Gentiles' ability to see through the deception of their time into truth which is timeless? (D&C 93:24).

How should the Gentiles view their momentary triumph and unchallenged possession of the land promised to others?

Why are those smitten and afflicted called by the Lord "my people" and the Gentiles referred to as "Gentiles?"

Is the irony of this beginning to dawn on you? Maybe you should re-read the title page of the Book of Mormon.

JUNE 24, 2010

3 Nephi 16:10

And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you: At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations; and if they shall do all those things, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them.

These words come from the Father.

The Father has commanded Christ to speak them.

This material is important to understand.

“At the day when the Gentiles shall sin against the Gospel...” NOT IF. NOT SHOULD THEY HAPPEN TO DO SO. It is in the day WHEN the Gentiles SHALL sin against the Gospel.

The Father has already seen this happen (D&C 130:7). He has told Christ to speak about it. But it is before the Father and therefore He can speak with knowledge of the coming rejection by the Gentiles.

What do the Gentiles do as they reject the Gospel? They *“shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations... above all the people of the whole earth.”* Read again the prior post. The Gentiles take their inheritance of the promised land as their birthright. They

presume God's favor. They mistake their probation and testing as proof of having God's favor. They are on trial, and presume they aren't being tested.

What, then, do the Gentiles do with their highly favored status? The list is sobering:

- Lyings
- Deceits
- Mischiefs
- All manner of hypocrisy
- Murders
- Priestcrafts
- Whoredoms
- Secret combinations

Read the list and contemplate how much of this is among us. If we do not murder, do we delight in bloodshed? Are we warlike? Are there people whom we kill daily somewhere in the world to project our national will and great power?

Notice that hypocrisy leads to murder. Murder leads to priestcrafts. Priestcrafts lead to whoredoms. Are we seeing a progression here? By the time we have whoredoms, have we already passed through murders and priestcrafts?

What are priestcrafts? (2 Ne. 26:29). What does it mean to seek the welfare of Zion? Is "Zion" the same thing as the institutional church? What is the difference? Can a person seek the welfare of Zion without seeking to succeed inside the institutional church? What is the difference between seeking to be a "light unto the world," on the one hand, and seeking the welfare of Zion, on the other? Can one seek to be a light pointing to Zion, and never be a "light unto the world?" What is the world? What is Zion? How

are they different? Can one who seeks the welfare of Zion ever get praise from the world? Can a person curry favor with the world while also seeking to benefit Zion?

If not hiring a whore, do we nonetheless watch with delight the portrayal of sexual license to entertain us, fill our thoughts, satisfy our lusts? Do you need to hire a prostitute to be practicing “whoredoms?” Utah is one of the largest consumers of pornography in the US. Hence, the continual return to this subject in General Conference.

When they do this, in turn the Gentiles will “reject the fullness of my Gospel.” To reject the fullness is not to reject the Gospel itself. As we have seen, some fragment of the Gospel remains even when it has turned into “iniquity” and “abomination.” Without some fractured segment of the Gospel to salve the conscious and let the people feel good about their sins, there couldn’t be “abominations.”

It is not the “Gospel” which is lost. Rather it is the “fullness of my Gospel” which is rejected and then taken away. It is first rejected, then it is forfeited. The Gentiles lose their entitlement to possess what they have rejected.

The Father has decreed it will happen. The Gentiles will change the ordinance and break the everlasting covenant (Isa. 24:5). What ordinance? What change? Has it happened? If not, what will be required to make a change and lose the “everlasting covenant” by the Gentiles? I hope to avoid that.

JUNE 24, 2010

3 Nephi 16:11

“And then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people, O house of Israel, and I will bring my gospel unto them.”

When the Gentiles have rejected the fullness of the Gospel, the Lord's memory will be stirred. He will "remember His covenant" again.

Notice the covenant He will remember is for "His people," whose interests and inheritance will now be vindicated. His words will be fulfilled. The Father's promises will all be realized. But "His people" are not the Gentiles. His people are the remnant to whom the Gospel will come as a matter of covenant and inheritance to reclaim a fallen people. This is the re-grafting of the natural branches referred to in Jacob 5:67-75. It is important to note that the Lord of the vineyard was directly involved with the few servants assigned to accomplish this final work of gathering together (Jacob 5:72).

This is to be done after the Gentiles (who are the European Latter-day Saints who descend from the bloodlines that overran and dispossessed the native people in North America), have rejected the fullness of the Gospel. Therefore, you should not expect that the institutional church, controlled as it is by those very same bloodlines, will be the means through which this final effort will be accomplished.

When the time comes, the Lord will "bring [His] gospel to them." How will He do this? What "laborers" should we expect to be sent? How, if the Gentiles have rejected the fullness of His Gospel, will the Gentiles be involved?

Can Gentiles who are lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations of the earth assist? If not, then what Gentiles can assist?

Isn't Ephriam to be involved? After all, they have the birthright. Are they not involved?

If they are, who will it be from among Ephriam?

How can the remnant to whom these blessings are promised, have still among them a few descendants of Ephriam? Why will

Mannassah, through the remnant, build the New Jerusalem, yet it will be Ephriam through whom the blessings are conferred upon the returning Lost Tribes? (D&C 133:26–34).

How can the New Jerusalem be the property of the remnant, but there be a group of Ephriamites who bestow crowns? What must these Ephriamites possess to be able to accomplish this task? How can they possess it and not be lifted up in pride above all other people of the whole earth? How can such power be put upon some group and they remain willing to ever bend the knee and confess before Him whose right it is to rule?

How can the Gentiles both reject the fullness of the Gospel, yet there be some who are of Ephriam who are able to bestow crowns?

What an interesting picture begins to emerge. Gentile rejection, but a tiny group of Ephriamite servants whose lives are lived so as to bestow blessings upon others.

The main body in the New Jerusalem coming from the remnant, who are to build the City of the New Jerusalem, yet within that City a functioning group of Ephriamites who will crown others with glory. All this preparatory to the Lord's return to a City set upon a hill which cannot be hid. To a location in the tops of the everlasting mountains, where all will gather from every nation.

Well, let's keep going to see how much we can figure out from the scriptures to correct our foolish traditions about these future roles and perhaps gain an even better idea of locations.

JUNE 25, 2010

3 Nephi 16:12

And I will show unto thee, O house of Israel, that the Gentiles shall not have power over you; but I will remember my covenant unto

you, O house of Israel, and ye shall come unto the knowledge of the fulness of my gospel.

Gentiles shall NOT have power over Israel. Gentiles, filled with pride, claiming to hold the power of God, sitting in the Temple of God and acting as if they were God, will lose their grip (2 Thes. 2:2–4). They will be cast down like Lucifer, after claiming they would sit in the congregations of the north, like the Gods (Isa. 14:13–15).

These Gentiles will not have “power” over the house of Israel, though they may claim to possess great authority (D&C 121:36–37). What, then, is the difference between the Gentiles lacking “power,” but holding authority?

How will the Lord remember the covenant?

What does it mean to come to “the knowledge” of something, rather than to start believing in something? What does it mean to have the “fulness of [His] Gospel?”

What does “knowledge... of the fulness” imply about the degree to which it will be revealed as part of remembering the covenant?

Why is the Gentile rejection of the fullness tied to the house of Israel receiving the fullness?

Are the basic Gospel Principles the same as the fullness? If not, what is the difference? What do the Gentiles risk when they reject the fullness and focus instead upon the basic principles?

How perilous is it for the Gentiles to suppress the mysteries of godliness and retain only the most basic of doctrines as their focus?

Unto whom is the Lord to teach doctrine? Who is prepared to hear? Are they necessarily to be first weaned from milk and prepared to understand meat? (See Isa. 28:9–10). If that is so, then what do we need to do to wean ourselves off the milk and be prepared to receive weightier matters?

When will these things be? How will you know when the spirit begins to withdraw from the Gentiles and blessings begin to be poured out on others of the house of Israel?

Well, let's keep going...

COMMENTS:

Gordon · JUNE 25, 2010 AT 9:31 AM

Verse 10 of 3 Nephi 16 does indeed say “WHEN the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel.” So, that makes it sound like it's going to happen; the Gentiles are goners. However, later in the same sentence the Lord adds, “IF they shall do all those things, and shall reject the fulness.” This modifies the meaning. It changes the verse from a bald statement of what the Lord knows is going to happen to a conditional prophecy. It is the same formulation as, “When you start dating other men, if that happens, I'm going to leave you.” The Lord knows what is going to happen, but do we know what he knows? Not from this verse.

Also, I can find no justification for the assertion that there will only be a TINY group of Ephraimites who will bless the tribes of Israel with crowns of glory. Jacob 5:72 talks about a group of servants, but does not mention the size of the group even obliquely. And I don't understand why we should believe that this tiny group does not include the institutional church. Surely, the First presidency and the Twelve are the essential part of the institutional church and they appear to be striving to build up the Church and Kingdom of God, both in the world and in their own lives. Yes they are imperfect, but their actions and their attitudes are representative of those I would expect to find in Zion.

Lastly, if Joseph Smith was a “pure-blooded Ephraimite” (as per Brigham Young) why should we not suppose that there are varying percentages of the blood of Israel in the different members of the church? If this is true, why should we suppose that “the Gentiles” are a homogenous block which are essentially equal to the body of the church?

Because of the light which I find in your books and your blog, I am predisposed to accept what you say as true. But, you seem to make some unsupported leaps of doctrine in the last few posts. I would gladly learn why I am wrong.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 25, 2010 AT 11:13 AM

Gordon:

The relative size is referred to by the Lord in a number of places where He contrasts the “few there be who find it” with the “many who go in thereat.” He also uses the parable of wise and foolish virgins. I take the meaning of “virgin” who are attired in wedding garments and have both oil and lamps to mean those who have: 1) been endowed; 2) been sealed; 3) come into possession of both oil and a lamp—meaning the Spirit has visited with them and they have shown its fruits at some point in their lives. From this group half will be unprepared at His coming and kept from the wedding feast.

There are others, and perhaps a post would be better than a comment. But the point is not to discourage anyone. It is to make us take a sober inventory of our lives and what we do with the Gospel we’ve been given. Are we taking it seriously enough? Do we do what we can to follow Him? Are we safely aboard, or yet in peril? If aboard, are we crying repentance and warning our neighbor? Do we really love Him? Do we love His children?

Whether the Church’s leadership is or is not going to lead us there remains an open question. As with all things, they and we are free to choose. But their choice should not affect yours, or mine.

JUNE 25, 2010

3 Nephi 16:13–14

But if the Gentiles will repent and return unto me, saith the Father, behold they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel. And I will not suffer my people, who are of the house of Israel, to go through among them, and tread them down, saith the Father.

Here Gentiles are given hope. Although as a group, they will fall away and reject the fullness, if there are any among them who “repent and return” they may still be numbered among those who are the Lord’s people. Those whom He calls “my people.” Those dear to Him by covenant and promise.

The few who do will be required to “repent and return.” Why do they need to “repent?” Why do they need to “return?” What have they been doing that will require this “repentance” and “return?”

Does it mean they will not remain in the way, but will have been led out of it? Will they necessarily have to abandon the abominations, or false beliefs, which have become part of their religious traditions?

Where did these false religious ideas arise? If the Gentiles inherit the fullness of the Gospel, then reject the fullness, what did they first receive? What did they do with what they received?

How can some few still persist and be numbered among the house of Israel? What must those who “repent and return” accomplish? How will they be able to accomplish this?

Nephi had described these “few” earlier in a prophecy about our day in 2 Nephi 28:14:

They wear stiff necks and high heads; yea, and because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms, they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men.

What does it mean to have “all gone astray?” Does “all” truly mean “all?” How can a “few, who are the humble followers of Christ” exist? Do these “few” “nevertheless err?”

What causes the “few” to err? What does it mean that they are “led, that in many instances they do err?” What does it mean to be

“taught by the precepts of men?” Wasn’t that the very problem that provoked the Restoration in the first place? Weren’t men teaching for doctrines the commandments of men? Did that produce only a form of godliness, which had no power? (*JS-H 1:19*).

Those who “repent and return” will be spared from being trodden down and torn up. Others of the Gentiles, who do not “repent and return” are destined, like the original inhabitants of this land, to be trodden down and torn up. Their inheritance here is probationary. If they fail the probation, they will be swept away. The Gentiles will be gone, just as the earlier civilizations are gone. It will be the Father’s doing.

JUNE 26, 2010

3 Nephi 16:15

But if they will not turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, I will suffer them, yea, I will suffer my people, O house of Israel, that they shall go through among them, and shall tread them down, and they shall be as salt that hath lost its savor, which is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of my people, O house of Israel.

The Gentiles, to whom the restoration of the Gospel came, will fail to repent and return to the Lord, and will doom themselves to destruction.

The land reverts back to those to whom it was originally promised. They, the rightful heirs, will “go through among them, and shall tread them down.” What does it mean to be “tread down?”

When salt has lost its savor, it becomes useless. The preservative has become a contaminant. The corruption, the abominable religion, is worse than what they were before inheriting the fullness

of the Gospel. They have sinned against a greater light. And in the process they have rejected the Greatest Light of all.

What did the Gentiles do to become salt without savor? Why are they good for nothing but to be cast out? Why is it appropriate that the Gentiles who previously cast out and trod down previous inheritors should now be trodden down? What did the earlier heirs do to merit destruction at the hands of the Gentiles? How does the cycle seem to repeat itself in the actions of both of these peoples?

Why do the trodden down peoples, who were the first heirs, remain the “Lord’s people” even when they have been dispossessed of the land and destroyed by the Gentiles? Why are the first to become the last, and the last to become the first? Why do such cycles of history repeat themselves? Why is the Book of Mormon unable to help the Gentiles avoid this cycle of destruction? Was the Book of Mormon intended to help the Gentiles avoid their fate? What did the Gentiles do with the Book of Mormon instead of using it as a guide to avoid destruction?

These prophecies are spoken by Christ, but ordained by the Father. What does it tell us about the Father’s involvement with this unfolding history? How does the “foot of my people” reflect symbolically upon the process of destruction? If the Gentiles have rejected the fullness of the Lord’s Gospel, but the feet of those who cry peace are beautiful upon the mountains, why do the one people get trodden and the others tread upon them? Why are clean feet preserved and the filthy cast out and trodden down?

How serious a matter is this Gospel? How should we conduct ourselves toward the Gospel? What is the Gospel’s fullness? This becomes more than interesting; it is gripping.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · JUNE 26, 2010 AT 11:37 PM

What do YOU think the Gospel Fulness is Denver?

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 27, 2010 AT 6:50 AM

I've set that out in *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*. I've elaborated on what comes as a result in *Beloved Enos*. This blog presumes you are already familiar with everything taught in those and the other books I've written. I'm trying to build upon what was set out before, not to repeat it. The first book took approximately 170,000 words which, were I to attempt to repeat it here would require years to accomplish and could not be done in as systematic a manner given the difference between a single discussion building on itself in a book and the somewhat interrupted and disjointed manner involved here.

I'm not trying to sell books. I make nothing from them (although there are others involved in publishing, printing, retailing, etc. whose livelihoods depend upon selling books—I do not). But it is the only manner in which to approach some challenges and have another learn what they need to know. It was also undertaken as a Divinely imposed responsibility, and therefore I presume that it will reward anyone who reads them with the Spirit in a way which could not be accomplished through other means.

JUNE 26, 2010

3 Nephi 16:16

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, thus hath the Father commanded me—that I should give unto this people this land for their inheritance.”

As a result of their behavior, the Gentiles forfeit the land. The ones who inherit the land will be “this people” or the ones to whom Christ was speaking. The land will belong to the remnant—those who were standing before Christ at the time of this address.

Now, the actual inheritors will not be those people, but those who claim the right as descendants through their fathers. It will

not, and cannot be the Gentiles. There were no European migrants in the audience when Christ spoke on this occasion.

We need to know who “this people” is to know who will inherit the land.

We also need to know what “this land” was to be able to know if the Gentiles who inherited the “land of liberty” (2 Nephi 10:11) which would “never fall into captivity except for wickedness” was North America (2 Nephi 1:6–11). Hence the relevance of knowing the location of the Book of Mormon lands.

That is such a side-track that I hesitate to even revisit the subject. I will only add that there are arguments for both North American and Central America. I think the better argument is for North America.

The various possessors of the land all have the same condition: They either follow Christ as they occupy the ground or they are swept away and others who will follow Christ will supplant them.

This was established by covenant with Lehi generations before Christ visited with and taught Lehi’s descendants. Lehi recorded the covenant:

Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a promise, that inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land; and they shall be kept from all other nations, that they may possess this land unto themselves. And if it so be that they shall keep his commandments they shall be blessed upon the face of this land, and there shall be none to molest them, nor to take away the land of their inheritance; and they shall dwell safely forever. But behold, when the time cometh that they shall dwindle in unbelief, after they have received so great blessings from the hand of the

Lord—having a knowledge of the creation of the earth, and all men, knowing the great and marvelous works of the Lord from the creation of the world; having power given them to do all things by faith; having all the commandments from the beginning, and having been brought by his infinite goodness into this precious land of promise—behold, I say, if the day shall come that they will reject the Holy One of Israel, the true Messiah, their Redeemer and their God, behold, the judgments of him that is just shall rest upon them. Yea, he will bring other nations unto them, and he will give unto them power, and he will take away from them the lands of their possessions, and he will cause them to be scattered and smitten. (2 Nephi 1:9–11)

Christ's words dovetail with the covenant made with Lehi. The same Lord announcing them both. That condition and lease of this land remains conditional. Keep the conditions and you may be preserved to inherit the land and be numbered with the house of Israel. Violate them and be swept away.

So we see that the times of the Gentiles, as they end, become quite perilous for the Gentiles upon the land. They will forfeit their hold, however improbable it may seem to them at the present. Christ's Father has declared it so. Who, then, can disannul?

The many confident assurances of God's favor we have do give us comfort, don't they? They are either true and right, and we have little to fear. Or they are among the abominations that allow foolish, vain and false notions lull us to sleep. The difference between those two propositions is quite alarming. I hate it when we have to make hard choices.

COMMENTS:

Karen · JUNE 26, 2010 AT 7:56 PM

Denver,

I have spent several hours in the scriptures yesterday and today refreshing my understanding of all the references to the “remnant”, etc. I am on board 100% as to what you are helping to open our eyes to greater understanding, but I must say I am still full of questions...and I have been for several years. Every time I address this subject with my husband we have more unanswered questions than answers.

I lean toward the “North America” Book of Mormon lands concept, also, but I am wondering if that means the remnant would be exclusively referring to the Native American Indians...or are all the people in Central and South America also part of this remnant. That is definitely what most of the church believes and all my friends from such regions are from the tribe of Manasseh. Do you have thoughts on this? Does it matter? Is it one or the other or all the native peoples of both continents?

Also, you said, “So we see that the times of the Gentiles, as they end, become quite perilous for the Gentiles upon the land...”

I was reminded that a good teacher once taught me that President Benson (the chamion of the Book of Mormon in my opinion) taught in a General Conference that the times directly preceding the coming of Christ in Third Nephi...parallel our day prior to His second coming. 3 Ne 6:12 talks of the beginning of the break-up of the CHURCH. 3 Ne 7:2 talks of the break up of the GOVERNMENT and consequent division into tribes. And Chapter 8 discusses the break-up of the LAND.

Three break-ups...church, government, land. Is this a type and shadow of perhaps the unfolding events that await us in order that the remnant return and the Gentiles are cleansed and given an opportunity for the few who will to truly repent? Any thoughts?

Karen

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 26, 2010 AT 8:08 PM

I considered this subject as potentially inappropriate for a blog; because it will take a long time to lay it all out. I decided to take the task on. But it will require a lot of material to be covered. Therefore you need to be patient. We're going to cover it all in increments. It will take a while.

I think it is North America. That will become apparent as the Book of Mormon text is reviewed.

I think the remnant involved are primarily found in North and Central America, but bloodlines get disbursed.

Remember that the people who were here were destroyed in staggering numbers. 25 million Aztec (more properly Mexica) reduced to 2 million in about 5 years from disease. 20 million Plains Indians so completely killed that when the push west was made the American Colonialists thought the Plains had never been inhabited. 98% of the Mayan Empire died of disease. Who remains? What scattered blood, including Lehi's, are among the tiny fraction of the native bloodlines who were here at the time of Columbus? What mixtures exist now?

It is unlikely the Aztec/Mexica did not have some blood from Lehi's people among them. It may be that those who survived the die-off are now predominately of Lehi's mixture.

I do think the Book of Mormon will parallel our unfolding history, and that was one of its intended purposes. Their history was abridged, and sections selected because of their relevance to us. Therefore their remaining, highly selected, abridged account is not as much historic as it is prophetic.

JUNE 27, 2010

3 Nephi 16:17–20

And then the words of the prophet Isaiah shall be fulfilled, which say: Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing, for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste

places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God.

Given the scholarly arguments over the meaning and application of Isaiah, here we encounter a profound insight from Christ. He attributes this quote from Isaiah to the coming events in the Americas. In this declaration by Christ we learn Isaiah was NOT speaking of the return to the Middle East for these events to unfold. Instead the “waste places of Jerusalem” are nowhere near Jerusalem. It is another place, far away, where the residue of Jerusalem’s scattered people are wasted, then restored again. It is also plural. One is here, in the Americas, on an “isle of the sea.” (2 Ne. 10:20). Now we can know from Christ’s own interpretation that Jerusalem’s “waste places” are scattered throughout the world. This land is one of them.

Then we see something odd. After the removal of the Gentiles, there is joy, rejoicing, singing together, seeing eye to eye and a return to Zion. The emotional setting seems at odds with what we anticipate. Destroying Gentiles and having the trauma of those days would seem to produce mourning and lamentation. It does not. Instead it produces singing in joy.

To redeem Jerusalem is to re-establish the promised heirs upon their own land, and bring again Zion. Whatever bottle-neck of destruction needed to bring that triumph to pass will be worth it. So great will be the peace that follows that it will wipe away all tears. Truth, saving doctrine and being fed by Christ’s own message will end all laments (Rev. 7:17).

How is the Lord’s “holy arm” made bare? How will “the eyes of all nations” see it? What will the ends of the earth behold, as the

salvation of God takes place? Why is it “all the ends of the earth” which will behold it?

What does it mean to “see eye to eye” when Zion is brought again? Why is Zion to be “brought again” rather than re-built?

If the Lord is to comfort His people, what will that “comfort” include? Why has He consistently used the word “comfort” to describe His visit with people?

Why, when the waste places are redeemed, does it say “Jerusalem” will be redeemed? Is redeeming the “waste places” the same as redeeming “Jerusalem” itself? How does that affect the meaning of other scriptures?

Why are “singing together” and “seeing eye to eye” connected in the same thought?

What does it mean to “become one” as a people? Can we ever accomplish that by acquiring enough “sameness” or “uniformity” in conduct, thought and speech? Is it worth any effort at all to mimic one another? If we are to “become one” how should each of us proceed to accomplish that? How does Christ expect us to become “one?” (1 John 3:2).

JUNE 28, 2010

What Does it all Really Mean?

There are some great comments on the previous posts. I’ve not wanted to interrupt what I was doing to address them. Before moving on to another set of scriptures relating to those questions and comments, here are a few responses:

To whom has the Book of Mormon been written?

What possible good would it be for a message to be written for an audience who would never read the Book of Mormon?

If the term “Gentiles” is sometimes quite broad (and it is in some contexts), does the message get addressed to all of them? Is the message tailored to those who would read the book?

If the warnings are read to apply only to non-LDS occupants of the land, then what do the warnings accomplish? Do they make us proud? Do they make us feel better than “them,” since only “they” are condemned and not us? What kind of a warning is it if the only ones being warned are those who will never read the book?

Does The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at least retain the power and authority to preach the Gospel and administer the rites of baptism, and laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost? When I prayed, as the missionaries were instructing me, I got an answer that led me to baptism. I believe that baptism to be authoritative and approved by the Lord. Does anyone think the church lacks the authority to baptize for the remission of sins? I do not. If, therefore, the church has that authority, does it not continue to occupy an important, even central role in the Lord’s work?

If you teach someone, and they want to “convert” and be baptized, would you not baptize them into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

What is the mission field for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? Who is not included?

If all the world is the mission field for the church, what, then, becomes the mission field for the Church of the Firstborn? [I do not hold that the Church of the Firstborn is a formal organization, existing here as a formal order. I believe its members associate with others who are not of this world, and consequently the Church of the Firstborn is never in competition with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.]

Would members of the Church of the Firstborn not pay tithes to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? Would they not attend its meetings? Would they not support its programs? Would they not use The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to assist them in raising their children? Would they not have their families baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? Even if they held authority given them directly from the Lord, would they not continue to be faithful members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? To uphold and respect the authorities who are given the duty to preside?

Until the Lord brings again Zion, where should we all join in fellowship?

Would members of the Church of the Firstborn ever envy those presiding in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? Ever challenge their right to preside? Did Christ ever try and displace Caiaphas? Did He not admonish us to follow His example?

Does The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints limit the amount of light you can acquire by your own heed and diligence? (D&C 130:18–19). Can any man prevent God from pouring out knowledge upon you if you will receive it in the proper way? (D&C 121:32–33). Can any soul approach the Lord, see His face, and know that He is? (D&C 93:1).

Of what relevance is it if other Saints give no heed or are not willing to receive knowledge from the Lord? Should we belittle them? If not, what then is our responsibility toward them? (3 Ne. 12:16).

What does it mean to let a “light shine?”

Why, upon seeing that light, would someone “glorify **your** Father who is in heaven” rather than heap praise and attention

upon you? What is it about the nature of the light which you are to shine that produces notice of the Father rather than notice of you?

David Christensen's definition of "whoredoms" was interesting. Whether you take the meaning in 1830, or you take our modern sexual meaning, would it change the result of any analysis?

One fellow who worked at the Church Office Building told me that approximately 60% of active adult male members of the church regularly view pornography.

Kisi also raised a question regarding Ishmael's Ephriamite lineage. Orson Pratt, Franklin D. Richards and Erastus Snow all said Joseph Smith mentioned in passing that the lost 116 pages included a reference to Ishmael's lineage and he was from Ephraim. Does this change anything?

If so, how? What other outcome might then be possible? Would this potentially even further limit the Gentile involvement?

On the subject of Joseph's statements contained in the Nauvoo era transcripts: These were the very materials from which Joseph's talks were reproduced. *The Documentary History of the Church*, by Joseph Smith, Jr., was compiled from these original materials. When *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* was prepared, it was done using these materials. The paper I wrote included the original source materials, not the derivative compilations.

As to the importance and reliability of these materials, first, those involved were the leading church fathers at the time. Thomas Bullock was the official scribe for Joseph Smith during the Nauvoo talks. His versions were kept at Joseph's request and were official accounts. Second, the *Joseph Smith Papers* project now underway through the Church Historian's Office is attempting to make more of these original source materials available to the Saints. If they are not important, then the Church would not be investing millions

of man-hours and dollars to bring the sources into the hands of the Saints.

It is not wise to dismiss as “mud” the very kinds of materials that give the best source for Joseph’s teachings. Indeed, D&C 130 is an amalgam of comments Joseph made in a talk given April 2, 1843 recorded by some of the very same scribes used in the paper I wrote. I’m just using original materials, rather than derivative, second hand interpretations made years later by others who were not present (or living) when the statements were made by Joseph.

Well, enough of the aside—onward still...

COMMENTS:

Stone · JUNE 27, 2010 AT 3:20 PM

The question I would ask is, “Which words of Isaiah”? Which words relate to “when the Lord shall bring again Zion”? Exactly when is the “when”? After 13:13, when “the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger”? Or some other time?

This “when the Lord shall bring again Zion” does it refer to himself, or by people by his command?

How many prophecies, and what are the interdependencies, of the minor prophets that have to be fulfilled before whichever “words of the prophet Isaiah shall be fulfilled”?

This is no simple matter, but presents a complex relationship with other prophets at, or near, his time.

Denver Snuffer · JUNE 27, 2010 AT 3:42 PM

Only the Lord can “bring it again.” That is why He is said to “bring” it rather than for others to build it. All the labor may come from men, but it will be the Lord’s command, Lord’s direction, Lord’s word which will cause it. Until He speaks it, it simply cannot come again. Hence the need for us to be able to speak with Him. He cannot bring it until a people exist who will listen to Him (or those who speak His words, no

matter how unlikely the source they may seem to be). Oddly, until such spokesmen or spokeswomen should be listening to Him, and then He tells them to begin, and in turn a group should be here who would listen and hear Him in that call, there is simply no need to worry about Zion.

JUNE 28, 2010

A Bit of a Detour

I received the following question:

You refer to D&C 84:26 which tells us that the “lesser priesthood ...holdeth the key of the ministering of angels..” and imply that every deacon in the church holds the key to the ministration of angels. That does not sound right to me. I believe the “key to the ministration of angels” in Section 84 and the “three grand keys whereby (one) may know whether any ministration is from God” D&C 129:9 are one and the same. If so, there is no Aaronic priesthood holder in the church today who has the key of the ministration of angels as those grand Aaronic keys are only given to Melchizedek priesthood holders in Holy Places.

My response:

The Endowment has two portions: An Aaronic portion and a Melchizedek portion. Brigham Young commented that the Aaronic portion should be given first, and separate from the rest. Then after proving oneself faithful and trustworthy, the Melchizedek portion would be received. We've never done it that way. However, if it were to be done that way, then those holding the Aaronic Priesthood, possessing the associated keys, would have the key to the ministering of angels.

Now, apart from that, before Joseph received any priesthood he entertained angels. Aaronic Priesthood keys may give one a right to seek such a visit, may give a basis for such a search, but possession of such a key alone will not force it to happen. Nor does the absence of such a key prevent it from happening.

In effect, what we sometimes view as hard and fast rules are more like rules for polite conduct. It is the way which things “ought” to occur. But the Lord is not powerless to work around it anyway.

There is almost no hard and fast rule. Just as soon as we think we’ve figured out what the Lord MUST always do, we find out that He has a work-around plan that opens up any number of other possibilities as well.

D&C 84 is correct. And such a key does belong to the Aaronic order. However, the “key” referred to is to be found in the Aaronic portion of the endowment, which permits you to recognize a true messenger should one visit with you. However, as D&C 129 also reports, if the messenger does not have a body, he will nonetheless deliver his message.

As to questions about the church and its current “failings” I am not inclined to make a list. Salvation is not “corporate” anyway. Whatever the church does or doesn’t do, salvation is an individual process to work out person by person. If you say: “The church is perfect!” Then I wonder how that saves me. Am I not imperfect? Does the church’s perfection aid me in any respect unless I will repent and return? Also, if you say: “The church is a corrupt mess!” Then I wonder how that damns me. Am I not still required to follow the Master? Was Peter perfect? Was Paul? Did their quirks and imperfections damn those who came forward and accepted baptism, received the Holy Ghost, and lived the Lord’s commandments?

There is a great disconnect between the church and Zion. But there is an even greater disconnection between the church and an individual’s salvation. We rise or fall based upon what light and truth we are willing to receive. Those who have the most should have the greatest capacity to help, encourage, and raise others. Sometimes the church puts on display the meanest of conduct.

The most petty and self-serving of behavior. That does not relieve us from living as we should.

If a person trusts the church to save them, they must be shaken and brought to see the foolishness of their false belief. If a person despises the church, they should be taught to show patience and charity toward their fellow Saint.

Sometimes you and I need to speak of the church's perilous and foolish conduct. Sometimes we need to think of the church's vital and continuing role.

As reasonable people we should no more entertain the myth of church perfection than we should view the church as an abhorrent enemy to our salvation. It is neither. It is a tool. It serves an important role. Ultimately, however, the church should not (and indeed cannot) come between you and the Lord. No-one belongs there.

When the church tries to insert itself between you and the Lord it deserves criticism; even censure. When the church makes a well-intentioned mistake, the mistake should be noted and avoided. But frank discussions about those things do not weaken the church or the faith of those who engage in the discussion. It means, instead, that people care and take seriously the subject of their salvation.

I have no interest in leaving the church. Nor do I have any interest in leading it. Each of us has a duty to proclaim the Gospel, and having been warned, to warn others (D&C 88:81). Elder Ballard told us to use the internet to share the Gospel. The article is in the July 2008 Ensign. Basically, this blog is Elder Ballard's idea.

My view of sharing the Gospel is not, however, to defend the indefensible, or to dress up swine and decorate them with jewelry and pretend we aren't debasing either the pig, the clothing or ourselves. There is so much mischief going on inside the church right now that I don't think 500 General Authorities can get control over

it. It is a run-away train. Between correlation, and the organizational systems in place, it is almost dysfunctional.

The management structure for the church's various departments is similar to what one would see in General Motors or Black+Decker. Each "division" is separately accounted for and needs to justify its expenditures based upon performance. Measurable results are expected. The goal of course is salvation. However, goals such as "increasing faith in Jesus Christ" are used to justify expenditures. Then polling or focus group information is used to show the goals are being met. The lengths to which charades are enacted inside the Church Office Building are painful to many of those who work there. Agreements to keep information confidential has not prevented private sharing of the frustrations lived inside the great white building downtown.

The justification for Correlation is set out by them (the Correlation Department which oversees all manual writing) in the Gospel Doctrine Manual on The Doctrine and Covenants and Church History; lesson number 42. In there the following quote appears: "*Explain that the purpose of Church correlation is to preserve 'the right way of God' (Jacob 7:7).*" The quote is taken from Sherem, the first anti-Christ in the Book of Mormon, who is bringing an accusation against Jacob. Sherem, the anti-Christ accuses Jacob of perverting the right way of God by teaching of Christ. It is this accusation which the Correlation Department has lifted and used to justify their own actions.

Sherem was stricken and died. May those who use his words to justify their own failures share a similar fate when the coming plagues arrive. If his words are good enough to justify their actions, then his fate is good enough for them to share.

Correlation has robbed the church of vitality, deprived the Saints of power, and created an environment in which oppression and abuse is inevitable. Seeking to have true doctrine is no excuse for suppressing discussion, enshrining a militant orthodoxy, and following down the same path that destroyed Historic Christianity's connection with God.

Well, I'm off topic and not doing any good with this. So let's return to a discussion of the scriptures. If we want light, we find it in the Book of Mormon.

CHAPTER 7

1 Nephi 13

JUNE 29, 2010

1 Nephi 13:30

The role of gentiles in the history of this land, promised to Lehi's descendants, is not just covered in the Lord's words. It is set out in some detail by Nephi. Therefore, we will look at some of Nephi's prophecy from 1 Nephi Chapter 13. Below is verse 30:

Nevertheless, thou beholdest that the Gentiles who have gone forth out of captivity, and have been lifted up by the power of God above all other nations, upon the face of the land which is choice above all other lands, which is the land that the Lord God hath covenanted with thy father that his seed should have for the land of their inheritance; wherefore, thou seest that the Lord God will not suffer that the Gentiles will utterly destroy the mixture of thy seed, which are among thy brethren.

This comes after an explanation of how the gentiles will flee oppression in another land (Europe), come here, and overtake this land. Nephi has been shown the establishment of a great church that alters the teachings to be given by Christ to the Jews. Then the prophecy continues with the above statement.

Flight from captivity has brought the Gentiles here. They came here (originally) for religious freedom. They wanted to follow their consciences when it came to matters of God and belief. This land was a land of religious freedom for these gentiles.

They then were “lifted up by the power of God above all other nations.” This “lifting up” is not only to enjoy religious freedom to worship God. It also included the power to retain that freedom against any foreign threat to remove it. Therefore, ancillary to the religious freedom, the gentiles were necessarily given economic and military might with which to retain that freedom against “all other nations.” But the “power of God” which “lifted [them] up” is conditioned upon them always serving the God of this land, who is Jesus Christ (Ether 2:12). The power of God cannot be used to protect a wicked people.

The land is “choice above all other lands.” Why is that so? What is it about the American continent which makes it more “choice” than any other location on earth?

Notice that here again Nephi is told that the land has been given to Lehi’s descendants as “the land for their inheritance.” Whatever dispossession the gentiles cause, these people have God’s covenant to return the land to them. What does it mean to have this land promised by God through covenant to Lehi’s descendants? Does that promise contain any condition? Will these people forfeit their right if they are wicked? If they will not forfeit the right, then what will happen to them if they cease to serve the God of this land?

Because of the covenant, the Lord will “not suffer that the Gentiles will utterly destroy” the covenant people? Note the “mixture of thy seed” mentioned to Nephi. Why is Nephi promised a “mixture of thy seed” will be preserved? Does gentile oppression

remove the promises to Lehi and Nephi? If not, what then do the promises assure them?

Why does God make a covenant to a worthy prophet-patriarch and bind Himself to fulfill the promise even with a posterity which may not be similarly faithful? Has the Lord done this before with Abraham? With Isaac? With Jacob? With Noah? Even though we knew nothing of these covenants when the gentiles overran the land, are they nonetheless God's promise and something which He will fulfill? How certain should we be that the Lord will deliver this land back to those who descend from Lehi and Nephi?

Why can a righteous prophet-patriarch obtain such promises from the Lord? What reason is there for such covenants to be made? Can they still be made? How? What did Lehi and Nephi do to qualify to receive such a covenant? Was there any intermediary? Will the Lord employ a servant when making such a covenant?

Well, this is interesting stuff. Worth continuing to consider, I think.

JUNE 29, 2010

1 Nephi 13:31–32

Neither will he suffer that the Gentiles shall destroy the seed of thy brethren. Neither will the Lord God suffer that the Gentiles shall forever remain in that awful state of blindness, which thou beholdest they are in, because of the plain and most precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which have been kept back by that abominable church, whose formation thou hast seen.

The gentiles are limited in how far they may go. Although the covenant people will be smitten and afflicted, they will not be utterly destroyed. Diminished, broken to the dust, but not altogether

lost. And, no matter what afflictions they may be called to endure, the Lord intends to give them this, their promised land.

A hopeful note sounds for the gentiles: The Lord will not let them “forever remain in that awful state of blindness” they are in when they arrive here. The Lord has commended the gentiles for coming to this land. They did so in response to the Spirit of God which “wrought” upon them (1 Ne. 13:13). The gentiles came out of captivity and humbled themselves before God (1 Ne. 13:16). The gentiles were given the “power of the Lord” because of their humility (*Id.*). In the preceding verse, the power of God was how they were delivered from their captivity (1 Ne. 13:30). Despite all this, these gentiles are “in that awful state of blindness.”

How can the gentiles be both blessed to inherit all the Lord’s assistance and yet in an awful state of blindness? What caused them to be blind?

If something is “plain” in the scriptures what must it include?

If something is “precious” in the scriptures what must it include?

If something both “plain” and “precious” has been removed, what has happened to the scriptures? What does it mean to be blind? What does it mean to “stumble?”

What does it mean to cause plain and precious things “to be held back?”

Does any organization or group which “holds back” plain and precious things become part of that “abominable church?” Since “abominable” requires the use of religion to suppress truth or impose a false form of truth, can the definition of “abominable church” be limited to Historic Christianity? What about a modern church, even a restorationist church like the Community of Christ (formerly RLDS) which suppresses or abandons truth? If they “hold back” truth, do they join in the collective assembly of false religions

called the “abominable church?” Even if they came through Joseph Smith and accept the Book of Mormon?

What are the “plain and most precious” parts of the Gospel, anyway? Would it have anything to do with knowing Christ? Since this is life eternal, to “know” Him, would it be a simple and plain, but most precious teaching to urge people to part the veil of unbelief and behold their Lord? (John 17:3).

Where do we hear that message preached today? I think when I find such a message taught, I will give heed to it. Nephi’s vision of these events does inform us, does it not?

JUNE 30, 2010

1 Nephi 13:33–34

Wherefore saith the Lamb of God: I will be merciful unto the Gentiles, unto the visiting of the remnant of the house of Israel in great judgment. And it came to pass that the angel of the Lord spake unto me, saying: Behold, saith the Lamb of God, after I have visited the remnant of the house of Israel—and this remnant of whom I speak is the seed of thy father—wherefore, after I have visited them in judgment, and smitten them by the hand of the Gentiles, and after the Gentiles do stumble exceedingly, because of the most plain and precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which have been kept back by that abominable church, which is the mother of harlots, saith the Lamb—I will be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day, insomuch that I will bring forth unto them, in mine own power, much of my gospel, which shall be plain and precious, saith the Lamb.

Here is meat indeed! What amazing truths unfold in this announcement!

Notice the definition of the “remnant” to whom the prophecies apply has now been given. The distinction between the “gentiles” and the “remnant” are apparent here. Notice that although the gentiles will receive “much of my gospel” they will still remain identified as “Gentiles.” We may refer to the restored church as “latter-day Israel” or similar terms, but the Book of Mormon vocabulary applies the term “Gentiles” to us. This is akin to the “Samaritans” many of whose blood was as Jewish as those who were exiled to Babylon and returned. Even Christ didn’t acknowledge they were Jewish.

Why is it that the gentiles receive “much of my gospel” rather than the “fullness of my Gospel?” As you consider that, remember Joseph used to lament about the Saints’ unwillingness to be taught new truths. Here are two of his comments:

There has been a great difficulty in getting anything into the heads of this generation. It has been like splitting hemlock knots with a corn-dodger for a wedge, and a pumpkin for a beetle. Even the Saints are slow to understand. (DHC vol 6, p.184)

Paul ascended into the third heavens and he could understand the three principle rounds of Jacob’s ladder—the telestial, the terrestrial, and the celestial glories or kingdoms, when Paul saw and heard things which were not lawful to utter. I could explain a hundredfold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision were I permitted and were the people ready to receive them. (DHC vol 5, p. 402)

Joseph administered a form of endowment ceremony in Nauvoo, but told Brigham Young that he would have to finish it. Joseph initiated a few in the manner he received, but was not content with the form of the endowment. Brigham Young reported that Joseph told him,

Brother Brigham, this is not arranged right. But we have done the best we could under the circumstances in which we are placed, and I wish you to take this matter in hand and organize and systematize all these ceremonies. (See Journal of L. John Nuttal, Vol. 1, pp. 18–19, quoted in Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith the Prophet*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999, p. 97)

Joseph also initiated a practice of sealing others to him, as the Patriarchal head of a dispensation. The nature of Patriarchal authority Joseph administered is different from what we currently understand or teach. Today we “seal” families together in genealogical lines based upon birth or legal adoption. Our families are tied together in what we understand was the intended purpose of Elijah’s prophecy about “turning hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers” so that the earth would not be smitten with a curse at the Lord’s return. But Joseph’s practice was somewhat different.

Joseph, who received the revelations on this matter, attempted to set out the manner in which the “family” will be constituted in eternity. He used Christ’s comment in Matthew 19:29 to support the idea that those who are worthy will be placed in a family organization that would be completely restructured in the resurrection. Orson Hyde later constructed a diagram of this teaching and published it in the *Millennial Star* Vol. 9 [15 January 1847] at pages 23–24. If you search for that on-line you can find it. You need both the diagram and the explanation to understand the teaching. It is also in *The Words of Joseph Smith* at page 297. Please find and read it. You need to understand that teaching, which came to Orson Hyde from Joseph Smith.

As a result of this teaching, beginning with Joseph Smith and continuing until Wilford Woodruff discontinued it, sealing for

eternity was not done in family lines. It was done instead to bind those who had received the Gospel to Joseph Smith, as the Patriarchal head of this dispensation. Joseph's teaching was followed by Brigham Young, who sealed himself to Joseph as his (Joseph's) son. John D. Lee, who was executed for the Mountain Meadows Massacre, was another sealed to Brigham Young as his son. Heber Grant's mother was sealed to Joseph Smith, although his father was Jedediah Grant. As a result he (President Grant) considered himself Joseph's son. That's a side issue.

Returning to the gentile inheritance of "much of my gospel" referred to above, does it suggest that the gentiles are not/never were given generally or as a group possession of "the fullness?" Is "much of my gospel" something worth considering? Can you be certain Joseph delivered all he could or would, were the Saints willing to receive it? If it was "much" rather than "the fullness" then how does that change things?

Assuming "much of my gospel" includes (as it tells us) those things which "shall be plain and precious" then do the gentiles have enough to allow them to receive an audience with Christ as the promised Second Comforter from John's Gospel? (John 14:18, 23). If so, then will not Christ, along with the Holy Ghost, teach you all things needed, even if the gentiles are not in possession of the "fullness" of it all? (John 14:26).

This is important to understand. Nephi makes it clear how the gentiles can become adopted into the promised line and inherit a place among the chosen people who will be preserved, inherit this land, and be numbered among the house of Israel. While that jumps us ahead a bit, it is directly connected here. The first two verses of the next chapter state the following:

And it shall come to pass, that if the Gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day that he shall manifest himself unto them in word, and also in power, in very deed, unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks—And harden not their hearts against the Lamb of God, they shall be numbered among the seed of thy father; yea, they shall be numbered among the house of Israel; and they shall be a blessed people upon the promised land forever; they shall be no more brought down into captivity; and the house of Israel shall no more be confounded.

If the gentiles will hearken to the Lamb, He will manifest Himself to them. What does that mean?

What does it mean to manifest Himself to us “in word?” What does it mean to manifest Himself to us “in power?” What does it mean to manifest Himself to us “in very deed?”

How would Christ manifesting Himself to you in word, in power, and in deed “take away your stumbling block?”

These are the means promised by the Book of Mormon to deliver gentiles so that they may become “a blessed people upon the promised land forever” so as to never be brought down into captivity. But to know this would require you to come into possession of the fullness. Gentile possession of the fullness does not come from group-think, or group possession of some institutional magic. It comes by the same means as salvation has come to mankind from the beginning. The Catholics don’t have it and can’t give it to you. No institutional church has the means to deliver the gentiles. It will come, if it comes at all, from Christ and on the same conditions as saved Joseph Smith, Paul, Alma, Moroni, Peter, Moses, Enoch, Abraham and others.

Now there is a great deal to understand about how to move from having “much of the Gospel” to having a fullness of it. But

it was always planned for that final step to be taken by you with the Lord. After all, He is the gatekeeper who employs no servant between you and Him (2 Ne. 9:41). This is why true servants will always point you to Him. False ones will claim they can save you, they have power to bring you to Him, they have been entrusted to open the door for you. The “gatekeeper” however does not need a doorman. Nor can He be fooled by men making pretensions to have authority while lacking any of His power. You must confront Him; or, to use His description, you must be comforted by Him.

If Joseph taught the organization of the Celestial Kingdom would involve reconstructed “family units” based upon the capacity of the individuals’ involved, did he understand doctrine differently than we now do? Why were the original sealings performed to bind people to Joseph as the Patriarch? Why was that continued through Wilford Woodruff? Why was it discontinued? Although it was replaced with a method that provides us with sentimental associations, is there something about our understanding that is less complete, less accurate and less of how Christ intends to organize the eternal family?

It is clear from these verses in 1 Nephi Chapter 13 that the Lord intends to make redemption available to the gentiles, if they will receive it. But the primary means was never intended to be an institution. It was intended to be the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon speaks right over the heads of those who are trying to distract you from returning to Christ. You must either seek and find Him while here, or remain in this Telesial state worlds without end. His invitation is extended. He will open the gate.

Where will we find true doctrine taught? From what source does it come? Will He not, as He has promised, send true messengers

to warn before He cuts off and divides asunder? If you do not understand this it is because you will not ask Him.

So, let us press on. I find this is more interesting a Gospel than I had at first imagined. Truly, such things do not enter into the heart of man. They must be revealed, or they stand unknown. Fortunately for us, the Lord has provided the Book of Mormon and sent Joseph Smith to establish a foundation from which we gentiles may derive hope.

JUNE 30, 2010

1 Nephi 13:35

For, behold, saith the Lamb: I will manifest myself unto thy seed, that they shall write many things which I shall minister unto them, which shall be plain and precious; and after thy seed shall be destroyed, and dwindle in unbelief, and also the seed of thy brethren, behold, these things shall be hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles, by the gift and power of the Lamb.

It is the Lamb who makes this promise. He declares He will “manifest” Himself to Nephi’s seed. Christ promises the same thing (to “manifest” Himself) to the gentiles in our day (1 Nephi 14:1). This original promise would be repeated by later Book of Mormon prophets.

The descendants of Nephi to whom the Lord would manifest Himself “shall write many things” which the Lord would minister. What does the qualification “many things” imply? Is “many” the same as “all things?”

The things to be written are what Christ “shall minister unto them.” Is this limited to His ministry after His resurrection? Would it include all things which He “ministered” to them, even through prophetic ministers sent by Him?

Here again the words “plain and precious” are repeated. Why is this phrase used? What does it mean? Why was this what was removed by the “great and abominable church,” but replaced through the things to be written by the Nephites? Is the fact Christ “ministered” to the Nephites, over a thousand-year dispensation, through many different ministers, in many different settings, alone evidence of something “plain and precious” to us? When Nephi would later write:

Wo be unto him that shall say: We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough! For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have. Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men, save their precepts shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost Wo be unto the Gentiles, saith the Lord God of Hosts! For notwithstanding I shall lengthen out mine arm unto them from day to day, they will deny me; nevertheless, I will be merciful unto them, saith the Lord God, if they will repent and come unto me; for mine arm is lengthened out all the day long, saith the Lord God of Hosts.
(2 Nephi 28:29–32)

Is not speaking to the Lord, and more importantly hearing from Him the most plain, the most precious of things? Would the Lord have ever promised to come, take up His abode (John 14:23), and sup with you (Rev. 3:20–21) if He did not mean it? Does the Book

of Mormon reiterate the promises given in the New Testament? Have they been restored to us by the Book of Mormon?

Here again we find the word “destroyed” used. “Destroyed” does not mean complete eradication. It means the loss of order, political independence and social coherence. Many will die, but they will not cease to exist.

What does “dwindle in unbelief” mean? Will anything be kept, although they should “dwindle?” Can a people “dwindle” and yet retain some truths?

It is not just the Nephite descendants who will “dwindle in unbelief,” but “also the seed of thy brethren,” the Lamanites. Whatever truths remain will not permit them to have on-going access to the Lord’s presence. However, that does not mean they will not have Divine favor, does it? After all, the Lord gives to everyone precisely what will be best for them to know according to His wisdom (Alma 29:8). Does dwindling mean that people are altogether lost to some portion of God’s teachings and favor? How is it possible to determine if any people from any society are not being brought wisely along by the Lord?

The teachings that Christ will “minister” to the Nephites will be written, and then “these things shall be hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles” at the appointed time. Why write them? Why preserve them? Why are the records of His acts important for others to learn about? Why would a record of His dealings need to eventually be brought to light? Will all His dealings eventually be brought to light? (2 Nephi 29:13; D&C 133:30). If He, therefore, imparts His word to you, what becomes your responsibility?

What does the coming forth of the Nephite record “by the gift and power of the Lamb” mean? Will this same pattern repeat? (D&C 133:26). Will the “gift and power of the Lamb” be on display

again? Will this “make bare His arm?” Will people finally consider things which they have previously ignored? (Isa. 52:15). Can you and I consider them now?

JULY 2010

JULY 1, 2010

1 Nephi 13:36

“And in them shall be written my gospel, saith the Lamb, and my rock and my salvation.”

Christ’s Gospel is in the Book of Mormon. I’ve written books explaining just how much of His Gospel is contained in the Book of Mormon. When writing *The Second Comforter* I found the Book of Mormon was the best source to explain the process. In the Preface to *Eighteen Verses* I wrote (and meant) the following: “I am convinced the Book of Mormon is the preeminent sacred text for our times. All other volumes of scriptures are not just inferior to it, but vastly so.” (*Id.* p. iii).

The Book of Mormon contains Christ’s Gospel. It also contains His “rock” and His “salvation.” What is the “rock” contained within it?

John Hall thought the better translation of Christ’s colloquy with Peter would have included the Lord identifying Peter not as a “rock” but as a “seer stone.” And upon the stone or seership would the Lord build His church.

I’ve thought the Book of Mormon was more a Urim and Thummim than a book. It is a tremendous source of subject matter upon which to ponder, oftentimes drawing a veil at critical moments while inviting the reader to ponder, pray and ask to see more. Used

in that fashion, the Book of Mormon can open the heavens and make any person a seer indeed.

The words of a prophet are best understood by a prophet. If you can come to understand the Book of Mormon's words, you can become a prophet. Or, more correctly, a seer before whom scenes of God's dealings with mankind, past, present and future, will be put on display. Mosiah 8:17 reports:

But a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known.

Another way to interpret the "rock" is found in *Eighteen Verses* where I discussed the meaning of 1 Ne. 1:6. The meaning of the "rock" before Lehi (who wrote in Egyptian and would therefore understand meanings) would mean Ma'-at. Facsimile 2, figure 4, for example, shows the image of the Horus Hawk atop a rock and on the heavenly boat.

Still another meaning is found in Moses 7:53 where Christ uses the term as a proper noun, or name for Himself. He is "the Rock of Heaven." In this instance the meaning of the above verse is that you can find the Lord within the Book of Mormon. (Remember that EB Grandin's print shop provided all punctuation and capitalizations to the first edition. It was actually John H. Gilbert who did the work, which he described in a written recollection of the events dated 8 September 1892. (John Gilbert's September 8th, 1892 recollections) If this was a proper noun and Gilbert did not capitalize it, we still don't. But that would not mean the word "rock" ought not to be rendered instead "Rock" as a proper name for Christ.)

The “salvation” to be found in the Book of Mormon is the same as salvation to be found in all the Gospel. That is, by finding Christ. For life eternal consists in coming to know Christ, and in turn Christ introducing you to the Father (John 17:2–3). It is this *appearing* which Joseph Smith referred to as literal, not figurative (D&C 130:3).

The prophetic message of the Book of Mormon is deeper and more profound the closer you examine it. It begins to become quite unlikely Joseph Smith could have produced such wisdom unless it truly is an ancient document. Of course the critics labor to make it seem so, but they haven’t seriously examined its contents to see what it says.

JULY 1, 2010

1 Nephi 13:37

And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost; and if they endure unto the end they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb; and whoso shall publish peace, yea, tidings of great joy, how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be.

Now we encounter words that require us to know meanings first. For the Lord’s “Zion” to be brought forth, we need to know what “Zion” means. What is it? When the Lord calls it “my Zion” does it belong to Him. Will the Lord be the one who “brings again Zion” as stated earlier in the 3rd Nephi materials of Christ’s prophecy? (3 Ne. 16:18, quoting Isaiah 52:8). What are the role of people in “seeking to bring forth His Zion?”

Will they actually “bring again Zion” or is that the Lord’s doing? Unless the Lord determines to “bring again Zion” will men be able

to accomplish it? Even if they are quite sincere and determined? What, then, must precede Zion's return?

Even if they are not given the commission or command to participate in Zion's return, will they nevertheless be blessed if they seek to bring it again? Is the promised "gift and power of the Holy Ghost" promised to those who would seek to bring forth Zion? What does that mean? How could anyone accomplish that?

What does it mean to "publish peace?"

What does it mean to "publish tidings of great joy?"

How does the "publishing of peace" and "tidings of great joy" relate to having your feet become beautiful upon the mountains? (I've already discussed having your feet clean of the blood and sins of your generation in an earlier post, *How Beautiful Upon the Mountains.*)

Why feet "upon the mountains?" What "mountains?" Are these literal, or figurative, or both? If the "mountains" are a symbol, what do they symbolize?

Tuesday I went to the Salt Lake Temple early with a missionary who reported to the MTC on Wednesday. I teach him in priest quorum. I wanted to make sure before his departure that the "endowment" he received would include some details of what the Mountain of the Lord's House was intended to confer. Young men are still teachable. I'd really like to move to the Primary, however. Primary kids, despite their energy, have open hearts and they are willing to receive.

By the time we get LDS adults to teach there is just too much idolatry to deal with....

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · JULY 1, 2010 AT 5:59 PM

Denver, I have a son whom I never thought would go on a mission that is about to turn in missionary papers in a few weeks. Going through the temple has been on my mind too. I have thought I would pull out his Dad's clothes and show them to him for one thing. But what suggestions might you have about what I should talk to him about... if you are willing. Your understanding is so much greater than mine.

Denver Snuffer · JULY 1, 2010 AT 8:27 PM

Let him know that the language of the Temple is symbolism. The ceremony is not telling you about history, but telling you about the universal problem of mortality. It is the story of every person who has ever lived or will ever live.

I've written a paper about the first three words spoken by the players in the endowment. If you've sent your email address in we've sent you a copy. I think the talk is a good example of how the Temple has meaning to orient all of us in what we are now facing in mortality.

The more you bring with you to the Temple, the more you get out of it. It was intended to make us reflect or meditate deeply. Its meaning surrenders to patient and solemn thoughts. It is a feast for those willing to contemplate meanings and explore symbolism.

Anonymous · JULY 2, 2010 AT 7:10 AM

You remember all the questions Aidan used to have? You would have been a wonderful teacher for him.

Denver Snuffer · JULY 2, 2010 AT 7:11 PM

I would have enjoyed that immensely. Children are open to truth in ways adults will no longer tolerate.

JULY 2, 2010

1 Nephi 13:38

And it came to pass that I beheld the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the book of the Lamb of God, which had proceeded forth from the mouth of the Jew, that it came forth from the Gentiles unto the remnant of the seed of my brethren.

Roles and definitions continue to be established here. Nephi's seed has been "destroyed" and only a "mixture" of his blood remains at the time of these events. Nephi has taken to calling them "the seed of my brethren" rather than a "mixture" of his (Nephi's) seed.

The "book of the Lamb of God" is later identified as the record we know as the New Testament. Altered, limited, with plain and precious materials removed, nevertheless called the "book of the Lamb of God." Acceptance of this New Testament book, notwithstanding its limitations and omissions, is akin to Christ referring to the Temple of Herod as His "Father's house" despite the fact that it had been profaned.

Although Christ called Herod's Temple His Father's house, He did not commune with His Father there. Christ visited with angelic ministers on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-3), in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:43), in the wilderness (Matt. 4:11), and alone while apart from others. But there is no record of Him entertaining angels while in Herod's Temple. Though the Temple had been profaned and was unworthy to receive such visitors, Christ still honored the site and referred to it in sacred terms. This is a great key to understanding Christ's language here.

The "book of the Lamb of God" is revered and held in extraordinary esteem, as is evidenced by the terminology used in this

revelation to Nephi. Nevertheless the book is corrupted, changed, with many plain and precious things removed.

Can the book that has come to the “seed of Nephi’s brethren” be said to be less than a fullness? Can the book be called “the book of the Lamb of God?” If it can be called “the book of the Lamb of God” can it also be said to contain a fullness?

[Here’s a modern detour in question-asking: Do you focus on the book’s value and worth by calling it the “book of the Lamb of God” or do you focus on the book’s failings by saying many plain and precious things have been removed? If you do the one are you “positive” and “hopeful” and “Christ-like?” And if you focus on the other are you “negative” and “judgmental” and “un-Christ-like?” Is Nephi being fair and accurate by including the book’s limitations? Or is he just another crank, tearing down the good works and valuable intent of others? Should he repent of his negativity? Ought we be offended?

These kinds of questions are more a reflection of our own insecurities and foolishness than they are helpful to understanding Christ’s “strange act” unfolding before our disbelieving eyes (D&C 101:93–95.)]

This “book of the Lamb of God” will originate from the Jews, be brought by gentiles, and provided to the “remnant” who are identified with the “seed of Nephi’s brethren.” Since we can recall the history of these events, and know it is talking of the New Testament, we can see the various identities. New Testament converts from Judaism to Christianity, including the Apostles, Seventy, and Paul, are called “Jews.” The descendants of the Puritans, English Colonies, American States and United States who dispossessed the native peoples are all referred to as “gentiles” in the prophecy. (I’m ignoring Central and South American for the moment.) The

natives will include among them some faction which is the “seed of my brethren” that is the “remnant” about whom these promises are being made.

The question remains as to the identity of the “remnant” about whom these prophecies are speaking.

I know side-issues are arising throughout this discussion. But I’ve been focusing only on the “remnant” for weeks now. I won’t depart from that single subject, despite the temptations that arise from questions flooding in on tangents. Bear with me. We’ll eventually get to other issues.

I’ve debated whether it is even possible to cover this subject on a blog. This is an experiment. I’m trying to cover a topic that should rightly be put into a book. Whether it will work or not is still an open question. I think it is helpful even if the ultimate objective can’t be met. We’ll press forward and see how it turns out.

JULY 2, 2010

1 Nephi 13:39

And after it had come forth unto them I beheld other books, which came forth by the power of the Lamb, from the Gentiles unto them, unto the convincing of the Gentiles and the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the Jews who were scattered upon all the face of the earth, that the records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true.

We know the New Testament will come forth first and get into the hands of the “remnant” of the promised people. It will get into their hands BEFORE some other materials will also come forth.

When did that happen? Was it something that occurred before the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830? Which native tribes received copies of the New Testament before the “other books”

came forward? What are these “other books” referred to here? They “came forth by the power of the Lamb” but came “after” the New Testament was given to the “remnant.” What books have come forth “by the power of the Lamb” to your knowledge? Apart from the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Book of Moses, Book of Abraham and Joseph Smith History and Matthew, what other books would qualify? Did all these come after the “remnant” had first received the New Testament “book of the Lamb of God?”

The effect of the “other books” will be to “convince” the gentiles as well as “the remnant of the seed of my brethren” of the truth of the New Testament and “records of the prophets.” Have the gentiles become convinced? Have the “remnant” become convinced? Have the Jews who were scattered upon all the face of the earth become convinced? Are they convinced of the truth of “the records of the prophets” even if they are not yet convinced of the truth of the “twelve apostles of the Lamb?”

Is this a serial progression? That is, does it come and convince the gentiles first? Then, having convinced them, does it next convince the “remnant?” Then, after having convinced both the gentiles and the “remnant,” does it in turn convince the scattered Jews? If serial, what stage of the unfolding of these events is happening now? What is needed before the phase would be completed and the next one begin?

What does it mean that “other books” will come forth? What kinds of “books” would they be? Who would have written them? Why would they come “by the power of the Lamb” only to meet the criteria? Is a good commentary written by CES among the promised “books” coming forward? What about the *Ensign*?

How would you be able to recognize a book coming “by the power of the Lamb” in fulfillment of this promise? Will these

“books” be recognized as scripture? Do they include discoveries at Qumran and Nag Hammadi? Was Hugh Nibley working on such projects, and if so, was he among those in whom the “power of the Lamb” was working?

This verse has potential for broad application. It raises questions worth contemplating and may surprise you at some of the issues it requires us to confront. Such are the Lord’s dealings with mankind in every generation. We are made prayerful because He gives us great subjects with which to grapple.

JULY 3, 2010

1 Nephi 13:40–41

And the angel spake unto me, saying: These last records, which thou hast seen among the Gentiles, shall establish the truth of the first, which are of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them; and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved. And they must come according to the words which shall be established by the mouth of the Lamb; and the words of the Lamb shall be made known in the records of thy seed, as well as in the records of the twelve apostles of the Lamb; wherefore they both shall be established in one; for there is one God and one Shepherd over all the earth.

The “books” that the prior verse referred to are now called “records” by the angel. The “records” will be among and originate from the gentiles. The purpose of the “records” is to establish the truth of the original records of “the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

The purpose of the whole is to confirm the reality of Christ in His mortal ministry. Christ, who came to earth, lived and died as a mortal, was the Savior of mankind. The New Testament record confirming His ministry, sacrifice and resurrection is true! Their testimonies of Christ are reliable. He is our Savior and our God!

The “plain and precious” things that got removed will be returned to us. I’ve spoken of that before and won’t repeat it again here. But the “plain and precious” things will become known to “all kindreds, tongues and people” again.

I was thinking about what was required for Joseph Smith to be able to get a message out in his day. He needed a printing press, which he could not afford. He needed Martin Harris to give a \$3,000 note backed by a mortgage on his home to motivate the printer to make the first printings of the Book of Mormon. He needed an army of disciples to distribute the material on foot or horseback. He needed an infrastructure that went well beyond his individual means. Today Joseph would need a keyboard and an internet connection. He could speak to more people in a few minutes, across a wider swath of the globe, as a single individual acting alone, than he was able to speak to through an army of followers who uprooted their lives to follow his teachings.

We continue to make great sacrifices in purse and time to send missionaries throughout the world even today. In truth, if Joseph Smith had access to the internet he could have restored more things to more people in less time than has been done from 1830 to the present. It makes you wonder—if the truth were not packaged, marketed, focus-grouped through approved language, and accompanied by supporting photos and digital graphics—if the truth were simply spoken plainly, would it have any effect? Does it need an infrastructure of trained professional marketing

to accompany it? Does it need a slick website to attract His sheep? Is His voice enough?

What if someone were to declare “that all men must come unto the Lamb of God, who is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world, or they cannot be saved.” What if they were to declare in sober words that the Lamb of God lives still! That He had appeared to and spoken with the one making the declaration. Would there yet be those who would hear and repent?

Would that message be drowned out by the chorus of foolish and vain things being spoken in the name of Jesus Christ by those who, despite having real intent and sincere desire, have not been given power to declare His words? Would such a message only be another bit of entertainment for the bored and curious to give but passing notice? Could the world be given such a message and warned, but fail to see what it is they are being offered for one last time before the harvest is to begin? If so, would we notice?

The verse raises interesting options for the Lord to fulfill His promises in ways which have only come into existence in the last few years. He certainly does have the ability to “hasten His work” when He chooses (D&C 88:73).

Should someone choose to come, the verse reports:

they must come according to the words which shall be established by the mouth of the Lamb; and the words of the Lamb shall be made known in the records of thy seed, as well as in the records of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

What does that include? Authoritative baptism? Authoritative bestowal of the gift of the Holy Ghost? Prophecy? Revelation? The “rock” of seership we discussed a few days ago? How must they come? The Book of Mormon suggests it must be through the gate of revelation (Moroni 10:4–5). Without revelation you cannot

obtain the testimony of Jesus; which is the spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19:10). Or, in other words, unless you find prophets who can bear testimony of Him, you have not yet found the means for salvation. This becomes quite interesting and important. Very frank about the conditions for salvation.

Then the promise is that all these witnesses, all these records, and all these disciples are to become “one.” “[T]hey both (records) shall be established in one; for there is one God and one Shepherd over all the earth” who in turn makes people to be “one” as well. A great assembly, a general congregation and Church of the Firstborn.

How great a promise has been offered to those who will receive! What good, however, is it to offer a gift if the one to whom it is offered refuses to accept? (D&C 88:33).

JULY 3, 2010

Fourth

It's the Fourth (third, actually, but because we're in Utah it gets celebrated early so as to keep the Sabbath, or something). Therefore my wife, in her wisdom has determined to only put up one post—I'm adding this as an aside.

I had a couple of off-blog comments addressed to me that haven't been put up. But to make certain that the matter is clear to those involved: Rest assured I take no offense at criticism. It really isn't important if folks like, dislike or are otherwise disposed toward me. Largely I'm irrelevant. Some of the things I have to say are quite important, in my view. But they derive their importance from the subject, not from me.

I probably deserve more personal criticism than I will ever receive. Therefore I do not and have not taken any offense at anything

said to me on or off the blog. Do not trouble yourself for a moment at the idea that you've offended me; because you certainly haven't.

I'm a trial lawyer. That means someone is hired (and paid quite well) to oppose everything I do, everything I write, and every argument I make as part of my daily work. Criticism is always with me whenever I am working. So to be criticized over ideas I present is no more offensive than to have a spirited argument in a case at work. I have thick skin and a tolerance for being criticized. Since I took no offense I don't feel the need to forgive, but nevertheless if forgiveness is wanted it is freely given.

One other thought: I think there are a number of you that are really seeing the Book of Mormon in its true light. That is joyful for me. Such a treasure; so unused; so little understood. To have it become treasured by some of you for the first time is truly a delight for me. Thank you.

JULY 4, 2010

1 Nephi 13:42

And the time cometh that he shall manifest himself unto all nations, both unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles; and after he has manifested himself unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles, then he shall manifest himself unto the Gentiles and also unto the Jews, and the last shall be first, and the first shall be last.

Christ showed Himself to the Jews during His mortal ministry. He showed Himself to the Nephites after His resurrection.

He visited others, who have also kept records of His appearances to them. The full extent of the records that have been kept has not become apparent to us yet. Nephi would report in the final summation of his lifelong ministry the following about the many records to come forth:

Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written. For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written. For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it. And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews; and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews. And it shall come to pass that my people, which are of the house of Israel, shall be gathered home unto the lands of their possessions; and my word also shall be gathered in one. And I will show unto them that fight against my word and against my people, who are of the house of Israel, that I am God, and that I covenanted with Abraham that I would remember his seed forever. (2 Nephi 29:10–14)

The “lost tribes of Israel” are plural. However many the number may be, each kept records and they are to come into our possession at some point in fulfillment of this prophetic promise.

All of this was foreseen by Zenos even before Isaiah. Zenos tells us the lost tribes of Israel will be spread all about, into the “nethermost” parts of the earth:

And these will I place in the nethermost part of my vineyard, whithersoever I will, it mattereth not unto thee; and I do it that I may preserve unto myself the natural branches of the tree; and also, that I may lay up fruit thereof against the season, unto myself; for it grieveth me that I should lose this tree and the fruit thereof. And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard went his way, and hid the natural branches of the tame olive-tree in the nethermost parts of the vineyard, some in one and some in another, according to his will and pleasure. (Jacob 5:13–14)

Where is “nethermost?” How many were there?

When Christ informed the Nephites of His post-resurrection ministry, He informed them He would be visiting the various Israelite people: “*But now I go unto the Father, and also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them.*” (3 Nephi 17:4). He visited the Nephites. They were an organized body, led by prophets, expecting His birth and death. There were other organized believers who also looked for His coming. What their prophets told them, and how they understood His ministry will be in their records. What He taught them when He visited with them after His resurrection will also be in their records. It is likely to mirror the Nephite experience and record. However, it is undoubtedly true that we will again learn how involved a Redeemer He has been. Should we already realize that from what we’ve been given? We ought to welcome His direct ministry among us. Somehow we find His intimate involvement hard to comprehend. We think, if someone should acknowledge they have seen Him, that such a person is somehow special, different, or unique. It ought to be commonplace.

In the unfolding ministry of the Lord, the Jews were the first, but will be the last, to receive again His ministry. The gentiles

have been given the Gospel. The remnant will be receiving it from them — soon.

CHAPTER 8

1 Nephi 14

JULY 5, 2010

1 Nephi 14:1–2

And it shall come to pass, that if the Gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day that he shall manifest himself unto them in word, and also in power, in very deed, unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks—And harden not their hearts against the Lamb of God, they shall be numbered among the seed of thy father; yea, they shall be numbered among the house of Israel; and they shall be a blessed people upon the promised land forever; they shall be no more brought down into captivity; and the house of Israel shall no more be confounded.

I've referred to these verses before. When Elder Mark E. Peterson claimed the Lord would not visit with "gentiles" but only with the house of Israel relying upon 3 Nephi 15:23, it was my view that the 3rd Nephi statement of Christ was as to His immediate post-resurrection appearances to the various scattered lost tribes. He had no commission from the Father to appear to the gentiles in that time frame. These verses are about a different, much later time. These are speaking of the time when the Book of Mormon (record of

the Nephites) would come into the possession of the gentiles. The gentiles will, if they hearken to the “Lamb of God IN THAT DAY,” have the Lamb manifest Himself to them. Today is THAT DAY. It is now when the gentiles are promised He will manifest Himself to us, in “word” and in “power” and “in very deed.”

His assignment immediately post-resurrection was to visit with each of the still organized, prophet-led, but scattered children of Israel. They had been put into the “nethermost” parts of the earth. He went to and visited with each of them serially. He did not visit with gentiles during that ministry.

But in the time following the publication of the Book of Mormon, and as part of removing the stumbling blocks of the gentiles, He is to visit the gentiles “in word” and “in power” and “in deed” so that it will “take away their stumbling blocks.”

What does it mean to stumble? What is a “stumbling block?” What kinds of things would impede you from walking back to the presence of God? How will Christ’s ministry in “word, power and deed” to gentiles remove these things?

It is AFTER the ministry of “word, power and deed” when the stumbling blocks are removed, that the gentiles are then “numbered among the seed of thy father.” Note that they are not numbered among other branches of Israel. Note that they are not sealed to their fathers and made Ephriamites descended from other branches. They are to be “numbered among the seed of thy father” or counted as part of Lehi’s seed. They are, in short, to be sealed to Lehi as their Patriarch and father. It is necessary to understand the doctrine discussed in this post.

This was always a part of the Gospel. Joseph Smith understood it and practiced it. Today we think it was an oddity that got corrected at the time of Wilford Woodruff. However, if you read the

Book of Abraham you realize that the adoption of people into an inheritance was always the manner the Celestial Kingdom was to be organized here. Look at the Lord's discussion/explanation to Abraham found in Abraham 2:8–11:

*My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and **thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee**, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations; And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father; And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal.*

Those who receive the same priesthood (Patriarchal) from the time of Abraham forward become his (Abraham's) seed. Therefore they become his (Abraham's) inheritance and posterity, sealed to him as a part of his family.

This was the priesthood that was bestowed upon Joseph Smith, as a result of which he received the promises of Abraham. While looking for references to Abraham throughout Section 132 is interesting, I'll just take an excerpt. [PLEASE forget about plural wives while you read this. Think only about Patriarchal Priesthood and the authority which was with Abraham and renewed in Joseph. It

is that issue that I want to focus, and not to become side-tracked on plural marriage. At some point I'll spend a few weeks on that side issue. NOT NOW.] So here is Section 132:28–32:

I am the Lord thy God, and will give unto thee the law of my Holy Priesthood, as was ordained by me and my Father before the world was. Abraham received all things, whatsoever he received, by revelation and commandment, by my word, saith the Lord, and hath entered into his exaltation and sitteth upon his throne. Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and of the fruit of his loins—from whose loins ye are, namely, my servant Joseph—which were to continue so long as they were in the world; and as touching Abraham and his seed, out of the world they should continue; both in the world and out of the world should they continue as innumerable as the stars; or, if ye were to count the sand upon the seashore ye could not number them. This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham, and the promise was made unto Abraham; and by this law is the continuation of the works of my Father, wherein he glorifieth himself. Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham; enter ye into my law and ye shall be saved.

Exaltation came through this priesthood, which linked together the fathers and the children of promise. The priestly sealing together of Patriarchs into a family that will endure as the government in heaven was the object of the Gospel in every generation. We are returning, at the end, to what it was at the beginning. However, the way in which it was to occur was “by my word” and “by revelation and commandment” so that the person knows he is to have a part in the Father’s kingdom. It was not to be merely a distant expectation, uncertain in origin and doubtful in authority. It was to be certain, not doubtful: *“The more sure word of prophecy means*

a man's knowing that he is sealed up unto eternal life, by revelation and the spirit of prophecy, through the power of the Holy Priesthood." (D&C 131:5). It is directly connected with this Patriarchal Priesthood, the same authority which belonged to Abraham, the possession of which by any man makes him the seed of Abraham.

Returning to the subject of "remnant" and "gentiles," the Book of Mormon prophecies still do not refer to the latter-day gentiles as anything other than "gentiles" even when they are "numbered among the seed of Lehi." Gentiles retain in prophecy their identification with "gentiles" although they are adopted as Lehi's seed. Hence Joseph Smith's reference in the Kirtland Temple dedicatory prayer to the Latter-day Saints as "gentiles" by identity (D&C 109:60). Whenever a gentile manages to acquire this adoption, they do not become identified as the "remnant" as a result. Instead, they become heirs to share in the promised blessings, but as "gentiles." They will get to assist the "remnant" but as "gentiles" not as the "remnant." Still, those who are adopted as Lehi's seed inherit with the "remnant" the Lord's promises. But they are nevertheless called in prophecy "gentiles" throughout.

COMMENTS:

Gordon · JULY 5, 2010 AT 8:55 PM

How wonderful, this makes sense of D&C 84:34. We become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham by being adopted into their heavenly lineage, and we become members thereby of the church and kingdom of God.

This makes the oath and covenant of the priesthood CLEARLY about receiving *the second comforter* and the attendant blessings.

It does require a paradigm shift, however. The Patriarchal priesthood instead of being an archaic, obsolete, appendage to the Melchizedek now appears as a the ultimate, glorious flowering of the Melchizedek priesthood.

But I am confused about D&C 84:6. It seems to say that Moses has sons which are his as a result of having received the Holy priesthood. If this refers to one of the Holy Orders of the Priesthood, then how can he have received it from Jethro, a mortal man. If vs. 6 refers only to the Melchizedek Priesthood, then how has it given him sons?

J. · JULY 5, 2010 AT 9:57 PM

If a 'Gentile' accepts the 'fullness' of the Gospel that is offered — and receives his calling and election unto eternal life, — he is then the seed of Jesus Christ — correct?

In your June 30 blog you mentioned that Joseph Smith is head of this last dispensation and those in this dispensation — are they not part of his 'family' rather than Lehi's?

Those who accepted the gospel under Abraham became his seed by adoption — are you saying that all 'Gentiles' who are faithful become 'adopted' as Lehi's 'sons' rather than to Joseph, who is head of this dispensation holding the keys of the Patriarchal Order, even as did Abraham as head of the patriarchal order of HIS dispensation.

Abraham & Joseph are both dispensation heads — where does Lehi fit into this picture?

Does Joseph still stand at the head of this dispensation? This has been my understanding.

Denver Snuffer · JULY 5, 2010 AT 10:24 PM

The priesthood held by Melchizedek was Patriarchal. The "City" was a family, sealed to him. They came into the order through the authority given to him to seal on earth and in heaven.

We have two divisions of priesthood in the Church, one which we call Melchizedek and one which we call Aaronic. These are not the same as what Melchizedek held, because in the Melchizedek order sealing authority is not generally granted.

Moses had authority from Jethro, but also visited with the Lord face to face, at which time the Lord gave him a work to do. The work was greater than the authority given by Jethro, and of necessity included

all keys to accomplish it (as I have explained earlier in a post about keys accompanying assignments).

Lehi was a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph; as was Joseph Smith. There is no conflict with Joseph as Dispensation head being the Patriarch of all who came after him, and Lehi being the father of all gentiles who convert in this dispensation.

Go back and review the chart from Orson Hyde I referred to earlier and you will see that genealogical order does not control, but worthiness and capacity control. How the eternal family will be structured will be the result of what the Lord knows to be the right, joyful, best and holiest of family orders.

Anonymous · JULY 6, 2010 AT 9:16 PM

Thank you, Ben. I'm feeling much better about the hundreds of hours I've spent researching my ancestors and sealing them (because I was inspired by the experience Denver shared in 2nd Comforter about doing temple work for his ancestors.)

CBK

Denver Snuffer · JULY 6, 2010 AT 9:27 PM

I continue to do Temple work for my ancestors; having attended the Temple twice last week. I see nothing wrong with doing work for my kindred dead. That is the program the Church has underway at present.

That having been said, I also know that families will not be organized in eternity exclusively in the same way as we have been born into a genealogy in mortality.

In the Family of God, Abraham will preside over the entire human family which comes after him. So, too, will Joseph Smith preside over all those who came after him, no matter their family relations. He is the head of this dispensation and will receive that position.

There will be others who are placed into the family lines of the Eternal Family based upon where they belong in God's eyes, which may be far different than where they were born. Some of the last will, after all, be first.

JULY 6, 2010

1 Nephi 14:3–4

And that great pit, which hath been digged for them by that great and abominable church, which was founded by the devil and his children, that he might lead away the souls of men down to hell—yea, that great pit which hath been digged for the destruction of men shall be filled by those who digged it, unto their utter destruction, saith the Lamb of God; not the destruction of the soul, save it be the casting of it into that hell which hath no end. For behold, this is according to the captivity of the devil, and also according to the justice of God, upon all those who will work wickedness and abomination before him.

Now I wish Nephi would only prophecy smooth things to us (Isa. 30:10). But once again here we find him being negative. He needs to repent or he's going to lose readers.

The “great pit” is an interesting symbol. Remember when the brothers sought to kill Joseph? Before they sold him into slavery, they put him into a pit in which there was no water (Gen. 37:23–24). They stripped him of his sacred garment—not of “many colors” but of “sacred markings.” Having stripped him of the garment that belonged to the heir, and assured him of his exaltation, they cast him into a pit without water. He descended, as the damned, into the waterless pit. This pit symbolizes the damned souls in spirit prison who, without deliverance from the waters of baptism, are left to suffer (See Zech. 9:12). Joseph's pit without water is a reminder of how the ordinances that pass us through the water are the means of deliverance. (Hence the Red Sea and rebirth of Israel as they emerged from Egypt.) Christ also alluded to this in His parable of Lazarus, when the torment could only be cooled by covenantal water (Luke 16:24).

Well the abominable church offers ordinances, but they leave people in a pit, without redemption and in need of authoritative washing to cleanse from sin. The devil and his children are the founders of this great and abominable order. They seek to cheat mankind of salvation. If they can cause even a little error that robs power from the ordinances performed, they can keep mankind captive. For death and hell will claim all those who have not been redeemed from the awful pit.

How unkind would it be to fail to warn people of this risk they face? How unkind would it be to allow them to proceed into the afterlife unprepared, uncleansed, and unredeemed? Which would be better, to stay silent while the idolatry of the Latter-day Saints robs them of redemption, or to speak up and warn? Men and institutions will never redeem a man. Idolizing an institution will damn every participant. Idolizing men will damn those false religionists. In the Latter-day Saint community we have two groups: Those who are humble and follow Christ, but who are taught by the precepts of men and err (2 Nephi 28:14). And the rest are those who follow men and worship the institution and proclaim "All is well" with their faith. For the first group there is hope, so long as they are able to find the truth (D&C 123:12). For the rest, they will become heirs of this prophecy of Nephi's, all the while assuring one another that the odds are they are going to be exalted.

The goal in every generation is to become Zion. To do that you must have a return of a Patriarchal head, as in Enoch's day or in Melchizedek's day, wherein they organized again after the pattern of heaven. A family. One. Where all things are in common because there is a loving environment where all are of equal worth. No one aspires to be a leader, but all become sons and daughters, brothers

and sisters, husbands and wives where the care of all is as natural as family affection for one another.

The devil and his children seek to fragment, to divide, and to keep mankind from organizing into a family where the hearts of fathers are with the children and the hearts of children are toward their fathers. When you divide up into separate clans or divided families, while still paying tribute to the honored position of “family life” among the divided clans and families, you still have only a form of godliness without any power. This is the goal of the devil. It will prevent Zion from ever being brought again. It will leave people unorganized and unprepared to assume a place in the government of God, which is His eternal and singular extended family, where all are one.

The references to the “hell that hath no end” is that same play on words that is defined in D&C 19:5–12. It is a place of torment, where people suffer as in the Telestial Kingdom, or the world in which you presently reside (to paraphrase the Endowment). How long will people endure such an experience? Until they repent (D&C 76:99–101). What if they do not repent? They will suffer, worlds without end (D&C 76:109–112).

All of this according to “the justice of God.”

Notice that people arrive here because of the “abominable church” that will always be ready to preach to you false, vain and foolish doctrines. They will offer anything to distract you and keep you from seeing the Lord “bring again Zion.” They will use the words of Zion to preach a false faith. They are “abominable” because their false teachings are clothed in the vocabulary of truth.

At that day even the very elect will be the targets of deception. Those claiming falsely to be “prophets” will arise and lead away many. They will show great wonders, spacious and glorious

buildings, feats of charity and good will. But the elect will not be deceived, though they may be troubled (*JS-M* 1:22–25). They will not be deceived because they treasure up His words. They know His voice, recognize when it speaks, and will use it to keep them from deception. They will have entertained angels, who will have gathered them, and will be waiting for His return (*JS-M* 1:37).

Now, indeed, is the great day of Satan's power; who rules from the rivers to the ends of the earth and there are none to molest him or make him afraid. We look for the day when, again, a voice will cry out in the wilderness saying to walk in the strait path of the Lord. It would be interesting if that should happen to see who would recognize it, and who would want to know instead "by what authority" such a voice cries out.

Well, there's more to the verse than this. Ask yourself:

- Why is it a "great pit which hath been digged for the destruction of men?"
- Who is it that "shall fill" it?
- What does "utter destruction" mean?
- What does the phrase "not the destruction of the soul, save it be the casting of it into that hell which hath no end" refer to?
- Why is this "according to the captivity of the devil?"
- Why is this "also according to the justice of God, upon all those who will work wickedness and abomination before him?"

It is an interesting insight into the patience of God, the eternal purposes of God, and the endless, even "worlds without end" which will be provided for all those who will not repent. What a vast, eternal work God has set about to accomplish! Imagine bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of man! What an endless process such a work may entail! Why would anyone procrastinate the day of their repentance?

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · JULY 6, 2010 AT 7:52 AM

How do you come up with They stripped him of his sacred garment — not of “many colors” but of “sacred markings.” from the scriptural reference? Gen. 37:23–24

Thanks

Anonymous · JULY 6, 2010 AT 8:36 AM

Denver, I read Gen. 37:23–24 and it says “coat of many colors”. Can you please clue us in as to how you got “sacred markings”. Are there other cross references that you used to put two and two together? Did you come to the conclusion through the voice of the Spirit? Are they words of another that have become your own? I am baffled. Hope you respond. thanks.

Denver Snuffer · JULY 6, 2010 AT 2:46 PM

The idea of a garment of many colors is an invention. If you look in your Bible every time it mentions many colors the word colors (even in the commentary) is in italics [the word in italics is actually many] because it is put in there by modern editors. It's found in no ancient source. It's not a garment of many colors at all. A garment of certain marks is the term that's used here. We'll see what it is in a second. 'This garment had belonged to Abraham, and it already had a long history.' It's history was lengthy because it went back to the Garden of Eden, you see. That's the garment; it's the only one. Just as we treat the story of Cain and Abel, we trivialize this. We say, 'Joseph was the youngest kid, so his father favored him and gave him a pretty garment of many colors.' There is no mention in any ancient source of a garment of many colors. That's an invention of modern editors trying to explain it. But here it was the garment he gave him. It was the garment of the priesthood. No wonder they were jealous of him, they being the elder brothers and he the younger in the patriarchal line coming down from Abraham. This garment had belonged to Abraham and had come down to Joseph instead of to the other brethren. (Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, 51–52)

JULY 6, 2010

Comment Error

Blogger is having a problem with their comments—apparently a worldwide problem. It has been reported to them. I will save the comments that come in and not post them until they fix the problem. If your comment has come to me and I have moderated it and it has gone on into hyper-space, I will repost it by copy and paste.

Keep the comments coming. Blogger should have it fixed soon, I hope.

Thanks

CM

JULY 6, 2010

1 Nephi 14:5

And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me, Nephi, saying: Thou hast beheld that if the Gentiles repent it shall be well with them; and thou also knowest concerning the covenants of the Lord unto the house of Israel; and thou also hast heard that whoso repenteth not must perish.

Again a reminder that Nephi's teachings come from an angel. He's not on his own errand in making these things known. I doubt a person of good faith and common sense would ever dare to make declarations as Nephi does unless he had received the message from such a source. Joseph put it this way:

None but fools will trifle with the souls of men. How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations—too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of

the called and chosen of God, according to the purposes of His will, from before the foundation of the world!” (DHC Vol 3, pp. 295–96).

Nephi was no fool. He wanted us to understand these teachings came from a higher source, and not man’s wisdom. Indeed, what man can open up the mysteries that have remained hidden? Either God makes them known or they remain a mystery.

I believe the wisest course would have been for all our teachers, from Joseph till today, to either declare what the Lord and His angels have made known to them or to remain silent. Had that been the practice our libraries would undoubtedly be sparse. But what few books that remained would be the “best books” worthy of study (D&C 88:118). I understand that not all have faith. But teachers do a profound disservice whenever they pontificate about something they do not understand. No-one is an “authority” who has not received intelligence from the Lord or His angels. They are simply trying to be helpful, or seeking to magnify a calling, but they are not on His errand. Alas, the full extent of this problem cannot be known. All those who have spoken in His name, but without His instruction and direction, have indeed taken His name in vain. This will be a great burden for those who have chosen to use His name in violation of a fundamental commandment to the contrary (Exo. 20:7).

The happy news is that “if the Gentiles repent”—is always a condition for moving forward. We can’t get through carrying on our backs the false, vain and foolish traditions men have handed to us. We must lay them down. Unless we do so we wind up exactly at the point when this Dispensation began: suffering under doctrine which consists merely of the commandments of men, having a form of godliness without power (JS-H 1:19).

What must gentiles do to “repent?” All gentiles, including those who have accepted the Restoration and who claim to believe the Book of Mormon...What must they do? To answer that look again carefully at the Lord’s condemnation of us:

And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received—Which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all. And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written— That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father’s kingdom; otherwise there remaineth a scourge and judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion. (D&C 84:54–58)

Then Nephi’s angel-minister reminds Nephi of two different thoughts: 1) There are covenants with the house of Israel. So they will be remembered. 2) Whoever repents will find things will be well. Nephi was told: “thou also knowest concerning the covenants of the Lord unto the house of Israel; and thou also hast heard that whoso repenteth not must perish.” The result is that even though the gentiles are not given a covenant status, they are nonetheless included within the promise that it is well with whoever should repent. Accordingly, if they will repent, the gentiles will not perish but will have eternal life.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who declare that God reigneth and will deliver His people. How merciful it is that the Lord God will accept all those as His people who will repent and come unto Him.

COMMENTS:

Taylor · JULY 6, 2010 AT 4:10 PM

Denver

What does “unbelief” mean as used in the book of mormon? During a book of mormon discussion a while back I remember you speaking to the more specific definition of the word as used in that context. Rather than misquote you I wanted to ask.

I remember something to the effect of unbelief not so much meaning that a person didn't have a belief, or willngness to believe something, but that unbelief meant a person believed in something false, distorted or incomplete.

Given the Lords direct words specifcilly about the churches unbelief and vanity I think this would be valuable to know.

Is to me anyway.

Taylor

Denver Snuffer · JULY 6, 2010 AT 9:33 PM

Almost without exception the Book of Mormon uses these words in this way:

“Belief” means you understand and accept true doctrine.

“Unbelief” means you do not understand and have not accepted true doctrine.

“Faith” means you have been visited by an angel.

“Knowledge” means you have been visited by the Lord.

The Book of Mormon is trying to teach you true doctrine, to have you reject false or incomplete doctrine, to develop faith and to bring you to receive at last knowledge.

Beverly · JULY 7, 2010 AT 3:17 PM

Denver — Can you clarify even further your definition of faith as you stated above. If I have faith in the Lord, in what he did and promises, then knowingly or unknowingly have I been visited by an angel? Would the Holy Ghost be classified as an angel?

Denver Snuffer · JULY 7, 2010 AT 5:23 PM

If you have correct understanding of Him then you have belief. Belief does not become “faith” as used in the Book of Mormon until an angel has ministered to you. Your belief in Christ is belief.

The Holy Ghost is not an angel in the sense used in the Book of Mormon.

There are different definitions of “faith” and I’m not saying that is the only definition ever given. In the Lectures on Faith Joseph Smith gives a different meaning. He defines faith as a principle of power through action, in which you put your beliefs into action and thereby acquire power; because Joseph related faith to having power.

What you are describing would be classified as “belief” in the Book of Mormon’s typical use of the term. It would also be called “faith” by Joseph Smith if, as a result of your faith you have acquired power from the Lord.

An answer I give only responds directly to a question asked. It does not attempt to cover all other applications, meanings or uses.

JULY 7, 2010

1 Nephi 14:6

“Therefore, wo be unto the Gentiles if it so be that they harden their hearts against the Lamb of God.”

Interestingly, rather than shouting out in rejoicing that all who repent will escape punishment, the angel instead pronounces a “wo” upon the gentiles. It is almost as if the future of the gentile conduct inspires nothing but pessimism for the angel. It inspires another warning and condemnation for the gentiles who, having received the Book of Mormon and other sacred writings, are then fully responsible to repent.

Notice that the relationship is between the “Lamb of God” and the gentiles. It is not between the gentiles and “leaders” or “prophets”

or “administrators” or “general authorities” or even messengers. It is between the gentiles and “the Lamb of God.”

Why that specific a relationship? Why is it exclusively between the individual and Christ?

Read again the description of the Telestial folk who return “worlds without end” to their condemnation:

And the glory of the telestial is one, even as the glory of the stars is one; for as one star differs from another star in glory, even so differs one from another in glory in the telestial world; For these are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas. These are they who say they are some of one and some of another—some of Christ and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch; But received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenant. (D&C 76:98–101)

From what you’ve now learned can you see how one might follow even a true messenger but fail to gain “the testimony of Jesus?”

Can you now understand why, although you have followed messengers, you may have not in fact received the “everlasting covenant?”

The Temple is a type and shadow. It is a symbol of the real thing, but it is not the real thing. The “everlasting covenant” is taught there. But to gain it you must receive it through “the testimony of Jesus.” Is this “testimony of Jesus” yours? Or is it rather Jesus testifying to you? If it is He testifying to you, then what must His testimony be?

In light of that does it mean then to “harden your hearts against the Lamb of God?” As you answer that, keep in mind His formula in D&C 93:1:

Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name,

and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am.”

Here Christ is but reiterating the message of the Book of Mormon.

Then how do you repent? I was asked about idolatry among the Saints. Anything that separates you from the Lamb of God is an idol. Cast it aside and come to Him. Why we have idols between us and the Lord is as different as one person is from another. Almost without exception, it comes as a result of a false tradition handed down. Your false traditions are based on your life's experiences while another's false traditions are based on theirs. No matter what they are or how they were acquired, whatever separates Christ from you must be set aside. Come to HIM. Not to me or any other. Only He can save you.

No wonder that after making great promises to the gentiles, *if they will but repent*, the angel cries out “wo be unto the Gentiles!” They won't receive: 1) the Gospel, neither 2) the testimony of Jesus, neither 3) the prophets sent to warn them and the message given to them, neither 4) the everlasting covenant offered to them.

Will you?

COMMENTS:

ML1321 · JULY 7, 2010 AT 8:45 AM

Joseph said the following about the telestial kingdom:

“And thus we saw, in the heavenly vision, the glory of the telestial, which surpasses all understanding;

“And no man knows it except him to whom God has revealed it.”

Denver, it appears you are teaching multiple mortal probationations (an idea seemingly believed by Eliza R. Snow and Heber C. Kimball, two of the prophet's closest friends). How are verses 89 & 90 quoted above reconciled with that doctrine? If we are, here and now, experiencing

a telestial kingdom and glory how is it that “no man knows it except him to whom God has revealed it?” And is this glory we now enjoy the “glory” spoken of which “surpasses all understanding?”

Thank you for all of your insight!

Matt

BTW, can somebody please teach me how to use the HTML tags?! I can't for the life of me figure out how to use those things.

Denver Snuffer · JULY 7, 2010 AT 10:22 AM

I'd say the glory of the telestial kingdom surpasses your current understanding; and will become known only as God reveals it.

JULY 7, 2010

1 Nephi 14:7

For the time cometh, saith the Lamb of God, that I will work a great and a marvelous work among the children of men; a work which shall be everlasting, either on the one hand or on the other— either to the convincing of them unto peace and life eternal, or unto the deliverance of them to the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds unto their being brought down into captivity, and also into destruction, both temporally and spiritually, according to the captivity of the devil, of which I have spoken.

There will be a time when the accounts will all be settled. Everything will become everlasting and people will either inherit eternal lives and move forward, or they will return to be destroyed both temporally and spiritually again. Joseph Smith commented in the *King Follett Discourse* about the process of gaining exaltation. He said,

you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned

them. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave.

Death and hell are the devil's domain. He's the god of that world, and since we have death and suffering here, he calls himself the god of this world. Those who come here are subject to his buffeting, and his will. They are tormented, tempted, troubled, and then they die. While captive here, they endure the insults of the flesh, and the difficulties of trying to find their way back to God.

Those who find Him, however, are able to receive "peace and life eternal" through a higher way. The devil is bound for them, and they are able to be "added upon" by the experiences and difficulties here.

All of this is called a "great and marvelous work" to occur "among the children of men." Note it isn't the "remnant" or the "gentiles" but "the children of men." Why so? Is everyone invited? Why, if everyone is invited, will it largely only affect the "remnant," and the "gentiles," and the "scattered Israel," and "Jews?" What about the "heathen," since they are also "the children of men?" Don't they also have part in the first resurrection? (D&C 45:54). Will even some of them be included among the "children of men" who behold this "great and marvelous work?"

Why is it "**everlasting**" whether it is for "peace and eternal life" or "captivity and destruction?" Isn't "*Everlasting*" another of God's names just like "*Eternal*" and "*Endless*?" (D&C 19:10–12). If so, then what does the "everlasting peace and eternal life," and "everlasting captivity and destruction" really involve? [You really need to read that paper I've been emailing out if you haven't read it already.]

Why does God want us to respond to His message and get out of this Telestial Kingdom into another, higher kingdom? Why does

He want us to become like Him? How is this experience able to make us more like Him?

If one is involved in the “continuation of the lives” (D&C 132:22) is that distant and second-hand? Or does God (or the Gods) get involved directly with His/Their children? (Abraham 3:24–25).

What causes “hardness of their hearts?” What causes “blindness of their eyes?” Why are those whose hearts are hard unable to receive Christ? Why are those who are blind unwilling to see Him?

This cycle of inviting people to come to the Lamb of God has been going on for some time now. When mankind generally rejected Him after the time of Noah, there was a chosen people who were given a sacred tradition. Ultimately they got proud, failed to recognize Him when He came, rejected His message, and killed Him. Gentiles converted and became the inheritors of His teachings. Then the gentiles began to persecute the previously chosen people for generations. In this verse the gentiles are remembered, sacred materials are entrusted to them with an obligation to spread that sacred material back to the earlier chosen people. However, for the gentiles to be able to accomplish this they need to hold onto the sacred materials and teachings. You simply can't spread abroad what you've failed to retain.

If the gentiles let the sacred materials and teachings fall into disuse, forfeit their priesthood by draining it of any power, and have nothing to offer the previously chosen people, then the gentiles will be cast off, trodden under foot and destroyed, as we have earlier seen.

This verse reminds us what is at stake: Eternity. Or at least God's judgment. It'll be embarrassing to return to Him unimproved and un-added upon. Particularly when His hand was stretched out to us all the day long. Gentiles who do as they are asked are given all

the blessings of the chosen people. Those who do not are rejected and destroyed.

As a friend and I discussed last week, Hindu's advise us to get off the wheel and return to God. They may be onto something with that thought. One eternal round, indeed...

JULY 8, 2010

1 Nephi 14:8–9

And it came to pass that when the angel had spoken these words, he said unto me: Rememberest thou the covenants of the Father unto the house of Israel? I said unto him, Yea. And it came to pass that he said unto me: Look, and behold that great and abominable church, which is the mother of abominations, whose founder is the devil.

The dialogue between Nephi and the angel is interrupted. Nephi is brought into the dialogue as the angel interrupts and asks Nephi a question. You should ask yourself why an angel behaves in this manner? Why interrupt the teaching by asking Nephi questions?

And what a question it is: “Rememberest thou the covenants of the Father unto the house of Israel?” Once again, it is the “covenants of the Father” that is important and controls what is being taught and all history involved. It remains not only “in the beginning” but throughout “is the Word of God.” Consider how broadly the “Word” of God may be applied:

- Christ is the “Word of God” because He lived and did all in conformity with the will of the Father (3 Nephi 11:11).
- All of creation came into being because of the Father’s Word, or power (Mormon 9:17).
- Christ’s spoken Word had such power as to astonish onlookers (Luke 4:32, 36).

- Nothing of power hereafter will exist unless obtained by the Father's Word (D&C 132:13).
- Moses made water come forth from the rock by the Father's Word (1 Nephi 17:29).
- Joseph Smith was able to bring the Book of Mormon forth because of the Father's word (Mormon 8:16).
- His Word is "quick" and "powerful" and can cut like a two-edged sword (D&C 11:2).
- It was by this Word of God that Enoch had power to hold at defiance the armies of nations (Moses 7:13).

Without the "covenants of the Father" the best laid plans, the most noble aspirations, the desire to have Zion return, will all fail. It will return by a covenant or not at all. It will return in strict conformity with His covenant, His Word, and not according to the vain desires of men.

The angel is setting up a contrast for Nephi. First he asks if Nephi remembers the Father's covenants, to which Nephi responds that he does remember them. Now, often in the Book of Mormon the word "remember" is used to mean "keep." If that is the way it is used here, then Nephi is being asked if he keeps the covenants of the Father, so far as they apply to him. Using that meaning, the angel is inquiring about Nephi's worthiness to receive more. Or, in other words: "Do you follow the Father's commandments?" "Yes." "Then I will show you more." Reminding Nephi that the only reason he is beholding these things is because of his obedience and sacrifice. Or, to put it more plainly, reminding US that this kind of information and learning from angelic ministers comes as a consequence of following everything taught to you before. You receive more because you follow what you already have.

Now, after the inquiry and answer, the contrast is shown: On the one hand: The Covenants of the Father. On the other hand: the Great and Abominable Church.

God's covenants are strict and apply in a very precise manner. The great whore uses religion to promise to all people everywhere their desires for being comforted in their sins. The great and abominable church does not want you to forsake your sins, but to retain them and expect God will forgive and overlook them. The great and abominable church wants you to believe that the way is broad and many will enter into exaltation. This whore teaches that no matter your conduct, the odds are you are going to be exalted. So eat, drink and be merry. If God is going to be upset He will merely beat you with a few stripes and promote you into the kingdom of God anyway (2 Nephi 28:8).

This contrast is drawn for Nephi because these are two extremes. Both of them are religious. One is founded on a true religion, the other is a false religion. One follows the Father's covenants and will result in God's promised results. The other follows the commandments of men who have mingled their own philosophies with scripture so that their doctrines are all corrupt. They share a vocabulary, but nothing else. For one, to "repent" is to return to God's presence, for the other "repent" is to satisfy institutional demands and surrender to control by others. The angel uses the contrast because this is where mankind finds themselves. We live between these two choices. Our eternal consequences hinge on how we choose. Among all sects there are good people who are blinded by the craftiness of deceitful men (D&C 123:12). Even though they may be honorable, by surrendering to deceit they forfeit the crown (D&C 76:74-76).

This contrast is shown to Nephi, and shared by him with us, because we are always facing the dilemma of choosing between those who will promise you everything and give you nothing, and those who warn you to repent, as a result of which you may receive everything. Oddly, mankind seems to prefer the former.

JULY 8, 2010

1 Nephi 14:10

And he said unto me: Behold there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth.

There are and always have been two churches only. One is true. Its members belong to the Lamb of God. The Lamb, and their Father.

Either you belong to the elect family of Christ, the Church of the Firstborn, or you don't. All other religions and philosophies are false. Read again the description of those who are saved (See What's in a name?) There are only "two," and one of them is not the Catholic Church, nor the Presbyterian Church, nor the Lutheran Church, nor The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. However, the ordinances received through The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are expected for those who belong to "the church of the Lamb of God," but there is not a complete overlap of the "church of the Lamb of God" and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Therefore, based on what Nephi says above, unless we are part of that body of believers whose Father is Christ, and who posses a

covenant from Him that they will be His, we belong to the whore of all the earth, a church of abominations. Those who are believers are they who He has declared to His Father “. . . having been true and faithful in all things.”

The other and all-inclusive great church is comprised of all philosophies, all belief systems, all unbelief systems, all rationalizations, all theories and vanities that distract people from repenting and following Christ. These vary from very good things that are uplifting, and possess even great portions of truth, to the degrading and perverse. This all-inclusive church is a “whore” because she is completely indiscriminate and open for all to have her acceptance and affection. She welcomes you. The only requirement being that you have false beliefs.

She will make you rich, or she will make you covet riches. If she gives them to you it is to corrupt you. If she withholds them from you, it is so you will lust and envy what you do not have.

Look at her list of trade goods, given in the description of her fall by John the Revelator:

And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. (Rev. 18:11–13)

The final two on the list are the reason for the other items. The earlier ones lead inevitably to slavery and loss of the souls of men.

The devil, who founded her, is not interested in anything other than slavery and the loss of your soul.

The great illusion of a whore is to imagine she likes you. To imagine she cares for you. To imagine she desires what you desire and is cooperating with you because she finds you attractive, appealing, and that you fulfill her longing. It is a lie, an illusion and a fraud. Her bodily diseases are less virulent than her contamination of the soul. Empty, false, vain and foolish thoughts occupy the imagination of those who have intercourse with the great whore. She prefers the lie, relies on it. You would not be her customer if not for the lies.

What an amazing congruence of sexual images and religious failing have been given to us by Nephi and John the Revelator. How apt! How perfect! Imagining something that is degrading and debilitating to be sacred. It is a work of a god or a devil. And of course it is for us to decide between them.

The whore does have her allures, doesn't she? How many of us are in her embrace, speaking of love and Jesus and the joy of the Saints, while remaining wretched, poor, foolish and lost? She offers you vanity as a religion. "Vanity" because it is vain, or without any effect to save, i.e., without power. Only a form of godliness, nothing real.

Such powerful deception as is implied in these verses demands our attention. It ought to force us forward to seek and obtain a more sure word of prophecy, so we **know our God and covenant directly with Him**. It should make us refuse all the imitations, all the deceptions, all those who pretend to speak truth, and instead demand that true messengers be sent from whom we can be taught further light and knowledge.

There's the rub, isn't it? How to tell the one from the other? A concealed and veiled resurrected Christ laid aside all glory and walked with two of His disciples for approximately seven miles on the day of His resurrection. After His departure, the one asked the other: "And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32). Undoubtedly the reason they already knew it was Him was because truth has power that vanity does not. Therefore, it appears that before our eyes are opened, we must determine truth first. I've written about this in the Appendix to *Eighteen Verses*.

Interesting cause and effect. Interesting the Lord would open the scriptures to touch their hearts. What a powerful pattern the Lord has given for those who follow Him.

JULY 9, 2010

1 Nephi 14:11–12

And it came to pass that I looked and beheld the whore of all the earth, and she sat upon many waters; and she had dominion over all the earth, among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people. And it came to pass that I beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and its numbers were few, because of the wickedness and abominations of the whore who sat upon many waters; nevertheless, I beheld that the church of the Lamb, who were the saints of God, were also upon all the face of the earth; and their dominions upon the face of the earth were small, because of the wickedness of the great whore whom I saw.

The whore has "dominion" over all. All nations. All kindreds. All tongues. All people. She has dominion over them all. What does "dominion" mean?

Notice the “church of the Lamb of God” are referred to as “the Saints of God.”

The Saints on the other hand, were “few” in number by comparison with the great dominion of the whore.

The Saints numbers are few because of “the wickedness and abominations of the whore.” How would the whore’s wickedness and abominations cause the Saints to be “few” in number? What trouble must the Saints overcome because of the whore’s widespread wickedness? What challenges must the Saints overcome because of the whore’s universal abominations? How do they “overcome” these challenges? (D&C 76:53).

What does it mean the whore “sits upon many waters?” (Rev. 17:15). Why are they likened to water? (Gen 49:4).

Note the Saints are also “upon all the face of the earth” but are not said to be “sitting upon many waters.” They do have, however, “dominions” (in the plural). Why is the whore’s dominion singular, while the Saint’s plural? The whore’s control is one, but the Saints are divided into sub-groups. Why? Will they be led by various prophets from various locations? (D&C 133:26).

This fragmentation of the Saints is set in a time frame of this prophecy and it will not last. However it will exist before the wrath poured out upon the whore begins.

Why is the whore much more successful than the church of the Lamb of God? Or, more importantly, is the number of those involved in these two different cultures any indication of their relative standing before the Lord? If not, then what matter? Is it the quantity of those who are following a particular creed or organization, or the quality of the knowledge some few possess of the Lord?

Will getting more people to join the Church change the outcome of this prophecy from Nephi?

What is important, then, for those who want to be on the right side of this divide? How do they become one of the “few” who are Saints belonging to the Lamb of God?

How should “success” be defined? By numbers, buildings, activity and wealth or possession of knowledge of Christ? If success has nothing to do with numbers, buildings, activity and wealth, why do we concern ourselves with them? If it has something to do with knowledge of Christ, why are so few able to declare they know Him? Who can state they have seen Him? Who can testify as a witness of Him? How successful have we been in distributing the knowledge of the Son of God?

Where should our efforts be focused? Is the Book of Mormon important in accomplishing what the Lord expects from His Saints?

What interesting information Nephi has given us in this verse. But it gets more interesting as it proceeds further....

JULY 9, 2010

1 Nephi 14:13

“And it came to pass that I beheld that the great mother of abominations did gather together multitudes upon the face of all the earth, among all the nations of the Gentiles, to fight against the Lamb of God.”

Did you notice that? The whore is also a “mother?” Why is that? What do we learn from that bit of information? Just how loyal will the deceived be to the institution they regard as their great mother? It’s no wonder they react with such hostility at the threat posed by the Lamb of God.

Now did you notice also that the fight is against “the Lamb of God” and not the “Saints?” They are opposed to Christ and are going to fight against Him.

This is akin to David's response to Goliath:

Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands. (1 Sam. 17:45–47)

David knew the fight was between the Lord and Goliath, not between him and Goliath. Therefore the advantage was all the Lord's.

The coming fight will be between those who regard the worldly order as their mother, and the Lamb of God.

Did you notice also that the great mother whore includes “all the nations of the Gentiles?” Meaning that included among this great false order will be the United States, the greatest of the Gentile nations. We've been told in modern revelation that along with all other nations, the United States will be destroyed (D&C 87:6). We disbelieve this and hope to save the nation. We want to follow the counsel of the Lord to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when we fail we may be received into everlasting habitations (Luke 16:9). Your affiliations here will serve you here, but you will not be trusted with true riches (Luke 16:11). The result is that we have no choice but to flee.

Well, the great whore wants to defeat the Lamb, but she cannot get access to Him. She must settle for destroying His teachings,

His doctrines, His ordinances. She will target these truths because they link the Lord to some few who are here. She will at every turn deceive, mislead, corrupt and discourage. She understands that the fight is with the Lord, but to destroy Him she must destroy all that testifies truthfully of Him.

All that is corrupt and corrupted is welcomed by her. All that fails to redeem the souls of men and return them to the Lord's presence is welcomed here in her dominion. She will confer tax benefits, honors, protection and awards upon those who cannot teach the doctrines that save. Wealth will amass, privileges will be given, and the great whore's dominion will expand to include "all churches" in these last days (2 Nephi 28:12–14). Persecution is the heritage of the righteous because this world has no part in Christ (John 14:30). When the righteous are no longer persecuted, and the honors and awards of men begin to be bestowed upon any religion, you may know they have made friends of the children of mammon.

She cannot destroy Him, so she will turn her anger upon those who preserve His doctrine, His teachings, His truths and destroy them that He may be cast out of this world. This is her plan.

But this battle is between principalities and dominions involving spiritual wickedness in high places, and not just flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12). Therefore we should fear not, because the battle is, always was, and always will be the Lord's (D&C 105:14).

JULY 10, 2010

1 Nephi 14:14

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon

all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.

Once the whore sets about to destroy the Lamb of God, He does not remain in His pavilion away. He takes up the fight for His Saints.

What is the “power of the Lamb of God?”

Why does this “power” “descend” upon the Saints?

Why are there two groups identified, “the Saints of the Lamb of God,” and also, “upon the covenant people of the Lord?” Are these the same or two different groups? If two, what is to happen in this descending of “power” upon these two?

Why are the “Saints” and the “covenant people” both “scattered upon all the face of the earth?” Why are they not gathered together in one place?

What does it mean to be “armed with righteousness?”

Why are “righteousness” and “the power of God” two different things?

Do the “covenant people” have to have “righteousness” to receive the “power of God?” Are they blessed for the covenant’s sake? What about the others? Who are “righteous” and their protection? Are they protected for righteousness sake?

Assuming the “power of God” is given to protect these groups, do they need munitions? Do they need intercontinental firepower? Do they need to form an army for their own defense?

What is the “power of God in great glory?” Will the children of the great whore be able to behold this “power of God in great glory,” or will it be hidden from them? If hidden, will they sense something? Will fear fall upon them that they flee from the presence of this glory? Wasn’t that the case with Daniel’s friends? (Daniel

10:7). Wasn't that the case with the companions of Saul? (*JST Acts 9:7* "And *they who were journeying* with him *saw indeed the light, and were afraid; they heard not the voice of him who spake to him.*") Will Zion not be protected by this "power of God?" (D&C 45:70). If it is to be like the days of Noah (Luke 17:26–27), then won't there be someone who can speak the word of God and mountains flee, armies held at defiance, and rivers turned out of their course? (Moses 7:13).

Will the same things happen that happened at the time of the great flood? If so, how much relevance does the history from Enoch through Noah have to our day? Should we be familiar with that pattern to know how the pattern may repeat itself?

What can you do to be numbered with those who will be spared? Does the known history of the antediluvians tell you anything about how you need to prepare? Since Enoch had 365 years to develop a people who were worthy to be spared, how much greater a work will it be to prepare now that life spans are generally less than 90 years? How great a work lies before you?

JULY 11, 2010

CD Talks Available

There are a couple of talks I gave in the past that were digitally recorded. They have been sold in the past for (as I recall) \$10.00 apiece. The proceeds from those sales were donated to a shelter for abused girls in Utah.

The recordings are still available. They are not charging anything for the copies, but are asking that donations be made. There are costs associated with producing and mailing the copies, so some donation is appreciated to be fair to those providing them. Any donation you make that exceeds the costs to reproduce and mail

them will be used to support the missionary effort of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Below are descriptions of the two recordings:

Denver Snuffer, One CD: Zion Symposium Talk, 4 Nephi, given February 23, 2008

Denver Snuffer, Three CDs: Christ's Discourse on the Road to Emmaus, given April 14, 2007

Cost: Donation

For orders email: thembones47@yahoo.com

While I own the copyright for these materials, all the money raised in selling them has been donated. None of the donations will be given to me, nor have any ever been given to me.

If you choose to make a donation, the money will go to those who will take the order, process your donation, and return anything above production costs to the missionary effort. Other than giving the talks and making this announcement, I am not involved in any other capacity.

The second recording (3 CDs) is a talk that became the appendix in *Eighteen Verses*. There are some differences between the recorded talk and the published appendix.

Anyone interested can contact the email address shown above to get a copy. Please do not contact me or the comment moderator. I am only making the announcement.

JULY 12, 2010

1 Nephi 14:15–16

And it came to pass that I beheld that the wrath of God was poured out upon that great and abominable church, insomuch that there were wars and rumors of wars among all the nations and kindreds

of the earth. And as there began to be wars and rumors of wars among all the nations which belonged to the mother of abominations, the angel spake unto me, saying: Behold, the wrath of God is upon the mother of harlots; and behold, thou seest all these things—

God's wrath is "poured out" and takes a specific form: "wars and rumors of wars among all the nations and kindreds." People go to war. The "wicked kill the wicked." (D&C 63:33; Proverbs 11:5; Mormon 4:5).

The wicked get to destroy one another, but they do not get to destroy the righteous (1 Nephi 22:16).

The destruction of God's judgment will be "among all the nations which belonged to the mother of abominations." But that was all nations, was it not? Therefore, what nation will not be at war in this coming day?

The angel makes a point of stating what Nephi is beholding: "Behold, the wrath of God is upon the mother of harlots." How is this God's wrath? The answer is that when God is angry, He withdraws His spirit (Helaman 6:35; Helaman 13:8). And when He withdraws His spirit from one, He generally pours it out on another (Helaman 6:34–36). When His spirit withdraws, men are left to their natural, carnal state, filled with envy, jealousy, covetousness, ambition and greed. When the heavens become silent, the judgments of God follow (Revelation 8:1; D&C 88:95).

This is the means by which the tares ripen in iniquity, and the wheat ripens in righteousness. However, to preserve the spirit among those to be saved in the last days, it will be necessary for the same priesthood, the same calling, to be in possession of those to be preserved. Otherwise they can't ripen into wheat (D&C 86:1–11). For the wheat are destined for Celestial Glory and eternal life (D&C

101:65). This cannot be realized without a covenant (D&C 132:20) and the testimony of Jesus to them (D&C 76:51–57).

How should we each proceed?

Can anyone make you “wheat” if you do not the things the Lord commands you to do? (Luke 6:46—a favorite verse of President Kimball’s).

Can anyone give you “oil” for your lamp?

What is your responsibility to obtain these things?

When the time comes that all nations of the earth are at war with one another as the means for the Lord’s wrath to be poured out upon the wicked, what is the role of the righteous? Will they join in the battle? Will they be spared? (D&C 45:68–71).

Why does the Lord not require the righteous to shed the blood of the wicked? Why would He use the wicked to destroy the wicked?

If His spirit withdraws from the world, but remains with His Saints, what peril is there if the Saints don’t also withdraw from the world?

Will citizenship in both Babylon and Zion be possible? Will Zion need a bank?

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · JULY 12, 2010 AT 5:12 PM

“Will Zion need a bank?”

I though [sic] Zion was a bank. :-)

Denver Snuffer · JULY 20, 2010 AT 1:07 PM

Zion’s Bank is a different subject:

On Friday, May 21, 2010 the *Church News* posted an article about President Monson dedicating a new multimillion dollar Zion’s Bank center in Provo, Utah. It was on the inside, third page, where everyone who subscribes to the Church News could not miss the article. I was reminded of the Kirtland Anti-Banking Safety Society. The dedication

was given prominent mention to quiet LDS members' concerns about keeping money in the bank. Using President Monson at the dedication was a calculated effort to keep deposits in the bank.

Today's *Deseret News* reports that Zion's Bank continues its slide in failing performance. The seventh straight quarter of losses, this quarter totaling \$135.2 million. The Troubled Asset Relief Payment (TARP) bailout money of \$1.4 billion has not been repaid.

Oddly the bank's stock has risen on expectations that the bank would be improving in earnings. Much of that expectation being fueled by unrealistic optimism.

Zion's has 500 offices in Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, Utah and Washington. Many of the depositors are subscribers to the LDS *Church News* and are no doubt keeping their money in the bank as a result of confidence in its ties to the LDS Church. The recent well publicized dedication of the Provo Center is, no doubt, calculated to keep that confidence high among depositors.

JULY 12, 2010

1 Nephi 14:17

And when the day cometh that the wrath of God is poured out upon the mother of harlots, which is the great and abominable church of all the earth, whose founder is the devil, then, at that day, the work of the Father shall commence, in preparing the way for the fulfilling of his covenants, which he hath made to his people who are of the house of Israel.

Now we get some indication of timing. A great deal has been described, but the timing of the events has been left out until now.

The “day cometh that the wrath of God is poured out upon the mother of harlots” — that is, when the great and abominable church is caught up in worldwide violence, every nation at war

with its neighbor or within itself. It is when those events are underway “the work of the Father shall commence” to fulfill all the prior commitments and covenants.

First, the great whore will reel and stagger as a drunkard, drunk with her own blood.

Then the “work of the Father” will “commence.” What does it mean to “commence?” Why choose such a desperate hour to begin?

Are there signs of this international and internal violence already afoot? Is the work of the Father now commenced?

The “commencement” of the work is “for the fulfilling of His covenants.” What does it mean to “fulfill?” Will every whit of His covenants be all completed, all finished, all kept? (D&C 1:38).

Interestingly, the “fulfilling of His covenants which He hath made to His people who are of the house of Israel” is not divided into “remnant” and “gentile.” At the time when His final work begins, all of “the house of Israel” will be remembered, in whatever scattered place they may be found. Why the change? Why no longer focus upon the “remnant” and “Jew” and “gentile” and “scattered house of Israel?” Why does He now call them all “his people?”

Do the fractures heal? Do the divided groups come together at last? Will the scattered, lost and forgotten remains of Israel be found throughout the world? (Jacob 5:67–68). Will the results be a restoration of all Israel, no matter what group they may have been identified with previously? (Jacob 5:72–73). Will these divided, but remembered people become one at last? (Jacob 5:74).

How much purging will be needed to bring this to pass? (Jacob 5:71; D&C 45:68–71; D&C 133:9–12).

If the work has begun, are there “servants” already here beginning to move the now wild branches back to their natural roots? (Jacob 5:70). How does one respond and return to their natural

roots? Who is the “tree of life?” How do we reattach ourselves to Him? (John 15:1–6). What of those who would have you attach yourselves to them, to become their disciples, to follow what they claim as their right to lead and control you? (D&C 121:36–37). How must they lead, if not by exercising control and dominion? (D&C 121:41–42).

[As long as we are in Section 121, there is an important but still unrecognized truth in that revelation. The caution in Section 121 about abuse is directed in whole at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Among other things, it is warning the LDS Church not to persecute the Lord’s Saints, and thereby fight against God (D&C 121:38). It has been traditionally interpreted by the LDS Church to the complete contrary. The LDS teaching turns the warning on its ear, and reads it to mean that you shouldn’t fight against the LDS Church! The warning, however, is addressed to the Church and warning it to exercise caution, lest they find themselves fighting against the Lord’s Saints, and thereby in turn fighting against the Lord. Read it carefully. It is not a caution to you or me, but a caution to the LDS Church itself. It means that there may be Saints of God who are at times at odds with, or critical of the LDS Church. When that happens, the LDS Church is warned to refrain from persecuting them, or else they may find themselves fighting against God. It is an unnoticed warning because the traditional interpretation is used to give the LDS Church protection against criticism.]

COMMENTS:

Ben · JULY 12, 2010 AT 3:32 PM

I need to read more carefully section 121, but on a quick look at the section you mention, I can’t see how that is directed at the institution

of the church. Against individual members, yes, but verse 37 specifically mentions amen to the priesthood of “that man,” singular, individual.

I’ve also never heard this scripture used as a protection against criticism.

I’d love more insight on this interpretation, I’m not seeing what you do.

Denver Snuffer · JULY 12, 2010 AT 7:57 PM

Ben:

Search for references using Section 121 in General Conference talks.

CHAPTER 9

3 Nephi 21

JULY 12, 2010

3 Nephi 21:1

Now we jump to late in His ministry where Christ is teaching the Nephites. We pick it up in 3 Nephi, Chapter 21:

3 Nephi 21:1

And verily I say unto you, I give unto you a sign, that ye may know the time when these things shall be about to take place—that I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among them my Zion;

Christ is telling the Nephites (and us) about timing. He will provide a “sign” to those who watch for such things. Contrary to what you’ve heard all your life about “signs,” they are and always have been part of the true Gospel. They invariably follow faith, but do not and never have produced faith (D&C 63:9–10). There are examples of signs throughout God’s dealings with those who follow Him (See, e.g., Helaman 14:4; Ezek. 24:24; Ex. 10:2; Acts 2:22, among many others). We are supposed to see signs, that we may know God is dealing with **us** (D&C 68:10–11).

Christ is giving a sign to us so we may understand when His Father's promises are being fulfilled.

The time when His Father's covenants are to be fulfilled will be the moment when Christ will "gather in, from their long dispersion, my people." Note it is "I" meaning Christ, who will do the gathering. Christ is the great husbandman of this, the Lord's vineyard. It is Christ who will personally do the gathering. How do you suppose Christ will "gather in" those whom He calls "His people?"

Notice how the gathered are referred to by Christ as "my people" and "house of Israel" and "my Zion." When the gathering is complete, the various groups are no longer separately identified. On the other side of this gathering they will be "one" people and a restored "house of Israel."

But note the sequence:

First, gathering in from a long dispersion.

Second, they convert into "my people" or the "house of Israel." Then they are "established" as "Zion."

Why does the Lord refer to it as "my Zion?" Can you have Zion without the Lord's presence? Can there be Zion without the Lord dwelling among them? (Moses 7:16-18). Notice in Enoch's City that it was the Lord who came and dwelt there, then later the Lord is the one who names or calls the people "Zion."

When the Lord calls it "my Zion" how literal is this? How directly will the Lord be involved?

If you want to have a place there, do your connections in a church, organization, fraternity, fellowship, quorum or brotherhood matter? If not, what association alone will allow you to participate? How important is the "testimony of Jesus?"

Read again the description of the group of Saints who are included with those who will comprise Zion. As you read, keep

in mind all we have discussed up to this point as you recognize familiar words used below:

⁵¹ They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given—

⁵² That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power;

⁵³ And who overcame by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.

⁵⁴ They are they who are the church of the Firstborn.

⁵⁵ They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—

⁵⁶ They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory;

⁵⁷ And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.

⁵⁸ Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—

⁵⁹ Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

⁶⁰ And they shall overcome all things.

⁶¹ Wherefore, let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God, who shall subdue all enemies under his feet.

⁶² These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever (D&C 76:51–62).

These, then are Zion. These are those who become “one” and are called by the Lord after they are gathered in the “house of Israel” and “my Zion.”

JULY 13, 2010

3 Nephi 21:2–3

And behold, this is the thing which I will give unto you for a sign—for verily I say unto you that when these things which I declare unto you, and which I shall declare unto you hereafter of myself, and by the power of the Holy Ghost which shall be given unto you of the Father, shall be made known unto the Gentiles that they may know concerning this people who are a remnant of the house of Jacob, and concerning this my people who shall be scattered by them; Verily, verily, I say unto you, when these things shall be made known unto them of the Father, and shall come forth of the Father, from them unto you;

The sign Christ is giving requires a specific knowledge of a sequence of events. These verses begin to detail how you will recognize the sign as the proper chronology unfolds.

First, Christ’s words which were “declared unto you” (meaning the Nephites) will be “made known unto the gentiles.” So, the Nephites must receive both what Christ *has* declared and *will* declare to them before His ministry was completed. Then these Nephites must record or preserve the words Christ declared. These words, recorded by the Nephites must in turn, become “known unto the gentiles.” This initial part of Christ’s sign is directly tied to the Book of Mormon. However, what does it mean that the words of Christ must be “made known unto the gentiles?” We have them, but do we know them in the sense that is being used here?

Second, the gentiles must come to a knowledge of “this people (Nephite audience) who are a remnant of the house of Jacob.” The gentiles must understand or “know” that the promises made to the “remnant” exist. Has that happened? If not, why not? Is it happening at the moment as you become aware of this information that has been in the Book of Mormon since its publication in 1830? (No wonder the Lord’s condemnation of the Latter-day Saints).

Note the Lord calls the audience, and in turn their posterity, “this people who are a remnant of the house of Jacob...this my people.” It is important to know that the Lord describes them with this identity as “my people” throughout His sermon and prophecy. This careful limitation of the reference to the Lord’s “people” should not be applied broadly. It does not include gentiles. We should not change His meaning. He is speaking about a single identified group as “my people” and it is those before Him and their descendants.

Now, although it is a parenthetical thought, He adds a third event in the chronology. The third event is the scattering of the “Lord’s people” who are the “remnant” by the gentiles. It will happen before the second listed event, but it is the third tier of the sign Christ is giving.

[By the way, this scrambled chronology is one of the things that evidences it is authentic and not a product of Joseph Smith’s imagination. The time-line is always scrambled somewhat when the Lord or His true prophets speak. Information is not presented to their minds in a chronological manner, and therefore it is grouped by subject, not by time (D&C 130:7–8). Isaiah, for example, was always grouping information according to subject, not chronology. Indeed, when looking back on a sweeping revelation, it is not possible to reconstruct a time line of events shown to a prophet in vision without some considerable effort. But this is merely an aside.]

The fourth portion of the sign is when the gentiles, who have the words, and appreciate or “know” them, bring them to the attention of the remnant. When those standing before Christ, through their descendants, come to receive these words of Christ from gentiles who know them to be true, then the fourth portion of the sign will have occurred.

Notice how Christ attributes the coming forth of the Book of Mormon to the gentiles as the work of “the Father.” Christ was and is directly involved, He is the husbandman and the true vine. But He does not take credit as the Son. He says this coming forth will be “of the Father.” All things are done by Christ according to the will of the Father, to whom He always gives the credit. There is a profound lesson in that for each of us. We are only accomplishing something good, enduring and valuable as we conform to the will of the Father and His Son. Whenever we are on our own errand, it is foolishness and vanity.

The “sign” given to us will continue in the Lord’s statement which follows. So let’s turn to more...

JULY 13, 2010

3 Nephi 21:4

3 Nephi 21:4

For it is wisdom in the Father that they should be established in this land, and be set up as a free people by the power of the Father, that these things might come forth from them unto a remnant of your seed, that the covenant of the Father may be fulfilled which he hath covenanted with his people, O house of Israel;

Christ attributes the wisdom of this plan to “the Father.”

The gentiles will be set up “in this land.” What land has become a land for free people “by the power of the Father?” The most common answer is the United States. That is the conclusion of Meldrum and Porter in their book *Prophecies and Promises - The Book of Mormon and the United State of America*.

The “wisdom of the Father” decrees that the gentiles will receive the record and the land where Christ visited the Nephites. Why is it wise for this to be the case?

From the gentiles, who inherit the record, the record will “come forth from them unto a remnant of your seed.” The gentiles receive it first, then it will come from them to the “remnant.” Who are the gentiles? Do the Latter-day Saints have the record? Even though they are in possession of the record, they are nonetheless called “gentiles”

Note that the “covenant of the Father” is the reason for these events to unfold. Why is the unfolding history of the remnant, gentiles and house of Israel to fulfill “the covenant of the Father?” What was/is Christ’s role in the process? If Christ is directly involved, why is it nevertheless the “covenant of the Father?”

Christ refers to the objects of the covenant as “his people” — the Father’s people. This is an important transition in the description. These people belong to the Father! Immortality and eternal life is a family affair. Christ’s harvest of souls is for the glory of the Father. If there were any doubt of Christ’s motivation and selfless service, His comments here remove that doubt.

From what source does the gentile freedom come?

If gentile freedom is based on the Father’s power, how vulnerable is their hold on freedom if they rebel and reject the Father? How much credit can the gentiles take for establishing their land of freedom? To whom should gratitude flow for the gentile freedom?

The backdrop Christ gives to our history is wholly based on the Father's will, covenants and design for mankind. We tend to question how involved the Father and His Son are in the daily events of life. From Christ's statement here, how involved are they?

JULY 14, 2010

3 Nephi 21:5–6

Therefore, when these works and the works which shall be wrought among you hereafter shall come forth from the Gentiles, unto your seed which shall dwindle in unbelief because of iniquity; For thus it behooveth the Father that it should come forth from the Gentiles, that he may show forth his power unto the Gentiles, for this cause that the Gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent and come unto me and be baptized in my name and know of the true points of my doctrine, that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel;

Now keep in mind this is all within a “sign” Christ is telling to the Nephites. It is a “sign” of when the great latter-day work will begin to unfold.

What are “these works” referred to by Christ? Was it necessary for the “works which shall be wrought among you hereafter” to be included in the “works” the gentiles were to receive? Why? Why would the gentiles need to know of the great success and ultimate failure of Nephite faith? The greatest time in the Nephite history would be after Christ's visit, when they lived a united order. But the harrowing end described by Mormon and Moroni shows a depth of shocking evil. The violence, killing, cannibalism are disgusting to read and consider. Why did Christ want the “works which shall be wrought among you hereafter” to be included for the gentiles to

have before them? What lessons would we not learn without these subsequent portions of the Nephite record?

Why do (from Christ's vantage point)/did (from our vantage point) the records need to come "from the gentiles?" And how did that "show forth [the Father's] power unto the gentiles?" What about the restoration was a visible display of the Father's power? Latter-day Saints have a "testimony" of the restoration, but gentiles seem unimpressed. The missionary effort among Americans today is nearly at a standstill. There are about as many people slipping into inactivity, or asking for their names to be removed as there are people volunteering to join at the present. So how is the restoration a display of "the Father's power" to the gentiles?

Does the Father use "small means" to display His power? (1 Nephi 16:29; Alma 37:6). Is it possible for the Father to show forth His power and for people to miss it entirely? What kind of "power" is missed by those who reject it?

If they do not reject it, notice what the "Father's power" may lead the gentiles to receive:

- repentance,
- baptism,
- knowledge of the true points of Christ's doctrine,
- being numbered among Christ's people, even Israel.

But if not, then they will be swept away by their own wickedness and violence.

Now it may not be appreciably "powerful" when the gentiles receive the Book of Mormon. But if they repent, and are baptized, and come to know the true points of His doctrine, how great a change will take place? How great a show of power is it when the only ones at peace are those who dwell in Zion? (D&C 45:68–71).

It is clear the Lord will only gather to Zion in the great day of calamity those who had previously seen in His “small means” the path to safety and redemption.

For the most part, the gentiles will be unimpressed with the Lord’s stretched out arm. Gentiles will remain slow to respond, skeptical of the means, and dispute whether the Lord is really involved. Even those who claim to believe in His restored Book of Mormon and covenant will take lightly what He offers them. Only a few will be willing to undertake a form of repentance. But to receive “knowledge of the true points of my doctrine” it will require something more than half-hearted conversion.

How do you suppose “knowledge of Christ’s true points of doctrine” would change you?

Why do you think it will be necessary to “repent” before you receive “knowledge of the true points of His doctrine?” (John 7:17).

Why are both of these (“repentance” and “knowledge of true points of doctrine”) required before you can be “numbered among Christ’s people?”

Why do some of the gentiles need to become so numbered? How will we know when that sign has occurred? Has it already? If not, then the sign isn’t before us yet—But if so, then the sign has begun. Are you among those who have repented, been baptized, know the true points of His doctrine, and become numbered with His people?

JULY 15, 2010

3 Nephi 21:7

And when these things come to pass that thy seed shall begin to know these things—it shall be a sign unto them, that they may

know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people who are of the house of Israel.

Now the completion of the sign:

When all that has been described has happened, and the remnant will “begin to know these things,” that beginning is the sign. Has it happened? Is it happening? Then who is the “remnant” that has or will “begin to know” about the Book of Mormon to fulfill the sign?

We’ve lost the history of Joseph Smith’s efforts to locate the “remnant” of the Nephites. The first mission to locate them was called by revelation in the first 5 months after the church was organized (D&C 28:8–9). Oliver was called and later that same month Peter Whitmer was also called (D&C 30:5–6). This began an effort to locate the “remnant” that continued after the death of Joseph Smith. That will take some time to set out and cannot be dealt with in this post. We’ll get to it.

When the remnant is at last identified, and have been given the Book of Mormon, and start to know about their history and the Lord’s covenants with them, that will be the moment at which the “sign” given by Christ will have occurred.

It is when this happens that all of us will “know that the work of the Father hath already commenced.” Or, in other words, the Father’s hand is in motion to finish up what He promised to accomplish. What is it He intends to accomplish? What does it mean “fulfilling of the covenant?” What does the reference to “the people who are of the house of Israel” mean? How broadly will this final work of the Father spread? How many of those who are included in the covenant to Israel will become affected by the Father’s work fulfilling the covenant?

Assuming the work “commences” at that time, how long will it take for the work to be completed? Will it be a single generation? (*JS-M* 1:34–37). How long is a “generation?”

Why is the fulfillment to result in “the house of Israel” being given their covenant again?

How can we participate?

Why would the “sign” be given? If it was given to inform us, how can we watch to behold the sign when it happens?

Is there any indication that the sign is now unfolding?

If the organized church does not pay any attention to these things, and does not search for the remnant as Joseph did, will that change these promises? Will the covenant of the Father be forgotten by Him if the Saints themselves forget about it? What effect does our neglect have on the Father’s covenants?

COMMENTS:

Brian Bowler · JULY 15, 2010 AT 11:19 AM

Denver,

I have noticed among the American Indians there is a lot of people looking for the Remnant, and there are a lot of Indian Prophets (some look like they lean to the anti-Christ type) that are saying their people will rise up again and lead the Gentiles in building Zion. Some even quote Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon extensively, as Joseph was supposed to bring the Remnant the Covenants of the Father.

Again, it’s a mixed bag as some are good and some appear to be in it for themselves, but I feel it’s all beginning to come to pass.

What are your thoughts, Denver?

Anonymous · JULY 15, 2010 AT 10:57 PM

If the majority of the BOM took place in this northern portion of America, then I think all the Indian groups in “this land” already know

about the BOM and the “Mormons” who failed their duty to establish and maintain the fulness as it was given to Joseph to restore.

Let’s hear it Denver, what do you think? Or do you only pose the questions?

Denver Snuffer · JULY 16, 2010 AT 10:13 AM

I would refer you to this post for my position on questions and answers (“Cite your minds forward” — June 7, 2010).

JULY 15, 2010

3 Nephi 21:8–9

And when that day shall come, it shall come to pass that kings shall shut their mouths; for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider. For in that day, for my sake shall the Father work a work, which shall be a great and a marvelous work among them; and there shall be among them those who will not believe it, although a man shall declare it unto them.

Christ is quoting from Isaiah and applying the words to a specific time frame. It is post-gentile receipt of the Book of Mormon, post-delivery of that book to the remnant, and post-opportunity for gentiles to repent and know of the true points of His doctrine. When that happens, the Lord will be freed up to fulfill the covenants of the Father.

When the Father’s covenants are in being fulfilled, “kings shall shut their mouths.” That is, the noble of this world will not know what to say. They will be at a loss of words because of the Father’s acts.

Things that haven’t been “told them” will take place, and they will not understand.

Things that they never had taught to them will unfold, and they cannot comprehend, cannot get their hands around it all. It will dumbfound them.

Even when people who understand that the events are according to the Father's plan, and the Lord's covenant, they will not be able to believe it.

Too much! Too distressing! Too unexpected! Too great to take in! It will be confusion and distress, and the idea that God is behind it all will be unbelievable to them (Isa. 52:15).

Their plans for managing the world will be dashed and end. Their great investments will be lost. The control they imagined they had as "kings" will fade to dust (Hag. 2:22).

How can such splendor, such great and masterful arrangements, such glory in mankind become nothing? How can it all fall to the dust? (Rev. 14:7–8).

It will be "great and marvelous" because it shows the Father's power and might. But it will be inconvenient and distressing, unbelievable and terrible (Malachi 4:1).

What is coming will leave proud men speechless and believing people vindicated. Everything will change.

Once again we see the tremendous relevance of Isaiah's words. You can search for language to capture our times and find no-one who has given phrases that capture this moment better than Isaiah. Even the Lord finds his words appropriate to quote as His own. Words of inspiration, given Isaiah by the Lord, become Isaiah's, then are taken by the Lord and used again as His. The symmetry of this chiasm is a reminder of how closely the Lord works with those He inspires. It is "His voice" even when the message comes from His servants. Who has ears to hear?

JULY 16, 2010

3 Nephi 21:10–11

But behold, the life of my servant shall be in my hand; therefore they shall not hurt him, although he shall be marred because of them. Yet I will heal him, for I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil. Therefore it shall come to pass that whosoever will not believe in my words, who am Jesus Christ, which the Father shall cause him to bring forth unto the Gentiles, and shall give unto him power that he shall bring them forth unto the Gentiles, (it shall be done even as Moses said) they shall be cut off from among my people who are of the covenant.

This statement has caused endless conjecture. Who is the “servant?” Was this Joseph Smith? Wasn’t it Joseph who was “given power to bring forth the words to the gentiles?” If Joseph was this “servant,” then what does it mean he will be “marred,” but the Lord will “heal him?” Is he coming back? Will Joseph be resurrected? Will he be born again?

Although Christ is speaking, this raises a matter worth addressing in connection with the statement. Therefore we’ll take a bit of a detour and address it. First, the purpose of prophecy is not always to make a matter clear before it happens. Prophecy may not have a clear meaning before an event happens, but once it has happened it becomes apparent that the event was foretold. This keeps the prophecy from controlling the event, but allows those who have faith to see the Lord’s hand in operation. Therefore, having some difficulty in attaching specific meaning to the prophecy is exactly in keeping with prophecy’s traditional way of communicating an event.

Second, the words of prophecy are not always established in the same way. In fact, there are a variety of ways in which the language

is fixed. Below are descriptions of the various ways the language of a prophecy comes about:

The Lord may give, announce or dictate the language and the prophet takes it down word for word. If this is the case, then the one who receives the language may not understand their meaning, even though they received the message. (In this case it is Christ who is speaking. We assume He would know fully the word's meaning. However, Christ has explained that His Father knows things that have been withheld from Him. See, e.g., Mark 13:32. So, you cannot rule out that even in this case the language was given and the meaning withheld.)

Sometimes it is not the language or the words that are given to the prophet, but a vision is shown or opened and then the prophet is left to craft a description. In such cases the words are the prophet's, but the underlying meaning is the Lord's.

Sometimes a vision may be shown or opened, but when the prophet takes to write the description, the language is prescribed, or limited by inspiration. In this instance, the prophet's understanding may be greater than the words used, and the language will be designed to accomplish the Lord's purposes rather than to make what the prophet understands clear to the recipient.

With respect to when one or another form of language is in scripture, we may not always be able to tell. Section 76 is one example we know how the language came to us. There was a vision, opened to both Joseph Smith and Sydney Rigdon, and as the vision proceeded Joseph would dictate the words given to him by the Lord to describe what he and Sydney beheld. The words were the Lord's. The vision was greater or included more understanding for Joseph and Sydney than the words of the revelation. Hence Joseph's comment: *"I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have*

of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them” (TPJS p. 304).

It is not important to fully understand the statement of Christ in this prophecy until AFTER it is fulfilled. Before it is fulfilled the following questions are interesting to contemplate as you think about its meaning:

Is the “servant” who will be “marred” and then “healed” a single individual, or a people with whom the Lord is working? If a people rather than an individual, then who is this servant?

If the ones who will cause the servant to be “marred” are plural, who are they? Are they a group, or groups? If groups, which are they? What is their affiliation with the “great and abominable church?”

What does it mean that the “servant” will not be “hurt” but will be “marred?” How can one be “marred” without being “hurt?”

Is the “servant” in verse 10 the same as the “him” in verse 11? Have the subjects changed? That is, can verse 10 be speaking about a people, but verse 11 be addressing a person whose work it was (or is) to bring forth Christ’s words? If an individual, is Joseph Smith the only one who can qualify? Can others also bring forth words of Christ to the gentiles, and the gentiles given an opportunity to accept or reject the words at their peril?

If they risk being cut off by rejecting the words, then can more than Joseph Smith be qualified to be “(even as Moses said) they shall be cut off from among my people who are of the covenant.” That is, when the latter-day prophets are sounding alarms and warning, is the message from Christ—no matter who speaks it— something, if rejected, will cause people to be cut off from the covenant?

How does one cut themselves off from the covenant? If you will not listen to Christ’s words, do you thereby cut yourself off by not listening? Would that be true if Joseph Smith is a prophet and you

reject him? Would that be true if Brigham Young were a prophet and you rejected him? What about an angel sent to you? What about someone like Abinadi, or John the Baptist, or some other unexpected messenger? Would the same be true anytime someone decided to reject a message authorized or sent from the Lord?

Now go back and re-read verses 10 and 11 with these questions in mind and see if you get a different meaning from them.

JULY 16, 2010

3 Nephi 21:12–14

And my people who are a remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, yea, in the midst of them as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he go through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Their hand shall be lifted up upon their adversaries, and all their enemies shall be cut off. Yea, wo be unto the Gentiles except they repent; for it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Father, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots;

Notice again the distinction between the gentiles and the remnant.

The “remnant” will behave in a way which will “tread down and tear in pieces” the gentiles. As they do this, “none can deliver” the gentiles.

Unlike the previous slaughter of the remnant by the gentiles, this time it is the gentiles who are slaughtered at the hands of the remnant. Those who are “enemies” to the remnant will all be “cut off.” What does “cut off” mean?

The woes of that coming time can all be avoided by the gentiles—predicated upon their willingness to “repent.” So we return

again to the recurring question of what it means to “repent?” How can “repentance” be the only means by which the gentiles survive the slaughter? What is it about gentile repentance that spares them from the wrath that is to be otherwise poured out upon them?

What symbol comes to mind when you think of “horses?” What does cutting out the horses symbolize?

Does the symbol of the “horses” and the symbol of the “chariots” go together? That is, does cutting out the horses and destroying the chariots express a single thought? If it does, what do the horses and chariots symbolize? How vulnerable is the American military might to destruction? What effect would symbolically destroying the horses and chariots of the American population have?

If the United States is to be engulfed in domestic violence, will it continue to have foreign military influence? Economic influence? Social and cultural influence?

Assuming the gentile population is swept away, trodden under foot and torn in pieces, what culture and social influence will remain?

What symbol does the lion among the beasts of the forest suggest? The young lion among the sheep? What is the difference between the beasts of the forest and the sheep? If both beasts and sheep are gentiles, then are the beasts different than the sheep? What sort of person called a gentile “beast” will be swept away? What kind of person called a gentile “sheep” will be torn in pieces? Why would both gentile beasts and gentile sheep need to “repent?” Does repentance of a “beast” and repentance of “sheep” take the same form? Why would both need repentance when they are so remarkably different in symbol? Is it enough alone to be a gentile sheep?

What message is being sent by this warning?

JULY 17, 2010

3 Nephi 21:15–18

And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strongholds; And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thy land, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers; Thy graven images I will also cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee, and thou shalt no more worship the works of thy hands; And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee; so will I destroy thy cities.

Cleaning up things so that the course of wickedness comes to an end involves some highly specific purging. However, the description is not given to us so we can know what will be coming as much as it is given to us to guide our own conduct and beliefs.

“Cities will be cut off” means what? “Strongholds thrown down” refers to what? Interesting things to contemplate to be sure. But much more relevant are the warnings in what follows:

“Cut off witchcrafts” is a warning to those who engage in certain practices. What should you do to avoid being cut off as a result of being involved in “witchcraft?” What does that mean? Are only wiccans being warned by this?

Who are the “soothsayers” who are to be terminated? What constitutes “soothsaying?” Look that word up. It appears in interesting contexts. The typical example involves predictions made using means other than true prophecy. But you should look at it and ask yourself how it would apply in modern applications: in business, government, economics, weather—especially long-term weather, politics, etc.

What are “graven images?” What are “standing images?” Why are the “standing images” said to be “in the midst of thee?”

What does it mean to “worship the works of thy hands?” How can a person worship their own works?

What are the “groves” that are to be plucked up? Why are the groves also “in the midst of thee?” The ancient usage of groves involved fertility rites, sacred sexual practices, or the worship of intercourse. What modern versions of this ancient form of fertility worship would be similar to the ancient behavior as to merit being called the same thing?

What does it mean to have our “cities destroyed?” Does this have anything to do with the other prophecy that the final victory of Israel will inhabit the desolate cities of the gentiles? (Isa. 54:3).

Remember this is Christ speaking. This is the Redeemer, the merciful author of our salvation. Therefore, you must conclude that these direful predictions are actually based on the overall long-term best interest of those involved. They are better off, improved and advanced by these judgments. Imagine that. The wrath of God is best visited upon those who are destroyed, rather than leaving them to continue the course they are headed in. It is an interesting thing to contemplate.

JULY 18, 2010

3 Nephi 21:19–20

And it shall come to pass that all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, shall be done away. For it shall come to pass, saith the Father, that at that day whosoever will not repent and come unto my Beloved Son, them will I cut off from among my people, O house of Israel;

Notice that the first four defects that are to end, include “lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes.” These are somewhat different than the next two. These first four are character flaws that lead to the next two.

The character flaws should not be thought of as defects in our ability to do business or conduct commerce. These are flaws leading to the failures of our redemption. Therefore, think of them as flaws in our beliefs, leading us to have what the Book of Mormon terms unbelief.

What lying goes on among us leads to priestcraft? How is our lying keeping us from knowing the Lord? What is it about our peculiar form of false belief that leads us to believe in, and spread about lying as part of the fallen, false faith we entertain?

What deceivings are part of our culture of unbelief? How is it we can celebrate the great priesthood “authority” we possess while acknowledging that it lacks any “power?” Are we deceiving ourselves? Are we alienated from God while thinking ourselves His peculiar people?

What envy is there among us? Has envy become a tool for church governance? If so, how does it become a tool for church governance? Have we built it right into our system at present?

Are we filled with strife? Is strife among us suppressing healthy exchange of ideas by labeling such discussion as “contention?” Is strife different from contention? Is uniformity of ideas and suppression of dissent something that will remove strife? If not, then why not?

These character flaws in turn lead to “priestcrafts” where people seek approval of the world but not the best interest of Zion (2 Ne. 26:29). Do we want popularity from the “world?” What is the “world?” Why would someone practicing priestcraft seek in particular to have approval and lead the world? Why is the distinction made between the interests of Zion and the interests of the world? Is public relations always focused on approval from the world? If so, why are we seeking such approval? Does the world’s opinion of

us matter? Why? When have the followers of Jesus been popular? What have they suffered for His name? (Heb. 11:36–40).

Then we see “whoredoms” which we have discussed earlier. David Christensen’s comment on the meaning of false religion is worth returning to read again in this post.

David Christensen’s comment:

Many of these topics discussed on this blog would benefit the general membership of the church and I long for the day when such teachings could be spoken openly in GC.

After reading Alma 36:14, I learned a new definition of Murder.

Yea, and I had murdered many of his children, or rather led them away unto destruction; yea, and in fine so great had been my iniquities, that the very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror.

That is a different way of looking into the word “murder”.

According to Alma, murder means “leading someone away unto destruction” ... Not the shedding of blood. Could we personally or as an institution ever be guilty of ever leading anyone away unto destruction? I know that might sound extreme. But read again what Alma thought of his actions after he lead others away. He has inexpressible HORROR. (what if we are to lead someone away just one degree (reminds me of President Uctdorf’s talk) ... Do we lead or follow others who possibly might be leading us off by maybe even just 1 degree?

Another word:

Whoredoms: From Webster's 1828 dictionary: "the desertion of the worship of the true God, for the worship of idols. Unfaithfulness to God; idolatry.

So do we have idols today? We sure see enough of idols on television. Are we guilty of committing whoredoms under this definition which is not necessary of a sexual nature?

One last thought from another eye witness to our days, Nephi, who said that many false churches shall be built up in the last days—They shall teach false and vain and foolish doctrines—Apostasy shall abound because of false teachers. What is this false doctrine? What is the "murdering" or leading someone away unto destruction? What is this vain and foolish doctrine? What is this apostasy?

THIS THE DEFINITION OF APOSTASY: Any doctrine that does NOT teach that salvation comes in and through CHRIST!

If we believe that our church attendance, our temple recommends, or our good works will save us.. to me that is apostasy...

Nephi says and I close with this: "They have ALL gone astray save it be a FEW, who are the humble followers of Christ."

Then Christ sounds the alarm, attributing it to the Father. Repent. Come unto Christ. Otherwise you will be cut off. What does it mean to come to Christ? Read the short statement in D&C 93:1. There is a succinct description of the process. You haven't come to Him until you have "seen His face and know that He is," or, in other words, until you hear from His own voice that He has atoned for your sins and He promises you a place in His kingdom.

All of these warnings are being given to orient you to what is important. The important thing is to come to Him. As Christ put it to Martha, “but one thing is needful.” (Luke 10:38–42). Until we have come to Him, all our concerns about other matters must remain secondary. Of what good is it to know all mysteries, if we have not come to Him? This is why, in the middle of this warning of calamities to come, the Lord places this invitation to come to Him. He can help. He can restore and protect. But only if you are His.

COMMENTS:

DKD · JULY 18, 2010 AT 8:15 AM

Denver, I'm confused by the reference to D&C 91:1...and the apocrypha.

Denver Snuffer · JULY 18, 2010 AT 8:51 AM

Oops, should be 93:1. We'll edit the blog to correct that mistake. Thanks.

JULY 18, 2010

One a Day

I will be posting one post a day Tuesday and Wednesday because I will be gone. CM

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · JULY 18, 2010 AT 10:21 PM

I know that this may not be the place to post this, but it doesn't really go with anything in particular. I am curious to hear Denver's (or anyone else's) thoughts on Mormon.org's new approach to reach out. Specifically, <http://www.mormon.org/people>

Anonymous · JULY 19, 2010 AT 8:42 AM

I looked at all the video clips of people who are Mormon. I never quite understood what Denver was referring to when he talked about focus groups and marketing. I think, though, this is an example of it.

The premise behind the videos is, “We are just like you...” albeit, seemingly nicer and happier versions. “We surf and sing and do art and skateboard and are ‘citizens of the world.’”

I’m not wanting to criticize per se, I was just wondering if this is what Denver was referring to when he talks about “groveling to gain acceptance from a doomed and ignorant religious tradition ...”

Denver Snuffer · JULY 19, 2010 AT 10:50 AM

The church uses what are called “personas” to market various ideas and programs. They create or fabricate a person and use that artificial person to present a point or make a “comment” as if it were a real person. Then when enough others have gotten the idea and are running with it, the personas are no longer needed and can be withdrawn or eliminated.

It would be interesting to know how many of the “people” whose names and information appear on the church’s new site are now real and how many were personas created to populate the blog. It probably has enough traction now that they aren’t needed anymore.

Beyond that, I don’t have a reaction. It certainly represents a major investment to create and maintain.

JULY 19, 2010

3 Nephi 21:21–22

And I will execute vengeance and fury upon them, even as upon the heathen, such as they have not heard. But if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance;

Again the warning and the promise. Vengeance and fury are terrible words. It will be the responsibility of Christ to inflict it, and Christ says it will be His. “I will execute vengeance and fury” not “the Father.” This is Christ’s assignment—His cup.

His fury will be executed upon unbelieving gentiles, as well as the offending and violent heathen. When the spirit withdraws and they are left to themselves, it is only the limits of their cruel imagination that will compass the torture and evil they will visit upon one another. He will allow it by withdrawing the light of Christ, or His spirit. Without conscience, without remorse, without affection, filled with anger and hatred, it will be vengeance and fury.

This is juxtaposed with the reminder that “if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts” He will be with them. If they will follow His path, His light and spirit will not forsake them. They will not descend into the same violent vengeance and fury. They will remain at peace. They will have hope in Him.

For those who will “repent,” and “hearken unto His words,” He will establish “my church” among them. Does this mean The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or the church of the Firstborn?

When His church is joined it is through “the covenant.” What “covenant” is that? Merely baptism, or something more?

When the “covenant” is given them, they become “numbered among this remnant of Jacob.” Who is that remnant? When they become “numbered” among them, what significance does that hold? Does it imply a covenantal link which, like being sealed to someone, makes you part of that eternal family line (as discussed earlier)?

Why is it necessary to become first in the covenant and numbered with the remnant before they receive the blessings of being “given this land for their inheritance?” What does the promise of land have to do with entering into a covenant? Can it ever be the same as the covenant made with Abraham if it does not involve an inheritance of land? If, therefore, the covenant of land is part of that new and everlasting covenant which was begun through Joseph, is

this a promise of reuniting the recipients with the “fullness of the Gospel” as opposed to receiving “much of the Gospel” discussed in earlier posts?

What is the Lord setting out in this declaration and prophecy? How do we become part of those promises? Is this something which an institution can do for you? Must you repent and come to Christ in order to become a part of it? If so, why not repent?

COMMENTS:

Kisi · JULY 19, 2010 AT 8:14 AM

Hi Stephanie,

I just got back on here to read the second post for today (3 Nephi 21:23) to a friend of mine, and you’ve taken it off!! It was so good and important. Did you take it off because you accidentally put it up before this afternoon? You can email me your answer, or whatever. THANKS FOR EVERYTHING. You can even email me the post!!! :)

love, Kisi kwatki2@gmail.com

Denver Snuffer · JULY 19, 2010 AT 10:35 AM

That was a mistake caused by my ineptitude in working on the blog myself. Normally Steph does everything technical on the blog. I just write stuff, she puts it all up and puts in the links, etc.

That post will come up in order, and she has scheduled it to be up while she’s out of town. So you’ll see it again, but in order and on her schedule.

JULY 19, 2010

Temporary Blog Disarray

While my wife is at girl’s camp for the next few days you may notice some temporary disarray in things here. This is caused by my direct involvement in the blog, rather than hers.

The problems you witness as I take a direct hand will be less, I'm sure, than the domestic tragedies which will undoubtedly unfold in the absence of my wife. Fortunately, I recognize my limits and will make use of Taco Bell, KFC and Arby's to avoid some of the perils I now face.

She has scheduled posts I wrote before her departure for the next few days, and they will come up in regular order. I may add comments as well, but they will interrupt the discussion rather than continue it.

I'm hoping things will not deteriorate too far before her return. And that I can keep the garden watered...

The dog seems to recognize his life is temporarily in jeopardy. But I think I have my son and remaining daughter fooled into thinking its going to work out.

JULY 19, 2010

3 Nephi 21:23–24

And they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem. And then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem.

Who are those referred to as “my people?” “My people” are “the remnant of Jacob.”

Who are those referred to as “they?” The “they” are gentiles who have repented, come to Christ, entered into a covenant with Him, received the fullness of His Gospel, become heirs, and received the promise of land, and a connection with the promises to the remnant.

So it will be these few, chosen, covenantal gentiles who will “ASSIST” the remnant.

- They won't lead them,
- preside over them,
- control them, subjugate them,
- nor dominate them.

They will “assist” them. What does “assist” mean? Who is taking the lead if the gentiles are only to “assist” in the process? What will the remnant do? What city is to be built? Why is it called the New Jerusalem?

Forget everything you think you know about where the New Jerusalem is to be built. Most of the myth and traditions about it are based on incomplete and inaccurate recreations of the events.

Joseph sent the first missionaries to the Lamanites to find the place. The entire block of Native Americans east of the Mississippi, from the Delaware to the Cherokee, had been relocated at the time of the 1834 revelations regarding the New Jerusalem. At that brief moment in time, all of them were located just over the boundary of western Missouri. The closest you could get to them was Independence, Missouri. Since it was the remnant who would build the New Jerusalem, the obligation was to find them, preach to them, and assist them in building. But the missionaries couldn't do that. When they tried, they were sent out of the Indian Territory on the threat of being imprisoned. So Independence was as close as they could get.

The Native Americans have relocated and relocated again. Now they are nowhere near Independence. When Joseph fled Nauvoo in late June, days before his death, he was leaving for the Rocky Mountains where he intended to locate the remnant. He returned, was killed, and never made it out here.

Brigham Young tried to locate the remnant. In fact, the St. George Temple was built as the next fully functioning Temple at

the chosen location precisely because it was intended to be near the remnant. In the very first endowment session, the Hopi Chief and his wife went through, received their endowment, and were sealed the next day. They were invited to try and connect with the remnant and this tribe was suspected as the one the Saints were to locate.

We've lost that fervor. We've assumed Independence is the site. We think we're going to build it. We have no clue we are only to "assist" and not control.

All of this is worth some study. But you're going to have to search back into history and ignore all the recent re-done and re-worked histories that ignore this early material. It's too much to get into in this post, but maybe I'll take it up at some point.

COMMENTS:

Matt · JULY 20, 2010 AT 2:42 PM

Denver,

I'm baffled by your assertion that the New Jerusalem is not to be built in MO, centered in Independence. How on earth do you square this with D&C 57:1-3? At first I thought "Maybe I've incorrectly assumed that 'city of Zion' (v. 2) refers to the 'New Jerusalem'," but that seems clear from the 10th article of faith, Moses 7:62, and D&C 84:2. And speaking of D&C 84, verses 2-4 seem to further confirm the statement in D&C 57:1-3 that the city will be in MO, centered in Independence. Please explain.

Denver Snuffer · JULY 20, 2010 AT 2:49 PM

Stay tuned. We'll get there.

As I said when we began, you need to let the Book of Mormon speak for itself, and not impose upon it your own preconceptions.

We're just going to take the Book of Mormon text and keep looking at it. When we finish, we'll then look at the D&C, and Joseph's own conduct.

A different picture will surely emerge. You'll then have what you need to be able to make a choice.

JULY 20, 2010

3 Nephi 21:25

“And then shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I also will be in the midst.”

What does the “power of heaven” include? (We’ve already looked at 1 Nephi 14:14 which is speaking about this same event, you should read again that post.)

What is the difference between the “power of heaven” and the Lord’s presence? Why would the power of heaven come first, then the Lord? (Moses 1:11).

What would it require for you to be able to endure the presence of the Lord? (Moses 1:2).

If you are not prepared for His presence, what will your reaction be? (Mormon 9:3–5).

Those who are directly in a covenant with Him, who have been promised forgiveness of their sins by Him, and who have sought and obtained His face, will be able to dwell in His presence. They will be prepared for His glory, have part in it, and thereby be protected when they are with Him.

If people have the “power of heaven” with them, do they need some other means to protect them as well? Why not?

Haven’t we already been promised this as early as 1833? (See D&C 97:15–19). What happened that we did not obtain these things? Have our Temples been kept undefiled? If not, why? Have we permitted the unclean to enter? If so, why? Is the glory of the Lord in our Temples? Can we behold His presence there? If not, why not?

If the promise was made to us in 1833 and we haven't realized it from then till now, then are we to be numbered among those who will have the Lord "in their midst" as set out in this verse? What should we do to change that?

By and large, the church has failed to honor the Book of Mormon, keep its terms and become heirs of its promises. Our collective failure does not prevent individual success. Individuals may still realize the blessings offered. But each of us must meet the exact same conditions. Having met them, however, nothing can prevent you from obtaining the blessings.

The Lord has been willing to bring individuals back into His presence on the same conditions throughout all time. Read again *The Second Comforter* if you do not remember what those conditions are. He is as willing to make you a citizen of Zion, member of the church of the Firstborn, and part of the general assembly today (D&C 76:66–69) as in the future established Zion spoken of in the verses we have been reviewing. Many have done it in times past. Some have done it in our day. All are offered the same opportunity, but always on the same conditions.

The unchanging Gospel of Jesus Christ is always the same, and its blessings are always available.

JULY 20, 2010

Roles and Limitations

My wife is gone and I have access to the blog, so I will add a thought to this line of discussion as an aside:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a role in the Gospel, but not the central role which some have tried to make it assume. It prints copies of the Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Cov-

enants and Pearl of Great Price. It conducts Sacrament Meetings at which an essential ordinance is performed. It provides missionaries an opportunity to teach, and then gives the ordinances of baptism and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. These are important and I do not think there will be any freelance practice of these rites so long as the Church exists. All of these things take place at the lowest level, where the hand of the Lord is still apparent. Elder Oaks' examples of the Holy Ghost come from that lowest level of the Church. It was at this level I first received companionship of the Holy Ghost as a gift, and not merely a visit to bear testimony of the truth.

The Church above this local level, however, has become somewhat of a deterrent to the Saints' progress and happiness. Mandates and control from an increasingly distant hierarchy more often than not detract from what could be enjoyed. The Church has first sought to obtain the ability to micro-manage every member's lives through the correlation process, then upon securing that ability has felt duty-bound to exercise that control. Now it is a matter of whether you are a "good member" if you conform to the central authority's direction on everything from opening your scriptures in Sacrament meetings, to engaging in an order of prayer in the privacy of your home, to your lesson's content when permitted to teach in a class of the Church. The color of the priests' shirts, the length of their hair, their dietary habits and dating restrictions are all weighed against programs like "Duty to God" and conformity to "Church Standards."

The standards and conditions ALWAYS have as their goal the betterment of those involved. But the results are to mislead those who conform into thinking they've become better as a result. The practice of universal conformity becomes a distraction in which

the distracted believe their strict Church regimen pleases Christ; when it was the heart He was always after. It was the religiously scrupulous who persecuted and killed Him. His persecutors were careful about their diet, dress, language, behavior and conformity. We may be reminding Him of His mortal opposition when we engage in this conformist behavior. He captured the hearts of fishermen, outcasts, prostitutes, tax collectors, the heretical and rebellious. Their outward behavior may not have conformed, but their hearts were in the right place.

The Church has something to add, to be sure. But what it adds comes to an end, so far as I can tell, once you move above the ward level. As LeGrand Richards quipped: “Everything above the Stake is just talk.” He’s right, but I would have said the Ward instead of the Stake. And some of that “just talk” actually interferes with the development of the Saints’ hearts. It would be better to remain silent than to speak up and justify interference by a flawed program between a man and his God, or a woman and her Lord.

I am active, but not merely in my weekly Church attendance. I am active also in my daily obligations to the Lord. It is my daily service which I consider the more important of the two.

JULY 21, 2010

3 Nephi 21:26

And then shall the work of the Father commence at that day, even when this gospel shall be preached among the remnant of this people. Verily I say unto you, at that day shall the work of the Father commence among all the dispersed of my people, yea, even the tribes which have been lost, which the Father hath led away out of Jerusalem.

Christ reiterates again the work of the Father is only at its “commencement” when the fullness of the gentiles is completed. The gentile day ends, the message goes to the remnant, and then will the work “commence at that day.”

We think the work was underway when Joseph initiated it. In one respect it was. But Joseph never lived to locate the remnant, nor to deliver the Book of Mormon to them, nor to see them return to believe in and obtain a renewal of their covenant with Jesus Christ. It was one of his great priorities. But Joseph was killed before the work advanced to the point which is called the “commencement” by the Lord in this prophecy.

The work of the Father consists in fulfilling covenants. His great latter-day work of bringing the return of the Gospel to the remnant, who had the promise, used Joseph Smith and the gentiles to lay a foundation. The work of the covenant, however, will commence when the gentiles hand off the restored truths, the record of the fathers, and the reminder of what great things are promised, to the remnant.

The work of the Father, once it commences, is not limited to restoring the remnant to their former status. It reaches to all those who had been “led away out of Jerusalem.” Therefore, all of those tribes who are “lost” to us, but are not lost to the Father, will be brought back and restored to the Lord.

This restoration of the lost tribes and return of the covenant is a subject Isaiah wrote and rejoiced about. I do not intend to take that detour in this post, but if you read Isaiah (particularly those portions quoted by Nephi), you will see how great a focus this final restoration has been.

We call our time the Dispensation of the Fullness of Time, because our time is leading to that return to fullness. However, in

one sense Joseph Smith was much like the Protestant fathers who laid a groundwork for a greater, further return of light. They did not see the full return. We might.

From the time of Joseph Smith until now, however, we have neglected or forgotten a great deal of what Joseph was given. There are doctrines we circulate today that are incomplete or misleading. We have not been diligent, and as a result our conferences, meetings, associations and discussions continue to be too low, too vulgar, too condescending from what we were called to receive.

How few or many of us will be permitted to participate in the on going process of the Restoration remains to be seen. However, when the fullness returns, those who become the heirs will look back on the era of the Latter-day Saints with much the same reaction as we look back on the Jewish era in which Christ lived. They will be astonished at the great principles of truth we discarded, neglected or ignored. They will wonder in astonishment at our groveling to gain acceptance from a doomed and ignorant religious tradition calling itself “Christianity.” They will find it utterly incomprehensible that we argued we should be regarded as one of them, rather than proclaiming their doctrines are the commandments of men, having a form of godliness but lacking any power. They will wonder why we would trade the power of God for acceptance and popularity; particularly when we were told that pandering for popularity is at the heart of priestcraft. Why, they will ask, did the Latter-day Saints invest tithing in opinion polling and focus group testing to insure the language and opinions of doomed Babylon were employed in declaring what little we kept of the restored Gospel? Our failure will be clear to them, although we find it quite opaque. We still think we’re approved by the Lord, even though our condemnation is set out in scripture.

The work of the Father will commence in the future. What is underway at present cannot be what was intended to bring the return of the Lord's Zion because we have neglected the ordinances, forgotten the teachings, and drifted into a "feel good" sentimentality which suggests that all of us are likely to be exalted. Using a gambling term to capture the grave risks we take, Deseret Book proclaims: *Odds Are, You're Going To Be Exalted*—while they risk damning all those who are willing to gamble with them on such foolish, vain and untrue notions. Nephi condemned that foolish idea long ago in a book which, if we kept its principles, would have spared us from our current plight (2 Nephi 28:8).

JULY 22, 2010

3 Nephi 21:27–28

Yea, the work shall commence among all the dispersed of my people, with the Father to prepare the way whereby they may come unto me, that they may call on the Father in my name. Yea, and then shall the work commence, with the Father among all nations in preparing the way whereby his people may be gathered home to the land of their inheritance.

When it begins in earnest and for the last time, it will be universal. There won't be an effort among one part of the vineyard which isn't mirrored by similar efforts in other parts of the vineyard. All the natural branches will be returned and reunited with the natural roots, as all are gathered again into one.

The Father will determine the timing. The Son will implement the plan. The process will require everyone, in every scattered part of the vineyard, to "come unto Christ." Unless they "come unto Christ," they will not be gathered and cannot be saved.

When they are brought again into their original state and begin to bear fruit, “they may call on the Father in [Christ’s] name” with His approval and blessing. Without that, the “gathering home” cannot become a reality.

The Father’s work will be “among all nations” because it will involve the judgment and destruction of all nations (D&C 87:6).

This will “prepare the way.” Why does the work need to happen “among all nations” for the way to be prepared?

What does it mean to now call all those who are to be included in this final gathering “his people” meaning the Father’s people? Why would they end their long sojourn by becoming the “Father’s people?” Christ has spoken of them being “His people” (meaning Christ’s) but now the culmination will result in them becoming the “Father’s people” as well (D&C 76:92–95).

Notice that part of the final covenant being fulfilled involves re-gathering into the lands promised as their inheritance. This does not mean a single step. It means that the great work of the Father in destroying the nations, eliminating the wicked, and returning knowledge and a connection to Him through His Son, will prepare the way for the final step of gathering the chosen people into the lands of their inheritance.

There will be gatherings, and a great gathering, and at last a distribution of the survivors into their respective promised lands. Between the time of the great upheavals, and the time of the final distribution, there will be a season in which there will a great gathering in the “Mountains” (2 Ne. 12:2) where it will be a fearsome, even terrible thing for the wicked to contemplate (D&C 45:68–70). This will be in “the tops of the mountains.” (Micah 4:1; 2 Ne. 12:2; Isa. 2:2). This will be where the New Jerusalem will exist. This will

be before the final distribution into the various places of inheritance of the Lord's people.

Before the return to the lands of inheritance, however, there will be terrible days, the likes of which have only been seen in the final pages of the Nephite record (Mormon 6:6–22).

The choice is between the Lord, His offered redemption and protection, and destruction. The gentiles are now offered a choice while reenacting the same poor judgment that led to their own loss of opportunity. That needn't be true of individuals. It seems apparent that the prophetic message of the Book of Mormon foretells gentile arrogance and pride, collectively claiming they are on the road to Zion, while they are instead doomed to repeating the errors of prior civilizations of this continent. We will get to that in the coming days, but for now we remain interested in the definition and destiny of the "remnant" of the prior occupants.

(What an interesting text this Book of Mormon proves to be. It makes one wonder why it would ever suffer from neglect.)

JULY 23, 2010

3 Nephi 21:29

"And they shall go out from all nations; and they shall not go out in haste, nor go by flight, for I will go before them, saith the Father, and I will be their rearward."

When the time comes to redistribute the survivors to their respective promised lands of inheritance, they will not flee, nor will the process be hurried. No one will pursue them. They will at last be free to go to their homes without being molested along the way.

The Father will go before them. The Father will be on their rear guard. His glory and His presence will be their shield and protection.

How will the earth respond to such a passage? Psalms 48:1–4 gives some idea of this great and joyful procession. Psalms 67 is another great anthem of this event.

Though the days before were terrible, in their wake all be comforted, for to know the Great Comforter is to know at last peace. Isaiah could not refrain from adding to the anthems of praise of this future event:

Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim. Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. (Isa. 49:8–13)

This ultimate triumph was always intended to be the outcome. The end will be joyful. Though His covenant people may pass through the trials and rigors of mortality, the fruit offered to them is delicious even in times of tragedy and distress (Alma 32:28). To make it through what is coming and endure to the final comfort, it will be necessary to come and plant that seed inside you now. Unless you do so, you will not have the strength to lay hold on the promises of the Lord.

The end will be worth all the shame and bitterness endured while the world still lies in sin and error (2 Nephi 9:18). The final triumph will be won by those who can endure the presence of the Father. This requires more than enduring the presence of the Son. Those who can rise to this glory must be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, and become kings and priests, holding that same priesthood and bearing that same right which was in the beginning and is named after the Son of God. They will be everlasting, for they came from everlasting and have reconnected with that while here in mortality.

The Book of Mormon is a message of hope and triumph. But to win that triumph and possess that hope requires the reader to follow the same path and take the same steps as all others who went before. There simply is not a way to avoid the rigors of the journey. It must change YOU. The work of the Father is to develop YOU. To do so it will require you to cooperate with Him. It is His work and His glory, but you must choose to let Him bring you along. Read Nephi's remarkable summary:

*Behold, the Lord hath created the earth that it should be inhabited; and he hath created his children that they should possess it. And he raiseth up a righteous nation, and destroyeth the nations of the wicked. And he leadeth away the righteous into precious lands, and the wicked he destroyeth, and curseth the land unto them for their sakes. He ruleth high in the heavens, for it is his throne, and this earth is his footstool. And he loveth those who will have him to be **their God**. Behold, he loved our fathers, and he covenanted with them, yea, even Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and he remembered the covenants which he had made. (1 Ne. 17:36–40, emphasis added)*

Can you not see the pleading, the meekness and the humility in this description of our God?

Great is His wisdom and endless His mercy and the extent of His doings no man can find out! He makes Himself known to those who seek after Him, and those who cry out they do not know Him is only because they have chosen to ignore His plea!

We will return then to Nephi's writings and continue this effort to understand what great covenants the Book of Mormon lay before us if we choose to receive them.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous2 · JULY 23, 2010 AT 4:08 PM

So, Denver Snuffer, where do we go from here? Think there are some of us in need of a lot of help. Any suggestions?

Denver Snuffer · JULY 23, 2010 AT 4:23 PM

I'm going to keep going. So keep reading.

One thought related to this post: In 2 Nephi 14:3 the prophecy of those who survive the purging states: "they that are left in Zion and remain in Jerusalem shall be called holy..." Meaning that these survivors are holy beings; having become holy before the purge. They survive because they were holy.

Two verses later the manner of their survival is explained in terms you should recognize: "The Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory of Zion shall be a defense." (2 Ne. 14:5). To dwell in a house with a pillar of smoke by day and fire by night is to dwell in a holy house. In effect, every home will be a Temple of the Lord and every occupant themselves holy.

This is why the wicked will be content to not go up against Zion. This is why Zion will appear to be too terrible to confront.

The answer to what we should do is always (in the Book of Mormon) to "repent and come unto Christ." He is called the Savior because He saves. He is called the Comforter because He comforts. If you have

not read *The Second Comforter*, you should. It is a manual of how to come to Him.

Anonymous · JULY 23, 2010 AT 5:32 PM

I read it for the 3rd time before Denver started teaching from the Book of Mormon in his blogs. Now that there is some light and understanding gathered from these lessons, I'll start over for the 4th time. I'm sure I missed a lot.

Denver, could you confirm, I think I read once that all the personal commentary you put in the book was to show us how NOT to proceed. Is that correct?

Denver Snuffer · JULY 23, 2010 AT 7:31 PM

The personal vignettes at the beginning of the chapters illustrate a principle discussed in the chapter which follows. However, more often than not, the personal experience related shows how I failed, did not understand, or did not follow the right course in my life. My own errors were required for me to learn.

The purpose of this approach was to show the reader that I am not different or better than they are. I had no advantage. If, therefore, someone as prone to error and failure as I am was able to finish the course, then the reader should be confident that they too may be comforted by our Lord.

Anonymous · JULY 23, 2010 AT 10:23 PM

Denver you said....

“To dwell in a house with a pillar of smoke by day and fire by night is to dwell in a holy house. In effect, every home will be a Temple of the Lord and every occupant themselves holy.”

What if currently you live in a home where not all of the occupants have caught the vision of the importance of studying the scriptures and things are a little disconnected, although all are good people, members of the Church, but plod along in the “institution”. A weekly (I know...it should be daily) gospel discussion doesn't occur unless I am the one to prepare it. I believe in covenants, I believe in family's and

I love mine, but it gets discouraging. What to do, what to feel, how to proceed. Discouraging.

Denver Snuffer · JULY 24, 2010 AT 9:08 AM

A home or Temple is called “sacred space” because the Lord may come and dwell there. It is a place of refuge and peace. It would be good to have such a house right now. But, if not, “know ye not that ye are the Temple of God?” God can come and dwell with you, even if others will not permit Him. Since you are the Temple, you may become the sacred space to which He comes. The blood on the posts and lentil saved the occupants, for the sake of the righteous. For the want of a few Sodom was destroyed. Be the few. Be the leaven. Be the salt. If you are the Temple you preserve more than yourself.

Further, what makes any of you think you can become redeemed without bringing others with you? Why would you think that those given to associate with you are not a gift from God, deliberately in your life to permit you the high honor and great responsibility of showing by a godly walk what redemption can bring? Why shrug off others, thinking they will fail when you will succeed? You will only succeed if you minister to them in patience, all the while seeking their redemption even before your own. Christ came not to be ministered to, but to minister. Why would it be different for His servants?

JULY 24, 2010

Discussion of the Gentiles and the Remnant

We’re still in a discussion which began June 7th to try and make sense of the present and future of Zion.

We have seen how priestly authority is more complex than a list of names on a page showing some connection to the Prophet Joseph Smith. We have examined how necessary it is to reconnect with heaven itself to have not just authority, but also power in the priesthood. That connection of power in the priesthood comes

from the hand of God, not from another man. The powers of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven and the hand of God (D&C 121:36).

Men do not make priests, God does. For those who have eyes to see, God's hand in priestly authority has been seen by endowed Latter-day Saints from Nauvoo onward. Men do not make prophets. God has reserved that right for Himself (Numbers 12:6). God will call them whether or not men accept or recognize them.

We think we have a hope in membership in the church, but the scriptures offer us no reason for that hope. Hope lies in Christ.

We have seen how carefully the Book of Mormon distinguishes between the "remnant" to inherit great promises, and "gentiles" who must align themselves with Christ to become inheritors of those promises. We have seen how members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are always identified with the gentiles (D&C 109:60), and not the remnant.

We have seen how the gentiles will be given authority over the remnant, and will be permitted to abuse and tread upon them for a season. We have seen that the promises once given the remnant will be given conditionally and for a season to the gentiles, who will receive the book written by the remnant's forebearers. The gentiles will become a great nation, and will be protected and powerful. They will be greater than any other nation on the earth. We have read how that will result in pride and foolishness.

We have seen that the gentiles will be swept away, just as the remnant was swept away. But those gentiles who will repent and receive Christ will receive a covenant entitling them to also belong to and possess this land as a place of inheritance.

Those gentiles who enter into this covenant, repent, come to Christ and receive Christ's presence will be preserved as the remain-

der of the gentiles' probation ends. When the time of the gentile dominance ends, they will be swept away.

We have seen that the gentiles who do not possess the covenant will become trodden under foot just as the remnant. The world will descend into darkness, as the Spirit and the Light of Christ withdraws from all but those who are chosen heirs. The wicked will destroy the wicked. The gathered faithful will have the Lord's Spirit as a protection and shield. The wicked will fear and not go near them, for they will be "terrible" to the wicked.

The covenant people will be gathered in the "tops of the mountains" where there will be a refuge and the Lord will be among them. When the destruction ends and the wicked have been swept away, the Father will return these gathered covenant people to their lands of promise. When He does, His hand will be over them, and will be their rear guard. Nothing and no-one will hurt or make them afraid.

This orients us to begin to consider more carefully what the gentiles have done and will do with their opportunity. So we return to Nephi's writings to look more carefully at ourselves and the perils we face.

All of this is an experiment to see if it is possible to have this kind of discussion take place on a blog. I used to teach a weekly Book of Mormon class where we examined the text carefully. In those ten years we were able to go from 1 Nephi 1:1 to Jarom 1:4. I know the material could be taught in that setting because the people were in front of me and I could take in what they were receiving as I taught. This is an alien way to teach, where disembodied words are put into a blog to be read by those who may or may not be attentive, diligent, prayerful and prepared. I cannot gauge the effectiveness of this as well except from how the Lord assists me

at my end. At the reader's end I am divided by circuitry, time and space and cannot measure as I could if you were in front of me.

I will continue the experiment, but remain doubtful that this will work as well as a book or a meeting would. In the end, the reader (or listener) must have the Spirit to be able to take in any light taught. So you will determine for yourself if you will receive what is offered. So, we will see...

COMMENTS:

Kathy · JULY 24, 2010 AT 3:32 PM

Denver — Question if you care to answer. How does the oft quoted comment that “the constitution will hang by a thread...the elders will be the ones to save the constitution” relate to the gentiles being swept away and all nations being destroyed (their governments). Is that a quote a tradition, a misunderstood quote? Where does it come from and in what context does it belong in light of what we have been studying?

Denver Snuffer · JULY 24, 2010 AT 3:52 PM

I only want to address the quote itself:

The quote was attributed to Joseph Smith after his death. It was rendered differently by different people. The one I think was most accurate was “if the Constitution was to be saved at all, it would be the Elders of Israel who would save it.”

The other versions make it definite. I think Joseph would likely to have been indefinite. Hence the preference for the version “if it is to be saved at all.”

CHAPTER 10

2 Nephi 28:1–19

JULY 25, 2010

2 Nephi 28:1–2

And now, behold, my brethren, I have spoken unto you, according as the Spirit hath constrained me; wherefore, I know that they must surely come to pass. And the things which shall be written out of the book shall be of great worth unto the children of men, and especially unto our seed, which is a remnant of the house of Israel.

Nephi, as any prophetic writer, says what “the Spirit hath constrained” him to say. This is the very definition of using the Lord’s name with permission and not using His name in vain (Exo. 20:7).

Nephi held power from God in the words he used. Therefore he could “know that they must surely come to pass” because he sealed them as he wrote them (D&C 1:38). For any person holding the sealing authority (which is an indispensable part of the Patriarchal Priesthood discussed earlier), the authority requires an alignment between the prophet, the Lord and the Lord’s will (See, D&C 132:45–49, in particular verse 48 which mentions “by my word and according to my law”—which required Joseph to align himself with the Lord before using that power.) Those who have

this authority will not do anything contrary to the will of the Lord (Helaman 10:5). It is because of this trust between the Lord and His messenger that the power is given to the man. Nephi was such a man. His book contained a seal upon it bearing the power of God.

Nephi knew. Knowledge came from Christ. Nephi knew Christ (2 Ne. 11:3).

Notice how Nephi refers to the “remnant” who are “our seed.” Nephi refers to the remnant variously as:

- descendants of his father Lehi (1 Ne. 13:34)
- descendants of his brethren (1 Ne. 13:38–39)
- his family’s descendants or “our seed” (1 Ne. 15:13–14)
- a mixture of Nephi’s descendants who are among his brother’s descendant’s (1 Ne. 13:30)

Nephi’s primary line of descendants would be destroyed, but that destruction would not include all. There would remain a mixture of blood that would include partial descent from Nephi (1 Ne. 13:30–31). The various bloodlines remained identified as Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lamanites, Lemuelites and Ishmaelites (Mormon 1:8). Although it would be impossible, without revelation, for us to determine which of these lines a person might belong to today, the Lord nevertheless revealed in 1828 that these various divisions remain identified to Him (D&C 3:16–19). No doubt, in time, He will restore to the remnant descendants this knowledge of their sacred paternity and eternal identity.

Their blood may be mixed, but the remnant remains. Nephi may have referred to them more often as descendants of his “brethren,” but they have within them some of his blood as well. In the day of redemption and restoration, the promises will all be fulfilled. The whole of the family of Lehi will be represented in the remnant.

Notice Nephi's prophecy is that "words which shall be written out of the book" rather than the book itself. This is, of course, exactly what we have. The actual book has been withheld. Only words from the book have been given us. But those words are intended to be of great worth to mankind, and in particular to the remnant.

This process is sacred, the promises are from the Lord. These words are given to us by Him, through a servant possessing authority to seal them up. We cannot prevent them from happening. We can, however, align ourselves with them and in turn be saved as well.

JULY 26, 2010

2 Nephi 28:3

For it shall come to pass in that day that the churches which are built up, and not unto the Lord, when the one shall say unto the other: Behold, I, I am the Lord's; and the others shall say: I, I am the Lord's; and thus shall every one say that hath built up churches, and not unto the Lord—

The Book of Mormon will become available to the remnant in a day when there will be "churches which are built up, and not unto the Lord." Generally this is interpreted by Latter-day Saints to mean OTHER churches, but not ours. However, the context requires all, including our own church, to be considered at risk as well. Here are the questions bearing on whether we (LDS) are among those being warned:

- Is the prophecy limited to the time before the Book of Mormon comes forth? (No; it will reach until the time when other records of the Lost Tribes are to come forth—a future event) (See, 2 Ne. 29:13–14).

- Is the prophecy about only those churches created by man, and not one intended to become Zion? (No; see verses 21– 24).
- Can a church established by the Lord become one which is not built up to Him? (Of course; see Eze. 44:10; Isa. 53:6; John 5:39).

Does the promise that the Lord will never abandon His latter-day work (D&C 138:44) mean that the church He established will not drift into condemnation? (See D&C 84:55–58).

Should we, therefore, consider these warnings to be equally applicable to us as Latter-day Saints as to the larger community of churches?

Nephi warns that each church will claim it is the Lord's. Do we do that? Each will claim divine authority and approval. Do we do that? Each will assert it belongs to the Lord. Do we do that? But the question Nephi focuses upon is whether it is “unto the Lord.”

What does it mean for a church to be “unto the Lord?” What would the opposite be?

How certain are we that what we do as a church is building up to the Lord? Do the procurement practices of the church “build up unto the Lord?” Does the auditor's report in General Conference even begin to allow you to make that determination? If some of the large and well-connected Latter-day Saint families own the businesses which contract with the church and have become wealthy by reason of trading with the church, is there some question which ought to be considered about “building up unto the Lord” in how business is conducted?

I explained how the church distinguishes between tithing money and “investment income” in a post on April 1, 2010. Does this seem consistent with the Lord's parable about the talents? (Luke 19:20–23). If in the parable, all returns realized on the money were

the Lord's, why does the return on the Lord's tithing now become investment money to be used for commercial projects developing condominiums, shopping malls, banks, and other income-producing ventures? Who is benefiting? What careers and fortunes are being made? What families are being benefited? Are they the Lord?

Assuming the purpose of a church were to "build up unto the Lord" what single purpose would be most important? In the Book of Mormon, as I've explained earlier, the writers seek to have you trade unbelief for belief; then to trade belief for faith; then to come beyond faith and receive knowledge. The knowledge it would have you obtain is of Christ (See Ether 3:19).

The lack of knowledge condemns a people who claim to be the Lord's. Nephi quoted Isaiah in 2 Nephi 15:13: [You will not understand Nephi's purpose in quoting Isaiah if you are unacquainted with Nephi's Isaiah.] *"Therefore, my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge; and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst."* Captivity comes from a lack of knowledge. Joseph Smith warned that "a man is saved no faster than he gains knowledge." (DHC 5:588). The ones who are considered "honorable" are "famished" because they lack knowledge. The "multitude" who follow the "honorable men" are in turn "dried up with thirst" because they are not taught enough to become saved (2 Ne. 28:14).

If the Lord promises to never abandon His latter-day work (D&C 138:44), does that mean men cannot abandon Him? Although men may abandon Him, can He work with you individually and "remember" His promises? Even if others are without knowledge, can you still obtain knowledge from Him? Though others may be "dried up with thirst" can you still obtain "living waters" from Him?

Can you rely upon the assertions from any church today that it is “built up unto the Lord?” How can you be “built up unto the Lord” even if you do not have any institution you can trust to bring to you that knowledge? Was the Lord always intended to be directly involved in your life? (Matt. 11:27–30).

If “captivity” comes from a lack of knowledge, and Joseph Smith tied knowledge to salvation, then why is the correlated curriculum of the church focusing less and less on doctrine? Why was the Relief Society and Priesthood Manual on *Teachings of the Presidents* volume on Joseph Smith carefully edited by the Correlation Department so as to support meanings somewhat different than Joseph’s? If you think meanings were not changed, then go to the sources quoted in the *History of The Church* and read each of the whole statements made by Joseph from which the excerpts were taken. I leave it to you to decide if the edited versions in the church manual were or were not both incomplete and misleading. [Personally, I was dismayed. But I have a sensitivity to words that is quite acute, and therefore something left out that is important to me may not be significant to you. You must decide that question for yourself. You will find it an interesting exercise even if you disagree with my conclusion.]

If a church claims to be built up to the Lord, but does not attempt to confer knowledge of the Lord upon people, then how are you to seek after this knowledge? [We are going to be discussing Nephi’s instruction to us about this very subject for the coming weeks. So keep the question in mind as we go forward.]

Remember this is the promised day when all are intended to grow into knowledge of the Lord, from the least to the greatest (See, e.g., *JS-H* 1:41 and Joel 2:28–29; and D&C 84:96–97). “Those who remain” will remain because they have “knowledge” that will save them. Hence Joseph’s teaching about the link between “knowledge”

and “salvation.” Also, the captivity spoken of by Nephi because people lack knowledge.

Go back to the post on Lecture 6 of *The Lectures on Faith*, April 21, 2010. If your church encourages you to become part of a broad mainstream without asking for the sacrifice of all things, then it is not requiring you to take the steps necessary to develop faith to save you. Rest assured, however, the Lord still has the same requirements, and He will work directly with you to develop you into a person who has the required knowledge. It was always intended to be individual. It is your quest. Others may encourage you along, but you must confront the process for yourself.

[Now, as a complete aside, I want to address the misapplication and overreaching misinterpretation of the idea one is “evil speaking” when a person explains something that concerns them. First, we are dealing with the souls of men. We are addressing salvation itself. If there is an error in doctrine or practice, everyone has an obligation to speak up, from the least to the greatest (D&C 20:42, 46–47, 50–51, 59, among other places). Second, the “truth” cannot ever be “evil.” Though the truth may cut with a two edged sword, truth is not and cannot be “evil.” Therefore, if someone should say something that is untrue or in error, then correct their doctrine, show the error, but do not claim what is good to be evil, nor support what is evil by calling it good (2 Ne. 15:20). Using a broad generalization to stifle a discussion of the truth is a trick of the devil, who is an enemy to your soul. It is not the way of our Lord. He was always open to questions, always willing to answer questions, ever willing to speak the truth even when it caused those with authority over Him to be pained by His words. We must follow Him, and not men, in that example. Even if we would personally prefer to not endure insults but remain silent. So, rather than con-

demn something as “evil speaking” that you believe to be wrong, explain the error and bring us all into greater understanding. But if something is true, then even if it disturbs your peace of mind, it cannot be evil.]

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · JULY 26, 2010 AT 1:53 PM

Denver,

I appreciated your comments about what it means to speak evil. I have wondered about this. A couple further questions I have...

If it is not considered “evil” because it is the truth...how can I be certain that my perspective is IN FACT the truth and I’m not the one in error? Is it just because you are weighing actions against the scriptures? (Personally, I have had many of the same observations you have had, but have only shared them with my most intimate family as I felt I was stepping into forbidden territory in my thoughts and would possibly damage someone else’s testimony with observations that I believed true, but nonetheless did not shake my faith or desire to remain an active participant in the Church. I have also feared that even if it was the truth...there was a poison I was succumbing to by being overly critical. Is there a concern with being too critical?

My second question stems from my husband...(this is the one I would really love to hear an answer about) whereas he agrees with your assessments(he would say they are the truth), he struggles with the fact that you are voicing them publicly because he fears that in essence it is the same thing as trying to “steady the ark”...which of course didn’t go over to well in the Old Testament. He basically thinks the Lord has forbidden any of us to try and steady the ark...no matter how precarious the situation it is in. That is not our appointment. I would love to know how you respond to that concern because I don’t really have a good response to that.

Is it just in the use of the scriptures you posted talking about “watching over the church?” How can I address the specific concern of

steadying the ark? Is there no correlation between the ark then and the church? Maybe I just need some enlightenment on the proper context of what steadying the ark was versus you trying to point out weaknesses or errors. Would love a response.

BTW, I have read all six of your books and read the blog daily and really appreciate it all.

Denver Snuffer · JULY 26, 2010 AT 3:42 PM

Anonymous:

The problem with steadying the ark was related to interfering with a function assigned to someone else. No one other than properly called priesthood authorities have the right to: organize a stake, call a stake presidency, organize a ward, call a bishop and his counselors, organize an elder's quorum and its presidency, call a conference, preside at a conference, conduct at conferences, authorize baptisms, interview for worthiness for baptism, interview for worthiness for callings, interview for priesthood advancement in church assignments, organize auxiliary organizations, collect tithing money, build and dedicate chapels, temples, etc. If anyone other than a properly designated authority were to undertake any of these, they would be steadying the ark and without appropriate authority to do so.

On the other hand, every one of us is obligated to preach, teach, exhort, expound and cry repentance as soon as we have been given the Aaronic office of teacher. Every adult who has been warned, is required to warn their neighbor. We are required to teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

Further, with respect to this particular effort, Elder Ballard has imposed the obligation to use the Internet to preach the Gospel.

This is NOT steadying the ark.

Finally, you must understand that there are many Saints who are perfectly content with their version of the Gospel and who have no interest in confronting questions or grappling to understand something more. I do not want to trouble them. But there are many more who are inactive and disaffected, or who continue to attend but who are

alienated by the teaching which appears in church, or who would leave the church altogether if they wouldn't disrupt their families. I believe they are struggling because they haven't yet read the Book of Mormon and been informed that this process, this struggle, their frustrations are not a defect in themselves. They can be active, faithful members of the church while searching more deeply into the faith. When eyes begin to open, they needn't abandon the church because they see issues. It will be alright. There is still hope. I write to help them, to show how to put context to problems. To see that despite all we have and will pass through, the Gospel is a personal journey, and they can remain in that personal journey despite earth and hell.

I should add, also, that none of you either get the off-blog emails or participate in the personal conversations which I have. There are some people whose names you would recognize who are quite supportive of my effort. I have it on good authority that presiding authorities are themselves divided over the correlation process and how it is affecting the church. Some have the identical view I express on this blog. I am not as radical in my view as some of you may think. Or, if radical, there are some in authority who share my view. I am trying to help them, as well.

Anonymous · JULY 26, 2010 AT 3:32 PM

Joseph Smith:

I will give you one of the keys of the mysteries of the kingdom. It is an eternal principle that has existed with God from all Eternity that that man who rises up to condemn others, finding fault with the Church, saying that they are out of the way while he himself is righteous, then know assuredly that that man is in the high road to apostasy and if he does not repent will apostatize as God lives The principle is as correct as the one that Jesus put forth in saying that he who seeketh a sign is an adulterous person, 8 & that principle is Eternal, undeviating & firm as the pillars of heaven, for whenever you see a man seeking after a sign you may set it down that he is an adulterous man (*wjs* p.20).

Denver Snuffer · JULY 26, 2010 AT 4:45 PM

The “Anonymous” quoting Joseph Smith:

Show me where on this blog I have criticized any leader of the Church. I have praised President Monson, singled out President Packer repeatedly for praise, spoken of Elder Scott and Elder Oaks in high terms, and explained that this blog is as a result of Elder Ballard’s admonition to use the Internet to teach the Gospel.

I freely admit I have criticized the Correlation Department, which I believe to be working at cross-purposes to the Brethren. They deserve criticism. I hope to see their department either come to an end altogether, or to be so vastly reduced in their influence as to become irrelevant.

I have high hopes for the Saints, and for the ability of the church to repent and remove its condemnation for neglecting the Book of Mormon. A proposition which President Benson and Elder Oaks have urged us onward to accomplish.

JULY 26, 2010

2 Nephi 28:4

“And they shall contend one with another; and their priests shall contend one with another, and they shall teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance.”

Nephi foresees that churches in our day will argue over the claim to have truth. When it comes to the Latter-day Saints, the relentless accusation made against us is that we aren’t “Christian.” This accusation is made by those who claim the right to define the word “Christian” to necessarily include acceptance of the creeds of Historic Christianity. These creeds are an amalgam of Neo-Platonic philosophy mingled with scripture.

We just ought to concede the point. We should proudly acknowledge we are NOT part of Historic Christianity. We disagree with Historic Christianity, and at a fundamental level we denounce

it as false. We are a restoration of Primitive Christianity. We do not share in accepting the creeds which Christ Himself denounced as “an abomination in His sight” (*JS-H 1:19*).

Oddly, from our end, we try and avoid the argument, fit in, claim we are “good Christians too,” and part of the larger community of churches. There isn’t as much fight left in us as there was once. Or, perhaps more correctly, our arguments are focused instead, toward those who attempt to preserve practices from the early part of the Restoration. In other words, we try to make ourselves seem more like Historic Christianity, and avoid or discard what once set us apart. We have inverted the picture from where we began. (Nephi will address that, as well.)

Although there are numerous examples of how we have altered our views to become more like other faiths, we can take just one to illustrate the point. We have abandoned plural marriage. But it is hard for us to claim the doctrine is false because it remains in Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants. While we do not practice it, and believe those who do have failed to stay on track, we cannot gainsay that the doctrine is true. Yet no other church is so vehement in denouncing and persecuting those who practice plural marriage. It is as if we want to lead the argument against the practice in order to distract people from the fact that the practice is approved in our scriptures.

Let me be clear that I do not advocate the practice nor recommend it. Nor do I think those who continue the practice do so either with approval or authority. I’ve explained the defects in their arguments to authority in *Beloved Enos*, and I am confident in the explanation given there. They do not possess the keys to continue that practice. Their own position is self-defeating.

Nor do I think these people will be given the hand of fellowship until Zion returns. But when it does, I do not expect those who follow the practice of plural marriage in a humble and devout way, having real intent, and proceeding prayerfully will be excluded from the gathering. It also seems self-evident that if John D. Lee, who was executed for the Mountain Meadows Massacre, has been reinstated to the privileges of the church, that those practicing plural marriage after the 1905 letter from President Joseph F. Smith will some day not also be reinstated to church membership.

Well, that was an aside merely to illustrate a point. We fail to contend about errors of other faiths, fail to defend our unique status, and in turn attack doctrines that we know to be true.

What Nephi will focus on in his prophecy is not the contention, but the absence of guidance from the Holy Ghost. This criticism will become the theme of the coming chapters. This collection of chapters at the end of 2 Nephi are his final warnings in which he tells us the great themes of prophecy that rest so heavily upon his soul. He is most alarmed that, in our day, men will “teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance.” What do you suppose it means to “teach with their learning?”

We know that other churches employ trained theological experts to professionally teach them as a paid clergy. We have always been critical of that approach because once a minister has been to college and been trained for the ministry, they mingle the philosophies of men with scripture. We have always been taught that even a child with the Spirit can edify a congregation in Sacrament by speaking with the influence of the Holy Ghost. We intend our meetings to be directed in word and thought by the Holy Ghost. But how much of what we are taught in our meetings and conferences are the result of man’s learning? Of focus group opinion gathering? Of

opinion polling? Of careful study of trends and development of data bases from social sciences? (See “Slippery” on February 22, 2010).

How much of what we are taught is from the “Spirit which giveth utterance?” How often are we fed as the Lord directed in D&C 84:85 through entirely spontaneous utterance? If Joseph was commanded to speak spontaneously so the Spirit could direct him (D&C 100:5–6; see also D&C 24:5–6) then why is a Correlation Department allowed to control talks today and prevent any spontaneous speaking in our conferences?

I know the purpose behind correlation was to ensure false doctrine was not taught. They seem to have instead insured that no doctrine is taught.

In my view, correlation has failed in its purpose. It has stifled the Spirit and stripped us of doctrine which should be prized and taught. Furthermore, it has not insured the doctrine it permits to be taught is true or consistent with scripture or earlier teachings.

Even though correlation has not prevented us from having errors of doctrine I do not believe an error of doctrine makes a person a bad man. Joseph Smith said:

I did not like the old man being called up for erring in doctrine. It looks too much like the Methodist, and not like the Latter-day Saints. Methodists have creeds which a man must believe or be asked out of their church. I want the liberty of thinking and believing as I please. It feels so good not to be trammled. It does not prove that a man is not a good man because he errs in doctrine.” (DHC 5:340). I do not believe anyone should ever be subject to church discipline for believing false doctrine. The false teaching should be overcome by teaching the truth, not by stifling discussion. The quickest way for truth to triumph is to allow free discussion. When we are open, the truth will always win out.

I agree with Joseph Smith that teaching false doctrine does not prove “that a man is not a good man.” Take the “Proclamation on the Family”, for example. It states:

All human beings— male and female— are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

This statement conflicts with what President Joseph Fielding Smith taught in the arrangement prepared by Bruce R. McConkie (and therefore undoubtedly approved by Elder McConkie as well):

Some of the functions in the celestial body will not appear in the terrestrial body, neither in the telestial body, and *the power of procreation will be removed*. I take it that men and women will, in these kingdoms, be just what the so-called Christian world expects us all to be: **neither man nor woman**, merely immortal beings having received the resurrection. (*Doctrines of Salvation* 2:287–288; emphasis added)

In another place President Smith taught,

Is not the sectarian world justified in their doctrine generally proclaimed, that after the resurrection there will be neither male nor female sex? It is a logical conclusion for them to reach and apparently is in full harmony with what the Lord has revealed regarding the kingdoms into which evidently the vast majority of mankind is likely to go. (Answers to Gospel Questions, Vol 4, p. 66— a set that was also edited by Elder Bruce R. McConkie)

If it is a grave offense to now err in doctrine, either President Smith and his son-in-law Elder McConkie should be condemned, or those who signed the *Proclamation on the Family* in September

1995 (the entire First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve) should be condemned. They contradict one another. The Apostle Paul would seem to agree with President Smith and Elder McConkie (See Gal. 3:28). The “Christian” world, of course, denounces marriage in eternity precisely because they disbelieve sexual identity ends with mortality. They base this upon Luke 20:34–35, Matt. 22:30, and Mark 12:25 as well as Paul’s statement in Galatians.

It appears to me that someone errs in doctrine. Despite that, I absolutely DO NOT BELIEVE that either the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve in 1995, nor President Joseph Fielding Smith and Bruce R. McConkie are bad men. Nor do I think that the contradiction should be managed by the Correlation Department. I think it should stand and become something on which each of us consider, ponder, pray and reach some conclusion for ourselves. It isn’t necessary for us to always have controversies taken away from us, particularly at the expense of losing our doctrine.

The approach now is to prevent spontaneous talks from being delivered under the influence of the Holy Spirit because of fear that we would excite criticism by contradicting one another. I think this is wrong. If we want to be cautious about doctrine, then we ought to call men who understand and teach doctrine to preside. I see trustworthy men and women on KBYU discussing doctrine all the time. Elder Packer was a Seminary Instructor before his call to be a General Authority, and he has always been reliable on doctrine. I would love to hear him speak spontaneously every time he speaks. Elder Scott, also, seems to me to be a man who, if allowed to speak without a prepared text would have a great deal to share. It would be delightful to hear him speak extemporaneously. There is something valuable enough when an inspired man does this that the D&C admonished Joseph Smith to only address the

Saints in this manner. If that was the Lord's desire for Joseph, and it remains in the D&C, then it is little wonder we pay a price as a result of the correlation process.

This is what the verse we are considering here is telling us SHOULD be the case. We cannot help but “deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance” when we do not permit the Holy Ghost the opportunity to inspire by giving spontaneous utterance.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · JULY 26, 2010 AT 3:37 PM

President Wilford Woodruff: “I say to Israel, the Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as president of this Church to lead you astray.”

Denver Snuffer · JULY 26, 2010 AT 4:39 PM

President Brigham Young:

What a pity it would be if we were led by one man to utter destruction! Are you afraid of this? I am more afraid that this people have so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire of themselves of God whether they are led by Him. I am fearful they will settle down in a state of blind self-security, trusting their eternal security in the hands of their leaders with a reckless confidence that in itself would thwart the purposes of God in their salvation, and weaken that influence they could give to their leaders, did they know for themselves, by the revelations of Jesus Christ, that they are led in the right way (JD 9:149–50).

Joseph Smith cautioned about trusting too much in the prophet and neglecting the duties devolving upon the Saints individually. And George Q. Cannon also taught the principle that you cannot trust leadership to save you.

You would, of course, already be familiar with that material if you had done as the blog suggests and first read what I've written.

I assume you are not acquainted with the carefully prepared things I've written and therefore misapprehend the subjects under discussion.

JULY 27, 2010

2 Nephi 28:5

And they deny the power of God, the Holy One of Israel; and they say unto the people: Hearken unto us, and hear ye our precept; for behold there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men;

The defect Nephi terms “deny the power of God” is an interesting matter to ponder. What do you suppose denying that power involves? How would it manifest itself in the way religious people go about their lives? Is praying without seeking an answer “denying” God’s power? Is presuming you have an answer when your own desires are all you are considering perhaps also “denying” God’s power?

I reflect on how many times I’ve learned something surprising, unanticipated, or which had never before entered into my mind. I think, too, about Joseph’s comment before his First Vision that “it had never entered into [his] heart that all were wrong” (*JS-H 1:18*), but the answer from God informed him otherwise. God’s answers are quite often:

- unanticipated;
- never something you would have considered;
- inconvenient;
- requiring of you something you would prefer not to give or do;
- clear and unequivocal;
- enough to make your frame shake as it penetrates to your soul.

When prayer gets through to God and provokes an answer from Him, it is offered with a sincere heart, having real intent (*Moroni 10:4*; *James 1:5*). If a prayer is offered without a sincere heart, and while lacking real intent, is this “denying” the power of God?

If a minister lacks real intent, and does not go to God in mighty prayer, has never become acquainted with the “power of God,” but proceeds to teach with their own learning anyway, do they deny the power of God?

In place of preaching what the Lord reveals, men will claim they teach correct “precepts.” They have all the revelation they need, and they are now proceeding with the authority given them by God. But they don’t hear from Him, don’t have new revelation to deliver from Him, and do not expect God to be involved any longer.

In effect, God has become so distant that “there is no God today.” He finished His work. He’s given His authority to men.

Whether the claim is based on Protestant claims that authority is derived from the New Testament, and all men who believe have authority from God, or it is a Catholic claim to have a line of authority back to Jesus Christ, it is the same. Without some involvement from God in the church itself, the teachings end in the same conclusion: “God has given His power unto men.” The institution has taken over. The claim is always that “the church is true” without regard to whether the Lord remains involved, revealing Himself to the church. This is what the Catholic Church has claimed for centuries God has finished His work and surrendered the “keys of authority” to the church. Now God has transmuted into a church, a Holy Roman Church, to which you may confess your sins, obtain absolution for your sins, and have entry into heaven provided to you.

With such a claim, why ask God for help? Why turn to a priesthood advancing such claims? Why make the difficult, inner changes that bring about real intent and faith in Christ? Why seek for and come into contact with “the power of God” if a church can be an adequate substitute?

How like the Catholics have we become?

Was Nephi only warning about Catholic error? Do his warnings apply equally to all?

JULY 27, 2010

2 Nephi 28:6

“Behold, hearken ye unto my precept; if they shall say there is a miracle wrought by the hand of the Lord, believe it not; for this day he is not a God of miracles; he hath done his work.”

This lack of faith in receiving answers to prayer from God leads to skepticism about any other manifestation by God. If the *leader* isn't having any experience with God, then they distrust claims by anyone else. Everyone is a fraud, if the *leader* can't receive an answer to prayer.

The root of this is jealousy and envy. But it is completely unfounded. Revelation received by another person has no limiting effect on what personal revelation you can receive. The Lord is willing to share with all. However, it is predicated on the same principle. If the *leader* were willing to humble himself and seek in the prescribed manner, he would receive the same result. Everyone is invited. No one is excluded.

Nicodemus came to Christ in the dark, and Christ taught him the same way He taught others. There are some sources which suggest Nicodemus was ultimately converted. If he was, there is little doubt that after his conversion, the spiritual life he had as one of the Lord's disciples was greater than that of a member of the Sanhedrin. The Lord was not unwilling to share with the Sanhedrin, but they were unwilling to receive Him. When one (Nicodemus) changed his heart, the Lord came to him.

This seething distrust and accusation of any who claim to experience the miraculous leads in turn to denouncing the gifts of God. When denounced, such gifts depart from us. We no longer hear about miracles, healings, visions, tongues, visitations, or other gifts experienced by those we read of in scripture. Therefore, when the presence of the gifts end, the record of scriptures ends. There is nothing to add, and so nothing is added.

Eventually the end of this spiritual journey into the dark is to denounce all things coming from the “hand of God.” No “miracle wrought by the hand of God” will be acknowledged, but will be denounced instead. The position becomes unalterable: “God is not a God of miracles anymore.” You must trust leaders and leadership. You will be deceived if you profess revelation or the miraculous. And so the approach into hell is carefully laid by argument, emotion and fear.

Nephi foresaw this. He is warning us against it. We should not be seduced into thinking God has finished His work. He hasn't. He is in the middle of fulfilling promises made generations ago to the “fathers.” We inherit from the Lord the promises He made to them. Now is a great day of miracles, visits, visitations, dreams, and healings. The heavens are open, if you will ask with a sincere heart having real intent, He will manifest the truth unto you. God remains the same. His blessings remain predicated upon the same conditions.

Seek. Ask. Knock. It will all be unfolded to you. He is no respecter of persons.

JULY 28, 2010

2 Nephi 28:7–8

Yea, and there shall be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us. And there shall also be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God—he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God.

This notion that religion should always encourage merriment and feasting has so taken hold that it becomes impossible to cry repentance. Anything that challenges a happy outlook is thought to be negative and of the devil. It creates the misunderstanding that the right to feel good about one's self is a higher obligation than the duty to teach repentance and forsaking sin.

If you are laden with sin (Isa. 1:4), it is of no consequence, for God intends that you be happy. It is of little matter that happiness cannot be found in sin (Alma 41:10), the gospel of positive attitude and flattery will triumph with the ungodly every time when it competes with a warning to repent and return to Christ.

The whole system has been worked out for us. The odds are you're going to be exalted. Deseret Book has taken a firm stand on that very subject. We have it from God, you see. Because Deseret Book is owned by the church, the church has been headed by a prophet, the prophet can't lead you astray, and therefore the odds are you're going to be exalted—Or so the reasoning goes.

If Nephi's warning is urged against the tide of permissiveness, supported by this false gospel of positive attitude and false hope,

then the message must surely be meant by Nephi for someone other than us. We cannot possibly be among those who incorrectly believe the Lord will justify us in committing a little sin. We do not believe in the utility of a little lie, do we? We do not use words to take advantage of others do we?

What pits have we dug for our neighbors?

By what measure do we advocate to live life pleasantly and not fear death or judgment? How could we be taken with the notion that a little guilt will result in merely a “few stripes” from an irritated, but ultimately tolerant, and permissive God? What doctrine is it we advance that suggests all of us will, at last, be saved in the kingdom of God?

Assuming this was meant to be a warning to US, *the readers of the Book of Mormon, and not to another audience who will never read the book because they aren't converted to it*, then how do we fit into this warning? Do we have a mistaken view of God's plan? What do we say, preach or believe that would provoke this warning from Nephi? Have you scrutinized the recent manuals from the Correlation Department to see if there is any basis for concern? Have you read the General Conference talks for hints of these teachings? Do you find them there?

How many articles do you find in the LDS *Church News*, *Ensign* and *New Era* which are positive, flattering and reassuring? How many articles confront you, call you to repent, warn you of the judgment and the duration of eternity? (Enos 1:23).

Why is the Book of Mormon constantly calling upon us to repent? Why are we not called relentlessly to repentance by our current leaders? Is there a disconnection between the message of the Book of Mormon and our modern messages? Has the Lord changed His mind? Was Nephi just a crank? Is the Book of Mor-

mon a negative book not relevant to an enlightened people who are specially chosen by God for endless happiness and promised they will never be led astray? Why would the Book of Mormon be a message for us? Why do we have a book so negative in tone, pessimistic in its view of us, while we sit atop the promises of never again having to face an apostasy?

What accounts for this disparity?

An interlude by:

Bobby McFerrin:

*“HMMMMMMMM, hmm, hmm, hmm, hmm, hmm, hmm, hmm, hm-
mmm, hm-hum-hm-hm.... Don’t worry. Be happy.”*

He’s Mormon now, isn’t he? I heard someone’s friend’s boyfriend baptized him when serving a mission in Southern California....

Poets and artists have been proclaiming the coming apocalypse in songs, art and movies for several decades. Nephi gives us the same message. But we spin happily out of control, loosed from the moorings and tossed by the approaching hurricane, all the while promising one another that it will all turn out right. We are special. We are chosen by God. Surely He will not judge us, nor hold us to account for what we believe. If we’re mistaken, He owes it to us to give us a warning, and an opportunity to repent. Other than that sad account of the prior occupants of this land, He hasn’t done that....

Oh. The Book of Mormon is important, isn’t it?

The foolishness of the doctrines that Nephi is denouncing provokes such dismay that our own foolishness needs to be paraded out in all its stupidity. We just don’t seem to get it. We’re reading Nephi’s warnings to us and pretending they were meant for everyone other than us. They aren’t—they are aiming at us. Read the

verse again and try to see our own teachings being laid bare. We are his target. We are his audience. We are being warned.

JULY 28, 2010

2 Nephi 28:9

Yea, and there shall be many which shall teach after this manner, false and vain and foolish doctrines, and shall be puffed up in their hearts, and shall seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; and their works shall be in the dark.

The alarming use of the word “many” suggests this is to be a widespread problem in our time. These teachings are denounced as “false and vain and foolish.” We should look at each:

What does “false” mean? Does something have to be thoroughly and completely wrong to be false? Is it enough to be off by enough to rob the teaching of power? How many truths will a liar tell while trying to get you to believe an ultimate lie? How well does a deception work if there isn’t some truth included in the message? So, then, how difficult will detecting the error be? May the very elect be deceived? (Matt. 24:24, see also *JS-M* 1:22). How will one be able to decide between a false and a true teaching? (Moroni 10:5).

What does “vain” mean? Is the best meaning “futile” or “without power?” If a teaching robs you of power, deprives you of the Spirit, is that “vain?” What would you trade in exchange for having power in the Spirit? If a little flattery is enough, would you take the assurance that God loves you, and will never let you be deceived enough to get you to let go of the responsibility to ever have His Spirit to be with you? (Moroni 5:2). If the current President of the Quorum of the Twelve has lamented our lack of power, is it really a lament about our vain beliefs? If so, what can you do about it? How can you avoid having your faith become vain?

What does “foolish” mean? Would something that is so poorly based, so weak and powerless to save, and utterly false be foolish? What about trusting a man to save you, rather than the Lord? What about the notion that there is a man who will be perfectly unable to ever lead you astray? How foolish is it to trust your salvation to the inerrancy of a man?

What kind of a heart is “puffed up?” How would these false, vain and foolish doctrines result in a proud following? Why would they think themselves better than they are because of these doctrines?

What does it mean to “seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord?” What does it mean to “seek deeply?” What foolish men would think they could ever “hide their counsel from the Lord?” Who would believe that God would be bound to follow what a man dictates—because they have keys to bind Him—rather than recognizing that the Lord alone holds all authority to judge and will alone determine all judgment? (See 3 Ne. 27:27). How foolish is it to become a sycophant of priestly pretenders, hoping that they will save you in the day of judgment? Will appeasing an LDS authority be of any more value than kissing a Cardinal’s ring when you are standing before the Lion of Israel to be judged? How well will the vain ceremonies and guarded conspiracies work in the day when everything is shouted from the rooftops?

What does it mean to have “works” which “shall be in the dark?” Does this just mean hidden? Does “darkness” also include the quality of the works? What kinds of work are “dark?” Can obliterating part of a sacred ceremony remove light and replace it with dark? Does curtailing the Saints’ ability to discuss true principles, exercising control and dominion and compulsion to prevent knowledge from spreading all contribute to darkness in the minds of the Saints?

When is the last time you were encouraged in the Temple to understand and discuss the meaning of the Temple ceremonies? When was the last time you were told NOT to discuss the Temple meaning inside the Temple? If you can't discuss it inside the Temple, and you covenanted not to discuss it outside the Temple, then where can you discuss its meaning? How will you learn if you are unable to share ideas about the symbols and their meaning? Is it "dark" when the light of teaching is closed to view?

I don't know if any of you recall that Hugh Nibley was given access to the chapel in the Provo Temple to speak to waiting patrons about the meaning of the Temple for a number of years. While waiting for a session to begin, patrons could listen to and ask questions of Hugh Nibley in an atmosphere of sharing and getting answers. Today, in contrast, they discourage you from discussing anything about the Temple even inside the Temple. I refer to an incident in the Jordan River Temple in *The Second Comforter*. I was told to not discuss meanings while in the Celestial Room speaking with full time missionaries assigned to my stake. I presided over the missionary work of the stake and worked closely with these wonderful young men. But I was told to stop teaching them. This is common today. It ought to end. We will only understand sacred symbols if we are able to teach one another about what we have learned. When I think of the library of material I have had to get through to be able to understand, I am left to wonder at how difficult the process has been made for those who would sincerely and humbly like to seek after further light and knowledge by teaching one another.

We should welcome as much light and truth in our exchanges with one another as we have to offer; in the right setting and with the right Spirit. It is not casting pearls before swine when the audi-

ence is prepared, worthy and interested in obtaining knowledge for the right reason. Now even if you have the very best of audiences, in the most sacred setting, we are told to not discuss what may be of vital interest to a soul seeking to gain further light and knowledge by conversing with the Lord through the veil.

How little discarding of light must one cause before they are doing “works in the dark?” It is such a terrible question with such fearful results that I would hesitate to be the one who limits the Saints’ ability to seek into truth.

Now, to balance things somewhat, I want to affirm several fundamental truths:

- We are accountable for our own search into the truth.
- No one can limit you if you are searching with real intent having a contrite spirit and broken heart.
- There is no conflict between fulfilling your duties to the church on the one hand and your responsibilities to the Lord on the other.
- You cannot blame anyone else if you have not been diligent about your own search.
- In the end, whether there is active opposition or active assistance provided to you, it is necessary for you to make the internal changes and to follow the path.

No outside party will control what is yours alone to control. But the first step to be taken is to realize you really are personally responsible. You can’t depend on others nor on an institution to do the work for you. But as you awaken to that recognition, you should not lose heart or become discouraged. Nothing has been lost collectively which you may not still lay claim upon for yourself.

I do think we could make a greater overall gentile success with a different, more benign attitude as a group. But even if you must

work against a corrosive environment, you can still do it. You have the greatest tool in your hands. You truly can get closer to the Lord through the Book of Mormon than any other means. It is a guidebook written for us and for now.

COMMENTS:

Ben · JULY 28, 2010 AT 8:37 PM

I think this is an example of the Samuel Principle that Custer talked about. We asked for a shorter endowment, we were offended at certain things, so the Lord basically said “go ahead” to our modifications to our own condemnation. I feel similarly to the changes to initiatory where now everything is “symbolic.” We aren’t meriting more, we are losing what we have because of the wishes of the Saints.

I think we will continue to hemorrhage youth from the church until we make many of the changes we’ve talked about here. We’ve set up impossible situation of trying to teach the gospel with the tools of Babylon. Frankly, I think youth see right through it, and see the world and Babylon in its undiluted “glory” and wonder why they should chose watered-down Babylon in the church. We need to go the other direction and present a real alternative. Ditch scouting and all of the now failed temporal attempts at reaching the youth through socialization and lets get down to the business of salvation.

Denver Snuffer · JULY 28, 2010 AT 8:46 PM

Ben:

I think at a very deep level (not something people recognize or can articulate), people can sense the truth. It comes from a primeval knowledge which comes from before birth. We accepted truth before, we are looking for it again. We crave it and love it when we find it. Everyone senses truth. They know when they hear it. And know when they don’t. It is innate.

We are losing truth, and also losing interest among the youth, investigators, and members.

JULY 29, 2010

2 Nephi 28:10–12

And the blood of the saints shall cry from the ground against them. Yea, they have all gone out of the way; they have become corrupted. Because of pride, and because of false teachers, and false doctrine, their churches have become corrupted, and their churches are lifted up; because of pride they are puffed up.

Why does this mention the “blood of the saints?” What does it mean for their “blood to cry from the ground?” I’ve discussed this before, speaking of the earth’s own spirit.

What does “all” include? Even us? If “they have all gone out of the way; they have become corrupted” includes us, what does that mean? How could we also be “out of the way?” Is Nephi right? What about Wilford Woodruff’s claim that we would never be led astray? Can someone who promises to not lead you astray then lead you astray? How solid a guarantee does any man offer to you?

What does it mean to “have become corrupted?” Can a church be “true” and still be “corrupted?” (D&C 84:53–58).

What “pride” can religion impose upon people who believe false traditions? Does your faith make you “proud” to belong? Do you think it makes you better than others? Do you believe you’re saved while others will be damned, because they don’t share your faith? Does that make you lose sleep at night, and want to cry out to save them—or to relax and enjoy your security?

What does it mean that the faiths are “all out of the way?” Is there only one “way?” If so, how would you recognize the right “way” from the wrong one?

Who are “false teachers” that teach “false doctrine?” Does “false” include omission of important truths? If one teaches truths about Christ, but does not teach you how to return to His presence, is

the teacher “false?” What would qualify someone to be “true” and teach the right “way?” How would you distinguish between true and false teachers? Between true and false doctrine?

How can “false teachers” corrupt a church? Can they corrupt any church? Even ours?

Why does becoming “puffed up” and “pride” follow false teachings? What is it about false religion that brings pride to its followers? How does false security caused by corrupt doctrine lead to “pride?”

What would the opposite religious attitude be for “pride?” Would humility, a broken heart and a contrite spirit be different than “pride?” What kind of teaching would cause a listener to become contrite, humble, meek and submissive? What kind of teaching would defeat pride and break a person’s heart? Can you have both? Can you be “humble” and “broken hearted” and also be proud of your religion? If you cannot, then can you think deeply about your faith, your meetings, your conferences, your private as well as public conversations and ask yourself if the teachers to whom you listen lead you to pride? Lead you to humility? Lead you to contrition and repentance?

Who is Nephi describing? Is it possible it could apply to us along with all other organized faiths?

I have often heard my fellow-Saint speak of the sense of pride the Conference Center gives them. It is a great, spacious and technologically advanced center. I’ve thought the ceiling of that building looks somewhat like that very successful evangelist Joel Osteen’s amazing church. I’ve wondered if the architectural firm took hints from other successful mega-churches when designing the Conference Center. Have you noticed how the dimmed lights and the magnified images, magnified voices and focus upon the great pulpit is designed to use all the modern audio-visual technology

to create heroic images within the building for the audience? It is a technical marvel. Really state of the art. It is hard for me not to take some pride in it all. Anyone who wonders if our church is respectable, successful, powerful or advanced, who visits the facility will no doubt leave with the conclusion that, despite our humble origins, we certainly have made a success in the world for ourselves. It is a story of overcoming and prospering.

If those whose bloodstained footprints covered our westward migration could see what we've become, I wonder what delight (or disappointment) they would feel. Would they have any mixed emotions at seeing this monument in granite, glass, brass and walnut? The third-of-a-billion dollars we spent on it produced a landmark of splendor for the ages. Poor Joseph had only an open air bowery to use. Adam, too, used the open plains of Adam-Ondi-Ahman to meet. We are, of course, blessed with more resources to use as part of our "worship."

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · JULY 29, 2010 AT 2:58 PM

Denver, please read again pages 281 – 286 of *The Second Comforter*. I really enjoy your books but I am getting weary of this blog. Let's continue reaching upward without pulling down those around us.

Denver Snuffer · JULY 29, 2010 AT 4:11 PM

Anonymous (7/29/10 2:58pm):

You mean Nephi, right? Because this isn't my subject, it is Nephi's. I'm just laying out what he is talking about. It is quite disturbing to me...

JULY 29, 2010

2 Nephi 28:13

“They rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries; they rob the poor because of their fine clothing; and they persecute the meek and the poor in heart, because in their pride they are puffed up.”

You must keep the prior verse in mind as you read this one. They are a continuation of thought.

It is an interesting thought to equate “fine sanctuaries” with “robbing the poor.” Why do you suppose Nephi would make that equation? Does it give us any pause?

What “duty” would be owed to the poor that entitles them to come before a “fine sanctuary?”

Is there a duty to care for the poor that comes before the right of someone to wear “fine clothing?”

What does it mean to “persecute the meek?” Can you “persecute the meek” just by ignoring them? By neglecting them? Does any religion owe some duty to the meek? What obligation is owed to the meek by people of faith?

Who is “poor in heart?” What obligation do we all owe to the poor in heart?

Now look at the last phrase. It begins with “because.” Isn’t Nephi saying that our defects are all due to “our pride.” That is, “because of their pride they are puffed up” and this is the reason we “rob the poor.” This is the reason we “persecute the meek.” This is the reason we “persecute the poor in heart.” Or, in other words, we are proud and puffed up and therefore we cannot help but cause these other offenses.

We necessarily ignore our obligations to the poor and meek because we are filled with pride. We don’t give a second thought to

what we're doing with resources entrusted to us to bless and benefit others, because we believe we are entitled to have "fine sanctuaries." We just presume we are justified in our "fine clothing" without regard to what we may owe others.

There is a moment in film that helps illustrate this verse. It is in the closing of the movie *Schindler's List*. The Allies had overrun the area and the Nazi rule had ended. As Schindler was receiving the gratitude of those who had been saved by his efforts, he was struck by what more he could have done. He was less interested in receiving gratitude than he was guilt ridden by how many more lives could have been saved had he parted with a ring. Had he parted with a car it would have secured other lives. The thought filled him with guilt. He had done some, it was undoubtedly true. But his conscious was filled with remorse because he could have done more. And in that setting, doing more was saving lives. He preferred a ring to another man's life. He preferred a car to a family's lives. It tormented him. If you can harrow up your mind to remember this scene, then think of what we might have done with the great resources we have been given in place of some of the monuments we have built.

Why do we need chapels at all? Why not meet in homes? What good could be done with the money we have invested in the chapels we have built? Joseph Smith built temples; he did not build chapels. General Conference was held in an outdoor bowery. Do we have anything to apologize for in how we use our resources? Were or are there poor toward whom the Lord would have preferred us to show mercy, and do more? There are families who have supplied church leadership from their large construction companies who have built projects for the church. I am told these relationships

are natural. They call who they know and associate with, after all. I suppose that is true.

Nephi seems troubled by his view of us. We seem untroubled by his words. At least we don't seem to change our behavior much because of Nephi's counsel. We deflect it, and point to others as his real target.

Well, Nephi is nothing if not relevant to almost everything going on today.

JULY 30, 2010

2 Nephi 28:14

They wear stiff necks and high heads; yea, and because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms, they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men.

This is so sobering and relevant a verse that it is the first thing quoted in the dedication of the first book I wrote, *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*. This is our moment. Inside this foolish age there are nevertheless a “few, who are the humble followers of Christ.” These are the salt which preserve the world. These are the leaven who keep us still from destruction.

“Stiff necks” do not bow in prayer and praise before a Lord to whom they regard themselves as unworthy. They are undaunted by their unworthiness. They think themselves justified, and therefore without any need to bow in reverence.

“High heads” do not tilt down to behold the less fortunate to whom they might have provided relief. They ignore the destitute and needy, preferring only to see those who are on their standing or above. Who can help elevate them? Who can give them an ad-

vantage? Who is a good contact to keep? The “high heads” will be careful about what social advantages come from associations, and will always pick carefully those whom they deign to notice.

But these stiff necks and high heads belong to those carrying a burden of sin. They are prideful, wicked, given to abominations and whoredoms. These are the ones who sit upon the labors of others, and fare sumptuously here. So long as your neck remains stiff and your head held high, you will never notice Lazarus lying at your gate.

But what of the “few, who are the humble followers of Christ?” What of them?

It is clear in this verse that they do NOT lead, but are instead being led. They are “led that in many instances they do err.” That is, those who qualify to be called the “few, who are the humble followers of Christ” are not themselves leaders. They are being led by others.

The others who lead them “cause them to err.” And why do they cause this? “Because they are taught by the precepts of men.” Therefore, the humble true followers are misled into accepting false, foolish and vain (or powerless) beliefs because the ones who preside over them are only able to offer the “precepts of men.” These “precepts of men” are unable to bring the “humble followers of Christ” to the knowledge of Him.

Keep in mind that the “precepts of men” are repeated by Nephi in this written sermon more than any other phrase. The learning used to lead is distracting, even damning, whenever it fails to lead to the Lord. Men’s precepts cannot rescue us.

Why are not the “humble followers of Christ” doing the leading? Because they do not have the “stiff necks and high heads” to become noticed, to be added to the group of insiders. Their clothes

are not costly, their home “sanctuaries” are insufficiently ornate. They are not the stuff of renown and recognition. They are, in a word, *the least*.

It is a troubling image which begins to emerge from Nephi’s words. They are shocking for us to consider. If the alternatives are what Nephi seems to leave us, then how much better is it to be among the “few, who are the humble followers of Christ” than among those with the authority to lead them?

I do not believe any of us are in a position to fully understand our times. We live inside a cultural fog that makes our judgments inside the bubble distorted in ways Nephi did not experience from his vantage point. The Lord can give us a clearer perspective through revelation, as He did for Nephi. But we are not equipped to fully recognize our peril standing inside this age and culture.

The one thing that is abundantly clear is that Joseph Smith was right about the need to reconnect with God. His first and primary message remains the testimony of James 1:5: If we lack wisdom, we should ask of God. God will give liberally to those who ask with a sincere heart, having real intent. Whether you believe Joseph’s account or not, Joseph was pointing us to James and testifying James made a promise which God will fulfill. So test James. Ask with real intent. Perhaps you will begin to see how Nephi’s words of warning are exactly what is needed to save us from our peril. At a minimum, the petition will make you closer to being one of the “few, who are the humble followers of Christ” because of your desire to know from Him the truth of your plight.

He always intends to save those who wait upon Him. Those who serve Him and do as He asks will never be forsaken. All that is required to qualify is to repent and come to Christ with sincere intent. No matter what else is going on, the Lord can take your

life's circumstances and make them work to fulfill His work. And His work is your salvation and exaltation.

The first step is to recognize the peril you face. The second is to then do something about it. To take the first step without the second is worse than meaningless. It inspires fear and pessimism. That is wrong. Happiness is the goal of our existence. That comes from Christ. So do not just notice your plight, but make the necessary flight back to Him.

JULY 30, 2010

2 Nephi 28:15

O the wise, and the learned, and the rich, that are puffed up in the pride of their hearts, and all those who preach false doctrines, and all those who commit whoredoms, and pervert the right way of the Lord, wo, wo, wo be unto them, saith the Lord God Almighty, for they shall be thrust down to hell!

Now we reach a terrible point. Nephi records an inspired condemnation. For a person in Nephi's position, recording words of condemnation holds terrible significance. They are not written unless they are instructed to do so, because their words will be fulfilled. I've explained this in *Beloved Enos*.

Nephi pronounces three "wo's." This is a three fold condemnation. It goes beyond this life. It will follow them into the hereafter.

Associated with the three "wo's" are three names used for God: "Lord God Almighty." It is a three fold assertion of divine authority. "Lord" refers to the Savior as Guide. "God" refers to Divine right and authority. "Almighty" refers to the irrevocable nature of the word used by God, and in turn the words given to Nephi. When you are confronted with all three, the "wo's" are pronounced by a power that cannot be altered.

This is more than a setback in the hopes of the “learned, and the rich” who are being condemned. This is a condemnation which reaches into hell itself. It is so significant a pronouncement that when you read it you should pause and think of the dreadful import for anyone who fits into the curse.

Those, who in their pride, use the precepts of men as the basis for their “preaching false doctrines,” are not just wrong, they are damned for this perversion of the religion entrusted to them to preach in purity and truth.

In effect, they were given a precious and eternally significant treasure, and they have diverted it into something that makes them rich, puffed up, and powerful. It is tragic. It is pitiful—meaning it should inspire pity in each of us. These could be well meaning people who have fallen into this error. But they claim to preach the truth, using God’s name in vain, while they spread a vain religion which cannot bring people to the knowledge of Christ.

Who would wish such a condemnation upon others? Who can read these words and not be moved with compassion and alarm for those who have fallen under this condemnation? Who would not remove it from those who are condemned if they could?

Nephi could not make a greater plea for the salvation of all those involved. The pronouncement is terrible and its implications eternal. Yet this verse seems to have escaped notice.

Who alone claims they are speaking for God Himself when they preach? Who could possibly qualify for this level of condemnation? This should make all of us think long and hard about any utterance we speak before we make our assertions “in the name of Jesus Christ.” The thoughtlessness which accompanies that expression among the Saints is contrary to the seriousness of the

condemnation we invite if we preach false doctrine while puffed up in pride; thereby perverting the right way of the Lord.

In an example which is chilling to read, the first anti-Christ we encounter in the Book of Mormon (Sherem) uses this phrase to justify his preaching. He accuses Jacob of “perverting the right way of God.” (Jacob 7:7). He brings himself under Nephi’s curse. It was a small thing, therefore, for Jacob to reiterate the condemnation of Nephi against Sherem (Jacob 7:14). Jacob was merely repeating what Nephi had already pronounced. And since Nephi had sealed the condemnation, it would be Nephi, not Jacob, who was responsible for the cursing.

This three fold wo, and use of three titles for God all suggest that teaching false doctrine and using man’s learning, while being filled with pride is so grave an offense that great care should always be taken before teaching, preaching or expounding on the Gospel. Only a fool would undertake to do so without knowing their words are approved of God. You cannot take cover using a Correlation Department, or a commentary, or a scholar’s words, or a selected bibliography. When you presume to preach the truth, you need to realize how serious a matter you are undertaking. Joseph Smith wrote from Liberty Jail:

The things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity— thou must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God, than the vain imaginations of the human heart! None but fools will trifle with the souls of men.

How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations—too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of the called and chosen of God, according to the purposes of His will, from before the foundation of the world! (DHC 3:295–6)

When we speak about Christ and His Gospel with others, we should do so with a sense of terrible awe and fear. If we have doubts about our message, we should remain silent rather than risk proclaiming what may be an error. It is a burden to be carefully undertaken.

As Nephi warns about our day, there will be many who will teach vain, foolish and false things coming from the precepts of men.

COMMENTS:

DJones · JULY 30, 2010 AT 8:29 PM

To Ben:

RE: your post on July 28th and Hugh Nibley's Endowment Talk to the First Presidency and The quorum of the Twelve:

Check out this web link:

<http://www.bhporters.com/Porter%20PDF%20Files/histort%20of%20endowment.pdf>

For others seeking to be taught a greater significance of the Temple, paste this link:

<http://www.bhporters.com/Porter%20PDF%20Files/the%20temple%20and%20its%20significance.pdf>

These should keep you busy for a while.

Denver Snuffer · JULY 31, 2010 AT 6:46 AM

I believe these words from Nephi are primarily directed at the leaders, and only secondarily relevant to those who are following. The trends and direction are always set by leaders.

I know there are humble people reading this who want to condemn themselves and justify leaders. But taken in context, Nephi's condemnation must necessarily be primarily aimed at those who lead.

I wish it were otherwise. I cannot tell you how these words cause me grief. I take no delight in this.

It would be easier to stop than to go on. But this Book of Mormon is something we must study if we are going to remove our condemnation. And it seems as if no one is willing to face its words. So the burden remains upon us.

DKD · JULY 31, 2010 AT 11:12 AM

Denver, could you help me better understand the covenant we have made not to speak evil of the Lord's anointed? How does that fit here? or does it?

Denver Snuffer · JULY 31, 2010 AT 1:01 PM

On "evil speaking" the following are relevant:

First, it is not "evil" to say what is true.

Second, it cannot be "evil speaking" when it comes from an accepted prophet (Nephi) and is found in the scriptures.

Third, if the Spirit underlays the concept or thought, it is not you speaking it is the Spirit. If the message which comes from the Lord, or the Spirit, then it is not even you speaking. You are voice, but it is another who speaks.

Fourth, a call to repent is not "evil" speaking; because if it were then we could never be urged to repentance. Because the issues involved in repentance are always going to be somewhat personal, cutting and difficult.

DKD · JULY 31, 2010 AT 4:47 PM

Thank you for the reply Denver—that makes sense...meanwhile, why do we make that particular covenant in the temple? What exactly are we promising? Maybe we need to be clear who is the Lord's anointed? It has always been my practice to pray about a bishop or stake president that serves in my ward/stake when they are called. In once case over the

many years, I had a bishop that I did not get an answer about after he was called. In another case, I was prompted in advance who was to be called as our bishop..... as it turns out, I served with that bishop as his secretary. Are these the Lord's anointed (ie as revealed to us)?

Who are the Lord's anointed?

Denver Snuffer · JULY 31, 2010 AT 9:05 PM

In the narrowest sense “the Lord's anointed” would be those whom the Lord anoints. It would be those whom the Lord makes His, sealing them up to eternal life.

In the broadest sense it would be anyone who has been through the Temple to receive their washings and anointings.

It is NOT the Lord. As to Him, there are other commandments which relate to using His name in vain, His status as our Savior, and other appropriate rules for respecting and worshiping Him. But it only takes a moment of reflection to see the Lord's anointed would be those whom He has anointed.

JULY 31, 2010

2 Nephi 28:16–17

Wo unto them that turn aside the just for a thing of naught and revile against that which is good, and say that it is of no worth! For the day shall come that the Lord God will speedily visit the inhabitants of the earth; and in that day that they are fully ripe in iniquity they shall perish. But behold, if the inhabitants of the earth shall repent of their wickedness and abominations they shall not be destroyed, saith the Lord of Hosts.

Nephi warns against “turning aside the just for a thing of naught.” A “thing of naught” means something without value. To “turn aside” is to leave or move away from. So he is telling you to be careful to not walk away from the truth being taught by a “just” or true source, and instead follow after something of no value.

This rejection of a true messenger and following after a false one inevitably results in “reviling that which is good.” When you reject the truth you normally have to deal with a troubled conscious. The way to calm it is to “revile against” the thing you have rejected. Not only do people “revile against” the message, but they go on to “say that it is of no worth!”

Think about the general reception given to the Lord’s messengers throughout scripture. They are always the object of criticism and reviling. Nephi is describing a syndrome here which always attaches to the true message and true messenger. They aren’t valued, but thought “a thing of naught.” The argument is always: “If what they had to say were important, it would come from someone more important.” Content is ignored in favor of status.

Now the Lord allows this to go on and always has. But, as Nephi reminds us, there does come a time when the limit has been reached. When the limit has been reached, the end “will speedily visit the inhabitants of the earth.” That is, when the time has come, the turn will be so swift that they cannot repent any longer. Judgment will overtake them too quickly.

The moment when they have reached the limit is described by Nephi as “fully ripe in iniquity.” That means they will no longer even listen to the truth. They have completely closed minds. It would do no good to extend them further opportunity, because they will not take any advantage of it.

So they are scheduled for destruction.

BUT, Nephi reminds us, they can repent. If they will change their minds and come to Christ, He will forgive them and heal them. If they repent, they will be preserved from the destruction. However, as has already become clear, their destruction is due to the fact they are “fully ripe.” So although repentance remains

theoretically possible, and the Lord will accept even late return to Him, the offenders are committed to their offense. They are not likely to take advantage of the opportunity.

How humble it is for the Lord to be willing to accept the reluctant, tardy and slow to repent. Nevertheless, He is willing to accept even them. He suffered for all, and will redeem as many as will come to Him. Initially, He won't destroy them with the wicked. Ultimately the outcome will depend upon how committed they are to the process of repentance. For to repent is to come to Him. They decide if His open arms will be where they finally embrace Him; or if they will stand afar off and think it too hard to surrender their sins and go further.

AUGUST 2010

AUGUST 1, 2010

2 Nephi 28:18–19

But behold, that great and abominable church, the whore of all the earth, must tumble to the earth, and great must be the fall thereof. For the kingdom of the devil must shake, and they which belong to it must needs be stirred up unto repentance, or the devil will grasp them with his everlasting chains, and they be stirred up to anger, and perish;

Remember that this comes at the end of Nephi's ministry. He saw the vision of the great and abominable church at the beginning of his journey into the wilderness. There has been over forty years between the time of the earlier visions and the time of this summary of his great teachings (See 2 Ne. 5:34).

Between the time Nephi saw the visions (set out beginning in 1 Nephi 11) and the time of this final instruction, Nephi has had

decades to ponder on the things he was shown in vision. He has, in fact, spent those years reflecting constantly upon the visions he received (2 Ne. 4:16). It is foolish to believe that Nephi, Joseph Smith or any prophet understood what they saw the day they saw it. Only time, careful, solemn and ponderous thought can unravel what a person is shown in vision by the Lord. The understanding of a prophet is not static. It unfolds. Joseph's first impression of the first vision was personal. He thought it was a message to him about himself. By the time he had finished translating the Book of Mormon, organizing the church, and collecting a following, Joseph realized the first vision was not his, but it belonged at a minimum to a larger community of believers. Eventually he would come to see it belonged to the world. The version we have in the Pearl of Great Price reflects that changing understanding. In it he gives the first understanding in what he told his mother the day it happened: He learned that Presbyterianism was not true (*JS-H* 1:20).

So this statement goes back forty years earlier and Nephi's vision of the fall of the great whore. This universal false religion will fail. It will "fall." The "fall" will be "great." It will "tumble to the earth"—meaning that it will no longer stand on its own, but will altogether collapse.

The purpose of this great calamity is to bring about repentance. The purposes of God, even in punishment, are to elevate and save others.

Notice the devil's tool that will be used in opposition to repentance: they will "be stirred up to anger, and perish." That is, to harden hearts and to blind eyes, anger will be the most effective tool. Rather than being humbled by the fall of the great whore, those who will continue to resist repentance will be angry for the losses. They will lament the loss of what they held so dearly.

This, then, is how the groups break down — For those who repent, the difficulties they encounter bring humility and contrition. For those who refuse to repent, they respond with anger at their trials.

This is the great watershed test. If your set backs in life humble you, then your heart is soft and you are a candidate for repentance. If you become angry, accuse God of causing evil, and refuse to be comforted, you are not a candidate for repentance. Your anger is a tool used to blind you. The one employing the tool is the enemy to your soul.

The trials and difficulties are gifts to stir you up to repentance. That is how you ought to respond. The only way to approach the Lord is through humility. Anything that aids you in becoming humble is good, merciful and just. You should view it as a gift. No matter the difficulty. Christ descended below it all; and none of us are greater than He (D&C 122:8).

from the desk of
Denver Snuffer

VOLUME 3

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from the desk of
Denver Snuffer

VOLUME 3

AUGUST 2, 2010—OCTOBER 26, 2010

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

A Note to the Reader:

This multi-volume series covers blog entries beginning in 2010. Scripture references in the text refer to the LDS versions of scripture found in the King James Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. Beginning about March 2018 the scripture cites change to the Restoration Edition of the scriptures. Cites of the Restoration Edition scriptures are typically denoted with OC, NC and T&C references e.g., (NC Matt. 8:10), or alternately (1 Ne. 1:22 RE) setting them apart from the former LDS scripture version references. For those interested, a scripture reference conversion tool that allows navigation between the various scripture references and versions can be accessed at: <https://scriptures.info/Scriptures/ReferenceTranslator>

CHAPTER 1
2 Nephi 28:20–32

AUGUST 2, 2010

2 Nephi 28:20

“For behold, at that day shall he rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good.”

One of the most effective ways to end thought or discussion is to get angry. Lawyers use anger as a tool to turn witnesses into thoughtless and emotional pawns. People make very bad decisions when they are angry. I’ve mentioned before my father’s saying that he never spoke a word in anger than he did not later regret.

This is a time of great anger. Anger about religious ideas flows from insecurity and feeling threatened by the idea. It is not possible to have a discussion when people are insecure, angry and unwilling to be thoughtful about ideas.

This is the work of the devil. He succeeds when people close their minds and fill with anger at teachings which introduce ideas that challenge assumptions.

This is why the Jews wanted Christ killed. This is why they wanted to kill Lehi when he spoke of Christ. The teachings ran

contrary to the presumptions, and as a result the response was emotional, angry and closed down thought and discussion.

Using fear to shut down people's ability to consider, ponder and pray is a technique used with amazing success. When you hear the argument that something will put you in peril, jeopardize your salvation, and to be afraid of the idea or discussion, you ought to ask yourself whether the notion that shutting down discussion seems right or not. Is it merely using fear to cause rage and anger? Can it be a tool to cause you to turn "against that which is good?"

All kinds of ideas need to be considered to bring you to the Lord. Closing down because of fear will hinder the process, as the devil knows (D&C 38:30).

The tool of anger is the other side of fear.

The object of this is always to cheat your soul, close your mind, keep you from learning the truth.

Now is the great day of anger. Have you noticed how much of the discourse in public life is based upon fear and anger? Those larger social dynamics invade the community of Saints, as well. We are as vulnerable to this technique as the rest of society.

Be slow to anger, quick to forgive; open and prayerful. The great plan to cheat your soul will not succeed with you if you remain humble and open.

AUGUST 2, 2010

2 Nephi 28:21

And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.

Now we have reached a point where the audience becomes unavoidably identified with the gentiles of the last days who claim to be assembling as “Zion.” This term gets applied in the Book of Mormon in a highly selective way. It includes the following:

- Last days time frame;
- Post-restoration of the Book of Mormon;
- People who are either claiming or who have actually assembled together as Zion.

We are the only ones who fit this definition. Therefore the application of these verses to include us is required. We cannot point to others and say we are not among those being warned.

What does “pacify” mean?

What does “lull” mean?

What does “carnal security” mean?

If you have people who are pacified, lulled with carnal security, what kind of people are you speaking about?

Why would these people think they were “Zion?” What possible basis could people who are pacified, and lulled with carnal security have for thinking they are “Zion?”

What does it mean that “all is well in Zion?” What does it mean “Zion prospereth?” Does “all is well in Zion” mean the same thing as “Zion prospereth?” If not, what is the difference? Is one “spiritual” and the other “carnal?”

Can one be an attitude, while the other is a measurement or statistic? Can “all be well in Zion” mean that we have comfortable controls and guarantees in place which will protect us?

Can “Zion prospereth” mean new converts, new buildings, new numbers, more tithing receipts, growth and political influence? What else might it mean?

Do we satisfy the notion that “all is well in Zion?” That is, can you see a reason to say that Zion is well at present? Do our people say that?

Do we satisfy the notion that “Zion prospereth?” That is, can you see any reason to say that Zion is presently prospering? Do our people say that?

Why would it “cheat souls” to make them think “all is well in Zion” and that “Zion prospereth?” Why would it lead people “carefully down to hell” for them to believe all is well and Zion prospers?

Can Zion ever relent? Can Zion tolerate a little sin? Does it cheat us if we are good, decent people, and we recognize we are good and decent? Even if we are good and honorable, can we be deceived? (D&C 76:75). How does prosperity blind us? Do John’s words to the Laodiceans tell us how we can err? (Rev. 3:17).

What quality does the devil employ to mislead us? Does being led away “carefully” mean it is harder to recognize the peril? Should it be hard to avoid deception? Why do those who take the Holy Spirit as their guide avoid this kind of deception? (D&C 45:57). Can anyone qualify to receive guidance from the Holy Spirit (Moroni 10:5). Can anyone qualify to receive Christ as their guide? (D&C 93:1).

What good does it do to follow even a true messenger, if you do not receive a testimony from Christ? (D&C 76:98–101).

To whom should you look for salvation?

Does part of the problem Nephi relates here grow out of the notion that being part of a group will matter? If you accept baptism and other saving ordinances from those with authority to minister them, but you do not come to Christ, will the ordinances alone save you? Since the ordinances do matter (Mark 16:16; 2 Nephi 9:23), what must you do after receiving them? (D&C 20:25). Is part of

enduring to the end helping others within your own ward family? Can you just walk away from your obligations to the church after entering into the covenant of baptism? (Mosiah 18:8–10).

COMMENTS :

Gordon · AUGUST 2, 2010 AT 5:19 PM

I had never before equated “enduring to the end” with seeking the face of the Lord while in this life. If there is a continuing path after receiving the ordinances which MUST be walked in order to please the Lord and enter into His presence, then why would the Lord not be more explicit in His directions? Why obscure the “way,” by lumping all of what is a very long, exacting and absolutely essential process, into a fuzzy, generic directive called, “enduring to the end.”

It really is no mystery to me why so many members of the church, having received the ordinances, are complacent about their standing with the Lord; the scriptures are written in a way which allows such complacency.

Or, maybe the Lord’s lack of direction is really my lack of discernment.

Denver Snuffer · AUGUST 2, 2010 AT 5:53 PM

Gordon:

Read again the chapter titled “What it Means and What it Does Not Mean” in *The Second Comforter*.

AUGUST 3, 2010

2 Nephi 28:22

And behold, others he flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them: I am no devil, for there is none—and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance.

How can the devil “flatter” someone? Why would it be “flattery” to tell someone “there is no hell?” What does it mean that

“there is no hell?” Have you ever heard this idea taught? Historic Christians are fully persuaded of the existence of hell. We, on the other hand, have three degrees of GLORY in which the idea of hell is sometimes lost.

So, is there a “hell?” (D&C 19:15). Do those who go there suffer? How difficult is the suffering? (D&C 19:16–18).

How can it be flattery for the devil to tell someone “I am no devil?” Would his appearance to someone as an “angel of light” be flattery? (2 Ne. 9:9). Did the devil attempt to do this with Joseph Smith? (D&C 128:20). How was Joseph able to determine the devil was the devil, rather than an “angel of light” when he appeared? Did Joseph learn something about detecting evil spirits from this encounter? What did Michael do to teach Joseph how to detect the devil? What did Joseph later teach about how to detect the devil? (D&C 129:8). What kind of a handshake would you expect to be used to detect a true messenger?

Have others been confronted by Satan appearing as an angel? (Moses 1:12). Now if one were deceived by the devil, thinking him an angel of light, would the devil teach them false doctrines? (Alma 30:53).

Would the false doctrines make them and those hearing from them feel secure, or would it stir them up to repentance?

What does it mean for the devil to claim “there is none?” I’m reminded of Peter asking a minister if he knew who he (the minister) worked for. The minister did not know, and so Peter informed him he worked for the devil. We don’t think about that much anymore, but it is nonetheless the case that there are many people offering instruction who are really either in the employ of the devil, or using then precepts of men as the fodder for their teaching.

What comes to mind with the image of the devil “whispering in their ears?” How close must the devil come to be whispering into a person’s ears? How attentive must the devil become to his target?

Why “awful chains” and not just “chains?” Are there “chains” that are not “awful?” Why would these particular chains always become “awful?”

What does it mean that “there is no deliverance” from these chains? Why would there be no more deliverance provided?

The verses we are considering are part of a careful message and cannot be separated from each other. They blend together. So when considering this portion of the message you must also keep in mind the other things that went before in Nephi’s sermon.

I am awestruck by this great prophet’s message. It inspires fear for my fellow man when I read it. The plight in which some men find themselves by the traditions handed to us seem to be such a trap as to defy escape. What can I say to liberate them? What can I do to help them escape? Who am I to even dare think I can make any difference? What petitions might I weary the Lord with to help avert this end for others?

We seem to all be asleep and incapable of noticing this terrible warning. Why cannot we all awake and arise and put on the beautiful garments, going forth to meet with the Bridegroom? (Moroni 10:31; D&C 133:10).

Perhaps some of you may make a difference in this battle. All of our souls are at risk and we seem more interested in preserving our current circumstances than in understanding them.

This Book of Mormon is alarming when we consider it a warning for us. Not at all the docile and superficial text we can turn it into when studying 8 chapters in a single 50 minute Gospel Doctrine class—reduced by the time taken for announcement,

opening and closing prayers, and witty banter exchanged among affable Saints as part of our renewal of weekly fellowship. Those things are good, of course, but the book commands deeper attention.

If I had to say one thing has done more to bring me into harmony with the Lord than any other thing it would be this: I have taken the Book of Mormon seriously. I have assumed it is an authentic and ancient text written by prophetic messengers whose words ought to be studied for how they can change my life. Though all the world may treat it lightly, I have tried to not do so. For that I believe the Lord's approval has been given to an otherwise foolish, vain, error-prone and weak man.

Take the Book of Mormon seriously. Apply it to yourself. Not as a means to judge others, but as a means to test your own life. It is one thing to evaluate our circumstances, which the book compels us to do, but we needn't go further than to realize our terrible plight. From that moment the warning should work inside ourselves to help us improve within, see more clearly our day, think more correctly about what is going on, and act more consistent with the Lord's purposes.

The Book of Mormon is the most correct book available. A person can get closer to God by abiding its precepts than with any other book.

AUGUST 3, 2010

2 Nephi 28:23

Yea, they are grasped with death, and hell; and death, and hell, and the devil, and all that have been seized therewith must stand before the throne of God, and be judged according to their works, from whence they must go into the place prepared for them, even a lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment.

This is a continuation of the warning. Nephi wants us to take quite seriously his warnings.

When you read words like these it becomes apparent the only safe way to measure his warning is to apply it directly and personally to ourselves. To think this was meant only for “others” is too complacent.

When the truth has made you angry, and you have forfeited the option of repentance extended to you, the “grasp of death” is upon you. You will remain subject to “death and hell.” Being “seized” by these two things, as you stand before the “throne of God” you will be certain that there will be, for you, a continuation of “the deaths.” (D&C 132:25).

Judgment is based “according to their works.” (See also Rev. 20:12–13; explained further in D&C 128:6–8). Joseph ties sealing power to these “works” which must be done under this authority and then recorded to become binding. This is the practice of the church. It is and has always been the practice of those having such authority. They not only perform the work, but upon having done so they create a record of having done so.

Upon being judged, they go “into the place prepared for them.” This place is, for those who are grasped with “death and hell” called “a lake of fire and brimstone.” A lake because it engulfs them so tightly they are flooded with the guilt. Fire because it is designed to purge and refine. Brimstone because of the bitterness of the experience. The torment there is “endless” meaning from God (D&C 19:4–12).

This purging does not confer blessings, but merely balances out the claims of justice for those who would not accept mercy (D&C 19:15–19).

Crying repentance is to warn, so the claims of justice may be avoided by obtaining mercy through Christ. Christ's mercy is offered to all, but will only be received in full by few. All will be resurrected because of His sacrifice (1 Cor. 15:22), and those who died without law will not be punished for their ignorance (D&C 76:71–72; D&C 45, 54), but to receive the full benefit of His atonement must do as He commands (D&C 132:22–23).

Those who love others and want their eternal welfare will invite everyone to repent and come to Christ. The prospect of others suffering needlessly because they would not repent is a great horror to them. This is why Nephi's words are at times so blunt. This is why he wants to stir us all up to our terrible situation. It is merciful to speak to us in these frank terms.

I know some who have read these words of counsel from Nephi and find them objectionable. However, Isaiah spoke against those whose words were "smooth" but filled with deceit (Isa. 30:10). To people who are content and filled with pride, it takes a great deal of candor to bring them to their senses (Enos 1:23). Nephi's warnings are intended to save as many of the gentiles who read his record from self-destruction as he can bring to repentance. It is better for us to take counsel from his hand than to dismiss his teachings. **He can only warn his readers. Since we are his readers, he must be speaking to us.**

AUGUST 3, 2010

Constitutional Forum 2

I will participate again at the American Heritage School in a Constitutional Law forum. The format is a panel discussion. It is at 7:00 p.m. this Thursday, the 5th. American Heritage School is located across the street from the Timpanogos Temple in American Fork.

This panel will be discussing First Amendment freedom of speech issues.

Since some of you attended last time, I thought I ought to post a notice again.

COMMENTS:

Denver Snuffer · AUGUST 3, 2010 AT 4:56 PM

If you attend you will miss the Rush concert at Usana. In fairness I thought you should be reminded of this considerable sacrifice.

AUGUST 4, 2010

2 Nephi 28:24–25

“Therefore, wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion! Wo be unto him that crieth: All is well!”

The word “therefore” ties all that went before to this warning about “Zion.” The threat of damnation, the pronouncement of “wo’s,” and the cautions about false teachers spreading false teachings are all designed to cause unease to Zion. That would be us. Or it would be what we claim about ourselves.

It is foolish to turn Nephi’s message into a warning to some other latter-day group. The gentiles, who have received the Book of Mormon, and who claim they are better than others, puffed up with conceit about being chosen and highly favored of God, are the ones who would identify themselves as “Zion” in Nephi’s prophecy. Not others. Us.

If you have reacted to the previous discussion with the notion that the interpretation given is really just my “opinion,” and not an actual warning targeting the Latter-day Saints, you should reconsider. Although Nephi’s message has been construed to apply to other faiths, (and the language certainly permits it) this part of

Nephi's sermon makes the conclusion inevitable. He is not warning others. He is not primarily targeting the world of the last days. He is warning and attempting to save the souls of those who receive his writings and self-identify themselves as "Zion."

This means if we are "Zion" we can never be "at ease." We can never relent. Self-praise and assuring words that make us relax are not only false, they cheat us whenever they remove the burden of repentance we must bear.

There can be no ease. There can be no determination that "all is well" until we have repented and come to Christ. When Christ has forgiven us, we can know we are forgiven. When Christ has promised us eternal life, we can know we have eternal life. Until then, we remain at risk and in jeopardy every hour we are here (1 Cor. 15:30). When, however, you know you are sealed up to eternal life, you have the more sure word of prophecy or the testimony of Jesus (D&C 131:5).

When can a person know they have a part in Zion? When the Lord Himself has made them a citizen. When the description given below is the description of their lives, then they may know it will be well with them:

They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given — That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power; And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and

true. They are they who are the church of the Firstborn. They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things— They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory; And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son. Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God— Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. And they shall overcome all things. (D&C 76:51–60)

These are they who have been told by the voice of God from heaven that they have eternal life. They are those who have obtained a hope in Christ.

When the Gospel of Christ is taught, it is always the purpose to bring people to this point. It is not Christ's Gospel when the teachings fall short of declaring this to the audience. Nephi was not trying to get you to improve your behavior or to become a good citizen. He was not attempting to make you a conservative, mainstream American. He was warning you to flee from this corrupt and failing society to a higher place where you can obtain communion with the Church of the Firstborn. A place where you join the household of God.

Zion is not and has never been the product of an institutional organization on this earth. It is a byproduct of there being citizens of heaven living here. Zion is the only way such persons can live with one another. First obtain a hope in Christ, and then all things will be added to you.

Why, then, should there be no ease among us? Because we have too few for the Lord to bring again Zion. Until then we do not

have Zion, and our false claims to it only serve to make us at ease while there remains yet a great unfinished labor to perform.

It is Nephi's love for us, his desire to see us saved and happy, that causes him to use such harsh words of warning. He knows what we lack. He wants us to overcome it all and join him in the chorus singing anthems of praise, because our joy cannot be expressed without such songs! (D&C 84:98–102).

AUGUST 4, 2010

2 Nephi 28:26

“Yea, wo be unto him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men, and denieth the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost!”

Now we return to Nephi's theme. Don't listen to the “precepts of men.” This warning is not for the teachers or leaders. Nephi is not saying to them: “don't teach with your own learning.” He has already consigned them to hell (2 Nephi 28:15, *supra*). Now he is speaking to the “few, who are the humble followers of Christ.” (2 Nephi 28:14). In place of three “wo's” there is only one.

Nephi pronounces a “wo” upon those who “hearken” or accept the “precepts of men.” They will be condemned. Their hopes will not be realized. They will suffer setbacks in their progression and will not attain to the hopes they might have otherwise attained. But their offense is less than that of the “lead them” and “cause them to err.” (2 Nephi 28:14).

If you “hearken” to the “precepts of men,” you are denying “the power of the God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost.” It is necessary for you to both deny God's power and rebel against the gift of the Holy Ghost in order for you to “hearken to the precepts of men.” God's power was designed to keep you from making these errors. The gift of the Holy Ghost was given to lead you to the knowing

the truth of all things (Moroni 10:5). When, therefore, you hearken to men's precepts you are not confirming through the Spirit that what is being taught is merely man's precepts.

With a tool like the Holy Ghost available to you, you are accountable for what teachings you accept. It is possible for you to listen to a teacher whose precepts are dark and to know as he speaks that the Spirit does not ratify his words. It is your responsibility to weigh all things and hold onto only those things which are good (1 Thes. 5:21).

When Jesus was asked about two witnesses He said He was one, the other was His Father, who also bore witness of Him. If they did not listen to the power of the Father, nor incline their hearts to receive the witness of the Spirit, then they could not know the Father, and could not receive that second witness (John 8:17–19). Nephi is saying the same thing. That is, no man teaching the precepts of men should be able to deceive you. Rather, for every teaching and every teacher, there should be a second witness coming from above which bears witness to you that you are hearing the truth.

So many Latter-day Saint teachers resort to sentimentality and emotion in their teaching, talks, books and testimonies. Some are fooled into thinking an emotional reaction is the same as a witness of the Spirit. Emotions rarely communicate light and truth or intelligence. The Spirit bears witness of the truth, conveys light and intelligence, and may not at all be emotional. Or, if emotions are involved, it may be fear (Isa. 6:5), dread (Gen. 28:17), or even horror at what you encounter (Gen. 15:12–18). Mere sentimentality is a false substitute for the witness of the Spirit. Joseph Smith explained it this way:

When you feel pure intelligence flowing into you, it may give you sudden strokes of ideas, so that by noticing it, you may find it ful-

filled the same day or soon; (i.e.) those things that were presented unto your minds by the Spirit of God, will come to pass; and thus by learning the Spirit of God and understanding it, you may grow into the principle of revelation, until you become perfect in Christ Jesus. (TPJS p. 151)

The warning from Nephi about how you deny the power of God, you reject the gift of the Holy Ghost whenever you “hearken to the precepts of men” is based on this principle. You have the tools to detect when you are being taught by men using the arm of flesh to advance an idea or notion. You are accountable, hence the “wo” pronounced on you by Nephi.

Ask yourself the following questions as you hear a teacher:

- Does he teach you to come to Christ?
- Do the teachings convey intelligence upon you, or just sentiment?
- Do they awaken inside you light and truth that you hadn't considered before?
- Are the teachings based on the revelations of heaven, or some study, analysis or tool developed by academics?
- Are you encouraged to seek for a confirmation from the Spirit?
- Did you learn something new, but find yourself feeling you have known it before?
- Whether it causes dread, fear or even horror, does the Spirit tell you, nonetheless, it is of God?
- Are you more inclined to get on your knees and call upon God because of what you have learned?
- Does the speaker merely want you to honor her, or an institution?
- Does the speaker hold him/herself out as an expert or someone with impressive credentials?

- Does he rely on status or office as the reason to trust his teaching, or instead rely on the truthfulness of his message? No power or influence can or ought to be exerted by virtue of office or position, only by persuasion and pure knowledge (D&C 121:41–42).
- Are the words noble and great, despite your view of the person who is delivering them?

You may be surprised when you ask such questions at what you learn. Nephi is saying it is your own responsibility if you allow yourself to be taken in by the precepts of men. Wo unto you if you do.

AUGUST 5, 2010

2 Nephi:28:28

And in fine, wo unto all those who tremble, and are angry because of the truth of God! For behold, he that is built upon the rock receiveth it with gladness; and he that is built upon a sandy foundation trembleth lest he shall fall.

This is the constant problem. People do not care about religion. So when someone like Nephi delivers a message to the audience that is threatening because it contradicts their presumptions, they get upset. They are fearful. They “tremble, and are angry.” When Nephi puts out the message, he knows those he addresses are going to react in a very negative way. He will become the object of their distrust and dislike.

But Nephi reminds the audience that it isn't him they have a problem with. It is “the truth of God.”

There are two reactions: One is anger, because it condemns them. The other is gladness. Those who are “built upon the rock” — meaning Christ—have their hope and faith in Him, for

He is the “Rock of Heaven,” (Moses 7:53) and they “receive it with gladness.”

Those who are “built upon a sandy foundation” will “tremble.” This would mean they are struck with fear. They are afraid of the message. They fear because they begin to realize their religious convictions may be wrong. They are afraid they “shall fall,” or in other words, if the message is true then they may be doomed and their high hopes dashed.

They would rather be angry and try and suppress the message than to receive it and repent. If someone has a good heart, then any warning is appreciated. Even if it informs them they are mistaken. They want truth. So a warning is appreciated when it permits them to correct their errors. These people are built upon the Rock, because truth alone determines what they will accept. They “hearken to the truth” because they are interested in knowing truth.

This message from Nephi reminds all of us about the difference between those who are grounded in the testimony of Jesus (the Rock) and those who hope their brand of religion will aid them (the sand). False hopes are quickly threatened when exposed to the truth. Knowledge that you are built upon the testimony of Jesus, however, cannot be shaken. Critics will be ground into dust by such a stone, but will not damage it (Daniel 2:45). Those with such knowledge would suffer death, but not deny the Lord (Mosiah 17:10). Though called upon to suffer for His name, they will not submit, but choose to die secure in the knowledge they have of Christ (D&C 138:13–14).

This kind of faith requires sacrifice, as explained in *The Lectures on Faith* previously posted. The Book of Mormon calls it “knowledge” and that lecture requires you “actually know the course you are pursuing is pleasing to God.” That is, whether you call it “faith”

as the Lectures do, or “knowledge” as the Book of Mormon does, it is the same. You must come to know Christ has accepted your sacrifices. You should re-read that if you want to reacquaint yourself with the requirements for gaining such faith.

AUGUST 5, 2010

Trivial Pursuit

I got a question which I’m going to interrupt and answer. The question included the following:

[After describing some personal stuff that’s mentioned in passing on the blog, it continues]

they are things that I would have steered away from because I truly believed that is what would please the Lord...I am seriously asking myself what is it that I am not understanding. I thought I was being obedient to what the Lord would want me to be doing. But am I actually like a Pharisee about these things? Are they not as important as I make them? Does the Lord really not care that I try to be really careful about what I see or listen do...even though I am doing it because I believed it to be offensive to MY spirit and THE spirit? Are these important things? Are you trying to give us a message to open our eyes that we get caught up in the wrong things?

First, I have tried to be invisible in what I write, other than to point out failings. I think the only things about myself which are important are: 1) flaws; 2) my witness of Christ. Everything else is distracting and moving focus from the real subject (Jesus Christ and His teachings), to a distraction and non-issue (myself).

In *The Second Comforter* I mention what I called the “Pharisee Phase” in which the endless rules of conduct are followed by a

Latter-day Saint in an attempt to be good. I've said this was useful and probably everyone goes through it. But it isn't going to work.

Most of the stuff we concern ourselves with is meaningless and time wasting. What matters are the principles and ordinances of the Gospel; and more important still, the underlying charity or pure love of Christ. Everything is attempting to get you to love your fellow man. Not in the sappy sentimental way we associate with "loving" someone. Because sometimes the most charitable thing you can do is rebuke someone, as we see from Nephi. Sometimes a sharp word comes from being moved upon by the Holy Ghost (D&C 121:43). But in the end the person rebuked should still feel they are loved and the reason for the rebuke was the concern held for them.

I know the church advises against R-rated movies. I think that's good advice. But there are some movies that are important works, but have an R-rating. *Schindler's List* was rated R. So was *Braveheart*. We are related to Robert the Bruce, and this movie has been seen by my children as part of understanding what it means to descend from the Scotts. My father landed on Omaha Beach on the morning of June 6, 1944. *Saving Private Ryan* is, for me, a personal story about what my father went through. I have watched it and own a copy of it, and my children have seen it in an attempt to have them understand their grandfather's sacrifices. So I do not always follow that advice given us. But others may, and I have respect for them. Your question said you "*believe it to be offensive to your spirit*" which is so important a statement that I would always defer to your decision on such matters. It simply is not my place to tell you to do something which offends your spirit. You should trust it as a guide.

Paul's teachings in Romans Chapter 14 (which I posted about earlier), is the only way we can become "one" as a people. I respect your motivation more than your actions, because they are pure. But we err when we judge another's actions and attribute to them motive. Pure motive cannot be known by observing actions. If we could judge motive from acts, then we would condemn Nephi for murdering Laban and stealing the brass plates. We would condemn Abraham for lying about the status of his wife Sarah, claiming her to be a sister. We would condemn Jesus for violating a clearly understood teaching about the Sabbath and not doing any labor upon the Sabbath. We would be wrong. Nephi was constrained to implement God's judgment, Abraham was acting on the direction of the Lord, and Jesus was honoring the Sabbath by keeping it holy, even if that came at the expense of performing labor.

We are told to refrain from judging one another precisely because we cannot judge motive from actions.

I would rather laugh than be stern. In fact, when Joseph refers to his "native cheery temperament" I would go a little further. I am prone to sarcasm and irreverence, because Mark Twain influenced my sense of humor while a child and I've never recovered. To me most of our problems are so stupid they compel us to mock them. But people wouldn't understand that if I adopted that approach, so I do not. When, however, I see Elijah mocking the priests of Baal and I identify with Elijah's conduct in that undignified scene (1 Kings 18:27). But most people would find that troubling and mistake the conduct and misjudge motive.

The Lord was gregarious, but we've turned Him into a caricature. The leaders of the church have themselves become imprisoned by an image which requires them to be holy from birth and never stray from a sort of "plastic-fantastic" single, dimensional, cardboard per-

sona. Inside this trap you see them living as if on constant display (which they are), wearing the uniform of a white shirt, dark suit and power tie to see a movie, (should they ever attend a movie). The Saints want it, the Brethren deliver, and everyone moves about judging motive from conduct when it is utter rubbish.

Don't think I am important or spend any time trying to understand me. It is less than worthless, it is a distraction. I'm simply not important. About me there are only two things which matter: 1) I am flawed and error prone and anything but perfect. I watch inappropriate movies, laugh out loud at stupidity, have a highly acute bullshit-detector and tend to use it at the wrong times. I do not seek for, nor want anyone's admiration. It would be better for me if people readily accepted that my errors are many, and therefore, they ought not depend upon me. They will more quickly look to the Lord if they do not look to me. 2) I have seen the Lord and He has ministered to me. The details are only set forth to the extent I have been required to set them forth. They appear in 9 words in *The Second Comforter*, and in two chapters in *Come, Let Us Adore Him*. I can tell you that when I said on this blog: "I have never won an argument with the Lord" that I was referring to what appears in *Come, Let Us Adore Him*. Long before anyone leveled any criticism at me for publishing something which I should have kept to myself, I made the same (and better) arguments with the Lord against putting it into print. He has "strong reasoning" which I am unable to overcome (D&C 45:10). I am no volunteer. I do as I am required. And I understand Joseph's comment that if he hadn't lived it he wouldn't have believed it. I doubt I would believe me if I were anyone else. What I have written is, nevertheless, true.

COMMENTS:

Sarah · AUGUST 6, 2010 AT 5:40 PM

Since when are we supposed to let our spirits be our guide? I thought we were suppose to take the Holy Spirit as our guide. I don't feel comfortable saying, 'you avoid whatever offends your spirit and I'll avoid whatever offends my spirit and we'll all be happy in our relative worlds.' Can't we just call good good and evil evil? My understanding was that if I obey the commandments, THE Spirit will abide in me. And if that same spirit abides in you, than whatever is sinful will be offensive to both you and I. And I know that it's impossible for us all to be on the same page at the same time (that's why we need to be patient with each other and withhold judgment), but aren't we all supposed to 'shake at the appearance of evil'? I chose not to see *Braveheart* and *Saving Private Ryan*, not because they were rated R, but because it was obvious that those movies would be extremely violent. It sounded like they were otherwise excellent films, but I detest those particular tools that Satan commonly uses to trap people: poisoning by degrees and using something beautiful to deliver a small but potent dose of sin that would harm any spirit. What am I missing here? Isn't 'badass' a bad word? I mean I won't judge you for saying it, but shouldn't we ought NOT to say it? Am I being a Pharisee here? I'm confused.

Denver Snuffer · AUGUST 6, 2010 AT 6:41 PM

Your own spirit should be connected to and enlightened by the Light of Christ, given to all men/women. That is your conscience. It is an important first line of deciding right and wrong. You ignore it and you risk searing your conscience. So following your own internal compass is something I would advise.

Those movies would be extremely violent. So was Mormon's life. Between the carnage and cannibalism, rape and murder, unrelenting genocide and end of his culture, his life was filled with horror. Yet he was the one who abridged the Book of Mormon and provided us with this great religious masterpiece. Somehow the violence, rape and murder

did not prevent him from being the Lord's primary prophet to preserve His primary scripture for our time.

Words convey meaning. Sometimes the best tool in the lexicon to convey a meaning requires one word, sometimes another. The best translation of some of John the Baptist's remarks would be of questionable civility; nevertheless altogether appropriate.

AUGUST 6, 2010

2 Nephi 28:29

“Wo be unto him that shall say: We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough!”

This general principle is addressed first. Nephi will build on it in the following verses. But the first statement is the broadest.

An earlier “wo” was pronounced upon those who rely on the uninspired teachings of men who use their own precepts. Now he adds a second “wo” to those who also deny the need for continuing revelation. We claim we are unlike all other faiths because we believe in the concept of continuing revelation. However, that notion is greatly modified by us to the point where the continuation of revelation is so limited, so curtailed, and so distrusted that we are generally unacquainted with any new revelation.

Do we hear of visions and visitations? Not much, if at all. We think that such things are reserved for leaders. For example, if Elijah were to return with a message to someone, we would expect the person with whom he would visit would be the church President. If it were someone other than the church President, we would instantly be suspicious because Elijah wasn't following the “chain of authority” as we expect. [Interestingly, as soon as you know Elijah was involved you should consider that another line of authority may be created.] So even if we heard from Elijah, it would cause

us trouble and likely be rejected as too irregular. This would be true of other heavenly messengers, as well.

What visitations could we tolerate? Pretty much we'd only think it appropriate for an ancestor to visit with a descendant to give a family message. A deceased great-grandfather coming to bring a message about one of his descendants would seem to fit within the whole "chain of authority" model we have created. Family business. Seems to be acceptable. However, even then, we would expect the person involved to "keep it to themselves" because it was inappropriate to share things like that. Too personal. Too sacred. Too much information of a deeply personal nature to warrant talking about it with others.

What if the great-grandfather were Abraham? Would that fit the model? What if his concerns ran to all who are living? Would that family be large enough to warrant talking about it with almost anyone? Oops, we're back to the whole "chain of authority" argument again, and would expect Abraham to limit his visit to the chief Mormon-in-charge. So a visit by Abraham would be suspect as well.

What if the message were from John the Beloved? He has a continuing ministry to visit with people and bring them to salvation. In fact, his ministry includes visiting with those who will be "heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth." (D&C 7:1-6). Still, if a person had him minister to him, we would not want to hear about it, would question the propriety, and wonder why John would come when other perfectly authoritative men are living on the earth inside the church holding the same keys as John. So, that would be questioned and regarded as irregular as well.

So as Latter-day Saints we believe in the continuation of revelation, visitations, visions, etc. so long as they conform to our limited model, come to the right person, and don't disturb anything we

have going on at the present. Which is to say we don't believe in continuing revelation much at all.

What about Christ? Can He visit with anyone whom He deigns to visit? That's a little closer call, because He seems to have promised to come to all. He also displayed remarkably democratic tendencies both on the day of His resurrection, and when visiting the Nephites. (I've explained His disregard for the church hierarchy He established on the day of His resurrection in *Come, Let Us Adore Him*.) He seems much less interested in respecting established religious authority than we do. So we might allow the Lord to visit with someone, but, then we wouldn't want to hear many details because that would be wrong for some reason. Probably "casting pearls before swine" or "profaning" or "disrespecting the line of authority" or something. Not sure which one, but there's got to be a prohibition against it somewhere.

So we have tendencies that are difficult to put into a hard and fast rule, but I'm going to attempt it Rule 1: We believe in continuing revelation; predicated upon the following:

Mostly to the President of the church;

But with others whenever:

—(i) It is a grandparent who lived sometime during the restoration or had some unique reason to be coming back, but never

—(i) an ancestor so long back they would be Biblical, because that puts us back into (a) above;

—(ii) if they have a message which would be of general interest, because that puts us back into (a) above;

—(iii) if the visit involves knowing something or clarifying something which might be sacred, because such things are wrong to discuss or acknowledge.

— (2) It is the Lord, but that's because He pretty much gets to do what He wants to do; except if it's important we'd want Him to explain why He didn't follow (a), above — and it better be a pretty good reason or else we'll have to question the report.

Well, we believe all that God has revealed to authorized people in positions of authority, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal to the proper channels many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God; and that once it has been reviewed by the Correlation Department and published by Deseret Book it will become something which we can all accept as being from an authorized source and reliable.

Until that happens, we have absolutely received enough of the word of God and we don't need any more of the word of God. And, by damn, if someone comes claiming revelation or an independent apostolic witness of the Lord's resurrection we will want them to cut off an arm or some other member of the body and then restore it again, so that we may know he has come with power. I'm quite confident that ought to satisfy our need to see a sign before we will believe a proposition.

Now we know for certain Nephi's warning is to those **other faiths** that do not accept continuing revelation and not to us. However, as to those, Nephi has pronounced a prior "wo" for their acceptance of the precepts of men, and now a second "wo" upon them for their refusal to accept continuing revelation. These begin to mount up and ought to worry those to whom these concerns are addressed, **whoever** they may be. Perhaps Nephi should have written his book for those people, instead of us good folks who read the book and know for certain that we're alright.

COMMENTS:

DJones · AUGUST 6, 2010 AT 7:21 AM

Denver...you say the most outrageous things...I could hardly contain myself...this is the best yet..'by damn'

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Denver Snuffer · AUGUST 6, 2010 AT 8:31 AM

Interestingly the catalog from Deseret Book is pushing on the front page a new book titled: *The Silence of God*. An oddly titled work of fiction which is, according to the catalogue "a powerful, extraordinary novel of devotion and loyalty." While I doubt I'll read it, I just thought the title was strangely appropriate for Deseret Book.

AUGUST 6, 2010

2 Nephi 28:30

For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto

him that receiveth I will give more, and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have.

Here Nephi shows he is the prophetic precedent upon which others would build. We often quote Alma for this idea, because Alma lays it out more completely. But Alma's teaching has its root in Nephi's warning here (See Alma 12:9–11).

Notice the Lord's promise that He will "give unto the children of men." He is liberal and does not upbraid us for asking (James 1:5–6). Indeed, He admonishes us to seek, ask and knock (Matt. 7:7–11; D&C 88:63).

Notice that "unto him that receiveth" is the singular. It isn't "those" but "him." Meaning each of us individually may come to Him and ask and receive. However, "from them that shall say, We have enough" is plural. Meaning, there are many who could have been taught, had they not shut the doors. The collective will resist new revelation, even when it continues. They will shut their minds and not tolerate learning of truths.

When, however, groups close their minds it becomes impossible to keep what they have. It is inevitable that "from them shall be taken away even that which they have." Meaning, that we are either in a process of restoration or apostasy. The instant we stop restoring truths, we begin to lose them. You cannot just keep what Joseph restored to you. That will be lost. You either continue on and receive on-going revelation and new visions, visitations and restoration, or else you begin to forfeit what you already have. So soon as you walk away from one precept, from one doctrine, from one ordinance, you have begun the process of apostasy or falling away.

This environment is not static. It is always in change. Either it is being built up, created and newly formed, or it is decaying, dying

and falling apart. It never holds static. This is because the things of this world testify of Christ's Gospel (Moses 6:63). The path is only upward. So soon as you stray from it, you lose the path. This is why you take the shoes from off your feet and put them on again as a symbol that you accept the path. You never remove them again, because once upon that path you are to remain so. The path is accompanied by greater light and truth, going from grace to grace until you receive a fullness (D&C 93:19, 26–28).

Nephi is telling us how to receive the fullness. It comes only through revelation and the opening of heaven. You may be anointed to become kings and priests, but the realization of these blessings depends upon your faithfulness. If you are true and faithful the time will come when you will be called up and anointed, whereas now it is all conditional. Only Christ can remove the conditions. To have Him do that requires Him, as the Word, to intercede on your behalf. It requires Him to confirm by His own voice from heaven that you are His, and to establish His covenant directly with you.

Whether it is the words of an old book or the words of an older ceremony it is the same. They can't save you. Only following the exact same path as the ancients followed can result in arriving at the same end. As the Sixth Lecture from *The Lectures on Faith* states:

When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice, because he seeks to do his will, he does know most assuredly that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not nor will not seek his face in vain. Under these circumstances then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life. It is in vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or

can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they in like manner offer unto him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him.

What role does revelation play? Without it no person can be saved. Who must receive the revelation? Each person for themselves.

What happens when revelation stops? To the person for whom revelation has ended, there is no salvation, (Moroni 7:37–38) and they will immediately begin to lose what they were previously given (Verse above). To the people who refuse to receive more, “from them shall be taken away even that which they have.”

Nephi has declared it, using authority from God to do so. We either accept his counsel and warnings or reject it at our peril.

AUGUST 7, 2010

2 Nephi 28:31

“Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men, save their precepts shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost.”

Now we move beyond the wo’s to cursing. Cursing by one holding authority to seal is a terrible thing to encounter. However, we should expect that one having that authority, possessing correct knowledge, along with the ability to lead into light and truth, would do all he could to be clear about a matter so those who read what he has said will understand unmistakably the responsibilities they face. Nephi is discharging a duty, and doing so with our best interests in mind. We shouldn’t take offense. We should be grateful even if it is painful to read.

So again we confront the phrase “trust in man” along with “maketh flesh his arm.” Have you considered the meaning of these terms? Have you thought about them as symbols?

“Trust in man” is another way of describing reliance on man to save. Man’s theories or hopes or vain formulas as the path to God is another way to describe “trust in man.” Do you want a preacher who will give you the philosophies of men mingled with scripture?

Something from Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations to “flesh out” the meaning of a phrase in scripture? A little story of personal experience from your own life, to personalize the meaning of a verse from the Bible? Will you trade that for an inspired warning that your soul is in jeopardy and you are cursed because of what you accept in place of the power of the Holy Ghost as your guide?

“Maketh flesh his arm” is another way of saying the “strength” of man, rather than the “strength” of God. The arm is also the means by which a sign or covenant might be set forth. By putting the “flesh his arm” rather than the signs of priestly authority from a true messenger, the implication is that any surrogate for God will do if they just have a few bona-fides. Credentials will be enough. Have they been to college and received training for the ministry? A man cannot preach unless he’s been trained for the ministry, you see. Are they a scholar? We like to defer to them. We quote them, study them, and believe in their techniques and methods.

But Nephi keeps thundering back: No man’s precepts should be accepted when they do not originate in revelation and the Holy Ghost. Without a connection to revelation and the Holy Ghost, the teachings are all the arm of flesh. If you want to trust in that, you will be cursed.

Nephi puts it into two, opposing camps. There are only two. There are either inspired teachings, given by revelation and con-

firmed by the Holy Ghost, or they are man's understanding. The first will save you. The other will curse you. There is no happy marriage. You cannot have both. This sword cuts both ways, and forces you to make a decision. Your eternity will be affected by the decision. So either you find the right way and follow it, or you are relying upon men and will in the end be cursed.

Interesting choice. Terrible dilemma. Glad we are absolutely guaranteed that the men we trust to lead us cannot ever lead us astray. Or the majority of them won't anyway. Because if we had to rely only on something as flimsy as the Holy Ghost to choose we would be forced to fast and pray, be humble and penitent to solve this terrible dilemma for us; working out our salvation with fear and trembling before God (Philip. 2:12).

I'm glad we don't have to go through that. We're the best of heaven and have come down to strut and fret our hour upon the stage, all the while enwrapped in several layers of guaranteed eternal life insurance policies paid for by the blood of martyrs and pioneers who suffered so we might be able to live comfortably. We are just GOOD people. They envied us. Everyone has, you know. The prophets all looked down from antiquity and longed to live among us, the favored few...

Oh, wait a minute, I got carried away. I forgot we were trying to understand Nephi's message. For a minute there I was too wrapped up in our own message. Well, to return to Nephi—someone's going to be cursed for trusting in men. Only those whose precepts and teachings originate in the Holy Ghost are going to be saved. It is a terrible burden to confront. It almost makes us want to turn away in sorrow rather than continue on following our Lord (See John 6:65–67). But, then again, who else has the words of eternal life other than Him?

AUGUST 8, 2010

2 Nephi 28:32

Wo be unto the Gentiles, saith the Lord God of Hosts! For notwithstanding I shall lengthen out mine arm unto them from day to day, they will deny me; nevertheless, I will be merciful unto them, saith the Lord God, if they will repent and come unto me; for mine arm is lengthened out all the day long, saith the Lord God of Hosts.

After all these warnings, the mention of Zion, the foolishness of following the “precepts of men” Nephi turns again to identifying the most relevant group being warned. It is “the gentiles” (or us). As he considers our collective effort and how we allow the “precepts of men” to be our guide, he states his overall conclusion about our performance: “Wo be unto the Gentiles, saith the Lord God of Hosts!”

This is the third wo. And it is accompanied by a three name title. This time incorporating the “Hosts” or Family of God. This is the Father’s judgment upon us. His status as the “Lord God of Hosts” is clearly intended to let us know those proud gentiles who rely upon the sparks of their own fire as their light will lay down in sorrow (Isa. 50:11; 2 Ne. 7:11).

When the Lord’s open arm is extended all the day, they reject Him and walk away. They prefer their own false ideas to the truth found in Christ. In the end they have “denied the Lord” because all His efforts toward them have been rejected.

Still, despite all these failings, and all the wo’s pronounced upon them, it is NOT the Lord’s failure. It is the gentiles. Even now the Lord would welcome them “if they will repent and come to Him.” His arm is yet “lengthened out all the day long.” So long as life remains, He is pleading for our repentance. So long as we are

here, He will welcome our repentance. And, so we do not miss the point, He also uses a three-name title when extending the plea to us for our repentance. He is speaking on behalf of, and as the chief among, all the “Hosts of heaven.” The entire council would welcome us back, if we would but return.

Can you not sense the agony of this plea? Can you not feel the mercy God would grant to any penitent soul? Despite this, men prefer their arrogance, their own precepts, their own false teachings to being taught by the Holy Spirit. We refuse to repent because we prefer our false teachings. We prefer our traditions that build up our pride, and tell us we are going to be exalted because we are good and deserve God’s favor. We’ve put up with tithing, and with faithful meeting attendance, and followed faithfully all kinds of leaders in every ward and stake we’ve ever attended. We’ve passed temple recommend interviews and attended faithfully our tithing settlement meetings—in short we think we’ve done everything God could possibly ask of us.

Except we have NOT repented and come to Christ. Had we done that, we would have been embraced in those opened arms of our Lord. In five points of contact with a loving God, we would have heard unspeakable things and know we escaped the wo’s pronounced by Nephi.

Nephi’s assessment of the gentile performance is consistently pessimistic. Coupled with Nephi’s description of a consistently open and accepting Lord who would welcome us at any time were we willing to repent.

Nephi’s message gets mangled in our distorted cultural rewriting of meanings. When someone points out what he’s saying, it produces anger and resentment. The result is not particularly encouraging

for the gentiles. Not merely because of Nephi's prophetic words, but also because of our reaction to them.

AUGUST 9, 2010

Come and Be Saved

In the preceding verses Nephi has changed from giving his own advice and counsel to quoting the Lord. He began in verse 30 with the words: "behold, thus saith the Lord" and continues quoting Him through the end of that chapter and into the next.

The third "wo" was pronounced by Nephi as a quote from the Lord. The "cursing of the gentiles" was pronounced by Nephi as a quote from the Lord.

Now I didn't point that out as we went through the materials. It is significant enough that it requires additional attention.

Christ has divided judgment up into two separate functions. For those who will be blessed, He will delegate the honor of blessing to others, including His twelve at Jerusalem, (Matt. 19:28, 1 Ne. 12:9) and twelve Nephite disciples (3 Ne. 27:27). Their judgment is honorary, however, because they are given no discretion in the matter. The Lord will decide the judgment. It is His alone, so as to insure it will be the right decision (3 Ne. 27:27). For those who are to be cursed, however, Christ will be the one who pronounces the judgment (D&C 29:27-29).

It is of terrible significance that these statements come from the Lord who alone holds the right to judge. He sacrificed His life for all, and is the Savior and Redeemer, seeking to save all who will come to Him. This is the same Lord who pronounces the words through Nephi:

Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men, save their precepts shall

be given by the power of the Holy Ghost. Wo be unto the Gentiles, saith the Lord God of Hosts! (2 Ne. 28:31–32)

The message is delivered by Nephi. The words are the Lord's. The merciful and loving Christ who suffered for all that they might not suffer if they would repent (D&C 19:16), is announcing His pessimism about the latter-day gentile effort to obtain repentance. Why do we seem destined to fail? Why is repentance so difficult for us? What terrible “precepts of men” hold us bound in chains that we cannot break free.

Several have made comments on the question of how we are to repent and come to Christ. There is a fundamental first step to be taken which the Lord has explained repeatedly in His teachings. I have written about this often, including in my first and last books.

In the chapter on the Atonement in *Come, Let Us Adore Him* there is an explanation given of what Christ suffered and what obligations are devolving on us as a result. We must do as He did, suffer in like manner, and forgive all offenses. His infinite suffering cannot be replicated in one sense, but in our own sphere and time we do suffer offenses and abuses. We are required to forgive as He forgave. It is our own forgiveness of others that qualifies us to receive forgiveness from Him. When we harbor grudges and resentments, we cut ourselves off from His Atonement. If we are to be forgiven we must in turn FORGIVE others. In *The Second Comforter* it is shown how we must make intercession on behalf of others, even our enemies, if we are to have a hope in Christ. We must lay down the burden of sin to enter into His presence. Much of that “sin” in each of our lives has been the offenses against us, and the resentment and anger we hold from these abuses. There are people who have done you wrong. There are some who did so

intentionally. When you forgive them, and plead on their behalf for the Lord to also forgive them in sincerity and love, you are not far from the Kingdom of Heaven. Your Lord did this. You must do as He did to be like Him. It is the only way to understand your Lord. In this, you must suffer as He did, choosing to forgive offenses rather than to seek justice. When you show mercy, you merit mercy. The beginning of repentance is found in forgiving others.

Your just claims for retribution must be surrendered. Your worthy desire to have vindication must be abandoned. Your right to have judgment against the ones who abused you must be forfeited. And you must go on to pray for their forgiveness.

If you have read all I have written you already know this. I am disappointed to have those who have not read what I've written trying to make sense of this blog. It will make absolutely no sense if it is not seen as an extension of what I've already covered. Even this brief statement about the relationship between your own salvation and redemption through following Christ is a brief note, a cryptic signal, and altogether inadequate to explain the matter. The careful, patient and fulsome explanation has been laid out elsewhere in what I've written. You must go there to see why, along with the many places in scripture where the Lord has made the matter clear.

Nephi takes no delight in pronouncing these wo's and writing the "cursing" the latter-day gentiles face. The Lord takes even less. He suffered and died to make salvation possible for these very same latter-day gentiles. He would save them all. But to do so it is absolutely necessary to bluntly warn those whom He loves. Enos recorded his own ministry and how it was affected by the audience he addressed:

And there was nothing save it was exceeding harshness, preaching and prophesying of wars, and contentions, and destructions,

and continually reminding them of death, and the duration of eternity, and the judgments and the power of God, and all these things—stirring them up continually to keep them in the fear of the Lord. I say there was nothing short of these things, and exceedingly great plainness of speech, would keep them from going down speedily to destruction. And after this manner do I write concerning them. (Enos 1:23)

Why would a joyful Lord, who delights in our own happiness, speak in terms of “wo’s” and “cursing” to us? What is it about us as His audience that compels Him to rebuke us? Have you thought of the standard in Section 121 (“reproving betimes with sharpness when moved upon by the Holy Ghost”) as part of this rebuke?

He so completely loves us that John equated Him with love (1 John 4:8). Can you imagine the frustration it causes our Lord to have to speak in these terms to us?

Why do we not repent? Why do we harbor and protect our sins? Why do we worship men rather than God? Why do we cleave to the precepts of men rather than the Holy Ghost? Why do we resist the truth when it is declared to us. Why do we demand that the truth be conformed to our understanding of the precepts of men? Why do we measure the things of God against our own traditions? Why do we not abandon instantly our false notions, and stop arguing against the truth which is in Christ? Why do we think any institution, fellowship, association or man can lead us to salvation instead of Christ alone who can save? (2 Ne. 31:19).

How long will you harden your heart against your Lord, whose pleas are aimed only at saving your soul? Why turn away and say that you prefer membership in a great and spacious building, pointing an accusing finger at those who would lead you to eternal

life? (1 Ne. 8:26–31). Your awards and honors are nothing. Your recognition and praise is corrosion. Everything here is doomed to decay, rot and fail (Matt. 6:19–20). This is the Telestial Kingdom. Everything here, every institution, organization and order is Telestial. None of it will survive death (D&C 132:7). Even the one association intended to endure (the family) will not endure unless it is through the Holy Spirit of Promise.

If you are going to be rescued from this Telestial Kingdom, it will be Christ who rescues you. His arm has been stretched out to you as long as you have been here, and it will remain stretched out until you depart here. If you are not saved, it will be because of your rejection of Him, not His rejection of you. He has done all He could. He has sent stern warnings, warm invitations, cheerful messengers, the dignified and the undignified, to show in all things He is willing to meet you more than half way. Those who reject these widely different invitations are accountable for their failure (Matt. 11:7–24).

The Lord continually asks: “What more could I have done?” (Jacob 5:41, 47, 49, 75; 2 Ne. 15:4).

Apparently we will only accept the “precepts of men” and trust the “arm of flesh” and therefore merit the coming disappointments.

Come unto Christ and be saved.

CHAPTER 2
2 Nephi 29

AUGUST 9, 2010

2 Nephi 29:1–2

The quote of the Lord continues into 2 Nephi 29:1–2:

But behold, there shall be many—at that day when I shall proceed to do a marvelous work among them, that I may remember my covenants which I have made unto the children of men, that I may set my hand again the second time to recover my people, which are of the house of Israel; And also, that I may remember the promises which I have made unto thee, Nephi, and also unto thy father, that I would remember your seed; and that the words of your seed should proceed forth out of my mouth unto your seed; and my words shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people, which are of the house of Israel;

The thought, “there shall be many” will be concluded in verse 3, and will be discussed there.

The day of the Lord’s “marvelous work” will be when He “remembers [His] covenants” made previously to “the children of men.” Those covenants to “the children of men” are all inclusive. This will include promises made to all mankind, without regard

to their status as Israel, gentile, heathen, or even if they are living or dead as the work begins. It is the Lord's covenants made in the pre-earth councils, and is for all mankind.

As fulfillment of these complete covenants, the Lord will "set [His] hand again the second time to recover my people." Now the focus moves from "the children of men" to a sub-set of those He calls "my people." His people are, by definition, necessarily affiliated with "the house of Israel" through covenant. These would include those called the "remnant" as well as those believing "gentiles" who accept the covenant and return through repentance to Christ.

Why do we see layers of covenants or promises referred to here? Why the covenants made "unto the children of men?" Why then further "the house of Israel?" Why further "promises made unto Nephi?" Why still further "thy father" [meaning Lehi]? Why a work which will affect all these groups? And, finally, why does all of the foregoing return to "remembering Nephi's seed?" What role does Nephi's seed, or remnant fulfill in the promises made to all mankind?

Why does the Lord make a covenant with all humanity, but then reiterate the covenant with Abraham? Why do the covenants get repeated through Isaac and Jacob, the last of whom supplies the name of the covenant people "Israel?" Why, after all those covenant recipients do the covenants get renewed with Lehi? Why immediately following Nephi do the covenants get renewed yet again in Nephi? Why does the Lord engage in this covenant making process to tie together the events of history and the lives of men? Can He still do this today? Does He still expect or want to enter into covenants with men today to further His purposes? Do those covenants necessarily get confined to an institution or priestly process rather than through Him, directly? Why not?

When we get to Nephi's descendants, why are they the ones who are to provide "a standard unto my people, which are of the house of Israel?" What does this say about the significance of the Book of Mormon? Why is it the "standard unto the Lord's people?" What does that do to clarify the condemnation resting upon the church under D&C 84:57? How important is "the standard" established by the Lord? Why would Joseph Smith say the "fullness of the gospel" is contained in the Book of Mormon?

Why does the title page of the Book of Mormon, which was part of the translated record, contain this description:

Which is to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever— And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations.

What does it mean that these words shall "hiss forth to the ends of the earth?"

Did you notice the Lord taking personal credit for the words of the Book of Mormon? What does the phrase "the words of your seed should proceed forth **out of my mouth** unto your seed; and **my words** shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth?" How does the Lord taking personal credit for these words affect the Book of Mormon's significance?

AUGUST 10, 2010

2 Nephi 29:3

"And because my words shall hiss forth—many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible."

This is one of the great missionary scriptures. It is used to show the Book of Mormon already anticipated an argument against it, and as a result shows there is no reason to reject the Book of Mormon because there is already an existing, recognized volume of scripture.

The gentiles are prone to prefer the Bible to the Book of Mormon. We emphasized the Book of Mormon for a few years, but found that other faiths were critical because we were not using the Bible as we should. So there has been a conscious effort to re-emphasize the Bible and de-emphasize the Book of Mormon. This has been done to broaden our appeal to members of other faiths.

The gravamen of the argument is in the words: “there cannot be any more Bible.” The idea there are other words of God, requiring equal respect to the words in the Bible, is a shocking heresy for many of the gentiles. Remember that first phrase in the first verse: “Behold there shall be many” who are going to say this. The “many” are the gentiles, and their criticism will be Bible-based.

So, how are we doing with this idea? Do we prefer the Biblical teachings to those of the Book of Mormon? Do we spend more time with the Bible than the Book of Mormon in our own individual study? If we had to choose one as the “standard for our people” which one would we choose? The Book of Mormon (as verse 2 suggests) or the Bible (as verse 3 suggests)? The Lord’s standard is the Book of Mormon. The gentile standard will be the Bible. Once again we are at odds with Historic Christianity.

This is not to say we disrespect the Bible. We don’t. We accept it as scripture. It is an admittedly valuable standard work, to be used in study and receiving knowledge of the things of God. Indeed, among other things the Book of Mormon testifies of the truth of the Bible. Therefore the Bible is certainly accepted as a work of

importance and value to us in matters of faith. But only one can assume primacy. The primary one for us is the Book of Mormon.

We may be justified in our attachment to and affection for the Bible. But the Book of Mormon must be preeminent. Our respect and affection for the Doctrine and Covenants, Temple and church organization is also well placed and should inform our understanding and behavior. But the Book of Mormon was intended to be the primary means for the Lord to impart understanding to us.

Much has been written and said about this volume of scripture, but we are only now beginning to understand what we are looking at.

In *Eighteen Verses* I have shown how little we have done so far with this book of scripture. I have never attempted to be exhaustive in any discussion about the book. In a decade of teaching weekly about the book, where I only went from 1 Nephi 1:1 to Jarom 1:4, the discussion was not exhaustive.

This book was a gift to us. We ought not think the Bible has more to offer than what we find in “the most correct book” because a “man can get closer to God by abiding the precepts [of the Book of Mormon] than any other book,” just as Joseph Smith said.

The primary text of scripture I have used in *The Second Comforter*, *Nephi’s Isaiah* and *Eighteen Verses* has been the Book of Mormon. The primary text used in this blog is the Book of Mormon.

Until we understand that book, I fail to see why we think we should have more. There is more in that book than we’ve noticed. The first step ought be to notice what we have. Then things will be added. However, until we have taken the Book of Mormon seriously, I fail to see why the most important message for us—found within that book—should not be the first thing to be understood.

AUGUST 10, 2010

2 Nephi 29:4–5

But thus saith the Lord God: O fools, they shall have a Bible; and it shall proceed forth from the Jews, mine ancient covenant people. And what thank they the Jews for the Bible which they receive from them? Yea, what do the Gentiles mean? Do they remember the travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews, and their diligence unto me, in bringing forth salvation unto the Gentiles? O ye Gentiles, have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant people? Nay; but ye have cursed them, and have hated them, and have not sought to recover them. But behold, I will return all these things upon your own heads; for I the Lord have not forgotten my people.

If you wonder at the Lord's patience and willingness to forgive you have an answer here. The Lord's respect for and defense of the "Jews" as His "ancient covenant people" is unmitigated by any criticism of them. Instead He points to their "travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews" experienced in bringing forth this Biblical record.

The Jews deserve our thanks, our gratitude and our respect for this great work of preserving the record.

Twice the Lord calls the Jews His "ancient covenant people." The Bible is a record of rebellion, persecution of the righteous, and slaying of prophets. It is a record of a fallen people who were often in apostasy, resisting true prophets calling for repentance, and suffering the judgment and condemnation of God. When the New Testament record (also a product of Jewish writers—even in the case of Luke who, though born to gentile parents, was converted to Judaism) came into existence it was the Jews who resisted and

persecuted the Lord. Yet He still calls them His “ancient covenant people.” He insists we have been ungrateful to the Jews for their work on the Bible.

This is the Lord speaking in the first person. Nephi is quoting Him. These are the same people Lehi taught would be the only ones “who would crucify their God.” (2 Nephi 10:3). Yet despite that, Christ refers to them as His “ancient covenant people” to whom we owe a debt of gratitude! How merciful is our Lord?

Now, those who produced the Bible text are not merely the believers, true prophets, and victims of Jewish hostility and persecution. The text may have originated with the prophets, but it passed quickly into the hands of the priests and Levites, scholars and Rabbis. These others may not have had the same divine inspiration and association with angels, but they nevertheless attended with strict discipline to preserving the record of the prophets. Even those who directly challenged the Lord included the scribes who worked to preserve the records of the prophets. These “labors” and “pains” and “diligence” have produced gratitude from the Lord!

If He is willing to thank them, how generous is our Lord in His thanks to mankind! How ungrateful are we?

We tend to see those with whom we differ as enemies. But the Lord does not want us to approach religious disagreement in this way. Instead he would have us “recover” them. He says: “ye have cursed them, and have hated them, and have not sought to recover them.” As Joseph Smith’s History recounts, his persecutors ought “to have treated me kindly, and if they supposed me to be deluded to have endeavored in a proper and affectionate manner to have reclaimed me” (*JS-H* 1:28). That is the only way to obtain agreement—persuasion, gentleness, meekness and love unfeigned (*D&C* 121:41–42). Instead of “holding a court” against someone,

we ought to preach the Gospel to them and teach them the truth with love and meekness. It is clear the Lord is showing by example how our attitudes ought to be displayed with those who persecute and reject us. But, then again, He taught the same thing in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5, 6, 7) and in how He lived (John 8:10–11) and died (Luke 23:34). Oddly we would convict and excommunicate the adulterer, but our Lord would not. Nor does He who holds the greatest claim to condemn the Jews condemn them. Instead He says we ought to have gratitude for their pains, labors and diligence.

What does our ingratitude merit us? It merits us judgment. For the same judgment we apply to them will in turn be applied to us. We will see it used as the basis for His rejection of us: “I will return all these things upon your own heads; for I the Lord have not forgotten my people.”

Being a religious people is fine; but being a self-righteous people has always been perilous. It is no different today. We should use the scriptures to inform our inner life. It is meant for internal use only. External application is likely to cause burning.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · AUGUST 11, 2010 AT 12:44 PM

I believe Christ would have probably excommunicated that woman taken in Adultery, but he probably left it up to the local leaders of the time. We don't have the whole story.

The fact that he forgave her does not mean she had repented, which doesn't happen just because you're caught in the sin. His forgiveness does not mean he can or would withhold needed consequences to help her truly repent & realize the seriousness of her sin so she won't repeat it, like most in her situation do.

Discipline is actually the loving thing to do for the sinner, no matter how much you forgive them. Consequences help the sinner to seek greater spirituality by having to earn blessings & membership back.

Serious sins like Adultery, Abuse & Abandonment are almost impossible to repent from without the help of serious discipline, like excommunication, like Pres. Hinckley said was usually the penalty.

Adultery is such a destructive & vile abuse against the spouse that those who commit such are almost, if not completely past feeling. Usually only the greatest consequences like excommunication will cause that person to repent from such deep rooted devilish desires & actions.

It is also loving to the 'victim' to discipline the sinner/abuser/adulterer/abandoner so the victim is protected & given justice for their loss & pain. Complete restitution & then some, must be required from the sinner to the amount possible or else it's just further abuse on the victim.

If Christ had let the adulteress just walk away & no discipline applied, how would the woman's husband ever feel justice was done for him or he be assured she will repent & recompense him for his pain & loss from her unfaithfulness to him?

Anonymous · AUGUST 11, 2010 AT 1:05 PM

Continued....

This is Christ's Church & despite the fact that Christ continually forgives us, even in the moment of our sins, he still asks his representatives (as Pres. Hinckley said) to usually excommunicate for all forms of abuse, adultery & abandonment (divorce). For that's usually vital to help the sinner repent fully. Light punishment or none at all, is usually an UNloving thing for serious sin, for it is usually extremely hard to repent from such sins without firm consequences like excommunication or else it usually just causes the sinner to repeat the sin & get worse & brings greater abuse on the victims.

What spouse is going to return & repent to their good spouse if not given severe consequences for divorcing them? Or especially if they are allowed to just remarry in the temple to someone else? This only encourages more abuse & adultery & abandonment. Children watch &

learn to do the same & not take marriage covenants or even the Church seriously if parents, adults & leaders don't.

The Scriptures teach that if there is no punishment for sin it's as if there is not law against it.

Abuse, Adultery & Abandonment & Addictions are rampant in probably every ward in the Church. A major cause for this is the serious lack of consequences by leaders for those who do such things. This is a huge injustice to the victims but mostly to the sinner himself. How will he ever come to repent before it's too late & he dies, unless leaders apply needed consequences & protection for the victims.

Leaders bring heavy & dire judgments on their own heads when they do not discipline sufficiently those who commit adultery (including porn), all forms of abuse, & abandonment & divorce of a good spouse.

Many non-members I have known have lost any trust or desire to investigate our Church when they see that our Leaders don't discipline for & thus make allowance for these types of serious sins that their own Church would never allow.

A religion or Church is only as good & safe as how it protects, especially women & children (& men too who need it) from abuse, adultery & abandonment(divorce) & how much is applied needed firm consequences for sin.

Denver Snuffer · AUGUST 11, 2010 AT 7:15 PM

There was a time when I would have agreed with that view. In the early church of this dispensation, the purpose of a church court was to obtain a confession. If someone confessed during the court, or immediately before, they would be forgiven and the court would end. If someone got excommunicated because of a sin, and they confessed the next day, they would be reinstated the next day. Once the confession was made, forgiveness was more or less immediate. Take a look at that early history. It is interesting.

For those who are excommunicated, we rarely see them again. The numbers are overwhelming against their return. So essentially an

excommunication means the end of that person, oftentimes also his/her immediate family, and the descendants of those.

Sin is wrong, and needs to result in repentance and change. But for the most part that is between the person and the Lord. When it involves others, it also includes them, too. But we sometimes cause a great deal of unintended consequences to even the unborn when we excommunicate.

AUGUST 11, 2010

2 Nephi 29:6–7

Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews? Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth?

This is a continuing statement made to Nephi by the Lord. Besides the sermons delivered in the New Testament and Third Nephi, this is one of the most extensive revelations to be found given by Christ. Given its length, and the fact it is a quote from the Lord, we are compelled to take note. The Lord is doing all He can to draw our attention to the fact that the Book of Mormon **MUST** be valued above the Bible. It **MUST** take its place in latter-day study of God's acts among men.

To say you have enough information from God is foolish. God “created all men,” and as a result He “remembers all men.” He will “bring forth [His] word unto the children of men” in whatever place, time and circumstance as He decides. He cannot be circumscribed

by our preferences or false understanding. He can and does exercise the prerogative to speak to whomever He decides.

When the Book of Mormon came forth, all people were startled at the idea God had more to say. They thought it an odd thing for anyone to claim there was yet more scripture. Joseph was persecuted and hated for announcing he had a new volume of scripture.

Now, some 180 years later we think the Lord is bound to talk to a specific person, in a specific way, and that anyone else or anywhere else is beyond the Lord's capacity to accomplish. In our own way, we are also bound to a tradition which excludes the Lord's prerogatives; we just redefine the box we confine the Lord.

He "brings forth His word" without regard to our views, and to "all the nations of the earth." Now "nations" is not the same thing as we regard it today. The "nations" at the time of the Book of Mormon were something we would call "people" or "ethnicity" like the Israelites.

The definition of an "isle of the sea" includes everything that is not part of the great Euro-Asian-African land mass. Although we regard North America as a continent, in the Book of Mormon vernacular it is an "isle of the sea." (2 Ne. 10:20). Further, most of Israel was relocated onto the isles of the sea (1 Ne. 22:4). So when the Lord affirms He speaks to those on the "isles of the sea" He is confirming that there are multiple locations, involving multiple parties, each one of which has received sacred communication from Him. There are, in short, still a great deal of His words which have not as yet come to our attention. They are coming. When they do, we are warned to take care in what we choose to reject.

When I was first investigating the church, this argument was presented to me by the missionaries in one of the first discussions. I have to admit the proposition made such sense to me that I found

it completely persuasive. The idea that God would not be in communication with the vast majority of mankind living separate from Palestine during the Lord's life seemed to be a sort of abandonment by the Lord. If He is the God of all mankind, then ought He not speak to all mankind?

The "wise men from the east" were not locals to Palestine. Yet they remained both connected to, and watching for signs involving the birth of the Lord. If them, why not others? The Book of Mormon answers this query. This idea was too persuasive for me to find doubt.

If God does remember all mankind, and speaks to the various nations over time, then the failure to keep the information intact is also explained. The Book of Mormon shows what and how a society's faith fails and is lost. It explains how very careless mankind is with knowledge given by God.

Riddles of history are better answered both directly and indirectly in the Book of Mormon than any other text, including the Bible.

AUGUST 11, 2010

2 Nephi 29:8

Wherefore murmur ye, because that ye shall receive more of my word? Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also.

Why would anyone complain or murmur because God has spoken? We do. Somehow we get offended at the very idea God can or has spoken further. It is disturbing. It requires us to learn more, and may require us to change. It is inconvenient. It is troubling.

But new information from God should always be welcomed. It should be exciting and delightful, even if it requires us to change.

Not only does the Lord remember all nations, but He “speaks the same words unto one nation like unto another.” Meaning two things: First, the records are going to agree on doctrine, ordinances and practice. There will not be some shocking departure from what we have already learned. But, second, we may find that other records have done a better job of preserving deeper insight into the history or truths than have we.

At one time the record written by Moses contained what is now in the Pearl of Great Price. At one time the record written by Abraham also found in the Pearl of Great Price was among the Biblical record. However, they were lost until they were restored through Joseph Smith. At one time the Biblical record contained the prophecies of Zenos and Zenock, only a small portion of which are still available through the Book of Mormon.

Although the records will agree, that does not mean there will not be significant additions to our understanding as a result of these becoming available. Even the record of the Nephites is sealed, and that of the Jaredites only partially translated (Ether 1:4–5). Joseph and Sidney were forbidden to give the full account of the vision of the afterlife (D&C 76:114–115). So you must not presume that “the same words” will be identical to the teachings preserved in our records. They may include much more.

It is also interesting how the Book of Mormon contains so much more information upon close inspection that it appears to have in a quick read. It is a measure of how seriously we take the Lord’s words as to how carefully we search the text.

As I’ve pointed out, most of the Book of Mormon scholarship is devoted to the question of the book’s authenticity. Word studies,

Jewish idioms, internal consistencies, author variances and other examinations of the book have dominated the Book of Mormon library we have produced. I have proceeded from the premise that the book is authentic, that it is what it claims to be, and worthy of respect. Then, based on that premise, I've asked what the book teaches. The result has been more than edifying, it has been at times shocking. I've found that most of the deepest doctrines taught by Joseph Smith can be found in the Book of Mormon. When his revelations reach the greatest heights, the Book of Mormon equals what is revealed.

We tend to view the Book of Mormon as a “basic” version of doctrine, because we all know there are sealed portions yet to be revealed. However, I think that attitude is wrong. Everything in the sealed portion is already in the book we have in front of us. But to find it we must look more carefully at the text than we generally do.

I keep hoping that by showing respect to the text we can accomplish two things: First, please the Lord and remove our condemnation from neglecting this valuable ancient record. Second, increase our respect for the value of doctrine. Without the unique doctrines restored through the Book of Mormon, we may as well be Presbyterian or Methodist.

These verses promise us that the testimonies of differing nations will agree. They will all testify both of Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Savior, and provide the means by which we can come to Him and be saved.

The numerous examples of the Book of Mormon all converge on knowing Christ. Indeed, the text has more examples of Christ ministering through the veil to mortal men than any other record, including His Judean ministry. It is a veritable treasure of Second

Comforter experiences. If you want to know Christ, the Book of Mormon is your best guide.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · AUGUST 11, 2010 AT 9:57 PM

As an aside, can you please post a recommended order in which to read your books? I haven't been able to find this information anywhere, but I suspect that there is a sequence that makes the most sense.

I've read *The Second Comforter*, but am not sure where to go from there.

Thank you.

Denver Snuffer · AUGUST 12, 2010 AT 7:29 AM

Nephi's Isaiah.

Eighteen Verses.

Ten Parables.

Beloved Enos.

Come, Let Us Adore Him.

AUGUST 12, 2010

2 Nephi 29:9

And I do this that I may prove unto many that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and that I speak forth my words according to mine own pleasure. And because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever.

The assurance to us by the Lord that He is the “same yesterday, today and forever” appears often in scripture (See, e.g., four times by Nephi including 1 Ne. 10:18; 2 Ne. 2:4; 2 Ne. 27:23, and above; Alma 31:17; Mormon 9:9; Moroni 10:19; D&C 20:12; and D&C 35:1, among other places). Why do you suppose the Lord wants us to

trust in this idea? What is it about the Lord's "sameness" that is important for us to understand?

Are the Lord's expectations different from one generation to the next? Are His teachings? Are His ordinances? Can we discard what He has given us and be justified? If His expectations are as unchanged as He is, then how important is it for us to study and retain all that He has given by revelation to mankind? How important is it to keep ordinances entirely intact?

If the Lord does not change, and the story of the Nephite people is a story of temporary success followed by ultimate failure, then how relevant is that account for us? Does temporary success in repentance guarantee constant favor from the Lord? When the Book of Mormon follows splinter groups in the narrative, because the splinters kept the commandments of God better, does that preserve a relevant lesson for those reading the book today? If so, how?

If the Lord "speaks forth [His] own words according to [His] own pleasure" then how can we control to whom and when He is permitted to speak? If He reserves to Himself this right, what effect does our system of recognizing an authoritative message from Him have upon His right to speak? Did the revelation given to Oliver Cowdrey that told him that he could not write commandments, but only according to wisdom, and never command Joseph Smith who presided over Oliver, establish a binding precedent on the Lord? (D&C 28:4–6). If so, what limit does that place on the Lord? Does the limitation on someone being sent forth as a missionary to preach the Gospel, and the requirement they be "regularly ordained by the heads of the church" limit the Lord's ability to speak His own words? (D&C 42:11). If so, in what way?

Does the revelation to Joseph Smith informing the Church in 1831 that no one other than Joseph Smith is to receive command-

ments and revelations for the Church limit the Lord's ability to speak to anyone else? (D&C 43:1–6). In particular, what of the Lord's counsel that this limitation was intended as “a law unto you, that ye receive not the teachings of any that shall come before you as revelations or commandments; And this I give unto you that you may not be deceived, that you may know they are not of me.” (*Id.* verses 5–6). Does that prevent Him from speaking “according to His own pleasure?”

What about the 1830 revelation given to Joseph Smith that no one other than Joseph Smith is to receive revelations and commandments in the church? (D&C 28:2). Does that limit the Lord's ability to speak according to His own pleasure?

Do the promises given to Joseph Smith apply directly and continually as the binding precedent and complete limitation on the Lord's capacity to speak to us? If so, then can He still speak to individual members of the church but without providing a “revelation and commandment” to the entire church? For example, do we expect only President Monson to receive revelation on the individual members of your own family? How is President Monson supposed to be doing that for the families of some 13 million church members? If that isn't possible, then what about the approximate 2,000 stakes? Do we expect only President Monson to receive revelation about each of these divisions? If the stake presidents have been delegated responsibility, then can the stake president receive all revelation for each family within the stake? Can the stake president alone receive revelation for the families of his stake?

If each person is intended to receive some revelation for themselves, is that an absolute bar to receiving revelation for another? If, for example, someone were not in your ward, not in your stake, not even living in your state, but asked you to give them a blessing

because of illness or injury, are you entitled to receive revelation while giving the blessing? Even if you have no connection to this person by family or church calling? Should you proceed with the blessing? If so, would you expect the Lord to assist, give revelation, and even inspire a commandment to the person if it were appropriate?

How hard and fast are the rules we impose on the Lord? Does His statement that He alone will decide when and to whom He speaks according to “His own pleasure” need to be weighed as part of the equation? If He cannot speak to anyone other than Joseph Smith, then did Joseph’s death prevent Him from speaking further? If He cannot speak to anyone other than Joseph’s successors in the office of President of the High Priesthood, then what if the occupant of that office is ill, infirm, or disabled?

Would the “system” govern, or the Lord’s “own pleasure” govern? If it is “His own pleasure” then how can we possibly know when He speaks? What about the Lord’s house being a house of order? Once He has a church established, should we trust He will confine His efforts to that church alone?

I suppose all these questions are answered by the Lord adding to “His own pleasure” that “because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever.”

In the final analysis, it is left to us to fast, pray, seek the guidance of the Spirit, and to find where the Lord’s own pleasure in speaking is to be found. I do not expect someone other than the presiding authorities to conduct the affairs of the church. Nor would I expect anyone would organize a ward or stake other than someone having authority over that responsibility, regularly recognized by the

church. I would not expect to either pay tithing to, nor be asked to pay tithing to, someone other than a Bishop in the church. But, just as Elder F. Enzo Busche encountered gifted sisters with the gift of prophecy and visions, I do not believe revelation is or can be confined to any single office, person, or group (See F. Enzo Busche's book, *Yearning for the Living God*). While serving in various church leadership positions, including as a General Authority, he encountered gifted women with spiritual capacities who astonished him. But, to his credit, he did not doubt them.

God speaks according to His own pleasure. He cautions you that just because He says one thing at one time, He is never limited in what He may say at another time; even if you think it contradicts His earlier statements. He is living and He has the final decision in what He says and to whom He speaks. We must not forget that principle. Even though we may not like the uncertainty this introduces to our trusted systems. He alone will remain in control.

AUGUST 12, 2010

2 Nephi 29:10–11

Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written. For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written.

Within the Book of Mormon, as a new volume of scripture, is the caution that even it is incomplete. What a marvel that is if

you think about it. Here's a new revelation telling us that there are other revelations that aren't included in either the Book of Mormon or the Bible.

Everyone nation, from time to time, received sacred messages from the Lord! No matter where they are—east, west, north or south, He's been in touch. They have written it down. The records are sacred, and He watches over them. They will be revealed. And, the good/bad news is that from their content we will be judged.

We are judged “according to our works,” but measured against “that which is written.” Think about that for a moment.

What if they haven't come to light yet? Are they still written? Are they still going to be used to measure us? If we haven't seen these words, why would it be appropriate for them to be used as a measuring stick for our conduct? Was the Book of Mormon's standards binding upon us even before the record came forth?

Why does He assure us He is unchangeable? Why does He assure us He is the same yesterday, today and forever? Is the standard going to change from ancient record to ancient record? If it does not change, then are we accountable for the same standard of conduct no matter when or where we live? How can we be held to account for things that are yet to be revealed?

If we cannot be judged against something we do not know (Mosiah 3:11), how can these words set a standard for judging even before they are published?

I want to propose a concept that appeals to my mind. When we are trying to “prove” a proposition, it is possible to set up an experiment where we control all variables but one, then see what that one variable does. How it acts, or reacts. Life here is like that, I think. A fallen Telestial Kingdom, “or the world in which you presently reside” — to quote an authoritative source — is the same

place for Able and Cain, Enoch and Noah, Abraham and Nimrod, Moses and Pharoah, Jesus and Ciaphus, Jacob and Sherem, Alma and Nehor, Joseph Smith and Thomas Sharp. Same place with all of these contemporaries. But with the exception of Enoch and Noah, (who took different routes, but nonetheless were both favored by God) all the other pairs had dramatically different outcomes? Why?

This world is a fallen, but controlled environment. We get introduced here with free will and the capacity to change. Inside that environment of a fallen world, there have been people who have come and lived with all the same limitations that we have, but who have grown to know God. Their lives are proof that it can happen. Their testimonies and records of success are part of the “proof” of God’s fairness and of mankind’s freedom to return to Him.

If the Bible and the Book of Mormon both attest to the fact that it is possible for mankind to overcome by faith and return to God’s presence, then we have the proof needed to see how this life should be lived. We have the evidence of God’s willingness to receive us, and of our own capacity to overcome and return to Him.

Testimony after testimony, experience after experience are recounted in the Book of Mormon. We have enough “proof” that this process is available and works. If we were to have more, in a different record, reaffirming the same thing involving other people, would it add any different proof than is already in our possession? If not, then can we be judged by the same standard without having the specific life stories before us to illustrate in another hundred ways how men have triumphed and men have failed?

Is it possible there are others, some of whom are still living, who may also have recorded unspeakable things? Do their words count? Are they binding upon us for no other reason than to prove

that in this contemporary world of sin it remains still possible to return to God's presence?

What interesting things the Book of Mormon raises for our pondering and edification. It is a revolutionary book, in the sense it revolutionizes our understanding of how God deals with mankind.

AUGUST 13, 2010

2 Nephi 29:12

For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it.

This is more than interesting. The Lord speaks, various people write what He speaks to them. These groups include:

Jews — we get that and it's the Bible, right?

Nephites — we get that too, the Book of Mormon, right?

Other tribes — how many? Who? When? Where? What?

All the nations of the earth — Now it's just too broad. What does "all the nations" mean, exactly?

So, let's take this a bit by bit, going through each one:

1. Jews: We have a Bible. But we DON'T have all the writings of the Jews, do we? We already referred to missing prophets Zenos and Zenok, and there are others. Look in your Bible Dictionary for "Missing Scripture" and you'll tree a list. (I'm pulling your leg. If you look that up it'll refer you to "Lost Books" so go there.)

[That reminds me of a joke I tell: If I get a tattoo it'll say "Leviticus 19:28." But you probably won't think that's funny.]

Anyway, the Jews recorded more both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament than we have currently. So don't get all certain the Bible is the final word from the ancient Jews. It isn't. Never was. There's more coming.

2. Nephites: Clearly more coming. Sealed material has not been revealed, and will be some day. Providing, of course, we were to actually merit the disclosure. So, I suppose that means don't hold your breath.
3. Other Tribes: We got nothing. Not even a number. The one chance we had to get a number was blown by both the disciples in Jerusalem and the Nephites. I've written about this in *The Second Comforter*. So the only way to triangulate is to either take the allegory of the Olive Tree in Jacob 5 and try to estimate—a risky proposition since it was intended to convey an overall meaning not a number—or we can work backwards from the crucifixion to the approximate 11 1/2 months later when Jesus appeared to the Nephites. Take the time spent with the Nephites, then estimate He's been busy doing that same ministry elsewhere. Divide the time taken to minister into the available time and you get something between 10 and 18 other potential groups out there depending on your estimate of the time used. The record attempts to prevent us from being too accurate because it identifies three days specifically, then resorts to just “many times” to cover what may have been days or weeks (3 Nephi 26:13). However, when you read of the Nephite disciples “journeying and preaching” but coming together in “mighty prayer and fasting” and the Lord's appearance again there, it seems closer to the 10 number than the 18 (3 Nephi 27:1). Well, you work it out. It's just an unknown

plural number which might be greater than just a couple. And for these we have no record at all.

4. All nations: Nothing here, either. And no basis from which to compile an estimate.

So, from the foregoing we can see that we have some tiny fragment of the whole, and cannot even begin to construct an outline of what we are missing. But despite our ignorance, the Lord spoke to them, they wrote it, and it is available for some group to eventually read. Apparently not us. We do not even get the rest of the record written on parchment and hidden by John, (referred to in the headnote to Section 7 of the D&C). We only get a part of the information from it (D&C 7:1–8).

So, there's a lot to be had. We don't have it...But what we do have we won't study. Well, maybe there is a cause and effect...

Seems to me, you don't want to talk about it. Seems to me, you just turn your pretty head and walk away. (Joe Walsh, from the James Gang era, before the heaviest toll was taken.)

So the Lord wants us to know there's ever so much out there. That we have a tiny fraction of what was once available. And we just don't seem to care. We'd rather reduce the volume of topics we study and eliminate the "mysteries" from our diet of Gospel study, so as to relieve ourselves of any responsibility for what we already possess. We are beyond dumbing down the Gospel. We're discarding it by the week. Tighter and tighter, until you are left alone, without God in the world. There's a brilliant phrase. It comes from the Book of Mormon. It is found at Mosiah 27:31; Alma 41:11 and Mormon 5:16. Of all the phrases turned in the Book of Mormon this is the most solitary, profound and descriptive of the fall from grace mankind experiences. It is perfect, even if what it describes is perfectly horrid.

Well, enough of this...

AUGUST 13, 2010

2 Nephi 29:13

And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews; and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews.

Well, happily the Jews “shall” get the Nephite words. Some day. Currently for the most part they don’t want them. And, even if they did, the “words of the Nephites” will include the sealed portion, because they are certainly part of the “words” the Nephites recorded. So this will be future, even if there were Jews interested in taking the offer today.

The Nephites also “shall” have the words of the Jews. However, once again as we have seen, the words include a great volume of material spoken by Christ, recorded by the Jews, and not in anyone’s current possession. So this, too, must be in the future. For now we aren’t even sure of who these “Nephites” are.

The Nephites and the Jews “shall” get the words of the lost tribes of Israel. This is a category, not a number. Remember that. So once again, future event. Don’t know when. Don’t know how many records. Don’t even know how many groups will be included.

But all these records are inevitably to come forth. Just not yet. Why?

Read Mormon’s explanation:

But behold the plates of Nephi do contain the more part of the things which he taught the people. And these things have I written, which are a lesser part of the things which he taught the people; and I have written them to the intent that they may be brought

again unto this people, from the Gentiles, according to the words which Jesus hath spoken. And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith, and if it shall so be that they shall believe these things then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them. And if it so be that they will not believe these things, then shall the greater things be withheld from them, unto their condemnation. Behold, I was about to write them, all which were engraven upon the plates of Nephi, but the Lord forbade it, saying: I will try the faith of my people. Therefore I, Mormon, do write the things which have been commanded me of the Lord. And now I, Mormon, make an end of my sayings, and proceed to write the things which have been commanded me. (3 Nephi 26:7–12)

What if I do believe these things? What if I will accept the things which He offers? What if my faith has been tried and I am found to be deserving of more information? Can a person come out from under the condemnation referred to above, even if the rest of mankind fails to acquit themselves? Alma comes with the reply: “Yes.” (Alma 12:9–11). So, as it turns out, ignorance is voluntary.

Well, shut my mouth! (That’s a pun, you see.)

[Can you do puns in a religious blog? Or will the long faced and dour be offended? Well, they don’t get it anyway. Hey! Why are you reading this if it offends you? Stop it!]

What do you suppose it would take for the Lord to respond to us removing the condemnation that we labor under? How should we go about trying to make that happen? I don’t see it happening, do you? I’m sort of persuaded by Nephi’s pessimism of the gentiles of our day. Even this mild blog discussion I am attempting has provoked ire in many readers. How we fix our collective disinterest

seems a monumental enterprise beyond human ability. I fear it would take some great calamity to unfold before we would change. Then again, I think the Lord has already told us that (D&C 1:17; 45:50).

AUGUST 14, 2010

2 Nephi 29:14

And it shall come to pass that my people, which are of the house of Israel, shall be gathered home unto the lands of their possessions; and my word also shall be gathered in one. And I will show unto them that fight against my word and against my people, who are of the house of Israel, that I am God, and that I covenanted with Abraham that I would remember his seed forever.

Now we have an estimate of the time when a general disclosure of the records of these various nations will occur. It's set in the time when the people who have survived the great distresses and wars of the last days will leave the New Jerusalem and return to their lands of possessions. That is, post-New Jerusalem, post-destruction of the wicked, and after the time when the Lord has come among them. When they are sent into their respective lands of possessions, then at last the entire record of the Lord's dealings with each nation will be "gathered in one."

So this won't be anytime soon. Well, if soon, it will be after some more dramatic events, which will take our minds off the issue of missing scripture.

What is interesting is the Lord's emphasis on those who "fight against my word." He puts this first. The fight, as He puts it, is against both "my word and my people," but it is the fight against His "word" that He lists first. This is important.

You will recall there were two different reactions to the two parts of Lehi's message. When it was repentance from their wickedness, the Jews mocked him. But when it was a message of the coming Christ, they wanted to kill him (1 Ne. 1:18–19). This is the war against His "word" in a nutshell. The message of hope and redemption found in Christ is what the enemies of God always seek to suppress.

First, distort, suppress and exclude His word. Then it follows that He has no people, because they cannot find their way back to Him.

Remember this is the great fight. It is relentlessly underway. So soon as His word becomes available, there will be forces, enemies, alliances, even good-intentions used to suppress, discard and alter His words. This is the great work of the adversary. This is the fight that gets waged first.

When the victory is won against His word, then the victory against the people is over. There cannot be any "people" belonging to Him if they do not possess His words in clarity, fullness, and with power.

What significance is there then in changing His words? Discarding His revelations? Suppressing His ordinances? Altering what He has revealed? Designating some of His word as "mysteries" that ought to be feared or avoided? Why would Joseph Smith advise us to search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God? Why would we be told to avoid them today? What has happened in the fight against the Lord's word among us?

The purpose of His word is to establish His people. When people have His word, and obtain the light and truth that flows from it, then they are inevitably turned in their hearts to the fathers. Primarily among those fathers is the one mentioned here:

Abraham. For in Abraham we see a return to the original order which preceded the flood. He inherited what “came down from the beginning” and restored the original ancient order (Abraham 1:2–3). When the “word” and “people” are again here, they are directly linked to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and are heirs to the covenant and priesthood they held. It is a return. It is a resurrection of an ancient order, where men know God and are His friends and companions while living here in this fallen world.

The results of having the Lord’s “word” is to then create a “people” who in turn are linked to “Abraham.” These things all follow in turn. The fight against it is begun at the “word” to prevent the others who follow. If you can choke people off and get them to refuse His “words” then you can prevent them from ever becoming His “people” and realizing the association which brings their hearts to the fathers.

It is a consistent plan and a predictable fight. How’s it going in our time? What good things have we done to preserve His word? Have we kept intact everything He handed us through Joseph? Do we possess all of the word He intended us to have, study and live? Are we thereby made into new creations, His people? Do we show the fruits of being His people? Do the visions of heaven flow over us, and angels minister to us? Do we possess knowledge of God in the sense used in the Book of Mormon? Are we in possession of all the rights and powers conferred upon Abraham?

It is an interesting interconnection the Lord refers to here. Worth reflection at a minimum. Fasting, prayer and seeking as well, perhaps.

CHAPTER 3
2 Nephi 30

AUGUST 15, 2010

2 Nephi 30:1

And now behold, my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you; for I, Nephi, would not suffer that ye should suppose that ye are more righteous than the Gentiles shall be. For behold, except ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall all likewise perish; and because of the words which have been spoken ye need not suppose that the Gentiles are utterly destroyed.

This is troubling if you understand what is said here. Let's see if we can pull it apart.

Nephi adds this direct comment to his descendants, the forebears of the remnant. Although they are the target of covenants and beneficiaries of the restoration, they too need to keep to the path. Though they are “beloved brethren” to Nephi, they are not given any unconditional promises. No one is. Everything we receive is based on what we do, think and say (See both Alma 12:14 and D&C 130:20–21).

Note that this is not about the actual remnant, but about the Nephites who would be destroyed. These people would have access

to Nephi's record until the time of Mormon, when they would be destroyed. You can see the time frame in the word usage, "Ye are" as to the Nephites, in contrast to "the Gentiles who shall be." This message is addressed to the Nephites in a time before the gentile.

What is particularly distressing is the comparison Nephi is making. He is saying that the Nephites, who possess the land of promise, needn't think themselves "more righteous than the Gentiles shall be" because if these Nephite descendants do "not keep the commandments of God" then they "shall all likewise perish." If the Nephites do not keep the commandments, they will, like the gentiles, perish.

This means that Nephi is confirming again his prophecy of the destruction of the gentiles. They are doomed. And the Nephites are similarly doomed unless they are obedient.

Despite this warning we know what happened to the Nephites. They were destroyed. The gentiles will be destroyed also.

In the case of the Nephites and the gentiles, "ye need not suppose that the Gentiles are utterly destroyed." That is, neither all the Nephites have been, nor all the gentiles will be "utterly destroyed."

Well, this is happy news indeed. Some tiny fragment of the gentiles will actually survive the destruction of the coming days! So we ought to rejoice! All is well with us after all! And coming from Nephi we know that we have a promise from one holding sealing authority who will, as I have previously pointed out, seal this prophecy (2 Nephi 33:13-15).

Interestingly Nephi warns his own descendants about their pride and haughtiness. He says that these Nephite descendants, heirs of the covenant, should not think of themselves as righteous. "I, Nephi, would not suffer that ye should suppose that ye are more righteous than the Gentiles shall be." Nephi's prophecy is clear to

him, and clear to his descendants. They both regarded the gentiles with pessimism. They (we) are doomed. So they saw us as something dreadful to be compared to. When Nephi confirms they ought not think themselves better than us, he is giving a strong warning indeed. The odd thing is that we read these same records, this same prophecy, and we think we're better than them! We have inverted the picture! We're good, they were bad! But Nephi is using us as the dreadful comparison, the stark warning, the terrible warning that if the Nephites do not repent they will be like us and perish.

When you pick these words apart and see the message it makes you wonder how we could have come to our inverted view. Arrogance and pride really do blind us. Almost completely. What more could Nephi have said to get us to understand? (2 Nephi 32:8).

COMMENTS:

Frustrated · AUGUST 16, 2010 AT 11:59 AM

NEED HELP! When you state that some thought or teaching is found in some specific Snuffer Book, is it possible for you to give a page or at least a chapter heading, particularly if it is from *Second Comforter* or *Nephi's Isaiah*. I have found the index 'lacking' in these books. *Beloved Enos* and even *Come Let Us Adore Him* weren't so large that I couldn't transfer the whole text into an electronic program for my own use and then I can "FIND" any word or phrase and then use the 'find' in a 'work sheet' on that subject —

I become extremely frustrated, especially with *the Second Comforter* which has so much and I waste hours, trying to remember or find where a phrase or idea was used and explained. As often as not I give up and go with what I have been able to find elsewhere.

Would it be possible to give page numbers when you refer to any portion of *Second Comforter*?

Thank You

Frustrated:

Denver Snuffer · AUGUST 16, 2010 AT 7:54 PM

Frustrated:

Be careful about making electronic copies. There are copyright laws which prevent making copies without permission to do so.

I do not rely upon the book revenue for myself, but donate it to the Church. But there are others (i.e., publisher, printer, retailer, etc.) whose livelihood is derived from the book sales, and therefore want/need the copyright protection for their life's work.

It is both a civil wrong and a Federal crime to infringe upon a copyright, carrying stiff penalties.

There is no Kindle version available for any of these books because of the inability to protect the electronic distribution from hackers. Therefore making any electronic copy is not permitted at this point.

I offer that as a word of caution only. But I would be careful about this issue.

AUGUST 16, 2010

2 Nephi 30:2

For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off; for the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel.

To the extent that gentiles “will repent” they may become part of the Lord’s “covenant people.” They are not the remnant, but they may join in the covenant. If they do, then by virtue of the covenant they become “covenant people.”

What is required for the gentiles to repent?

What covenant must they enter into or receive so they may be numbered among the “covenant people?” Is membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints the only thing needed

to “repent” and become a “covenant people?” If not, then what else would be required?

To the extent that “the Jews will not repent” then they will be “cast off.” Although history has shown how the Jews have been treated (as Nephi put it), “ye have cursed them, and have hated them, and have not sought to recover them.” (2 Ne. 29:5). These difficulties suffered by the Jews are preliminary. The Lord always watched over and preserved them from complete destruction. However, when the Gospel is offered to them in the last days, in the final offering to the last (who had once been first—see 1 Ne.13:42), they will reject the offered renewal of the covenant at their peril. If they reject it, they “shall be cast off” because that will sever the covenant. “The Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel.”

Although we know the Lord will extend every opportunity to the descendants for the sake of a covenant with those who have become the friends of God, there are limits. God will do all He has promised to do. He will forbear, entreat, beseech, send messengers, labor alongside with His messengers, and do all He can to reclaim the heirs for the covenant’s sake. In the end, however, the heirs must either accept what He offers, or be cast off.

It is extraordinary how long the Lord will extend His hand to reclaim His people. But everyone must choose to follow Him. We have our agency. We cannot be forced to follow Him. Even though He may be longsuffering and patient, He cannot compel any to be saved (Moses 4:1–3). Unless a person is free to choose for themselves, there is no existence (D&C 93:30).

If you remove the right to choose, it is not only agency that is obliterated, but it is existence itself. Though we are utterly dependent on God for our very existence, sustained from moment to

moment by Him loaning us the ability to move, breathe and act (Mosiah 2:21), because we are free to make choices we exist. If you destroy the right to choose you have ended the personality of the person. [I have explained this in the beginning of *Beloved Enos*.]

Well, all of this is of no import if the gentiles do not “repent.” Whenever we brush up against that subject we wind up engaged in discussions about justice, mercy, vengeance and restitution. I’ve written about this process in both *The Second Comforter* and *Come, Let Us Adore Him*. Briefly, here are some of the most important points: To be forgiven we must forgive. Not just forgive, but plead for mercy for those who have offended us. The role of accusing is left to “the accuser of the brethren” or Satan (Rev. 12:10). When we accuse others we interfere with their salvation. If we are the one who was offended, and we make no accusation against them, then we become their savior. Satan’s right to accuse is inferior to ours as victims of the offense. We suffer in the flesh the wrongs of others. If we make no claim for justice, surrender those and seek instead for mercy on behalf of others, then Satan’s accusations can have no claim upon them. We mimic Christ, follow His example, and in our own limited way also atone for the sins of others. Joseph Smith was trying to get us to understand this concept when he taught:

If you do not accuse each other, God will not accuse you. If you have no accuser you will enter heaven, and if you will follow the revelations and instructions which God gives you through me, I will take you into heaven as my back load. If you will not accuse me, I will not accuse you. If you will throw a cloak of charity over my sins, I will cover yours—for charity covereth a multitude of sins. (DHC 4:445)

I have explained this at length in what I’ve written in *Come, Let Us Adore Him*. Christ said this in His ministry repeatedly. He lived

it. He showed by His own example the way to obtain forgiveness for every wrong you have ever done. It is in the same way He went about atoning for sins. It is by suffering offenses and returning good. It is by forgiving those who spitefully use and abuse you. It is through loving those who are your enemies. It is by becoming sons and daughters of God. And it can be done in no other way (Matt. 5:38–48). If you do not forgive others, you cannot be forgiven (Matt. 6:14–15). This is why Christ, in teaching us to pray, told us we are only forgiven as we forgive others (Matt. 6:12). It is as we forgive that we obtain forgiveness.

The way is strait and narrow, and cannot permit you to pass through while carrying any burden of accusation, desire for revenge or even just complaint about others. When you lay down what you might justly claim against others and seek nothing for their offenses, then you are able to enter in. To be blessed, we must seek peace with those who would make war against us (Matt. 5:9). When we judge all others with mercy, it is with mercy alone we will be judged (Matt. 7:2).

For the most part, the gentiles will not repent. They will hold courts, use their time judging, exact conditions, set limits, and annotate their permanent records with notes showing what discipline a person has undergone. And happily employ control, compulsion and dominion over one another (D&C 121:37) right up to the time when the trumpet sounds and it is everlastingly too late. Others will justify this failure to forgive, shout praises to the abuse, and claim all compulsion and dominion is necessary to protect us from the evil. Even though our Master told us not to resist the evil, but forgive it (Matt. 5:39).

For the most part, the gentiles will demand they be judged by a law they cannot satisfy. Some few, however, will forgive and plead

for the weaknesses and failings of others. They will forgive, and thereby be forgiven. They will obtain for themselves a judgment based only on mercy, for they have shown mercy to others. This atoning act of love and intercession will be the hallmark by which the children of God are identified in the Day of Judgment (Matt. 5:9). Only the peacemakers can be trusted to live in peace with one another. All others are unfit for the presence of God.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · AUGUST 16, 2010 AT 12:05 PM

Does this apply to only the victims? Parents, for example, whose children have been victims of child rape or abuse at the hands of a spouse... do they have any kind of accusatory role? Or are they just pissed off for nothing? If they cannot really “forgive” except in a general way, like people who say over the pulpit “I love you all” are they still held accountable?

I almost feel like this attitude could result in a stance of not feeling obliged to protect one’s family or those dependent on us. Hey, if someone rapes my wife and kids and I forgive them, so much the better for me. And if the wife is mad at me, she’ll just be condemned, that’s all. In some twisted way, the unconditional forgiver is off the hook. He doesn’t have to stand against the evil — he just forgives it all.

Is this getting weird to anyone else?

Denver Snuffer · AUGUST 16, 2010 AT 8:06 PM

It does seem weird. When Pope Innocent III was asked by St. Francis to approve the order which was proposed to follow the Sermon on the Mount, the Pope was understandably skeptical. The Sermon was great in theory, but the Pope never thought it possible to actually live it. When St. Francis not only did, but taught others who did as well, the order was eventually approved.

We have Jesus, and we have St. Francis, and recently we had Mother Theresa. So there have been three, I suppose. All of whom were definitely weird. Surely this wasn’t meant to be a real lifestyle. Just theory.

I can imagine 10,000 reasons why it won't work. But so far none of them have actually entered my life. But because I can theorize why it ought not be lived, it makes me comfortable in saying it isn't meant to be.

Good stuff; better stuff, the best stuff just got better.... Or whatever it is that Snapple is saying these days... I'm OK and you're OK. So we're all OK together.

AUGUST 16, 2010

2 Nephi 30:3

“And now, I would prophesy somewhat more concerning the Jews and the Gentiles. For after the book of which I have spoken shall come forth, and be written unto the Gentiles, and sealed up again unto the Lord, there shall be many which shall believe the words which are written; and they shall carry them forth unto the remnant of our seed.”

Nephi speaks again prophetically about our time. He makes no distinction between the Jews and “the remnant of our seed,” or Nephite remnant in what he says here. The “book of which I have spoken” is the record of the Nephites. It will come forth, written as a warning to the gentiles. Here is another attempt to establish a time frame for a prophecy. It will be after the record exists, gets brought forth “unto the gentiles” and then is “sealed up again unto the Lord.” We are in that era now. The record exists, even if part of it is sealed. It has come forth, at least in that part intended to be released at the point of this prophecy. And it has been “sealed up again unto the Lord.” We don't have possession of it at present.

I've addressed the cover story that the Angel Moroni still has the plates in what I've written before. Briefly, the Book of Mormon tells Joseph Smith to “seal them up unto the Lord” in detail in three places. This is one of them. The other two are 2 Nephi 27:22 (giving the most detailed instruction to Joseph) and Ether 5:1-4.

All of these instructions are to the same effect. Once the Book of Mormon has been translated, to the extent it is to come forth in our day, the plates are to be “sealed up again” by Joseph. Since he did everything else in the way he was instructed, there is no reason to believe he wouldn’t have sealed up the record and hid it again.

Here Nephi prophesies that “there shall be many which shall believe the words which are written.” Meaning that those words “written unto the gentiles” or what we have in print now, will in fact be believed by “many.” They “shall believe the words.” Nephi has assured us of that. Therefore, it is necessary that some group from among the gentiles distinguish itself by actually believing the words of the Book of Mormon. It will be this group which “shall carry them forth unto the remnant of” Nephi’s seed. Notice that they will “believe” in the book. (That will require them to have a correct understanding of the book’s content, otherwise they would have unbelief.)

Those who do not believe (or have unbelief) in the Book of Mormon will not, indeed cannot, bring the words to the remnant. They aren’t qualified. They would not be able to convert any of the remnant. It will be those who actually believe in and accept the precepts of the Book of Mormon who will carry them forth unto the remnant.

Considering the otherwise direful predictions about the gentiles, this is the one way where hope may come to them. The group that believes in the Book of Mormon will necessarily have to be preserved to fulfill their responsibility to carry the words to the remnant. This is a subset of the Saints, and clearly not all of the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For the church itself, there remains a condemnation because of their

unbelief in the book (D&C 84:54–57). This condemnation of the church was repeated by President Benson and again by Elder Oaks.

If, therefore, you would like to be preserved, the manner in which that will happen, according to Nephi’s prophecy, will necessarily require you to abandon the condemnation of the larger church, and become one of those who believe in the Book of Mormon. Not only to say, but to do; as Section 84 above requires.

It is surprising how much information the Book of Mormon has for us. It is even more surprising that with such detail available to us, we have done so little to understand and teach it. The words of this prophecy by Nephi ought to be proclaimed among us. However, very little attention has been given to it.

One of the effects of pride is blindness. We can’t see what our pride prevents us from seeing. We have to come down to the depths of humility (to use a phrase Nephi coined in 2 Nephi 9:42). Interestingly it is only the Book of Mormon which tells us to “come down in the depths of humility.” (2 Ne. 9:42; Helaman 6:5; and 3 Ne. 12:2). Once Nephi coined the phrase, Mormon used it twice in his abridgement. It is a good phrase. It does tell us what we must do.

The great work of the Lord in this day revolves around the Book of Mormon. More instruction, prophecy and promises are contained in that book for our day than any other. You can get closer to God by abiding its precepts than any other book.

Joseph Smith didn’t write it. It was written by ancient prophets, sealed up to come forth in our day, and translated by the gift and power of God.

It is a perilous book. We neglect it at the risk of failure. Don’t let it remain a “sealed book” for you. Anyone can come to believe in it if they are willing.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous — AUGUST 16, 2010 AT 4:26 PM

Seems I recall a while back Denver stating something akin to, “Forget your preconceived notions about the New Jerusalem being in Missouri,” and a promise that a discussion would be forthcoming. Are we still on track for that?

Denver Snuffer — AUGUST 16, 2010 AT 7:57 PM

I sense that finishing one subject in connection with understanding a full topic is imposing upon the patience of some of you. The whole setting needs to be set out, because it runs against a lot of our preconceived notions. We’re headed somewhere, but won’t get there for a while.

I wondered if this ought to be dealt with in a book instead of a blog when we started. Maybe it should be taken up there rather than here.

If you are patient, we’ll get there. But we can’t just leap from one topic to another without leaving out a large segment of the overall picture necessary for the pieces to fit together.

AUGUST 17, 2010

2 Nephi 30:4–5

And then shall the remnant of our seed know concerning us, how that we came out from Jerusalem, and that they are descendants of the Jews. And the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among them; wherefore, they shall be restored unto the knowledge of their fathers, and also to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was had among their fathers.

Once the remnant obtain a copy of the Book of Mormon, from a believing gentile hand, they will realize they are originally come out of Jerusalem. They will realize also that they are “descendants of the Jews.

It comes full circle. Those who were lost have returned again. The “prodigal” will return (Luke 15:11–32). There will be joy at the return.

This will happen as a preliminary to “the gospel of Jesus Christ [being] declared among them.” The Gospel being declared requires a true message, true messengers, authority, and ordinances. That will follow the remnant receiving the Book of Mormon. To what extent the gentiles bring those things and to what extent it will require heaven’s direct involvement, remains to be seen. But when the remnant reconnects, they will reconnect in every respect. The “gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among them!”

As a result of these events, the remnant “shall be restored unto the knowledge of their fathers.” What does it mean to be restored? What knowledge? Which fathers? The Nephites, and Lehi, or to the earlier “fathers” as well? Does this include Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

What does it mean they will be “also [restored] to the knowledge of Jesus Christ?” What does this “knowledge” involve? What kind of relationship with Christ does this imply?

If we wonder at the “knowledge” the remnant will obtain, we have a parallel given to us: The future remnant knowledge of Christ shall be akin to that “which was had among their fathers.” Meaning they will grow to know what the earlier Nephite disciples and peoples knew. What kind of knowledge does that include?

When the right target receives the right Gospel, the results are dramatic. When the wrong group is entrusted with the Gospel, they tend to let it atrophy, grow dim, and become a social order without the power of godliness. The restoration was intended to cure that problem. But as with any gift from God, we must do more than

to “take no thought but to ask.” (D&C 9:6–7). We must pursue knowledge and act with alacrity when it is given.

If we do not do this, then the result is not a blessing, but a cursing (D&C 124:47–48). No matter what we are offered by the Lord, we must act consistent with His will to receive the blessings offered. When we fail to fulfill the obligation He appoints to us, then we fail to obtain what was offered (D&C 124:31–32).

Once they have been given the gospel, the remnant will not fail. Their reconnection will be as a nail in a sure place, not to be moved. Their knowledge will grow into the perfect day, just as it might with anyone who is willing to receive what Christ offers (D&C 50:24). Noon at the summer solstice is a symbol of the perfect day. This year, in contrast, at midnight of the winter solstice there will be an eclipse. This would be a symbol in the heavens of the opposite of the perfect day. When it arrives it undoubtedly is a sign relevant to the time. (Those things are never accidents or mere happenstance.)

The ideas begin to accumulate. Darkness and light. Free will and acceptance of what is offered by God. So many divergent roads that are offered in place of the one that remains strait and narrow, but nevertheless in a straight course before you (2 Nephi 9:41).

AUGUST 17, 2010

2 Nephi 30:6

And then shall they rejoice; for they shall know that it is a blessing unto them from the hand of God; and their scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes; and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a pure and a delightsome people.

Once the remnant is in possession of the Gospel, they will “rejoice.” What does that mean? What form would “rejoicing” take as a result of receiving the Gospel?

What does it mean to “know that it is a blessing unto them from the hand of God?” How would they recognize that?

What are the “scales of darkness” which cover eyes? How would the scales have been over their eyes in the first place? What does it mean to have the scales “begin to fall from their eyes?” Does “begin to fall” mean something about a gradual process, rather than a single quick event? How do scales continue to remain in place, even as they “begin to fall?” What does that imply about the difficulty in overcoming errors because of false understanding or traditions? Even the remnant will struggle to fully remove the “scales of darkness.”

Why are there “not many generations” involved in this process? Do you need “generations” to pass away in order to fully remove darkness?

Why is it not possible to accomplish this in a single generation?

If the Lord’s purposes in redeeming the remnant will take “not many generations” then why do we think we can accomplish it in one? How gradual a process is involved?

What does it mean to become a “pure and delightsome people?” (For many editions of the Book of Mormon, this phrase used to be, “white and delightsome.” It was changed back to the original, “pure” rather than “white” in the 1980 edition.)

Why does purity and being “delightsome” to the Lord go together?

If this process is going to involve “not many generations” then how far away are we from this unfolding?

When we read prophecy like this, we should realize we are looking at unfolding history from the Lord's perspective. We want to know what will happen in our single lifetime. We are impatient. He is interested in having us know the truth.

Nephi's prophecy gives us a perspective that helps put our own time into context. We are in a hurry. History is not. There is a great deal left to do. There is a great deal left to happen. Nephi is letting us see this lengthy agenda.

AUGUST 18, 2010

2 Nephi 30:7–8

And it shall come to pass that the Jews which are scattered also shall begin to believe in Christ; and they shall begin to gather in upon the face of the land; and as many as shall believe in Christ shall also become a delightsome people. And it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall commence his work among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, to bring about the restoration of his people upon the earth.

Nephi has circled back and is reiterating his earlier prophecy, assuring us that this is the order, these are the priorities and this work is indeed universal.

The scattered Jews will begin to believe in Christ, and as they do they will be gathered again. These will also be among the people destined to become “delightsome” as a result of the Gospel.

Again, we have the reminder of the universal nature of this work. Every nation, kindred, tongue and people will be invited. The invitation is to result in a “restoration of His people upon the earth.” That is, the purpose of the creation was to produce God's people. By and large that hasn't happened.

From the rebellion of Adam's children, through the almost universal rebellion at the time of Noah, mankind has been unwilling to become His people. The times when we find a "people of God" upon the earth is the exception, not the rule.

The desire to see Zion return is not the same thing as seeing its return.

I sometimes wonder if people who speak of Zion have any clue of the tremendous gulf between what that will require and who we are as a people. Having a vocabulary is not the same thing as having the heart to produce Zion.

How do people live with one another in peace? Without any poor among them? While seeking the best interest of all, and without ambition. Why would we believe we can get that great task done in a short effort in our day? There is no precedent living in anything like Zion, in this or the last seven generations.

Having the Gospel understood is the first step, of course. As a group, there is such a poor command of the scriptures that we have some considerable study before us. Passing familiarity with some scriptures is not of much use. They are the standard given to us to help reveal the basis for becoming a covenant people.

I notice how the subject of "calling and election" gets mentioned from time to time. It would be better to learn about the fundamentals of the Gospel that we are not living than to attempt to understand what lies at the end of the struggle.

Losing ourselves implies something quite distant from the self-centered worry that grows out of not knowing your standing before God. The first step is to pray in sincerity, asking God to soften your heart that you may believe. The steps Nephi followed are described in first few chapters of *The Second Comforter*. Those

steps are not given to us merely to contemplate. They are given for us to follow.

As we see Nephi wrapping up his two books of scripture, he turns to the distant view of a return upon the earth of a “people of God.” We could have been that people. We even fancy ourselves as being likely to be among such a people. But if we lived that kind of life, we would already associate with such beings here, in the flesh. We would know we have part with them, because we would be associating with heaven now, as they will do then.

There is no one else who you need to look to other than the Lord. There is enough revealed in the Book of Mormon to tell you what you must do to become part of His people. You don’t need me, or a program, or a leader, other than Christ. He has offered the opportunity for each of us to become part of His people.

Well, onward still....

AUGUST 18, 2010

2 Nephi 30:9–10

And with righteousness shall the Lord God judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. For the time speedily cometh that the Lord God shall cause a great division among the people, and the wicked will he destroy; and he will spare his people, yea, even if it so be that he must destroy the wicked by fire.

Nephi quotes Isaiah to weave a second witness into this end-of-times description of the Lord’s agenda.

Righteousness for the poor. Equity for the meek. Smiting for the earth. Death to the wicked. For the poor, why “righteousness?”

For the meek, why “equity?” For the earth, why shall it be “smitten?” What is the “rod of His mouth” to be used to smite the earth?

For the wicked, it is the “breath of His lips” which will slay. Have you considered what this means? Why His “breath” when that is the mechanism that brings life to Adam, (Gen. 2:7) and the Spirit to His disciples? (John 20:22) Does the word “breath” imply the converse of bringing life, and the removal of the Holy Spirit? If so, how do those ideas affect the meaning of the Lord’s decision to “slay the wicked?” In what sense will they be “slain?”

What does it mean that “the time speedily cometh?” From what point is the measure taken to decide the “speed” of His coming? Is it from Nephi’s prophecy, or from the time in which the prophecy is set?

What does it mean there will be “caused a great division?” How would that “division” manifest itself? Is it first spiritual, then physical? Or is it both from the start? If it is first a great spiritual division, followed at some point in a physical gathering together of these two groups into separate locations, how would it unfold?

How will the wicked be “destroyed?” (Mormon 4:5). Will they also be able to destroy the people whom the Lord identifies as “His people?” (1 Ne. 22:16).

What does it mean that the Lord “will spare His people, yea, even if it so be that He must destroy the wicked by fire?” Is that true? Would the Lord personally intervene to protect His people? Has He done anything like that before? If so, when? Why? Can He still do that today? In a time of tremendous upheaval and destruction, can He selectively preserve His people? (3 Nephi 9:1–13). What protection is there from such forces of destruction?

Have you noticed how things seem to be speeding up? Business cycles that used to take generations now play themselves out

in a few years. Political dynasties are crumbling and institutions which were once impervious to change are being forced to change. Cultural norms are changing so quickly that change is itself the new culture. The days seem to be shortening, don't they (Matt. 24:22; JS-Matt. 1:20).

AUGUST 19, 2010

2 Nephi 30:11–15

And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. And then shall the wolf dwell with the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling, together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

These words, again borrowed from Isaiah, are familiar to all of us. The time frame puts it inside the larger Nephi prophecy regarding the fulfillment of covenants made to the “fathers.”

What is interesting for us is the narrative of end-of-times peace and return of righteousness. This includes a “people of God” returning to inhabit the earth set inside the Book of Mormon narrative prophecy. The Book of Mormon remnant figure centrally into the progression. It (the book) comes forth, and from that time until the fulfillment of the return of righteousness and peace, the book's involvement is central. The gentiles receive custody of it. Don't do much with it. Some few actually believe it. They will eventually take

it to the remnant. The remnant begin to come onboard with their conversion. They increase, the gentiles decrease, the momentum builds. The gentiles ultimately get swept away, while the remnant begin to grow into the fullness of the Gospel in all its rights, ordinances, and return to the knowledge of Christ.

As the culmination of these trends, which begin small, but gain momentum as they roll forth, we see the final product for what it was always intended to become: Zion. Once the stone cut out of the mountain without hands begins to roll forth, it will not stop until it has filled the whole earth.

Among those who are destined to fulfill these events, they will “not hurt nor destroy in all” the Lord’s “holy mountain.” What does it mean to “not hurt?” What does it mean to “not destroy?” Why a “holy mountain?”

The earth itself will be “full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” What “knowledge of the Lord” is referred to here? How completely does the water cover the sea? Will there be any need for one man to say to another “know ye the Lord” in that day, or will all who remain know Him? (Jer. 31:34; D&C 84:96–99).

We imagine that day, but do not live for it. We think ourselves qualified to be part of that group. But ask yourself, do you make others hurt? Do others who hurt find relief from their pain by what you are willing to suffer, without returning evil for evil, but good for evil? Or do you believe such ideas to be “weird?” Because they are, indeed, for all we do, all we say, all we live and all we are, so alien to us that they are weird indeed.

From inside that culture, looking back at us and our time, reading our foolishness, observing our entertainment, they will think us more than “weird.” They will think us utterly insane. And they will be right. We are the madmen, claiming ourselves to be

righteous, while dwelling in raw sewage and celebrating revenge, discord, hatred and anger. We speak of Zion while marketing Babylon. We ask “what will sell” before we undertake any project. We study the trends of the fallen, wicked and perverse in order to adapt our faith, our words, and our conversations to appeal to Babylon. The social statistics of Latter-day Saints run about 7 years behind the larger population.

We’re all headed to hell, but console ourselves that we remain “peculiar” because we are slower in our descent than the larger population. It never occurs to us that a complete break will be needed.

The Lord plans to provide that break. The question then will be whether we join with those who lament the fall of Babylon (Rev. 18:9–11), or among those who will rejoice at the coming of Zion (D&C 84:96–102). Perspective is affected by what our hearts value. Unfortunately, the choice is “either-or,” and not both (Luke 16:13).

Well this is indeed “getting weird”...

AUGUST 19, 2010

2 Nephi 30:16–17

Wherefore, the things of all nations shall be made known; yea, all things shall be made known unto the children of men. There is nothing which is secret save it shall be revealed; there is no work of darkness save it shall be made manifest in the light; and there is nothing which is sealed upon the earth save it shall be loosed.

This is another confirmation by Nephi of what was written before. The Nephites will have the records of the Jews and lost tribes of Israel, and the Jews and the lost tribes will have the records of the Nephites. “The things of all nations” will include these various Divine messages and teachings given to the various nations/people

of the earth. The “children of men” in that day will have available to them the records that allow them to see how the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. They will realize that these distant echoes of the Gospel which appear in other faiths, traditions and sacred texts were, at one time, an authentic communication from the Lord or His servants.

So much of what appears to contradict will be found to have a common root. The things that have been sealed and kept from public discourse will become part of the public dialogue. We will not have the same requirement for “secrets” to be kept. But “nothing which is secret” will remain so. It will all “be revealed.”

When the truth is unsealed, so are the conspiracies, the foolishness and the ambitions that have worked to keep the truth from becoming known. None of the “work of darkness” which has been afoot will be kept from public view, but “it shall be manifest in the light.” Whatever excuses men have had to suppress the truth, deny the Spirit, and employ the “arm of flesh” as their guide will be exposed for what they are. They will put on display. The wisdom of the wise will be seen for the foolishness it was. The strength of man’s arm, the studied foolishness gained from social sciences, opinion polling, focus groups and other attempts to figure out where the ignorant are going and jump in front of the trend to feign leadership, will be seen for what it was. The endless praise and adoration given to these foolish and weak political, governmental, business, educational and “moral” leaders will be seen for what it was.

Oh the wisdom of God and the foolishness of men! When men are educated they think they are wise (2 Nephi 9:28). All the studied ignorance of men will be recognized as foolishness, rather than as wisdom as it is now (1 Cor. 3:19). Then the fools will at last shut their mouths and cease to thunder out their errors (Isa. 52:15).

You can almost feel Nephi's relief as he contemplates this outcome. The final vindication of the truth. The final conquest of the foolishness of men. It is consoling to consider that this odd and corrupt world we find ourselves in will at some point finally end. The truth will be vindicated. The errors and evil we enshrine in our institutions and art will collapse. We will emerge from behind the scales of darkness covering our eyes and at last see things as they are in the light of heaven.

...I'm thinking the most common reaction will be "oops" or some four letter equivalent...

You realize you can fix that today, right? You know the Gospel intends to take you out of this fallen world and into that kind of light even now, right? That was what Christ was trying to do all along. That is why He's provided the scriptures (primarily the Book of Mormon for us) to help us catch on before the terrible end is upon us. So you can do something about all this.

Or you can think it just "weird," remain as you are, and enjoy the decline. 'Cuz lotsa folks is do'in just that, ya know...

AUGUST 20, 2010

2 Nephi 30:18

Wherefore, all things which have been revealed unto the children of men shall at that day be revealed; and Satan shall have power over the hearts of the children of men no more, for a long time. And now, my beloved brethren, I make an end of my sayings.

The truth will be revealed. But truth of this nature will involve something else. Satan will have no power. When we gather enough light and truth, Satan's influence and power ends. We find that Satan is "cast out" because he can no longer deceive.

His primary tool is the lie. When there is enough truth, there is no longer any reason to believe or teach a lie. Therefore, he has lost power.

His secondary tool is the lusts and appetites of the flesh. When these are controlled, he is rendered completely ineffective. He is bound.

Once the lies are exposed and the appetites of the flesh are subdued, the hearts of men are freed from captivity. Nephi is describing a future day when this will be the common situation for mankind.

Of course, this doesn't have to be a future day. It is possible to gain enough light and truth today so the lies are exposed to your view. It is also possible to subdue the appetites of the flesh. In any event, the desires, appetites and passions ought to be kept within the bounds which the Lord prescribes. We say that, but we don't often do that. Most people are not willing to actually subdue their desires, passions and appetites. It seems weird to suppress the desire for revenge, to actually turn the other cheek, and to return good for evil. In short, it would appear the Savior's conduct in willingly going to His death without accepting Peter's offer to use the sword in His defense was a bit nutty. At least from the perspective of the damned. (They can't even stop watching pornography. Latter-day "Saint" indeed. What's saintly about the vengeful, lustful, and gluttonous? But that's an aside...)

Binding Satan so he has no "power over the hearts of the children of men" is an interesting phrase. Why "power?" Why "power over the hearts?" Why "children of men" rather than sons of God? (See the dialogue between Moses and Satan where Moses refers to himself as a "son of God" but Satan calls him a "son of man" in Moses 1:12-13). Isn't that interesting?

Why is it that such power over the hearts of the children of men will be lost? It is as if entry into a Telestial World will bring about the binding of Satan, even before becoming a “son of God,” and beginning the final journey into the Lord’s presence. This is interesting—as if Nephi understood the Temple itself (2 Nephi 5:16).

Satan’s power is lost for a “long time” but not forever. Why? How will Satan be loosed again? (Rev. 20:7; D&C 43: 31; D&C 88:110). I’ve described this event and the reasons in “The Great Competition” in *Ten Parables*.

The final phrase is because Nephi was through with his message for a while. He may have intended to take his writing up again, but the final phrase indicates he was done for the time. We cannot tell how long it was between the last verse of Chapter 30 and the first verse of Chapter 31. When he takes up his writing again, he is clearly ending his ministry. How long he took to compose his final thoughts is undisclosed. But this will be an old man, finishing his mortal warning to us.

Let’s take a look at it...

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · AUGUST 20, 2010 AT 8:07 AM

Denver,

You said, “It is as if entry into a Telestial World will bring about the binding of Satan...”

Did you mean Telestial or Terrestrial? It makes sense to me if you meant Terrestrial, but I am confused if you really meant Telestial since you have often mentioned this world now is a telestial kingdom and clearly Satan is not even close to being bound in such a world (unless we do it individually, as you always point out). Am I missing something of a critical teaching you are trying to convey and the temple, too? Or was this a mistype? Would love your help.

Denver Snuffer · AUGUST 20, 2010 AT 10:20 AM

That's right, should be "Terrestrial" instead.

CHAPTER 4

2 Nephi 31

AUGUST 20, 2010

2 Nephi 31:1

And now I, Nephi, make an end of my prophesying unto you, my beloved brethren. And I cannot write but a few things, which I know must surely come to pass; neither can I write but a few of the words of my brother Jacob.

Don't make any mistakes, Nephi was a prophet. He knew he was a prophet. He also knew his testimony and explanations were indeed prophesy. So, in case you were wondering, here he removes any doubt. He is "making an end of my prophesying unto you." And he identifies "you" to mean his "beloved brethren." Who would that be? Could gentiles be included as his "beloved brethren?" What would a gentile have to do or be in order to qualify for that description? They why aren't you doing that?

Why "cannot" he "write but a few things" further? Is there a limit put upon his prophecy for us? (1 Nephi 14:28). Would he have liked to have said more? Does he assure us what he did write is true and complete as far as permitted to be written? (1 Nephi 14:30).

What does it mean that he knows it “must surely come to pass?” How can he know that? What does it mean about the information we have in his record? How closely was the information given in conformity with what the Lord wanted him to reveal? How seriously should we take the record or prophecy of Nephi?

Why does Nephi refer again to his brother Jacob? What did Nephi and Jacob have in common in their faith and knowledge? (2 Nephi 11:2–3). What does this imply about the validity of their testimony, their prophecy, their commission to deliver words of warning? What level of attention should their words attract from us? If we give them strict heed, will they lead us in the way of life and salvation?

As he ends his record, an aging and dying prophet, whose journey began on another continent is pleading to us to save ourselves. He has been such a significant source of faith in moments of despair, that when the Lord was reminding Joseph Smith of faith in troubled times, He drew directly from Nephi’s life. Joseph was in Liberty Jail, abandoned by force of arms by his people, who had been evicted from Missouri. The governor had ordered the extermination of Mormons if they remained. Joseph’s people had been killed, mobbed, evicted, driven in the snow from Missouri, their property pillaged, their women abused, and their houses burned. In a dungeon cell, Joseph was lamenting his plight. He felt abandoned by the Saints, and by God. As he pled for relief, the Lord told him to face adversity without complaint, because it would ultimately be for his good. When the Lord spoke and reminded Joseph of moments of despair over which faith and hope triumphed, one of the moments used was taken from Nephi’s life:

if the billowing surge conspire against thee; if fierce winds become thine enemy; if the heavens gather blackness, and all the elements

combine to hedge up the way; and above all, if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. (See, 1 Nephi 18:13–16)

It was no accident that the 116 pages were lost, compelling the use of Nephi's full record to begin the Book of Mormon. It was a "wise purpose" indeed (Words of Mormon 1:6–7). These words were always destined to come to us unabridged, from the hand of Nephi unaltered, translated by the gift and power of God into our language by Joseph Smith. Now they confront us, inform us, elevate us, warn us and deliver to us the means of obtaining the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

AUGUST 21, 2010

2 Nephi 31:2

Wherefore, the things which I have written sufficeth me, save it be a few words which I must speak concerning the doctrine of Christ; wherefore, I shall speak unto you plainly, according to the plainness of my prophesying.

Nephi has been pondering for over four decades about the great revelations given to him in the Arabian Peninsula (2 Nephi 4:16 and 2 Nephi 5:34). His creation of, and inscription on the plates were after these long deliberations and reflections.

When he says "the things which I have written sufficeth me," he is putting a punctuation mark on his plates. He is saying he has finished his ministry, finished his prophecy. He has refined and set out his message in a deliberate, careful way. These books of Nephi are not internet blogs undertaken daily. They are not rapid-fire responses, nor stream-of-consciousness statements. They were

planned for the ages. Born from pondering, inspired by revelation, described as prophecy by the author, and filled with light and truth if considered with care by any reader. Nephi's pronouncement that they "sufficeth me" is a powerful statement by an aging prophet.

Years of preparation and reflection allow him to "speak plainly" to us. There's no need to be vague. No reason to hide our plight from us. He wants us to understand. When he attempts to "speak unto you plainly, according to the plainness of my prophesying," we read into it the wrong definitions, associate his words with others who will never read the book, and consider ourselves blessed and vindicated instead of condemned, and called to repentance. We do that a lot. What good is it to read things which tell you to be proud? Why follow a religion that tells you you've no reason to repent? Everyone but you is going to hell, right? (Alma 31:17-18). Because so long as you remain affiliated with the broad mainstream of your church, God will save you. And if there's any hint of error, He will beat you with a few stripes and all will be well. Nephi has already condemned that as an error, hasn't he? (2 Nephi 28:8).

If his words were plain and intended to be taken at face value, why read into them justification for yourself and your sins? Why think they condemn everyone but you? Why are they speaking in disparaging terms about **those who will never have the book**? Why did Nephi write a book **condemning only those who will never read it**? Surely, if he was in fact "plain" in his meaning, then we ought not read anything into it other than what it says and how it says it. **It must be a message to us.**

If it is addressed to us, then we have more than one "wo" pronounced upon us by Nephi. We have been warned. We need to change what we are doing. The gentiles with whom we are identified

(D&C 109:60) are collectively condemned. We need to separate ourselves by our behavior from theirs. We need to repent.

Now, just in case you think, as a recent comment has asserted, that the Lord has sent another message vindicating us as a collective gentile body/church in D&C 1:30, I would remind you that revelation came from the Lord in 1831. In the following year the Lord gave another revelation that put the church under condemnation (D&C 84:54–58). We know that condemnation was not lifted, because of President Benson and Elder Oaks.

More troubling still is the Lord's threat to reject the gentile church altogether in January of 1841 if the church did not follow His strict appointment and complete building a temple in the time He provided (D&C 124:31–32). The warning was given that even if the temple were built, we would still be condemned if we failed to do what He said (D&C 124:47–48).

Did we keep the appointment given us? The Nauvoo Temple was not completed before Joseph Smith died. The endowment was not completed by Joseph, but Brigham Young was told he had to finish it (See this postdated June 30 titled 1 Nephi 13:33–34). Did we keep the appointment? Have we been able to avoid being rejected as a church? Have our covenants been fulfilled?

Why do we repeat endlessly the praise from 1831 but ignore the threatened rejection that came in 1841? From January of 1841, until Joseph's death in June of 1844, we had three and a half years to complete the Nauvoo Temple. Was that "sufficient time" to do what was required of us? If so, we did not complete it. Why was Joseph taken? Was that any indication about when the "sufficient time" expired? If so, what then? Where would that leave us?

Is our best hope to be found in the messages and warnings of the Book of Mormon? Can there be gentiles found who will believe its message? How carefully ought we study it?

Did you know the church had almost no use for the Book of Mormon until Hugh Nibley's efforts? (You know that if you've read *Eighteen Verses*.) Hugh Nibley, by his efforts beginning in the 1950's, practically discovered the Book of Mormon for the church. He's gone now.

Even though Moses was taken from ancient Israel, and with him the authority of the priesthood, (see D&C 84:25–26) the ancient Israelites remained the Lord's people. He still worked through them and sent them messengers from time to time. These messengers were rarely the High Priest. Although in Samuel's case he displaced the High Priest (1 Samuel 3:1–21). They were sent from time to time. Their qualifications were private, as the Lord told Moses they would be (Numbers 12:6). I have no doubt Hugh Nibley was sent to us. If you've paid close attention, his departure has created an intellectual collapse at the center of the faith, with various egos contending to be noticed. They aspire to put upon them Hugh Nibley's mantle. They are not made of the same stuff, called with the same calling, nor endowed with the same capacities.

I doubt we'll see someone like him again. Perhaps we may someday see someone with an equally important message, but among those born in this dispensation, there is none to compare to Brother Nibley.

Well, now we're off-point again. So back to Nephi...

AUGUST 22, 2010

2 Nephi 31:3

For my soul delighteth in plainness; for after this manner doth the Lord God work among the children of men. For the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding; for he speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding.

This raises an interesting side issue. Nephi's explanation of how God speaks to different people "according to their language" is something worth explaining. We have a great example in the visit of John the Baptist to Joseph and Oliver found in *JS-H* 1:68–70 and Oliver's account in the footnote there. The language they quote from John the Baptist is phrased differently by each of them, although both are quoting the angel. Angel's leave an impression. Notwithstanding Joseph Fielding Smith's teaching that memory from such things fade with time, my experience tells me quite the contrary. Such things are distinct and memorable. Often, if you need to hear a quote, the person who received it can quote word-for-word what they were told many years later; particularly when the quote is a declarative statement of what is to be or what is conferred. When, therefore, Joseph and Oliver give two different accounts of the quote, I understand this not to be a contradiction, but an example of the thing Nephi is referring to in this verse.

The communication of angels is not usually verbal in the traditional sense of verbal communication. That is, no air is being vibrated. Rather, the form the communication takes is for the angel to "speak" by delivering to the mind of the person spoken to the concept or declaration to be understood. Then the person, receiving the concept or declaration into their mind, is obliged to convert into words the message received. If the vocabulary of the

recipient is German, they will use German to reduce the message to words. If English, they will use English. If their vocabulary is rich and complex, the words may be more exact. If their vocabulary is simple, the words may be simple.

However one comes into the presence of God or His angelic ministers, once there, the thoughts that come to the person will conform to their understanding, their vocabulary, their manner of phrasing. The underlying purpose is always the same: to make the communication plain to the understanding of the person visited.

It is also true that the Lord “giveth light unto the understanding” and does so according to the heed and diligence we give to what we have already received (Alma 12:9, see also D&C 50:24). We cannot understand some things even if they are explained to us if we do not have the necessary light to permit that understanding. Light and truth attract one another.

When we approach God, we do so by degrees not merely by study. We find ourselves gaining light that quickens our understanding. What we cannot understand at first, gains clarity only after a period of living true to the things we already have.

The commandments are not something we follow to please God, but something we do to understand God. Living true to what we believe He expects of us, allows us to gain an appreciation for what kind of Being He truly is. In that sense, the commandments are not so much burdens to bear, but revelations to understand. The greatest understanding, of course, does not lie in strict conformity to the letter of any law or commandment, but the insight obtained from the underlying principle you discover as you follow it. Commandments should soften or break your heart, not harden it. When a commandment hardens the heart of the follower, they have misunderstood the commandment altogether. This was the case with

the accusers of Christ, who followed the underlying intent with perfection, while breaking the superficial requirements regularly.

None of it will become “plain” to the follower until they have done and understood what the commandments were attempting to reveal to them. When, however, you encounter a Nephi, you have someone who now sees the issues plainly. It was meant for us all to see them plainly.

AUGUST 23, 2010

2 Nephi 31:4

Wherefore, I would that ye should remember that I have spoken unto you concerning that prophet which the Lord showed unto me, that should baptize the Lamb of God, which should take away the sins of the world.

This puts us back into the narrative Nephi wrote much earlier in his first book. He described this in 1 Nephi 11:27. Although the Lord’s mortal ministry was future, and separated by more than half-a-millennium, Nephi witnessed it. The Lord is able to make witnesses of His mortal ministry even of someone who lived at another time and place, as He has done with Nephi.

During that vision, Nephi saw more than the Lord’s mortal ministry. He was shown the entire history of the world through the end of time. However, Nephi was only permitted to bear selective testimony of what he saw. Others were given responsibility for testifying to portions of what Nephi saw, but was not permitted to record. He saw it all. He was to record only some of what he saw. He was told at a certain point that the responsibility for recording it became John the Beloved’s and not Nephi’s (See 1 Nephi 14:19–28).

Nephi saw it, John the Beloved saw it, and others, including Isaiah, also saw it (1 Nephi 14:26). I've explained this in *Nephi's Isaiah*.

Here Nephi returns to the Lord's baptism to begin an explanation of "the doctrine of Christ" (2 Nephi 31:2) so that Nephi's testimony refocuses the reader on the path required for salvation. Since Nephi's primary reason for writing is to save others, he cannot finish without a final direct appeal for all to understand the "doctrine of Christ."

What is the difference between "the doctrine of Christ" and the "Gospel of Jesus Christ?" How do they relate to one another?

Here Nephi has linked together four distinct thoughts: First he has 1) already described the prophet which 2) the Lord had shown to Nephi. This was the earlier vision described above. That prophet 3) should baptize the Lamb of God during the Lord's mortal ministry. The Lord, who is the Lamb of God 4) should take away the sins of the world.

This is a specific time and setting. It involves a specific event and two persons: John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. Nephi has seen the event, and reminds us of it as a baseline from which to reconstruct the "doctrine of Christ."

Remember that the Jews who confronted John the Baptist did not ask him what ordinance he was performing. They did not ask why he was performing the ordinance. They only asked what authority permitted him to be performing an ordinance which they already understood and undoubtedly already practiced. Why would John baptize if he were not Christ, or Elias (in that context meaning Elijah), or another returning prophet who already had the authority (John 1:19-28). The inquisitors already understood the ordinance.

Baptism was a pre-Christian ordinance. Because of historic interests which conflict with one another, both the Jews and the Christians downplay or ignore that truth.

Look at the wording above and ask yourself: Why, when the vision is shown to Nephi, is Christ identified as “the Lord?” Then, when Nephi beholds His baptism, why does he refer to Christ as “the Lamb of God?” The same person, at first identified as “the Lord,” and then identified as “the Lamb of God.” Why these two identities? Why would it be so clear to Nephi that the Lord holds these two identities that he would use them in this single verse to make Christ’s identity and deeds clear to the reader? How do the different names/titles help us to better understand Christ?

Why is a pre-Christian prophet commissioned to know and write about these things? Why would the Nephite descendants from the time of this writing through the time of Moroni all be entitled to know about this event? What importance is it for us to understand this about Christ?

Well, let’s push further into the “doctrine of Christ” to see what it may persuade us to do or believe.

AUGUST 23, 2010

2 Nephi 31:5

And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfil all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water!

This is a missionary proof text, used to persuade everyone to get baptized. They used it on me. It worked. I got baptized.

How undeniably essential is baptism as a result of this argument? Does it seem to you that if Christ Himself needed to be baptized

that without it it would not be possible for anyone to please God? If Christ needed it, then undoubtedly all of Christ's inferiors need it as well. The only exception seems to be those children who are not accountable, and for whom Christ's atonement will be applied because of the justice and mercy applied to such unaccountable young souls (See Moroni 8:20–22). They need no baptism. But all of us do. Without it we have no hope for redemption.

It is indisputable from this verse that baptism is essential. But the question remains "why?" Why would this ordinance be required for residing in God's presence in the eternal worlds? We know, of course, that all such matters were ordained before the foundation of the world, and cannot be changed now (D&C 130:20–21). But that does not answer the question of "why?"

Have you ever inquired to know why? It is not answered in scripture. It is only implied. Sometimes the best place to look for an answer is to go back to the beginning. Reading the account of Adam's baptism (who was the first to receive the ordinance in mortality) we find a few things. By the water we keep the commandment (Moses 6:60). The first man was taken by the Spirit and baptized, put under the water and brought forth out of the water again (Moses 6:64). After he had been buried in the water and brought forth again, he was told he had been born again of the Spirit (Moses 6:65). Before any of the ordinance happened, however, Adam was told this:

behold, all things have their likeness, and all things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above

and beneath: all things bear record of me. (Moses 6:63) Did you catch that?

Just before Adam's baptism the Lord explains to Adam that the reason for "all things" being as they are is "to bear record of me [meaning Christ]." Baptism is designed to bear testimony of Christ. How so? In what way does baptism tell us about Christ?

Christ died, was buried, and on the third day arose from the dead (D&C 20:23). He said He would do that before His crucifixion (Mark 8:31; Luke 18:33). His disciples did not understand this prophecy (Luke 18:34).

Baptism is a reenactment of Christ's death and resurrection. Once you have been placed under the water you are cut off from the breath of life. If you remain under the water for too long, you will die. While there, you are only able to survive by holding your breath. You retain the power to live, if you return to the surface soon enough, but your life is dependent upon the one performing the ordinance. They must lift you back to return you to life. Just as Christ needed the power of His Father, we also need the power of the officiator to raise us back to life. It is as if the life of Christ has been beautifully choreographed. Christ was sent to lay down His life and take it up again. That is what He did. As Joseph Smith explained in the King Follett Discourse:

The scriptures inform us that Jesus said, as the Father hath power in himself, even so hath the Son power—to do what? Why, what the Father did. The answer is obvious—in a manner to lay down his body and take it up again. Jesus, what are you going to do? To lay down my life as my Father did, and take it up again. Do you believe it? If you do not believe it you do not believe the Bible. The scriptures say it, and I defy all the learning and wisdom and all

the combined powers of earth and hell together to refute it. Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power.

First we receive an ordinance which shows us the way by symbols. We are shown the way back to redemption and resurrection, but must see it with the eyes of faith, before we behold it as it truly is (Ether 12:19). If we are to rise from the dead and have eternal life in Christ, we must first enact that event through the ordinance which points to the reality of our future rise from the dead.

Ordinances are the preliminary act, designed to bear testimony of the real event. They are not the real thing, but a “type” of the real thing. They must be seen through the eyes of faith (Ether 12:19) to allow us to gain the faith necessary to obtain the real thing. Before you are resurrected in a whole, complete and glorified fashion you must first voluntarily agree to enact that future event, looking forward in faith to that future day. Before you enter into the Lord’s presence, you must first enact that in the Temple, looking forward in faith to that future day.

All things point to Christ. However, only those who have the faith to see within them the underlying reality with the “eyes of faith” will obtain to the final promises and covenants intended for all of us to obtain.

AUGUST 24, 2010

2 Nephi 31:6–7

And now, I would ask of you, my beloved brethren, wherein the Lamb of God did fulfill all righteousness in being baptized by water? Know ye not that he was holy? But notwithstanding he being holy, he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments.

Although Christ was the one mortal upon whom death could make no claim (He being holy), He nonetheless obeyed the same conditions as everyone else. Notwithstanding His holiness, His right to face judgment and not be condemned, He set the example. No one else could face the judgment and pass. Therefore, everyone other than Him would require baptism for repentance and remission of their sins. He did not. He determined to obey anyway so everyone could see the strait path by which they can obtain hope.

He was flesh. He was mortal. He could (and did) die. Though death could not claim Him, He was to die. Baptism is the great symbol of death and resurrection, and He is the resurrection. He lived the symbol as well as the reality, so all others could have part in that victory. The symbol to point the way. The reality to open the way. We are in turn “shown the way” by what He did.

He also “witnesses” before “the Father that he would be obedient unto Him.”

Think about the command of understanding Nephi is exhibiting here. He is telling us that Christ’s mortal ministry would include these very specific events for these very specific reasons. This was what he was permitted to tell us. What other information was

within his knowledge which he was forbidden from sharing? Does this level of understanding by Nephi tell you something about what can be learned from the Lord if you are diligent in following His path? Why, if you can see what may be available, would you not be willing to do whatever is asked of you in order to receive something similar in your own life?

Well, the foundation of the “doctrine of Christ” begins by seeing Christ’s example, learning of the necessity of baptism and obedience to the will of God. That is where everyone must begin. If you start right, you are likely to continue in the right way. But if you do not begin aright, then you are not likely to have any ability to return and find the right way. You cannot enter in by some other way. If you enter in the right way, you will begin to recognize the True Shepherd’s voice (John 10:1–5). This is the beginning. It is as important to the doctrine of Christ as all that will follow.

AUGUST 24, 2010

2 Nephi 31:8–9

Wherefore, after he was baptized with water the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove. And again, it showeth unto the children of men the straitness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them.

This is an interesting cause-and-effect. Once Christ was baptized, “the Holy Ghost descended upon Him” as a result of the baptism. Now, true enough an ordinance was instituted by which hands are laid upon a person, post-baptism, where the “gift of the Holy Ghost” is bestowed. This practice was instituted by Christ (Acts 8:14–17). However, in the case of Christ’s own baptism, no hands were put upon Him. He was baptized. The Holy Ghost descended upon Him.

It is clear that baptism is a gate through which all must pass. Immediately after the ordinance, the Holy Ghost must become the companion of those who are redeemed.

Christ set the example. We are obligated to follow the example.

Receiving baptism without also receiving the Spirit renders the event incomplete. Nephi will explain the essential nature of the Holy Ghost in the redemption process in a few more verses. It is clear that the Holy Ghost is the instrumentality by which redemption itself comes. The Spirit is the guide which will lead back to the Lord's presence. Without the guide, the doctrine of Christ is incomplete.

The water is something that we must pass through to keep the law. It is the companionship of the Spirit which makes you justified, by leading you to do what is right. It is the resulting application of Christ's blood on your behalf that will sanctify you (Moses 6:60). You cannot receive sanctification without first receiving baptism and then also the Holy Ghost.

If there is no other way, and all must comply, then the way is both "strait" and "narrow."

Christ's example is the only one for us to follow to obtain hope for our own salvation. He is the "prototype of the saved man" (Lecture 7, *Lectures on Faith*, paragraph 9). If it was necessary for Him, it is the more necessary for us.

Baptism is one thing, accepting the Holy Ghost is another. The one is objective, and openly visible when the act happens. The other is internal, involving welcoming a member of the Godhead into your life.

I remember kneeling on an Atlantic beach in the cool sand at the setting of the sun on the day of my baptism. The Atlantic is cold in September, and I was chilled from the ordinance, still wet

while kneeling, and shivering as the elders began the ordinance. When, however, they said: “receive the Holy Ghost” I remember becoming warm, beginning at my scalp and flowing downward until my entire body was warm and calm. It was palpable. It was physical. To me the experience was no less dramatic than the descent of the Holy Ghost “in the form of a dove” on the day of Christ’s baptism. It was every bit as objective, as physical and as memorable as any other distinct event in my life.

More importantly, I began to experience the fruits of that event immediately. What followed for me, within the hour of my baptism, was akin to what Joseph and Oliver experienced (*JS-H* 1:73). Within days I found also that the scriptures began to have far more distinct and clear meaning than ever before, again just as Joseph and Oliver found (*JS-H* 1:74).

It was clear to me that the Holy Ghost imparts something altogether more significant than what I alone could do, understand, or accomplish. It expanded capacity, enlightened and informed the mind, and led to understanding things which were unknown and unknowable before.

This process is not just mandatory. It is a far superior way to experience life than to live alone, without God in the world (*Alma* 41:11). It is a blessing, a gift. The “gift of the Holy Ghost” is, without question, the great “gift” coming from God to aid us in our return to Him.

Discoveries in Chiasmus

August 24, 2010



COMMENTS:

Denver Snuffer · AUGUST 25, 2010 AT 1:47 PM

There will be a volume of the talks published by, I believe, by either Mill Creek Press or Cedar Fort Press. Not entirely sure which will publish it, but I do know all the talks will be published in a single volume.

AUGUST 25, 2010

2 Nephi 31:10–11

And he said unto the children of men: Follow thou me. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father? And the Father said: Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son.

Notice the “prophetic-perfect” tense, where Nephi speaks of the Lord’s future conduct as if it were in the past. This is what happens

when a prophet speaks in prophecy. To the prophet, the events are in the past because he was shown it **before** writing it. Although the event has not occurred yet, the prophet remembers it in his mind and to him it is a past event.

This “remembering” the future makes the mind of the prophet akin to the mind of God.

Nephi again addresses his “beloved brethren” in this plea. Can we “follow Jesus” and not keep commandments? Is “be willing to keep the commandments” the same as “keeping the commandments?” Are all commandments to be kept? What about those that create conflict? How did Christ resolve the conflict between the commandment to do good and honor God on the Sabbath, with the commandment to do no work on the Sabbath? Are some commandments objective and without conflict (like baptism) while others may conflict with each other? Can you keep them all? Do you think you even know them all? How do you resolve conflicts? How do you make up for the wrongs you do in ignorance? (Mosiah 3:11).

Notice the quote Nephi reports from “the Father.” Again, Nephi is telling us something about his associations. He says the Father has stated: “Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son.” You can search all the scriptures and you will find this quote appears in this one place. Nephi is quoting the Father. Where did Nephi get the quote from if it does not otherwise appear in scripture?

What does that tell you about Nephi? What does it tell you about the Father’s view of baptism? What does it tell you about the actions of Christ and the will of the Father? Why does the Father refer to Christ as “my Beloved Son” while speaking of baptism?

With what emotion does the Father express Himself about Christ? Does that emotion attach to any of those who do as Christ did? Does it please the Father when we are baptized? Why?

What is God's work? (Moses 1:39). How does baptism relate to this work? How do we "follow Christ" without seeking to do everything He did? Can we do all He did? Why did Joseph say we must go from one exaltation to another? What does Joseph refer to when he explained:

you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power. (King Follett Discourse)

This was long after Joseph received the Vision of the Three Degrees of Glory found in Section 76. Section 76 was received February 16, 1832 while the King Follett Discourse was given April 7, 1844. Remember that all of what was seen in the vision was not recorded by Joseph:

But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion; Which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter. (D&C 76:114–115)

Why would some things be known to a prophet but "not lawful" for him to reveal to others?

What does the idea of "following Christ" imply, if it were taken to its fullest extent? Why would that require someone to go "from

one small degree to another?” What would be involved for someone to pass “from exaltation to exaltation,” as Joseph mentions in this discourse in April, 1844? How fully must we follow Christ?

If it is God’s work to bring to pass immortality and eternal life for His children, then must God work out salvation for His children to confer upon them immortality and eternal life? If another becomes “like God” will they undertake the same work? Will it require the same price to be paid? Is there another way?

AUGUST 25, 2010

2 Nephi 31:12

“And also, the voice of the Son came unto me, saying: He that is baptized in my name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me; wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do.”

Notice that immediately following the quote from the Father, Nephi adds a quote from the Son. Here Nephi makes it clear that the Father said to Nephi what is quoted in verse 11, because he adds, “And also, the voice of the Son came unto me, saying...” As soon as the Father stopped speaking, the Son added the comment he now quotes.

This contradicts what is an often referred to Mormon legend. Our legend is that the Father does nothing other than introduce the Son. This comes from a misreading of the Joseph Smith Translation of John 1:18. This verse is rendered in the *JKV* as follows:

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” *In the JST is changed to read: “No man hath seen God at any time except he hath borne record of the Son; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

This is the basis for asserting the Father doesn't ever speak, apart from introducing and bearing testimony of the Son. It is clearly a false notion, however, as the Father has many quoted words in the Book of Mormon. The fact the myth exists is, once again, evidence of how little we have as a people studied the Book of Mormon.

Well, returning to this verse, we find that the promise of the Holy Ghost is made by the Father! That is, Christ is saying when the Holy Ghost is sent, it is a gift from "the Father." Indeed it is! The Father of our spirits (Heb. 12:9) has given us all that spirit which dwells within us (D&C 130:22).

First the Father tells us to be baptized and follow Christ. Then Christ adds to it the plea: If you do that you will receive the Holy Ghost as a gift from the Father. So "follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do."

How seamless the will of the Father is with the desire of His Son!

How eager are both the Father and the Son for us to come to them!

How consistent is the message we receive from both the Father and the Son!

There is no other record in all scripture that puts together the promises of the Father and the plea of the Son like Nephi has done here!

How great a prophet was Nephi! How trusted and familiar must he have been with both the Father and the Son to be able to deliver this message to us!

Let it sink in. Let it be understood. Then, realize Nephi was a man just like you and I. He suffered, toiled, was rejected, fled and worked in obscurity to follow God against the active opposition of his own brothers. His knowledge and experiences are open to all.

If you have not realized before, now you should realize why Nephi forms the bedrock example in *The Second Comforter* to lay out the process of returning to God's presence. Among prophets, Nephi was a pillar of light, whose understanding reached into heaven itself.

Perhaps we should have been giving him more attention for the last 180 years. Well, it's not too late for you to begin to do so now.

AUGUST 26, 2010

2 Nephi 31:13

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism—yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.

Now we get the explanation of what it means to “follow Christ.” It is not merely the act itself, but the underlying intent of the act. To follow Him requires:

- Full purpose of heart. What does that imply or require?
- Acting no hypocrisy. How so?
- No deception before God. Can a man deceive God?
- Real intent. What does “real intent” include?
- Repenting of your sins. How does one repent of their sins?
- Witnessing unto the Father: How do you witness to Him?
- Willing to take upon you the name of Christ. How?

The only way I can think to touch upon Nephi's meaning is to get personal about this process. It is by how I have lived that I have come to understand Nephi's meaning.

I remember as the missionaries were teaching me that I came to the conviction that the restoration of the Gospel had indeed happened. It was not a happy thought. I did NOT want to become a Mormon. It seemed like a terrible change to attempt to make, in what was an otherwise content life at the time. As a lifestyle some of it seemed to have merit. Not drinking, smoking and living a higher moral standard certainly made some sense to me. But the association with Mormons had no appeal to me at the time. I thought them shallow and artificial in many ways, and did not want to become immersed in a society that seemed to be either a pretense, or if not, then living a standard I could never attain.

I reluctantly accepted baptism, not because I wanted to become Mormon, but because I truly believed it was the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ. However humiliating it may be to associate with a social group I had practically nothing in common, it was the right thing to do before God. I told God that I was doing this because of Him, and that I doubted I could live these standards, doubted I could be happy among these odd people, that I did not know if they were really sincere, but that I was. I intended to try to leave such sins behind as I understood I was committing, and to attempt to become part of the artificial life-form known as "Mormon." But I doubted my capacity to continue on to the end. In all this I was absolutely sincere, but completely hopeless about what it would result in over the long run.

I was, in fact, willing to take upon me these obligations as a matter between me and God. However badly it may turn out be-

tween me and other Mormons, I expected that as between me and God it would be better than alright. I thought it would please Him.

So I was baptized.

Oddly, upon baptism things changed. A great deal, in fact. What seemed unlikely for me to be able to do under my own capacity, became almost second-nature. These people who I feared I could never fit in with became my brothers and sisters. It took a surprisingly short time and I found that what I feared most was the lightest of burdens to carry. Associating with other Mormons was delightful. I found that I loved the Mormons and I loved being one of them. It ceased to be “them” and “me” but turned into “us” and “we.”

And, by damn, we are a peculiar lot. We’re the oddest people on the planet. Peculiar doesn’t even begin to capture our quirkiness, phobias, longings, hopes, aspirations, misunderstandings, convictions, genius mixed with stupidity, juxtapositions of truth and error, traditions and deep doctrines. We’re a cacophony, really. But underlying it all is a hope that we are on the right track and a conviction that we’re going to please God even if it requires us to offend Him.

I appreciate the faith restored through Joseph at a whole different level than the one which brought me into the fold. It is true. Abidingly and without any failing, the faith restored through Joseph is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The sad truth is, however, that faith has not been preserved as Joseph brought it back. Even from the time I was baptized in the waning four months of President Lee’s administration until today, the faith has undergone a radical revisionism. Today it isn’t even what President Kimball presided over. It is becoming increasingly altered, bureaucratized, regimented and turning into a religious

product managed by an increasingly menacing middle-management which prefers rules and regulations to the Spirit and truth. They manage it as if it is another Fortune 500 company whose product line is religion and religious paraphernalia. The Spirit increasingly withdraws from our councils, our conferences, our private as well as public conversations, because it is grieved, and not many people seem to notice as it does so.

The faith I joined still exists. But it is covered by layers of sediment making it progressively more difficult to breathe life into it. That original faith, the one that attracted me, was always meant to connect the believer to Christ. Directly, and without intermediaries. Each Saint was to be a prophet, because the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, according to John the Beloved.

But I began this process “acting no hypocrisy” and I will finish it remaining so. My “real intent” is before God, and the resistance, opposition and criticism of men will not alter that. Indeed, it cannot. As soon as I respect the opinions of men more than the “full purpose of heart” required of me, I cease to be “willing to take upon me the name of Christ.”

I understand Nephi’s words. I live them. I cannot do otherwise at this point. It is for that reason, therefore, that I have been privileged to receive “the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost;” which has permitted me from time to time to “speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.” It has not been easy. It is certainly not what I wanted when missionaries interrupted a content life, and introduced this inconvenient faith to a reluctant 19-year old. It was not what I expected when the journey began before baptism, nor what I thought would then follow immediately after I was baptized. I find now, as I survey

the altered and altering faith practiced by the Church I belong to, there are increasingly more troubles in living and acting with:

- Full purpose of heart
- Acting no hypocrisy
- No deception before God
- Real intent
- Repenting of my sins
- Witnessing unto the Father
- Willing to take upon me the name of Christ

But that will always remain a matter between the Father, the Lord and myself. Nephi lived these things, too. It was for that reason he understood them and was able to set them out with clarity in writing. Light and truth, which is intelligence, only come as a consequence of living it.

I will never stop being Mormon, nor forsake the faith I have accepted. I love associating with the Saints. I'm also glad to not be a part of leadership. I wouldn't want the condemnation that accompanies leading these people in the course that we are currently set. It is better to practice the faith as I understand it, explain it to those who care to listen, support those who try to keep my ward family at peace with one another, and raise my children to respect the light and truth.

I am content. More than content, I am filled with joy and hope for what lies ahead for myself and all those who have the testimony of Jesus.

AUGUST 26, 2010

2 Nephi 31:14

But, behold, my beloved brethren, thus came the voice of the Son unto me, saying: After ye have repented of your sins, and witnessed

unto the Father that ye are willing to keep my commandments, by the baptism of water, and have received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, and can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels, and after this should deny me, it would have been better for you that ye had not known me.

Nephi first gave us his personal testimony and witness of the principles. Having done so, now he adds the testimony and promise of Christ. Christ's promise and covenant are slightly different than Nephi's formula. But the two are nevertheless in complete harmony.

The "voice of the Son" declares to Nephi, and Nephi testifies to us, that "after ye have repented of you sins" and you have "witnessed unto the Father that ye are willing to keep [Christ's] commandments" by receiving "baptism of water" and then have received "baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost" you will speak with "a new tongue."

How can a man speak with a "new tongue?" What does "a new tongue" mean?

Think of Isaiah's meeting with the Lord in the Temple. He confessed how unworthy his speech had been, and how much regret he felt at having been a man of "unclean lips." (Isa. 6:5). His lips were unclean because of the low, mean, vulgar and unworthy things that occupied daily conversation. Or, as Joseph put it:

How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations—too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of the called and chosen of God, according to the purposes of His will, from before the foundation of the world!
(Letter from Liberty Jail)

To speak with a new tongue is to speak worthily of sacred things. It is to correctly weigh the truth of a matter, know by the

power of the Spirit that what is said is true and in conformity with God's will and then to speak it. It is to render sacred the vessel by the things it holds.

To speak with a new tongue is to be able to speak with the tongue of an angel because you have become an angel; or a companion of angels anyway. It is to elevate your thoughts, and then what proceeds forth from your mouth, because of what is in your thoughts. It is to reveal truth by the things you are authorized or commissioned to speak. It is to have a right to speak in the name of the Lord by His consent, His authority, His will. It is to "know, nothing doubting" that He is your Lord (Ether 3:19). It is to say, without hypocrisy, without guile, without hesitation and in truth, that the power of salvation is found in Christ and that you are His. That He has entrusted to you words of life, and that salvation can be found only in Him and His words. It is to have the Word of God within you.

Can an angel fall from grace? Only by being cast out of heaven (2 Nephi 2:17). When an angel falls he becomes a devil. For these it would be better if they had never known Christ, for they have decided to crucify Him anew. Because after having had the Holy Spirit make great things known unto them they have turned against the Lord by their knowing rebellion against Him (D&C 76:35). They are sons of perdition, and the heavens weep over them (D&C 76:26, 31-32). These are they who know the battle is and always has been the Lord's, and they either align themselves with Him or against Him.

You cannot speak with the tongue of angels without having knowledge of certain things given you. The clarity with which you can declare truth is distinct from what others say or claim to know. Light and truth, which is intelligence or the glory of God

(D&C 93:36), is not a mystery but an understood and appreciated experience where darkness has fled and God's own glory has been upon you (Moses 1:11).

This is what the Gospel of Christ was intended to confer. Not just belief, or faith, but knowledge and understanding. The journey back to God's presence was always the outcome intended by the Gospel. The Gospel message is and always has been that you should receive further light and knowledge by conversing with the Lord through the veil. Not through an intermediary, but in your own behalf, face to face.

The entirety of the process may be reduced to just a few words: You are intended to receive baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, which purges you from all sin. After being made clean, every whit, which is suggested by "fire" then through the instrumentality of the "Holy Ghost" which dwells within you you may be brought into remembrance of all things.

These then are the words of both Nephi and Christ. They agree. They are the two witnesses of this doctrine and truth. Therefore, it is so.

AUGUST 27, 2010

2 Nephi 31:15

"And I heard a voice from the Father, saying: Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."

The dialogue continues. It is clear the conversation being reported by Nephi is one where both the Son and the Father spoke to Nephi, and contributed to the dialogue. A question was posed about whether Nephi heard this in connection with his vision of Christ's mortal baptism by John the Baptist. He certainly beheld

that event (1 Nephi 11:27). However, the testimony and teaching of both the Father and Son regarding baptism, as reported by Nephi in this final sermon, are separate from that event. They are an independent revelation and explanation to Nephi, where both the Father and Son taught the importance of baptism.

We also have the important condition set out of “enduring to the end” as a requisite for salvation. A while ago there was a question about the concept of “enduring to the end” and *The Second Comforter*. They are directly linked. You cannot have a great season of concentrated effort, followed by abandonment of purpose. If it is in you to abandon the journey, then you will never qualify to receive these blessings. The Lord knows the intent of the heart. The preceding verses describe how the Lord measures the heart. You cannot deceive Him.

The Lord also knows whether it is in you to “endure to the end.” Whether the end has come is irrelevant to Him. He beholds all things, past, present and future (D&C 130:7). Therefore, He knows if you are willing to “endure to the end” before your life has been lived.

Enduring to the end, or the fixed purpose to always serve God so that you may always have His spirit to be with you, is essential to salvation. You claim this is your determination every time you take the sacrament (D&C 20:76–79). Whether you take this commitment seriously or not determines whether you are destined for salvation or not. It also determines if you are qualified to receive His personal ministry and comfort.

The Father declares: “Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful.” The reason Christ is the Father’s “Beloved” is directly related to His words being “true and faithful.” That is, Christ only does and says what He knows represents the Father’s will. He has

done this “from the beginning” (3 Nephi 11:11). He represents the “Word” of the Father because you can find in Christ’s words and deeds the very word of the Father (D&C 93:8).

It is this that qualified Christ to be the Redeemer. His words are faithful and true. So are Nephi’s. The words are the Lord’s though they were delivered by a man.

Nephi, having been true and faithful in all things, was able to converse with the Father and the Son through the veil and receive from them further instruction, counsel, warning, and comfort because of the things he learned. This is the pattern for all of us. This is the culminating message of the Gospel of Christ.

AUGUST 27, 2010

2 Nephi 31:16

“And now, my beloved brethren, I know by this that unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved.”

What does it mean to “endure to the end?” Is it to put up with all the difficulties of mortality? Are we simply supposed to overcome boredom, irritation, trials of our patience, and the offenses caused by others? Is that what it means to “endure?”

What about “endure to the end in following the example of the Son of the living God?” Is that something different?

What if you see errors and mistakes all around you? Is it “enduring” to keep your mouth shut? Do you need to speak up?

What about the changes that have been made or are being made which alarm you? Is it “enduring” to stay silent in the face of things that suggest this is harmful?

When I first went through the Temple, it was the understood and longstanding practice of the Saints to hold prayer circles in their

homes, invoking the “True Order of Prayer” as taught in the Temple. President Kimball sent a letter to the Stake Presidents terminating that practice. I have a copy of that letter. It said that prayer circles were no longer to be practiced outside the Temple—by anyone in the church.

Then in 1990 the True Order of Prayer was altered again, with the elimination of penalties. Thereafter the name changed to the “Order of Prayer,” rather than the “True Order of Prayer.”

Those who went through the Temple before 1990 would know about how to conduct a prayer circle involving the True Order of Prayer. But they were instructed not to do so outside the Temple. Those who went through after 1990 would not know how to conduct a True Order of Prayer circle, because they were not instructed in the Temple in anything other than the Order of Prayer.

It was still possible for those who knew the pre-1990 form to communicate the process in the Temple to others. However, recently there has begun a practice of hushing any discussions seen taking place inside the Celestial Rooms of the Temples.

It is as if those who are in control are opposed to keeping the earlier information, and working to keep it from being preserved by others. Is it “enduring to the end” to watch these changes and say nothing? Or is it “enduring” to actually endure, to preserve, to persevere against opposition and to keep as an enduring feature of the faith, information you received if you went through the Temple before 1990? Does a person who, in all sincerity before God, believes that Isaiah’s prophecy warned against this (Isa. 24:5), “endure” if he remains silent? Or must he speak up? If so, how and to who? Which is enduring? Which is enduring to the end in following the example of the Son of the Living God? What example did Christ set in relation to this kind of a conflict? Did Christ

submit, or resist authority? If He did both, how does one endure while appropriately weighing those things they will submit to, and those things they will resist?

What about Nephi's warning that you "cannot be saved" if you fail to do the right kind of "enduring" to the end? If salvation itself hinges upon solving this riddle, then how carefully must you weigh what you resist and what you submit to?

It is for this reason we work out our salvation before God as Nephi has explained, acting no hypocrisy, with real intent, having faith in God, but also with fear and trembling (Mormon 9:27, also Philip. 2:12).

Indeed, God has given us a test worthy of a God. And only those worthy of becoming among the gods will be able to solve the riddle. Because only they will humble themselves, come with a contrite spirit and broken heart to offer upon the altar a sacrifice worthy of being accepted. Others will proceed in ignorance and arrogance to proudly proclaim: "I know my culture is true!" "I know all is well in Zion!" "I follow a broad and safe mainstream into a great and spacious building where there is peace, pride, success, prosperity and assurance that I am saved while all around me there are those who will be cast down to hell!" Or similar such nonsense... Warned over Evangelical gibberish, with a vague Mormonesque vocabulary applied to it. Having a form of godliness, but without power. This new form of ungodliness will not be lacking in body, parts and passions, for the image of the idol raised will be the very image of the person looking in the mirror. They will think themselves destined to rule and reign over principalities, dominions, heights, depths and others. They are their own idols! What irony it all invokes! It must make the devil look up to heaven and laugh still. (Moses 7:26). Perhaps we ought to see some humor in it as

well....Or, since we're speaking of the loss of men's souls, maybe it can never be humorous. Only tragedy. Only disappointment. Only foolishness.

Where is the hope? Is there none? Yes, in repentance! Changing our course! Remembering God again! Restoring what has been lost! Returning and repenting! That's right! And Nephi has invited us to do just that.

So "enduring to the end in following the example of the Son of the living God" is not easy. Even understanding the meaning of these words is challenging. Thank you Nephi. You have proven yet again how prayerful we all must be. Let us, therefore, repent!

AUGUST 27, 2010

Spencer W. Kimball 1978

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
OFFICE OF THE FIRST PRESIDENCY
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84143

May 3, 1978

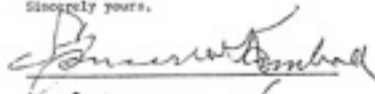
TO ALL STAKE PRESIDENTS AND BISHOPS:

Over the years special permission has been given from time to time for special prayer circles to be held either in the temples of the Church or in special rooms designated for that purpose in stake, ward, or other buildings.

Because of the increasing number of requests for such prayer circles, viewed in light of the rapid growth of the Church, and because of the complications that holding prayer circles in temples on Sunday have created and their tendency to take the participants away from their families and their other Church responsibilities, the Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve has decided that all such prayer circles, whether held in the temples or outside the temples, be discontinued immediately.

However, recognizing the value of these prayer circles in developing spirituality, commitment, and unity among those participating in them, we suggest that in lieu of such prayer circles, stake leaders may wish to consider the following: (1) that periodically stake leaders and their wives attend a temple session together in connection with which arrangements be made with the temple presidency for the prayer circle held during the endowment session to be composed of several stake leaders and their wives; and (2) that periodically stake leaders and their companions be called together in a special meeting where opportunity be given to those present to express themselves by way of testimony or exhortation.

Sincerely yours,



The First Presidency

AUGUST 27, 2010

2 Nephi 31:17

Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do; for, for this cause have

they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter. For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost.

You must “do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do.” You must “follow Him.” There is no other way nor name given under heaven to obtain salvation (Mosiah 5:8).

It was for this reason Nephi was “shown” these things. The Lord and His Father taught Nephi so he could in turn teach others, including us. The message was intended to save many, not just Nephi. But we must give heed to the message when we hear it.

The “gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water.” You must repent first. Then, having repented, receive baptism by water. When this is done, “then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost.”

Without the “fire” to purge the sacrifice upon the altar, it is not cleansed. It cannot become holy unless exposed to that fire.

But note—this is automatic. It is not by the laying on of hands. The laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost is not required in this teaching. Nephi, with elaboration from the Father and the Son, is teaching that this is an event that follows the process of “repentance and baptism by water.” That is, the ordinance of baptism, when accompanied by repentance and done right, is the reason for this event.

Laying on of hands is for “the gift of the Holy Ghost” so there may be a companion and guide for a person. This is an ordinance. It is also the moment one is confirmed a member of the church. But it is not necessarily co-equal with receiving “fire and the Holy

Ghost” as described here. There is nothing that excludes it from being coincidental in time, however. They may happen at the same moment. That is, after baptism, and while receiving the laying on of hands, one may receive both the gift of the Holy Ghost, and also fire and the Holy Ghost. As a result one is renewed in the manner described in this chapter. They are not co-equal.

Laying on of hands does not appear to be an ordinance in the Book of Mormon until the coming of Christ in 3 Nephi. The only potential exception is found in Alma 31:36, where Alma “clapped his hands upon them who were with him” and they received the Holy Ghost. This is similar to the Lord “breathing” the Holy Ghost upon His disciples (John 20:22). They were instructed to lay on hands, and would perform that act rather than breathing upon those who were to receive the Holy Ghost. The ordinance is different from “clapping” or from “breathing” and involves the process we follow in the church today (D&C 33:15).

The baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost promised here is given without man’s involvement, comes from heaven, is promised by both the Father and the Son. It is a signal of redemption, purification and holiness. It is included in the “gate” for entering into God’s presence. For God is a “consuming fire” and those who enter into that presence must be able to endure that fire (Heb. 12:29; see also Deu. 4:24). Without the capacity to do so, a person would be consumed by the flames (Lev. 10:1–2). The fire and the Holy Ghost are also given as a sign to the recipient that they may know it is safe for them to enter into God’s presence and not be consumed. In earlier versions of the First Vision, Joseph described the “pillar of light” as a “pillar of fire” which gradually descended. He wondered if the trees would be consumed as it descended, but seeing they were not he thought it safe for him to be exposed to it

as well. When it fell upon him, the vision opened up and he saw the Father and the Son.

Christ also entered into this glorious light on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–2).

We are to do as Nephi instructs, “do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do; for, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter.”

We live below the standard Christ set for us. We needn't. Have faith. Press forward feasting on His words. You can and will find Him there.

COMMENTS:

Eric · AUGUST 28, 2010 AT 11:05 AM

No need to post this however, I think that your premise is incorrect unless I misunderstand the following scriptures.

D&C 20:

41 And to confirm those who are baptized into the church, by the laying on of hands for the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, according to the scriptures;

42 And to teach, expound, exhort, baptize, and watch over the church;

43 And to confirm the church by the laying on of the hands, and the giving of the Holy Ghost;

Denver Snuffer · AUGUST 28, 2010 AT 12:20 PM

Eric:

Your point deserves a response: Section 20 was given at the organizational meeting for the Church on April 6, 1830, instructing on the manner for conducting ordinances in the Church. As of that moment, no one would thereafter become a Latter-day Saint without conforming to the system put into place, including laying on hands for the Holy Ghost. If, therefore, after that time anyone was to receive the blessings, they would receive it in that formalized system.

Nephi is writing in another day, under a different system. They are operating under the Law of Moses during Nephi's time. Yet the higher law was nonetheless accessible because they received and handed down the higher priesthood among themselves. Hence Alma's teachings about the higher priesthood. (You can't teach about what you don't understand. You can't understand what you have not experienced. At least not in the manner in which Alma is able to understand and expound upon it).

After April 6, 1830 anyone who receives "fire and the Holy Ghost" will have been baptized and confirmed into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. However, these are still not co-extensive. Meaning it is possible to be confirmed into the Church and yet not have received the experience. Hence the importance of Nephi's teachings in helping to illustrate the difference between the experience and the ordinance which we now perform.

You must seek for and obtain this experience. Ordinances turn keys, or point you toward the event. But the event is between you and God, not you and an officiator.

AUGUST 29, 2010

2 Nephi 31:18

And then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by the way ye should receive.

This is the path to "eternal life." It is "strait and narrow," but it is the way to eternal life. What is eternal life?

Why is the path "strait and narrow?" Is it to deprive you of something, or is it to direct you toward the only path where abundance can be obtained? If you become connected to the

“true vine,” are you then able to “bear fruit?” (John 15:4–7). If you bear fruit, what can you ask of Him that He will not give to you? (John 15:7). What does that mean? Have you read *Beloved Enos*? If so you will understand what is being discussed.

By doing as the Father and Son have asked, you “receive the Holy Ghost.” What does it mean to have the Holy Ghost dwell within you? (D&C 130:22). How does a spirit dwell inside a person? How does that spirit become “Holy” and the third member of the Godhead? If the scriptures say, and Christ taught that those who receive God’s word are gods, what does it mean? (John 10:34–36).

Did you notice the Father and Son promise the Holy Ghost, and when you receive it the Holy Ghost bears witness of the Father and Son? The first promise to you the last, and the last bears witness of the first. In one eternal round, the doctrine of Christ includes all members of the Godhead combined into a witness that will come to you, take up residence within you, and make you a vessel of the promises fulfilled. You are to return home, and take your abode again. Or, more correctly, permit Them to take up Their abode with you (John 14:23).

You become the record of God’s dealings with mankind. You become the promise of God’s presence, for you fulfill “the promise which He hath made.”

You receive the “record of heaven” or, more correctly, the Record of Heaven, for it is a proper name and title (Moses 6:61). When it has come to you, then this Record of Heaven will abide with you. You will be the one who possess the “peaceable things of immortal glory.” You will know “the truth of all things” for it will reside within you (Moses 6:61). You will understand wisdom, for she will be with you. You will know mercy, possess truth, and be capable of performing judgment, for the judgment you judge will

not be yours but will be given to you (3 Nephi 27:27). God will dwell within you.

When He appears to you, you will see Him as He is, for you will be at last like Him (1 John 3:1–2). If you can understand this, then you will purify yourself to receive it (1 John 3:3). For the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost will purge and purify, refining you with that holy fire (Mal. 3:2).

This doctrine of Christ will bring you in contact with God. You were meant to return to the Family you came from. It is the homecoming you have always felt was needed. You do not belong here. There is something higher, something more holy calling to you. It is not found in an institution, or program, or award, or office. It is only found in God, who is your home.

The doctrine of Christ is the doctrine of God's return to be with you and abide with you. It is Him coming to sup with you. He has been knocking at the door all these years seeking entry into your life (Rev. 3:20). If you let Him come in, He will prepare a throne for you (Rev. 3:21–22). Only those who have descended will be permitted to rise. Only those who humble themselves can be exalted (Matt. 23:12). While all those who rule rather than serve, will be disappointed. These are they who declare themselves worthy to be followed and insist they can use compulsion. They pretend to be on the Lord's errand while they are on their own. They crave dominion over others but will be cast down. They will be denied priesthood, and be left begging for water to cool their tongues for the torment of it all (D&C 121:37 and Luke 16:23–24).

How much better is it, then, for us to repent? It seems foolish to do otherwise. I find I'm persuaded by Nephi.

AUGUST 29, 2010

Don't Over-think Things

There are some brilliant comments from some of you. Profound comments, even. But you must be careful about over-thinking things. Doctrine is not to be understood as an academic or scholarly undertaking. (Remember the chapter in *Eighteen Verses* on Moroni 10:5.)

It is supposed to be understood in the doing (John 7:17). When you have done it, as Nephi has, then you will be able to explain the doctrine. To attempt to have a command of the doctrine without having done the will of the Father is to always be left without understanding. It is also not necessary to be able to fully expound the doctrine before doing it. It is necessary to take action consistent with the invitation offered to you.

Your mind can work at cross purposes. Remember the chapter on "Becoming as a Child" in *The Second Comforter*. In order to go forward you must go back. Simplicity is at the heart of God's offer to commune with you.

COMMENTS:

krichens · AUGUST 29, 2010 AT 6:37 PM

Yes we shouldn't overthink things but it's easier to know when you are overthinking vs not thinking enough once you are on the other side. Its like learning a new software program, if you don't know the program then the documentation doesn't make sense; but once you learn the program the documentation now makes sense but you don't really need it because you know the program.

Denver Snuffer · AUGUST 29, 2010 AT 7:37 PM

That software analogy is really on point. Experience leads to understanding. But understanding alone cannot ever give you experience.

Anonymous · AUGUST 29, 2010 AT 8:36 PM

So if understanding can never give us experience than how can those people who are raised in the millennium ever really understand evil? & how to fight it & stay strong around it, if they never experienced it around them?

Will the faithful from the 1st 6000 years of history be stronger & more valiant in eternity than those people in the millennium because they stayed righteous amid evil & had more experience with evil & thus learned more?

Anonymous · AUGUST 29, 2010 AT 9:37 PM

Anon @ 8:36...

I've wondered the same thing and also in relation to the doctrine that children under 8 who die are automatically saved/exalted in the Celestial Kingdom. Why would someone ever give a healing blessing to a child, then? Wouldn't that be such a disservice? Or even against the Lord's will, since what more can you have then exaltation?

Denver Snuffer · AUGUST 29, 2010 AT 9:44 PM

Read "The Great Competition" in *Ten Parables*. None will escape testing.

AUGUST 30, 2010

2 Nephi 31:19–20

And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save. Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life. in him,

“Once on the narrow path, are you done? Have you “arrived?” Is there “rest?”

No, you are on the path, but you cannot turn back. If you even look back, you risk moving on an uneven path (Luke 9:62).

You could not get this far if you hadn't followed “the word of Christ” and therefore you can only continue by following the word of Christ along the journey.

Your path is not just based on Christ's words, but also “with unshaken faith in Him.” What is “unshaken faith?”

What does it mean to rely “wholly upon the merits of Him who is mighty to save?” Can you take any pride in what you have done? Can you boast of something about yourself? (Mosiah 2:22–25).

What does it mean to “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ?” How would “steadfastness” be lived? What is a “perfect brightness of hope?” I've defined that kind of “hope” in **Eighteen Verses**.

How does any person come into possession of “a love of God and of all men?” Would that come from within, or as a gift from God? Moroni prayed for the gentiles to receive grace that they might obtain charity (Ether 12:36). The Lord replied that if the gentiles lack charity it would not cause any loss to Moroni, for he was saved (Ether 12:37). [Once again reflecting the pessimism which the latter-day gentiles are consistently viewed by the Book of Mormon.]

Why “press forward?”

What does it mean for us to be “feasting upon the word of Christ?” Is “feasting” something more than participating in a gospel doctrine class discussion once a week? What would it require for you to “feast” upon the “word of Christ?” Is scripture study alone

enough? Would you need to receive anything directly from Him to be included in the “feast?” How would that be obtained?

Did you notice once again we are reminded we must “endure to the end?” Once again, you must determine how “enduring” is to be accomplished, and what “enduring” will require.

If, however, you do these things then “behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.” Notice the promise of eternal life comes from the office of “the Father.” It is because this final step comes from the authority to make you a son. His office is the only one which can declare “this day have I begotten thee.” (Psalms 2:7).

AUGUST 30, 2010

2 Nephi 31:21

And now, behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. Amen.

This is “the way” to salvation. Nephi adds: “and there is none other way.” What does it mean there “is none other way?” Does that mean any religious system, institution, process, explanation or additional doctrine cannot save you? Is it true that you either enter in through this method or you cannot be saved? Is the purpose of the other rites, rituals, ordinances and teachings merely to bring you into this one true “way and there is none other way?” Or do you need to look for additional things, helps, ordinances, confirmations, and blessings to be conferred?

What of the other Gospel rites? They did come from God, didn’t they? How are we to understand the relationship between other

ordinances, even “higher ordinances” and this “doctrine of Christ” being explained by Nephi?

Clearly the “doctrine of Christ” is intended to give you the underlying basis for all salvation. There is no other “name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God” apart from Jesus Christ. He is the one who, by His obedience and sacrifice, put power into the plan of salvation. We know this to be true from everything declared by the prophets of God. But what about “this is the way; and there is none other way.” What does that mean? Does it exclude other ordinances or processes? Does it make the Law of Moses no longer binding upon Nephi and his posterity?

Clearly following Nephi’s ministry, his descendants did not abandon the Law of Moses (See, e.g., Jarom 1:5; Alma 25:15). And so, if there is “none other way,” it did not mean that the Nephites were to abandon practice of the ordinances then in effect. Nor does it mean that we abandon the ordinances now in effect in our day.

It is not that the ordinances are essential, but that the **purpose** of the ordinances are essential. The underlying meaning is essential. The “doctrine of Christ” becomes possible to understand, live and receive as you follow the ordinances. They are “helps” to bring you into this correct path. You will honor them, conform to them, seek for them, in order that you may inherit the blessings of the “doctrine of Christ.”

Why are ordinances instituted? They are to bring you to the point where you inherit in your body and spirit these great blessings of the “doctrine of Christ.” They prepare you. Their effect is to qualify you, instruct you, advance you toward this goal of receiving the blessings found in the doctrine of Christ as expounded by Nephi in this chapter. Once ordinances have been adopted, it is then unlikely you can ignore them and receive what is promised

by the “doctrine of Christ.” How can you refuse what is offered and still accept the underlying gift? How can you mix ingratitude and gratitude?

Is it important, therefore, to keep the ordinances intact? If changed does some of the communication involved in preparing you to receive the “doctrine of Christ” lose something?

For example, without the shedding of blood there can be no covenant. Christ’s blood is the culminating event which shed blood to activate a covenant between God and man. However, even after Christ’s sacrifice, we are still required to offer sacrifice, and even the return of animal sacrifice will happen at some point in this final dispensation. The Law of Moses was fulfilled and will not return. However, the sacrifice of blood by animals which was before the Law of Moses will return. As Joseph Smith taught:

These [animal] sacrifices, as well as every ordinance belonging to the Priesthood, will, when the Temple of the Lord shall be built, and the sons of Levi be purified, be fully restored and attended to in all their powers, ramifications, and blessings. This ever did and ever will exist when the powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood are sufficiently manifest; else how can the restitution of all things spoken of by the Holy Prophets be brought to pass. It is not to be understood that the law of Moses will be established again with all its rites and variety of ceremonies; this has never been spoken of by the prophets; but those things which existed prior to Moses’ day, namely, sacrifice, will be continued. (TPJS, p. 173, DHC 4:212)

When the penalties existed in the Temple ceremonies of our dispensation, we were reminded of the shedding of blood required for a covenant. When removed, we lose some of that memory. How would penalties involving the shedding of blood prepare people

for the return of animal sacrifice? Would it help remind them that shedding blood is required to establish a covenant? Even this final Dispensation of the Fullness of Time could not be an effective covenant without the shedding of blood to seal the testament or covenant (D&C 135:3).

Does the Gospel of Jesus Christ require the sacrifice of all things? (We've explained this before in relation to **The Lectures on Faith**.) If so, then how do we obtain the blessings we desire from the hand of God without being willing to make a similar sacrifice? If it is required, then how do we qualify to receive this baptism of fire spoken of by Nephi that will purge us from all sin and permit us to speak with a new tongue? How is this sacrifice made apart from the irrevocable commitment made within yourself to "endure to the end" by laying upon the altar everything you have, even your own life if necessary, to build up His kingdom? How, in a fallen world filled with sin, in a day where there is no sacrifice or consecration being made by others; how do you do that? What does the "doctrine of Christ" allow you to do without regard to the sins and errors you find all around you? Even if all the world is content to remain Telestial, or some few encourage only a Terrestrial law be followed, can you still find and live the "doctrine of Christ?" Does Nephi's teachings require you to be anything or anyone special or noteworthy in this life? Can you do this in private, between you and God? Can you follow the "doctrine of Christ" by what you think, ponder, pray, say, do and believe?

This statement, which concludes the exposition on "the doctrine of Christ" is concluded using the names of "the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. Amen." Although only a few will recognize this, it is a formula used when using the sealing authority. If you

are aware of this, then you would realize what Nephi has done is declared that he possesses the Patriarchal Priesthood authority, which invariably includes the power to seal. He will mention “sealing” his testimony again before he concludes. But if you know this is a formula employed in connection with this authority, you will recognize it. Within the ordinances of the church, we use this formula when baptizing and again when sealing a marriage in the Temple. All other intermediate ordinances are done “in the name of Jesus Christ.”

COMMENTS :

Steve • AUGUST 30, 2010 AT 3:44 PM

Denver said:

For example, without the shedding of blood there can be no covenant.

Steve:

I wonder what this says about the loss of the penalties. Without the penalties and at least the promise of shed blood, are there no covenants made in the endowment?

Similarly, without the anointings in the initiatories, are there no true ordinances performed there?

Sad. I live in sad days. I hope for hope to return.

Denver Snuffer • AUGUST 30, 2010 AT 4:10 PM

That's what the Book of Mormon allows. And that is why the Church was under condemnation: for not remembering the covenant found in the Book of Mormon. So, really, if you awaken to this opportunity (which few gentiles are going to do) the opportunity is yours.

We'll keep going and see what glories the Book of Mormon is able to bestow. :)

Anonymous · AUGUST 30, 2010 AT 8:01 PM

Denver:

The baptismal ordinance done in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost is virtually always done by one not holding the sealing authority. Notwithstanding you say using the name/titles of the Godhead indicates one who holds the sealing power. I am perplexed.

Denver Snuffer · AUGUST 30, 2010 AT 8:11 PM

Baptism has been specifically authorized to be performed “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” That authorization came from the Lord, by revelation (D&C 20:73). That authorization is important and allows the formula to be used. Then, in the Temple, it is once again prescribed for use. I point it out deliberately, and knowing that the authorization of the formula is deliberate, noteworthy and important to consider as a matter of meaning.

CHAPTER 5
2 Nephi 32

AUGUST 31, 2010

2 Nephi 32:1–2

And now, behold, my beloved brethren, I suppose that ye ponder somewhat in your hearts concerning that which ye should do after ye have entered in by the way. But, behold, why do ye ponder these things in your hearts? Do ye not remember that I said unto you that after ye had received the Holy Ghost ye could speak with the tongue of angels? And now, how could ye speak with the tongue of angels save it were by the Holy Ghost?

It is the program of the Gospel that communication and understanding of God's will should be obtained through revelation. That revelation comes from contact with, and communication by, the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is able to tell you "all things" (Moses 6:61; Moroni 10:4).

You don't need another source once you are in contact with the Holy Ghost. It possesses the "record of heaven" (Moses 6:61).

Nephi is assuring us that we can come into possession of the fullness of truth by the means he has been explaining as the "doctrine of Christ." As a central, active part of that doctrine, the line

of communication between you and God is opened. It is another reminder of counsel found in Deuteronomy 30:11–14:

For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.

Forget all the cultural assumptions and extras you hang on to. Leave them all behind and keep it simple:

You were a spirit before you were born (Abraham 3:22–28). You were there when some were chosen to be “rulers,” or in other words, teachers (2 Nephi 5:19). You have within you a spirit that was in that group. You saw and participated in what went on, and have that somewhere still inside you. It is kept from you by the “veil of flesh” now covering your spirit (Heb. 10:20). Somewhere within you lies the “record of heaven.” Or more correctly, the Record of Heaven (Moses 6:61). If you gain access to it, it has the capacity to teach you the “truth of all things.” (Moses 6:61). Within it is such an abundance of truth that the things of God are not hidden from you, neither far off. It is not in heaven, so that you ask: who will go to heaven to bring it to us. It is not beyond the sea that you should ask who can go to bring it to us? But it is very close to you, in your own mouth, in your own heart, that you can do what is asked of you (Deut. 30:11–14, above).

Hence the saying of Christ that the Comforter will bring things to your remembrance (John 14:26).

Christ taught the kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:20–21).

Why is it that the body is animated, with power of thought and communication, alive and vital while there is a spirit within it? But when the spirit departs, what then of the body? The power to live and breathe and move and do according to your will is gone at that point. But from whence came that power? (Mosiah 2:21). If it is God who is “lending you that power” then how closely are you connected to God? How immediate is His presence within you?

If you can gain access to God, will you need to go out, or will you instead need to go within?

Our minds are corrupted. I’ve spent time dealing with the corrosive influence of cultures from Babylon to today in *Nephi’s Isaiah*. All that must be “ground to dust” and blown away (Daniel 2:34–35). That will occur within you. You are the battleground where the conflict is being fought. You are potentially the Temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16).

Awake and arise! Come to yourself and realize who you are. This “doctrine of Christ” will teach you all things you must know for life and salvation. But you ought not look to another to find what you already have. You must instead repent and return to God, who is your home.

AUGUST 31, 2010

2 Nephi 32:3

Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.

Nephi makes these three things equal:

1. The power of the Holy Ghost to give words, which

2. Are the same as what angels would speak, which in turn
3. Are the same as the words of Christ.

Holy Ghost/words of angels/words of Christ. They are all the same as “the words of Christ” which will “tell you all things what ye should do.”

If you will “feast upon the words of Christ” then you will know “all things what ye should do.”

How do you unlock this power that potentially exists inside you? What tools have been given to us to receive access to this great inner record of truth?

Why are we given ordinances? If we will follow them and receive them, what do ordinances allow the Lord to open up for us?

You know if you are doing as you should. You cannot lie to yourself. You cannot deceive yourself about whether you will follow God with full purpose of heart, acting no deception, repenting of your sins, and with real intent (2 Nephi 31:13). If you do these things there is a law irrevocably decreed which permits you to receive what is offered (D&C 130:20–21). You actually know if you have offered the correct sacrifice (Lecture 6, in *Lectures on Faith* discussed here). Just as you know when you are unworthy before Him (Mormon 9:4–5), you also know when your confidence before God grows naturally inside you and you follow the path to return to the light (D&C 121:45–46). It is extraordinary and even miraculous, but it is also absolutely natural.

The conditions were set before the foundation of the world and all you must do to obtain these blessings is to follow the path. You KNOW if you are in the right way. You cannot lie to God, and as we have seen in the discussion of the preceding verses, God is within you.

Do you keep the commandments? Why? Are you doing so with real intent, following the “doctrine of Christ” or just to be “seen of men?” (Matt. 6:1, 5). When you do these things in secret, your Father (and you) know it and then come the rewards of having your heart right with God (Matt. 6:4, 6).

At the end of the long search into all the universe to find God, you will discover the search leads you back to what was inside you all along. You came from Him, and He is with you. But to find Him you must return. The scriptures and teachings of Christ are filled with this journey and the battleground has always been within you. You need to remember. The Holy Ghost, the third member of the godhead, dwells inside you, provided you will receive it.

The laws irrevocably decreed are the very principles which permeate life itself. You are not separate from this “doctrine of Christ” but a living embodiment of it. If you live it, you will prove it. You are here to be proven (Abraham 3:25). What have you determined to prove with your life?

Nephi spoke in plainness to us. He could not find simpler language to describe this process. I have tried to be plain using other scriptures and language. But the great lesson can be reduced to this: Do what you have been taught. When you do it, the light will increase within you. That light is truth. It is intelligence, or light and truth, or the power of God (D&C 93:36). All you must do to activate that light, gain that intelligence, and behold the glory of God is to keep His commandments (D&C 93:28). If you want to receive a “fullness” then the immediate door through which you pass is to keep the commandments (D&C 93:20).

Most importantly, you must:

follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ. (2 Ne. 31:13)

You alone will know if you have done this. Or rather, you and the Lord will know. When you are satisfied that there is no hypocrisy and no deception between you and God, that you have come to Him with real intent and repenting of your sins, witnessing through the ordinances (baptism and sacrament) that you will take upon you the name of Christ, then you qualify. If you do not, then you are not qualified.

I am completely satisfied that the people who gain such access, receive the blessings, or obtain a hope in Christ are ordinary people. They are not distinguished by their great intellect or powerful positions. They are typified only by the singleness of their heart and true devotion. There is not a whit of difference between what they believe and how they live. They do not excuse themselves from doing what they know to be right, even if it is painful, uncomfortable, or something they would never do on their own. They invariably do what the “words of Christ” bid them to do. No matter the price, they will follow Him; not a leader. Indeed, almost all of His servants are at odds with leadership. You know how completely He was at odds if you have read *Come, Let Us Adore Him*. To follow Him is to have that same contention between you and the larger religious community of any age or dispensation. Stop trying to please men and start following Christ.

I do not know what more can be said than Nephi has been saying. Let’s press on.

SEPTEMBER 1, 2010

2 Nephi 32:4–5

Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark. For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do.

Comprehension of the “doctrine of Christ” is not based on command of a vocabulary or mastery of an argument. It is based on gathering light. Light is gathered by heed (obedience) and diligence alone (D&C 130:19). By following the light you have received already, you grow in light (D&C 50:24). This process leads to the “perfect day” where the light has chased away all darkness. This is how we, like Christ, can grow from grace to grace until we also receive a fullness (D&C 93:20).

If you do not do this, then you may acquire a vocabulary with which to discuss the subject, but you will not have the light to comprehend it. Light can be shining all around you, but if you do not acquire light within yourself by your actions, you cannot comprehend the light (See, e.g., D&C 6:21; D&C 10:58; D&C 34:2; D&C 39:2; D&C 45:7; and D&C 88:49).

If it perplexes you, then ask God for understanding. He will tell you what to do. Follow His instruction. In this way you qualify to receive further light and knowledge by conversing with the Lord. He knows perfectly what you lack, and by the Holy Ghost within you will tell you what you must do.

If you will not humble yourself and ask for this to be made known to you, then you cannot be brought into the light. Then the only result will be to perish in the dark.

If you will follow the steps with the required real intent, acting no deception before God as you do, then you will receive the Holy Ghost. It will be unlocked to tell you what you lack and what you need to do. This inner light is a powerful source which can literally tell “you all things what ye should do.”

It is in the doing that you find the learning. It is in the act of following Him that you learn to be like Him. Obedience is the means by which you gather light. The commandments are revelations of the inner person you ought to become. They are how you grow in the flesh to comprehend God in the Spirit. Your body is a veil that keeps you from Him. By subordinating the will of the flesh to the will of the Spirit, you gain light and truth.

Do it to understand it.

Once you understand you will be able to tell when someone speaks with the power of the Spirit words of eternal life, or if they are, as Nephi puts it: “perishing in the dark.” There are many who claim to speak on the Lord’s behalf who declare false, vain and foolish things. While they will be held to account for that, the point is not to condemn them. They may yet see the light, and repent and return. The point is that you must avoid being misled by those who would lead you astray. The few humble followers of Christ are warned that they will be taught the precepts of men and must use caution to avoid being misled (2 Nephi 28:14). We’ve discussed that already.

The proportions and the balances required to see things aright are too fine, too subtle and too difficult to put into words. They are harmony. Nephi’s teachings are woven into one great whole.

There are not isolated strains to be taken from the great whole and then given undeserved importance. They must fit together. You can only accomplish that when you see the whole by the light of the Holy Ghost within you.

Nephi is both pleading and warning in these two verses. He wants you to go to the source and be directed from there. To have the words of Christ available to you. To hear the words of angels as you draw near to the light. If you do not, then it is because you refuse to follow the steps he has described.

You must act to know. Without following through in your heart (which you cannot ever deceive) you can't draw near to the light. The discussion in *The Second Comforter* walks through line upon line that walk back into the light, and ultimately into Christ's presence. It is a modern manual to find Him.

SEPTEMBER 1, 2010

2 Nephi 32:6

Behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and there will be no more doctrine given until after he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh. And when he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh, the things which he shall say unto you shall ye observe to do.

This is the totality of the matter: the doctrine of Christ. Receive the Comforter and it will tell you what you must do.

It will in turn lead you to The Second Comforter. He will then take you further still.

What does it mean that Christ "shall manifest Himself unto you in the flesh?" Is this speaking of the time when Christ appeared to the Nephites (3 Nephi 11:1-41, where He did declare doctrine)? Or is this speaking of Him appearing to each individual? (John 14:23 and D&C 130:3) Is it both?

What does it mean that “the things which He shall say unto you shall ye observe to do?” What takes primacy—your culture, respected peers, leaders of society or government or church, or the Lord and His sayings? Why?

What does it mean that “no more doctrine” will be given until Christ “shall manifest Himself unto you in the flesh?” Was there more doctrine given to later Nephite prophets before Christ appeared in 3rd Nephi? What about the very next writer-prophet of the Book of Mormon and his testimony of revelation from Christ? (See Jacob 1:4, 6; Jacob 4:6; Jacob 7:5) Was his ministry one that included the Lord “manifesting Himself unto [Jacob] in the flesh?” (See 2 Nephi 11:3)

How and what is to be revealed? Although you may receive Christ “in the flesh,” does it mean you may tell others all things you learn as a result? Or are you constrained and limited in what and how you measure to others? Who decides what is appropriate to include in your testimony, you or the Lord? (Alma 12:9–10)

If “what He shall say unto you shall ye observe to do,” then what of criticism? What of those who will not accept your testimony? What if your testimony of Christ is dismissed as merely your “claims?” What if things done in meekness and humility are misconstrued and said instead to be done to get notice and popularity? Should you expect to be without criticism?

What does it mean that “the things which he shall say unto you shall ye observe to do?” Does it mean others will even understand why you do what you do? Does it mean it will be welcomed? Does it mean you will have some credential the world will recognize? Or will only those who hear the Master’s voice respond? (John 10:27) If it is the Master’s voice which should be heard, then how do you

avoid introducing your own voice in His place? What if the words are a rebuke or warning? Should you hesitate? (3 Nephi 30:1–2)

If you only have your testimony to offer, how likely is it to be persuasive in this world where rank, position, acclaim and popularity define influence? What if, as Bob Dylan penned: *“All I got is this red guitar, three chords and the truth.”* What then? Is the truth resilient enough to endure in this hurricane of deceit and worldliness? It will, even if only with a few.

At your core, you love and respect Jesus Christ. When given the choice before your were born, you accepted and agreed to follow Him. That is why you are here. If you followed Him then, you ought to be willing to follow Him now. If you can find Him. I believe that anyone who can find the Master’s words, no matter how unlikely a source by which they come, will follow them. The only means authorized to declare them is through persuasion, gentleness, meekness, love and pure knowledge (D&C 121:41). As it turns out, that is enough. Those who have kept the Light of Christ shining within them will recognize His voice (John 10:27).

SEPTEMBER 2, 2010

2 Nephi 32:7

And now I, Nephi, cannot say more; the Spirit stoppeth mine utterance, and I am left to mourn because of the unbelief, and the wickedness, and the ignorance, and the stiffneckedness of men; for they will not search knowledge, nor understand great knowledge, when it is given unto them in plainness, even as plain as word can be.

Nephi has reached the limit of what he can say. He has alluded to The Second Comforter, or the appearance of Christ to you in the flesh, but then his message ends. He “cannot say more.” But

he has told you that when Christ appears to you that you should do what Christ tells you to do.

Then Nephi laments our unbelief, wickedness, ignorance and stiffneckedness. You have already been told that in the vocabulary of the Book of Mormon the word “unbelief” means that you do not understand correct doctrine. You accept false notions, or your understanding is so incomplete as to make it wrong.

What is “wicked” about not following the “doctrine of Christ” so that you can receive the tongue of an angel? What is wicked about not pressing forward in the light of the Holy Ghost to the point where you receive Christ in the flesh? Why would that failing be “wicked?” (D&C 88:33).

Why are we “ignorant?” Is it because of our lack of learning or sophistication, or instead because of it? Studied ignorance is the most indelible kind. It prevents someone from ever casting away unbelief. It enshrines unbelief.

These conditions are all culminated by “stiffneckedness.” Meaning that we are not only in error, but we are decidedly committed to remaining so. We won’t budge. Won’t humble ourselves and ask the Lord to remove our scales of darkness. We just remain devoted disciples of unbelief, leading in turn to our wickedness, borne upon the shoulders of our ignorance. What a spectacle we are when seen in the light of the Holy Ghost—that is, through the eyes of a prophet like Nephi.

What is interesting is this comment comes at the very end of Nephi’s ministry. It is an aged prophet carving his last message targeted to the last day audience of first gentiles, then secondarily the remnant, and finally the Jews. And to this latter-day audience beginning with us, Nephi is rebuking us. It must be because of his love for us. It must be motivated by the love of Christ, because it

follows immediately after explaining to us the “doctrine of Christ.” So whether it seems to be the case or not, this is a loving, kind, light-filled warning from someone who knows what we lack.

Soberly, however, this rebuke should be compared to the rebuke he leveled at Laman and Lemuel. He told them to stop debating the meaning of a revelation given to their father, and start asking God for answers. Compare Nephi’s earlier warning and rebuke to his brothers with this verse addressed to us:

*And they said: Behold, we cannot understand the words which our father hath spoken concerning the natural branches of the olive-tree, and also concerning the Gentiles. And I said unto them: **Have ye inquired of the Lord?** And they said unto me: We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us. Behold, I said unto them: **How is it that ye do not keep the commandments of the Lord? How is it that ye will perish, because of the hardness of your hearts?** Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said? —If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you.*
(1 Nephi 15:7–11)

We read that and think ourselves better than Laman and Lemuel because we identify ourselves with Nephi. Nephi, on the other hand, sees our day, and identifies us with Laman and Lemuel. What a profound disconnect our arrogance causes between Nephi’s meaning and our reading.

He is being as plain as words can be. And we are being as obstinate and obtuse as unbelief, wickedness, ignorance and stiff-neckedness can cause. You can feel the irony.

SEPTEMBER 2, 2010

2 Nephi 32:8

And now, my beloved brethren, I perceive that ye ponder still in your hearts; and it grieveth me that I must speak concerning this thing. For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray.

Again we are called “beloved brethren” despite having just reminded us of our unbelief, wickedness, ignorance and stiffneckedness. His motive is our welfare. He doesn’t care a whit about flattering us. He wants us saved.

Still you wonder if this can be true. Still you doubt and think it too much. Still you are left not knowing if the message comes from the Lord. But those doubts are because of your failure to pray. You just won’t listen to the Spirit which teaches everyone they must pray. “For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray ye would know ye must pray.”

Nephi knows this because he is a man of prayer. Nephi, as a man of prayer, is struck by the foolishness of deciding matters without prayer. To him it is amazingly obvious that prayer will rescue you from doubt. But Nephi knows why you won’t pray to know the truth of things.

You want an authority to tell you.

You want the truth to become popular so it is easy to find.

You want certifications, scholarly support and widespread recognition of the truth.

You want someone whose position you respect to tell you what is true. And until they do, you feel confident you don’t need to study it out and pray to know for yourself if it is true.

But Nephi catches you in the act and tells you this is because you are listening to “the evil spirit” which is the one who “teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray.” So you are following the spirit. But it is an evil spirit you follow.

God’s Spirit will always teach you to pray and to ask Him about the truth. And if you ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, He will manifest the truth unto you. He can tell you the truth of all things if you will ask and permit the Holy Ghost to respond (Moroni 10:4–5).

If the only way to find the truth is to search prayerfully for it before receiving a witness from the Holy Ghost that it is indeed true, what happens to you as a result? Do you gain a testimony of the process? Do you grow in light and truth by what you have experienced? Was this always meant to be direct between you and God? Is the method itself necessarily always to involve God?

Nephi is a prophet. And he’s working to make others like him. That’s the way it is, you see. Those who have something are eager to have others join them. They are not interested in praise or recognition. Instead they are interested in seeing other souls redeemed. Hence Nephi’s blunt message and plain words. They are merciful indeed.

SEPTEMBER 3, 2010

2 Nephi 32:9

But behold, I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul.

Another significant reminder by a prophet of what is needed.

The great passage from Alma on prayer is an echo of Nephi (Alma 34:17–27). Nephi said it first.

What is involved with “performing anything unto the Lord?” How much of what we do in our daily responsibilities ought to be performed “unto the Lord?” (Rom. 12:1).

Do not “perform any thing” for the Lord until you have “in the first place” prayed to consecrate your performance. Here Nephi teaches you how to live the law of consecration. You don’t need others to join you. You don’t need a city to live where all things are held in common. You only need your own pure intent, acting no hypocrisy, consecrating your performance to the Lord for the welfare of your soul.

If you “must not perform any thing unto the Lord” before praying and consecrating it “for the welfare of thy soul,” then how should you proceed? How much thought should you take about the Lord and your relationship with Him daily? How careful should you be about your words, thoughts and works? (Alma 12:14). It is again, a reminder that we should always remember Him, and keep His commandments which He has given us, that we may have His Spirit to be with us (D&C 20:77).

What does it mean to “pray always, and not faint?” What does “praying” have to do with “fainting?” What does it mean to “faint?” Can you “faint” in your spiritual life? Is a physical “faint” merely an example of what happens to us in the spirit? If so, what must you do to avoid becoming “faint” in your prayers?

How many of your prayers have ended by your mind drifting away? No certain conclusion to the prayer, just a distracted mind becoming occupied by something other than the prayer being offered? Is that to “faint?”

What does “fainting” tell you about your vulnerability? What precautions do you need to take to be able to “pray always” and not be vulnerable to “fainting?”

Is the primary difference between the outcome of the lives of Nephi and Jacob on the one hand, and Laman and Lemuel on the other, how they regarded prayer?

What does having prayer as a priority say about an individual?

CHAPTER 6
2 Nephi 33

SEPTEMBER 3, 2010

2 Nephi 33:1–2

And now I, Nephi, cannot write all the things which were taught among my people; neither am I mighty in writing, like unto speaking; for when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men. But behold, there are many that harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit, that it hath no place in them; wherefore, they cast many things away which are written and esteem them as things of naught.

Nephi would like to teach us (his readers) all he taught those who lived with him and heard him speak. But he could not. Even the things he was able to etch in the metal record he left was incomplete when compared to the body of teachings he preached to his people.

There is also a significant difference between speaking and writing. When you speak there are many tools of speech—emphasis, movement, presence, and radiation of the Spirit to help the speaker measure the effect of the message on the audience. When Nephi

taught by the power of the Holy Ghost, he was able to see how his audience was receiving it. He knew when it penetrated “unto the hearts of the children of men.”

Writing was another matter. Particularly when it would be translated from one language to another before the gentiles would receive the words. The distance and language between Nephi and his audience is so great that Nephi came to the sad realization that a reader who is not already prepared to have the Spirit with them as they read will miss the power of the message.

In their presence Nephi could use the power of the Holy Ghost to affect the spirit of those who were listening. However, a reader separated by language and culture, and more than two millennia would have to have the Spirit first before being able to understand his message.

It was the recognition that many gentiles would read this record without possessing the Spirit that made Nephi acknowledge the gap between his spoken ministry and his written one. Those with “hard hearts” may be affected by his presence and preaching. Those with “hard hearts” who only have his written record, however, are going to “cast things away which are written and esteem them as things of naught.” They won’t recognize that they were from God, written by a prophet who knew God, and were the result of a commission to preach given by God. Instead they will think him “a thing of naught.”

Nephi’s message will mean far more to those who are prepared. For those who are not prepared, the message will be meaningless. Nothing. A thing of “naught” to be “cast away.”

That is always the case. The Lord commissions someone with a message and the audience has a role in receiving the message. Powerful public ministries do not convince everyone. Even Nephi

failed to convert Laman, Lemuel and the majority of those who were living together at the time of Lehi's death. Then, immediately upon Nephi's death, there were struggles in the society he helped found.

The process of salvation is always a work between God, His children, appropriately sent messages, and adversity and opposition. Nephi is reminding us how vital having the Spirit is to the success of understanding his written message. We should ask ourselves often if our hearts are open to receiving truth, no matter how it comes to us, and no matter how it may challenge our presumptions, pride and foolish traditions.

What a terrible thing it will be for some to realize they "esteemed as things of naught" the very words which might have saved them had they given heed.

SEPTEMBER 4, 2010

2 Nephi 33:3

But I, Nephi, have written what I have written, and I esteem it as of great worth, and especially unto my people. For I pray continually for them by day, and mine eyes water my pillow by night, because of them; and I cry unto my God in faith, and I know that he will hear my cry.

Nephi's single-minded focus was life-long. Now, as he writes advanced in age, with a retrospective knowledge, and prophetic foreknowledge of revelation, he confirms what he has written is "of great worth." When a prophet like Nephi appraises the work as "of great worth," it is important to realize that your disagreement with the assessment is a reflection on you, not him. It is a reflection of your own level of understanding rather than on the work itself.

Are Nephi's two books "of great worth" to you? Why? Can you articulate the reasons they have this "great worth" in everything you think and do in your daily life? How have they changed you? If there is nothing you can point to of value, then perhaps you have not yet found the "great worth" Nephi believed his writing to hold.

Why "especially unto [Nephi's] people?" Who are Nephi's "people?" Why would they be more valuable to them? Why would they have a special value to them, above the value to the gentiles?

When Nephi says he "prays continually for them," who is the group he identifies as "them?" Why does he pray for "them?"

Why does Nephi cry into his pillow at night because of "them?" Who are they and what did Nephi know would be the end of "them?" (See 1 Nephi 12:19; 1 Nephi 15:5).

Nephi knew his cries to the Lord would not go unheard. He knew the Lord would keep a covenant made with Nephi concerning "them." (1 Nephi 13:30). The remnant of Nephi's seed would not be utterly destroyed. Nevertheless, the future destruction would be near absolute, leaving only a remnant.

Despite this foreknowledge, Nephi nevertheless reports he made it a practice to nightly "cry unto my God in faith, and I know that he will hear my cry."

Nephi kept faith in the face of certain destruction of his descendants. Hope in the face of looming apostasy by his seed. Charity toward those who would reject the Lord.

He has ceased to be exclusively a prophet, and has risen to the role of intercessor and advocate for the unworthy. He has become covenantal father, and presiding Patriarch over a lineage whose redemption will come through his covenant with the Father. He has joined the ranks of the "fathers" toward whom hearts must turn in order to avoid cursing at the Lord's return (Malachi 4:6).

The circle has closed and the eternal round is completed. Nephi has godly feelings and godly empathy for a doomed posterity. We behold at last the veil removed. We see such nobility of character, and greatness of soul that we are compelled to accept his role as teacher and ruler. He has taught righteousness all his days. Though his older brothers refused to acknowledge or accept him, we should not. His parting message suggests, however, that more of those who will read his record have the same spirit as Laman and Lemuel than will have the necessary spirit to recognize and “esteem of great worth” what he has provided to us.

It is almost too great to take in for the few who are the humble followers of Christ. However, they can avoid being led into error by recognizing in Nephi the teacher and ruler who was sent to deliver a message of salvation to a doomed people. For those who now live under the same prophetic doom, (3 Nephi 16:15; 3 Nephi 20:16; 3 Nephi 21:12) Nephi represents a lifeline offered to those humble enough to accept his message. They will gladly recognize their plight, awake and arise and become people of prayer.

COMMENTS :

Manu Forti · SEPTEMBER 4, 2010 AT 9:03 PM

You are going to weep for the Church when you read this.

<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2010/09/04/mormons-new-ad-campaign-seeking-dispel-myths-pr-romney-run/>

Mormon leaders have launched an expansive ad campaign in some battleground states designed to re-brand the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as “normal,” igniting speculation that the church is laying the groundwork for Mitt Romney to re-emerge next year for another presidential bid without an anti-Mormon stigma.

It is as you've been saying.

Now I'm bummed, alarmed and sad.

Anonymous · SEPTEMBER 5, 2010 AT 9:45 AM

We just have to hope that it's true that those ads had nothing to do with Romney & that the leaders of the Church do not support him in his run for President.

The Zang Family · SEPTEMBER 5, 2010 AT 3:00 PM

Why does everything have to be laid at the feet of the leaders? There are departments at headquarters that do what they will with sending out advertisements, etc. All bad press is good press, and the General Authorities don't always micromanage. People do what they want and often stamp the First Presidency stamp of approval on their efforts, in my opinion.

Can this unwieldy beast of a Church be so tightly managed that every mistake can be quashed by the President of the Church?

Was Joseph able to stop W. W. Phelps' over-the-top publications in Missouri?

Could Joseph or should he even have stopped Sidney Rigdon's Salt Sermon?

We are not compelled to say everything sent forth from Salt Lake is good, especially when Christ Himself said He wasn't good before He finished His preparations. Are we better as a Church than the Master Himself?

When we all come in a unity of the faith, and can be truly called Zion, then we may say all is holiness to the Lord. Before then, we may express our opinions about what is righteous and what is not, what is helpful to the cause of Zion and what does violence to it.

If Salt Lake is resorting to opinion polls for their programs, what are they supposed to think when for every idea that comes out we say "Yes, sir!" to?

What if they try two pilot programs in different areas of the Church that are diametrically opposed in doctrine the one to the other. If both congregations fall in line and say "this is the Lord's will!" can the Lord's will be opposed to itself? I think not.

Don't you think this blind yes-man culture we've adopted frustrates these leaders to no end? How can they lead zombies? We are like lemmings ready to fall off the precipice at the whim of a twenty-time passed over rumor that we think some leader had a hand in implementing.

O be wise, what can I say more?

Denver Snuffer · SEPTEMBER 5, 2010 AT 5:48 PM

The Church (bowels of COB) is planning a reality TV program using a "Mormon" family or group. It's the hot new idea that's supposed to be breaking through to give the Church new recognition and acceptance. It's the top recommendation of the marketing geniuses doing the recommending, and I hear it has been given a green-light to proceed.

I can't begin to explain all the reasons this idea repulses me. But my opinion doesn't matter one whit.

I do remember the BYU co-ed who appeared on MTV's Real World a while back. She was expelled from BYU for her conduct during and after the program, wound up making headlines for a while in the embarrassment of expelling her, and her parents had some critical things to add to the whole affair.

Reality TV has been one way to get the Church noticed already. But it doesn't teach doctrine, doesn't advance the name of Christ, doesn't preach the truth, and backfired once already.

I'm hoping at some point the Brethren tire of this foolishness, fire the entire infrastructure of social-science based employees, and return to preaching the Gospel.

But, then again, why would they ever stop listening to the "experts" they have hired. That infrastructure is the very basis for Elder Holland's claim in General Conference that the Brethren are "in touch" better than even the top Fortune 500 companies. Not something they're likely to dismantle. Until their failure has become so undeniable, so complete, so vast in scope that they realize it has always been a blind alley.

Anonymous · SEPTEMBER 5, 2010 AT 8:08 PM

Elder Holland gives the impression he (and the other Brethren who repeat such things) are so "in touch" because of their prophetic call and

position as an Apostles. Their presentation seems to strongly suggest that. Akin to Nephi who saw our day and it's pitfalls and thus was VERY in touch. I had NO idea their being in touch was padded with the hiring of the best marketing guru's available. I'm disillusioned. Was it blind to assume their "in touchness" was due to being apostles of the Lord? Due to revelation? But it's actually due to hiring social science experts??

I hope and pray their ability to be in touch in reality has more to do with divine revelation than buying into the advertising experts.

Denver Snuffer · SEPTEMBER 5, 2010 AT 8:14 PM

Go back and re-read Elder Holland's talk. He makes no apology for it, and is not at all vague or unclear. It is because of the opinion polling and information gathering systems which are better than most large corporations have for their systems. Just allow him the privilege of speaking exactly what he means. Don't read anything into it.

We have a lot of problems of imposing models of thought upon the truth. Stop doing that with the scriptures. Stop doing that with the Brethren. Allow them the privilege of just being straight forward in their meaning.

SEPTEMBER 5, 2010

2 Nephi 33:4

And I know that the Lord God will consecrate my prayers for the gain of my people. And the words which I have written in weakness will be made strong unto them; for it persuadeth them to do good; it maketh known unto them of their fathers; and it speaketh of Jesus, and persuadeth them to believe in him, and to endure to the end, which is life eternal.

Nephi makes a practical application and provides us with an example of his teaching of "consecration." He knows the Lord God will "consecrate" his "prayers for the gain of [Nephi's] people." Notice that the benefit of that consecration is not for the welfare

of Nephi's soul, but the welfare of others. Once again Nephi follows his teaching, and then elevates the purpose from "the welfare of [his own] soul" to the welfare of others (2 Nephi 32:9). His concerns are selfless, sacrificial and intercessory. He has become a man of charity and full of love for others. These whom he calls his "beloved brethren" and his "people" are, in fact, those who will destroy and supplant his own descendants. Although a "mixture" of his seed will be there, these people for whom he is consecrating his petitions to God are the Lamanite victors over his posterity. If you have read *Beloved Enos* you will see the elements of redemption playing out in Nephi's words similar to how they play out in Enos' words. Charity is the end result of this consecrated life.

Nephi's words were "written in weakness" but he knows the Lord God will make them "strong unto them." Who is "them?" How does the Lord God make "words strong" to someone? What power communicates the strength of Nephi's words?

What does Nephi mean by "it persuadeth them to do good?" Why is persuading to do good part of the way to recognize words from God?

What does Nephi mean "it maketh known unto them of their fathers?" Which "fathers?" Does the reference to "their fathers" help you identify who "them" is referring to?

Why do words which will become strong always focus upon "Jesus, and persuade to believe in Him?" Can words which speak of something else, or other programs, initiatives, organizations and events ever "become strong?" Must the message focus upon Christ before it is possible for it to "become strong?"

Why must you "endure to the end, which is eternal life?" What end? We've asked that before, but not answered it. How long must the enduring last, if it is to result in "eternal life?" Will it be a great

deal after this life before you have learned enough to be saved? Will you need to endure then, as now, for eternal life to be yours?

What else were you going to do after this life? Planning to play a harp and sit on a cloud somewhere with Captain Stormfield? Or were you planning to be engaged in a good cause, enduring to the end of all time and all eternity, worlds without end?

We encounter so much doctrine in Nephi's writing. It is almost impossible to understand this writer-prophet without some effort to learn the doctrine ourselves. Perhaps we de-emphasize doctrine at the peril of losing the very message Nephi wrote.

SEPTEMBER 6, 2010

2 Nephi 33:5–6

And it speaketh harshly against sin, according to the plainness of the truth; wherefore, no man will be angry at the words which I have written save he shall be of the spirit of the devil. I glory in plainness; I glory in truth; I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell.

Nephi's writings "speaketh harshly against sin. "This is because of "plainness of the truth." If you're going to speak plainly about sin, the words are necessarily harsh, because there's no other way to be plain about it. Warning against sin and pride is offensive (2 Nephi 4:13).

Those who become angry at the truth have "the spirit of the devil" in them. That is, they are under the devil's influence and deceived. Nephi understood this principle because of his older brothers' reactions (1 Nephi 16:1–2). So when someone becomes angry at the truth, they are in darkness.

Christ gave this as one of the signs of the deceived. They argue against the truth and become angry (3 Nephi 11:29).

Those who are Christ's, however, join with Nephi in glorying in plainness, even if it cuts or requires repentance. They appreciate the plain direction which allows them to follow in the true path. They appreciate truth, even when it condemns their acts and requires them to change. They glory in Christ, preferring Him to unbelief, traditions of men, and the arm of flesh.

Nephi knew Christ had redeemed his soul from hell, for He had declared it to Nephi. The reason Nephi understood the fullness of Christ's Gospel, could declare the doctrine of Christ, and was a prophet given a commission to teach was because he had been taught by the Lord (2 Nephi 11:2). The return to Christ's presence was not merely a spectacular event to write in a journal, or a bragging point to claim among others. Indeed, much of what Nephi obtained from the Lord was never recorded for us or Nephi's posterity. The return was to obtain light and truth, or intelligence, which is the glory of God. It was to be ministered to by the Perfect Teacher. This, in turn, made Nephi the great minister he became.

The Greatest Servant teaches servants to serve. They are not chosen to be idolized. They are not chosen so a band can strike up "Hail to the Chief" when they enter a room, as everyone rises in adoration and respect. Nor are they chosen to wear silk robes, with subservient sycophants kissing their ring in adoration, hoping for favors. They are chosen instead to serve, while being discarded, challenged, rejected and scorned. Yet in this they only follow their Master, who came not to be served, but to serve. Christ disparaged us gentiles because we submit to abuse and call our abusers our benefactors (Luke 22:25-27).

We hardly understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ at all because we utterly reject its principles. We won't live them to know if they are true. Then in our ignorant darkness we judge the light. All

the while Nephi's words invite us to choose a different route, act with real intent, with full purpose of heart, repenting of our sins to find our way back into the light. Instead, we cling to the false traditions of our fathers, claiming for ourselves the prerogatives of God Himself, believing we are better than others, and failing to see the burden of sin we carry in our blind ignorance.

Nephi may have gloried in plainness, but we glory in positive messages telling us we will be saved in our sins. Nephi may have gloried in Jesus, but we use His name to endorse our products and ratify our false teachings. Nephi may have urged the plainness of truth itself, but we market based on focus group tested and opinion polled results so our product line should get good market acceptance.

Nephi's way would work better, you know. The truth attracts those who seek truth. No matter how utterly it may fail in market testing, truth sells. Truth attracts. At least it attracts the Master's sheep, and we'll never be able to save any others anyway. So we should offer the truth to make a clarion call to those sheep. When we dilute it with the theories of marketing, the arm of flesh, salesmanship and branding, the sheep have no idea that there is any truth under the slick presentation. How can you hear the Master's voice in such a cacophony of Wall Street gibberish? Truth alone wins, prevails, succeeds against all opposition and will have its final vindication in the triumph of the Lamb!

I appreciate Nephi's plainness and preference for the truth. I think I may join him in that view. I suppose, however, it'll make some folks angry.

SEPTEMBER 7, 2010

2 Nephi 33:7–9

I have charity for my people, and great faith in Christ that I shall meet many souls spotless at his judgment-seat. I have charity for the Jew—I say Jew, because I mean them from whence I came. I also have charity for the Gentiles. But behold, for none of these can I hope except they shall be reconciled unto Christ, and enter into the narrow gate, and walk in the strait path which leads to life, and continue in the path until the end of the day of probation.

It is necessary to read all three verses to see what Nephi is saying. What distinctions does he make? Is his charity to his people unequivocal? Is his charity to the Jews unequivocal? Is his charity to the gentiles equivocal? Why?

Does the condition that appears in the final verse apply to the preceding group (gentiles) or to all three groups? How do the remarks made by Nephi in the prior verses we have looked at modify or explain which group the final limitation should be applied?

What has Nephi foreseen or said to suggest he has hope for his own people? What has he done to seek charity by his consecrated petitions for his own people? What has he said about the future inheritance of the covenant blessings for both his people and the Jews?

On the other hand, how little promise has he shown for the gentiles? How conditional are their latter-day rights? How much failure has been prophesied regarding the gentiles?

Since we've been discussing this for months, I am not going to repeat it. You can look to see the scope of Nephi's declarations for his people, for the Jews and for the gentiles. After you've done that, it becomes plain that Nephi has:

Charity for his people.

Charity for the Jews, from whence he came.

Charity for the Gentiles, but he cannot hope for the gentiles except they shall be reconciled to Christ, enter into the narrow gate, walk in the strait path, and continue to do so until the end of the day of probation.

We are reminded again of the Savior's own prophecy of the failure of the gentiles (3 Nephi 16:10). We are reminded of the Lord's promise to take the fullness from us in 1841 if we did not complete the construction of the Nauvoo Temple within the allotted time given (D&C 124:32). If we failed, we would be rejected. We did not complete the Nauvoo Temple in the three and a half years allotted after that revelation while Joseph was alive. Then Joseph was taken, much like Moses was taken (D&C 84:25). What the Lord threatened we would lose permanently at the end of our appointment was the fullness of the priesthood, which He had already removed from us in 1841 (D&C 124:28). So the gentiles sit in a precarious position indeed.

You must answer for yourself the questions posed by Nephi's teaching:

- Have we been reconciled to Christ?
- Have we entered into the narrow gate?
- Do we walk in the strait path?
- If so, have we done so as a people until the end of our days of probation?

To be able to restore again that which we lost before 1841 would require someone truly mighty in Spirit. Fortunately, we have been promised that lifeline will be extended to us again at some point (D&C 85:7). However even he will not be able to help a gentile

who has not been diligent having their name written in the book of the law of God.

The mothers who minister to their children in patience and love will undoubtedly be among those whom the Lord will remember in that day. The first parable, The Busy Young Man, is about those little acts through which we find our Lord. The Weathered Tree is about the enduring power of a mother's love, and how like the Lord's own sacrifice, this often under appreciated calling has been and continues to be.

Mothers oftentimes do not take time to study because they are too busy engaged in the **actual work** of charity, love and service. Some may not be able to construct a scripture-based explanation or exposition, but they recognize truth by the light acquired within by their fidelity to the Lord's system of conferring light and truth.

I have been far more impressed with mothers in Zion than with the tattered remains of what is now called Zion by the gentiles. The pride and foolish traditions which claim authority while lamenting the lack of power are the expected results of the latter-day gentile stewardship according to Nephi.

The good news, and the thing we should rejoice over, is that Nephi does extend to us gentiles an opportunity to be saved. All we must do to join in the blessings is to:

- Be reconciled to Christ.
- Enter into the narrow gate.
- Walk in the strait path.
- Endure to the end of our days of probation.

So we do have a choice. No matter what failings have occurred or things we lack.

It was Lifehouse who sang an anthem to yearning:

Desperate for changing,
starving for truth,

...

Letting go of all I've held onto,
I'm standing here until you make me move
I'm hanging by a moment here with you

...

Forgetting all I'm lacking
Completely incomplete
I'll take your invitation
You take all of me..

I like that song. It is strangely applicable to the condition we find ourselves. But our yearning of course ought to be for the Redeemer who alone can save us.

COMMENTS:

Matt · SEPTEMBER 7, 2010 AT 11:11 PM

The sealing wherein one is made both a king (queen) and a priest(ess)" was not even introduced until 28 September 1843 (see, for example, p. 306 in *The Words of Joseph Smith*, by Ehat and Cook) so how can you argue it was taken away in our dispensation in or prior to 1841?

Denver Snuffer · SEPTEMBER 8, 2010 AT 6:23 AM

D&C 124:28. It isn't an "argument." It is a quote from a revelation in January 1841.

SEPTEMBER 7, 2010

2 Nephi 33:10

And now, my beloved brethren, and also Jew, and all ye ends of the earth, hearken unto these words and believe in Christ; and if ye

believe not in these words believe in Christ. And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ, and he hath given them unto me; and they teach all men that they should do good.

After the conditional statement warning the gentiles of their need to be reconciled to Christ, Nephi speaks to his “beloved brethren” and the “Jews,” but omits specific mention of the gentiles. Instead he refers to “all ye ends of the earth.” This would include all those who are neither Jew, nor Israelite, nor gentile. This is a lot of people who are called “heathen” because they have little direct prophetic mention. Nephi, for example, only refers to them once in his writings (2 Nephi 26:33). In that single reference Nephi promises all, if they will repent and return to Christ, can be saved. All are invited. All can come. Everyone may learn of Christ, find Him and be saved.

There is a distinction between God’s absolute willingness to accept all who will come to Him, on the one hand, and the prophetic foreknowledge of who would accept the invitation, on the other. The opportunity is open for all. There will be few who will accept.

Nephi’s testimony is based on Christ and employs both Christ’s doctrine and teachings. He assures us as readers that if we are willing to accept his writings we are, in fact, accepting the words of Christ. If you believe Christ, you will believe Nephi. For almost everything Nephi has written comes directly or indirectly from Christ. To believe in Nephi’s words is to believe in Christ, and to believe in Christ is to accept Nephi’s words.

Think about that for a moment. Nephi does not leave you wondering if the message will save you or not, whether he has some special inside information or not, or whether he has seen the Lord or not. He is direct and does not require you to guess. He has not

adopted any equivocal or carefully studied words or phrases to tell you about Christ. He is blunt, even plain. His words offend those who are unwilling to surrender their sins and repent. He says what he has written “are the words of Christ.” This means that before he taught, before he wrote, before he concluded his testimony, he consulted with and obtained approval from Christ.

There is nothing vague in Nephi’s warnings, nor unclear in his message.

He openly invites the gentiles to repent. He does so repeatedly. He tells us that with the exception of only a few, we are condemned and will fail in our dispensation. As to those few, he warns us that we will be prone to err because of the things we are taught (2 Nephi 28:14). He offers us a clear, light filled body of teachings that will clarify for us the body of doctrine that will save us. However, we must take his warnings seriously and study them with care.

Imagine how much effort and thought went into preparing to carve into the metal plates. Imagine the amount of thought he employed before undertaking the final, permanent etchings to complete his ministry. His brother commented about how arduous the process was during his writing on the same plates (Jacob 4:1).

Nephi saw our day, and knew how difficult it would be for us. He wrote a message to be preserved and available no matter who would lead us, no matter what messages we would hear, no matter what confusion would develop. He gave us a message to announce the conditions of salvation over the heads of any foolish, vain or false teachings. They are a lifeline extended to the gentiles, as well as his beloved mixed blood descendants (the remnant), and the Jews.

Nephi knows his words will teach anyone who accepts them “to do good.”

The gentile problem is not in reading his words, but in “believing in them.” Gentile interpretation almost always involves unbelief. We do not let his words hold their “plain meaning” but want to construe them, read into them praise, and remove from them the blunt warnings given us. We want to make ourselves justified by the words that warn, condemn and challenge us to do more. Our unbelief separates us from Nephi’s message even as we read his words.

It does no good to argue with him. It does no good to juxtapose his words of counsel and warning with other words of comfort and reassurance. He is alarmed by our condition and warns us to flee from error. We want to read into these words other ideas Nephi never intended.

When we began back with Alma, Chapter 13, it was with the idea we would let the words speak for themselves. We were going to try and see what was being said apart from our own desires or hopes. We’ve been trying to let Nephi have his own words and meanings as we’ve been looking at his teachings, as well.

An inspired teacher will not offer their own words and pretend they come from Christ. They are not going to dare speak in the name of Christ if they offer only their suppositions, hopes, and understanding. They know, as Nephi, that to do so is to take the Lord’s name in vain, and to preach for doctrines the commandments of men. It is often the case, however, that men will urge their own views hoping to make them more convincing, while using the name of Christ. Surely every such teacher will be held to account before Christ for every idle word spoken in His name without His authority or approval.

Nephi knew this doctrine. Nephi understood how weighty a matter it was to use the Lord’s name in connection with teaching

doctrine. Nephi writes in the full confidence that the Lord has approved his message, inspired his words, and will vindicate them to those who will believe them.

Personally, I would hardly dare to teach doctrine if I did not know what I say to be true. Nephi's example is perhaps more important in this respect than in any other. He is surely worthy to be called a "teacher and a ruler" by all of us (2 Nephi 5:19).

SEPTEMBER 8, 2010

2 Nephi 33:11–12

And if they are not the words of Christ, judge ye—for Christ will show unto you, with power and great glory, that they are his words, at the last day; and you and I shall stand face to face before his bar; and ye shall know that I have been commanded of him to write these things, notwithstanding my weakness. And I pray the Father in the name of Christ that many of us, if not all, may be saved in his kingdom at that great and last day.

You judge. You decide. If you don't believe, Christ will vindicate Nephi's teachings, and you will learn just how wrong your judgment was. For Nephi will be at the judgment bar with Christ. You will stand "face to face" with Nephi as you stand before Christ. You will see, along with all those who abuse and treat true messengers as "things of naught," that you have rejected Christ when you rejected His words delivered by one authorized to speak in His name. Nephi invites you to judge his words with the confidence of knowing that he was given power to say all he said. And he had the Lord's confidence because he didn't say anything about what the Lord instructed him not to speak about.

You will one day know Nephi was "commanded of [Christ] to write these things." Nephi was commanded despite his "weakness."

In this context “weakness” is a relative thing. Because Nephi had seen the Lord his perspective allowed him to measure himself against perfection. It allowed him to assess the difference between the Lord as Teacher, and Nephi as servant. The holiness, majesty and power of God were known to Nephi. He had already had the experience of seeing the absolute standard of holiness in Christ. For most people this will come at the last day, and will result in them understanding, for the first time, that they should have repented (Mormon 9:3–5). Nephi had already been able to reconcile himself to Christ. Therefore Nephi knew of his own “weakness” and of the power of redemption found through Christ.

Nephi’s prayer was for the redemption of all. He hoped that “many of us, if not all, may be saved in his kingdom at that great and last day.” Nephi knew he had been redeemed. Yet he identifies with all of us who read his words, and hoped all may be saved.

The measure of a prophet’s ministry is in the salvation of others. Nephi does not celebrate his own redemption. He agonizes over the salvation of others. He labors for the redemption of “many...if not all” of the rest of mankind. This is the pattern. Redemption causes the redeemed to work for the salvation of others. Perhaps it might be better put that the reason someone obtains the kind of redemption Nephi obtained is because they are of a character to work for the redemption of others. There is no reason to withhold the promise of eternal life from them, because others will be redeemed as a result of their redemption. They will labor, preach, teach, intercede, seek, pray, and work tirelessly to bring others to the tree of life. They become a fellow-servant with Christ and labor alongside Him in the work of redeeming others. This is one of the reasons for the parable of “The Busy Young Man” in *Ten Parables*.

Nephi is working directly toward redemption of others. There is no secondary or indirect route being taught. There is no attempt to get some kind of “activity” started, or to introduce a program to do anything apart from bringing you to repentance. He wants you to approach Christ directly through the power of the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, which will teach you all things you should do. He wants you to hear and speak with the tongues of angels. He does not want to entertain, distract, or emotionally move you. He wants you to come to Christ. Nephi only tells you the minimum about himself, giving only such information as may be relevant to his message concerning Christ. To the extent he is able, Nephi consistently draws your focus to the Lord.

There is great understanding of how a true friend of Christ lives, acts and thinks found in Nephi’s writings. They are a urim and thummim into what you find in a man of God. Imitations will always exist. But the real thing is going to be far more like Nephi than Joel Osteen. More sleeves rolled up and fewer cuff-links.

I do hope we may all join Nephi and are saved in the kingdom at that last day. I hope we recognize how great Nephi’s teachings are, and how they address our day with the message we need to hear and heed.

SEPTEMBER 8, 2010

2 Nephi 33:13

“And now, my beloved brethren, all those who are of the house of Israel, and all ye ends of the earth, I speak unto you as the voice of one crying from the dust: Farewell until that great day shall come.”

When Nephi paraphrased Isaiah 29 in the 2 Nephi 27, he appropriated Isaiah’s words to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. He adapted them making a paraphrase rather than a

quote. (I explain the reasons for this in *Nephi's Isaiah*). Here he uses the Isaiah materials again to identify who he (Nephi) is: “the voice of one crying from the dust.” The primary audience for his writings will be those who come to read the book in the last days; when mankind will be in possession of the record which has been printed and distributed to the masses.

Nephi's primary audience for his teachings are those who, like us, live in the last days after the Book of Mormon has come to light. Although Nephi's descendants would have access to these same records, their greatest work and worth would be in the last days. Hence Nephi identifying himself as a “voice of one crying from the dust.”

There is also a secondary meaning. Because Nephi was mortal, he was made of the “dust of the ground.” (Moses 3:7). He was a man testifying to the truthfulness, as a witness in mortality, of the great things which exist beyond the veil. He is one of us, and yet able to tell us of things to come. Therefore, his witness is given in mortal weakness, but with the power of God behind it. His own strength is dust. The power of Christ to redeem, however, is without limit.

Three distinct groups are addressed in the message: Nephi's descendants, called his “beloved brethren.” They are “brethren” rather than “children” because they would descend primarily from his brother's seed who would overcome his. But there would be a mixture of his among them. So they were his “brethren.”

The second are called “those who are of the house of Israel.” These are the Jews, or others who keep their identity with Israel. Not the gentiles, who have been lost and must gain covenant status one by one, and thereafter live true to the covenant in order to be redeemed. “Those who are of the house of Israel” have been previously identified and discussed by Nephi in the Nephi 28.

The final group is “all ye ends of the earth.” That is, the gentiles, heathen, and those who are not otherwise included even in prophetic mention. All mankind. All the ends of the earth may receive what is offered and attain to covenant status, if they repent, acting no deception, without hypocrisy, following Christ. And all are included in the broad sweep of Nephi’s invitation to come to Christ.

His “farewell” is “until that great day shall come.” That day is when you see the Lord in judgment with Nephi there beside Him. At that time you will be “face to face” with Nephi, accounting for your heed or neglect of his message. He just mentioned that in the prior verses. He now bids you good-by until that moment. So you should look forward to meeting Nephi at this point. Although you need to take his message seriously if you intend to enjoy the moment.

What other prophets have warned us that their message will confront us in the presence of Christ while he, the prophet-messenger, is there with us at the moment of judgment? Nephi is in a very small group of qualified messengers whose words should be taken with soberness and respect. He is a towering figure when measured by the correct standard. We seldom encounter such a man. When we do, we would be well advised to take counsel from him.

What more can he have said to alert us to the importance of his message?

SEPTEMBER 9, 2010

2 Nephi 33:14

And you that will not partake of the goodness of God, and respect the words of the Jews, and also my words, and the words which shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the Lamb of God, behold,

I bid you an everlasting farewell, for these words shall condemn you at the last day.

From Nephi's perspective, if you deny his message, reject what is taught, and walk away from his teachings, then you "will not partake of the goodness of God." You have been offered fruit from the tree of life, and you're just unwilling to "partake of that goodness." It is ingratitude and foolishness (D&C 88:33).

This word "partake" hearkens back to the tree in Lehi's and Nephi's dream. (Lehi's version is found in 1 Nephi 8). People prefer to go join in a crowd inside a building. The building is a symbol of man's work. The "arm of flesh" is used to build such structures. No matter how "great" or "spacious" such work may be (1 Ne. 8:31), it is nonetheless the product of human labor. In the dream, those who enter into the building do so to join the multitude in mocking and scorn of those who choose the tree instead (1 Ne. 8:33). In contrast to this, the tree bearing fruit is a product of nature—God's product. Man's labors do not produce trees. Without God, trees do not exist. Man cannot take credit for either the tree or its fruit. It is a gift given to him.

Now the gift must be obtained by coming to the tree. You cannot partake of its fruit while standing at a distance. You must go to the tree, take the fruit in your hand, and "partake of the goodness of God" before you are able to realize how "delicious" this goodness truly is (1 Ne. 8:10–12).

So Nephi's invitation to "partake of the goodness of God" is a reminder at the end of his record of the visions he received at the beginning of the record. Come, partake, be saved.

What would you need to do in order to "respect the words of the Jews, and also [Nephi's] words?" Why does he add "and the words

which shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the Lamb of God?” Does this mean that if you have “respect” for Nephi’s words and the Bible, you will receive other words? Words from “the mouth of the Lamb of God?” Does it suggest you will speak directly with Christ? That part of the fullness of this process is to once again speak to and hear from “the Lamb of God?” Will it result in Christ speaking to you in the flesh? (2 Nephi 32:6).

Why will Nephi’s words “condemn you at the last day?” Why does Nephi bid an “everlasting farewell” to those who won’t “partake of the goodness of God?”

Is Nephi uncharitable? Are his words harsh, unkind or intemperate? Should he be praising us more and condemning us less? Is this a “hard thing” he has spoken to us? (1 Nephi 16:2). If it is not harsh, unkind, or intemperate, then should this kind of warning be given by anyone who is concerned for the salvation of your soul? Why? If your messengers don’t challenge you to repent, but instead use smooth words, reassuring you in your present course, would their message conflict with Nephi’s message? What would you make of such a conflict between their praise and reassurance, and Nephi’s stark warnings?

SEPTEMBER 9, 2010

2 Nephi 33:15

“For what I seal on earth, shall be brought against you at the judgment bar; for thus hath the Lord commanded me, and I must obey. Amen.”

Another reminder of Nephi’s status. Not only does he preach the words of Christ, but he also has the authority and power to “seal on earth” his message. He obtained this directly from the Lord. He is a trusted servant, acting in the similitude of the Savior Himself. Holding the power to seal, he proceeds to do so. Those with eyes

to see will realize this is an important punctuation mark on the final statement he leaves for us in his message.

The power to seal and “the Lord commanded me, and I must obey” go hand in hand. One simply does not receive this kind of authority if they will begin to freelance. They are to use it only in the manner the Lord would use it. Although the power is theirs to use, they are governed by their character to use it only according to the Lord’s command. Nephi, for example, received this acknowledgment when given the power to seal: “that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will.” (Helaman 10:5; see 10:4–5 for the more complete explanation).

When Joseph Smith received this power it was given in connection with his calling and election made sure. It happened between 1829 and 1832, the exact date is unknown. It was reduced to writing in 1843 in D&C 132. It is my view that the revelation making mention of it was not a single event, but rather as many as five different revelations related to the same subject, all of which were dictated at the same time and included in Section 132. I’ve explained this earlier in a series of posts about Section 132. Go back and look here, here, here, here, here, and here if you don’t remember it.

Joseph received this power, and this fullness between 1829 and 1832. However, by 1841 Joseph was no longer able to use it because it had been “taken from [the church].” (D&C 124:28). It would not affect Joseph individually, for his calling and election was made sure (D&C 132:49). But if “taken,” it would affect the church.

Nephi’s power to “seal” his writings at the command of the Lord, and his own obedience, now make his words binding on all of us. They become covenantal. Hence the reference to remembering “the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon” (D&C 84:57). It is not

merely interesting doctrine, nor even prophecy, but has reached covenantal status by virtue of the priestly seal placed upon it by Nephi. We ignore it at our peril. We define it as just a volume of scripture at our loss. It was intended to be studied and followed as the means to reassert a covenant between ourselves and God. By following its precepts we can return to God's presence where we are endowed with light and truth, receive intelligence and understanding. Each of us is invited to make that return. Nephi lived it, and as a result was able to teach it. We should do the same. That is, live it to be able to understand and then teach it. **It is the doing that leads to the understanding.**

There is a great deal of what Nephi taught that we have not considered. Now let's talk about the remnant.

CHAPTER 7

The Remnant

SEPTEMBER 10, 2010

Remnant, Part I

When I started, I doubted a blog was an appropriate venue to address a topic like the “remnant” of the Book of Mormon. This is still an experiment.

If you’re new to this blog, you need to go back and start reading sometime in April. Then you’ll have the foundation for understanding this topic as we move forward.

Undoubtedly there will be those who don’t bother to read what has been written previously. They will make comments here about something that was thoroughly discussed in earlier posts. Just grin and bear it. For the most part, I will be ignoring it.

I’ve tried to remain focused even when there have been questions good enough to answer. But to start answering even very good questions is to hijack the topic and run afield. There have been occasional asides, but that’s because of human weakness and the inability to resist temptation.

We are trying to fit our traditions about the remnant and their role into the framework of the Book of Mormon. From what we’ve

seen so far, it should be clear that we, the Latter-day Saints, are identified as “gentiles” in the Book of Mormon. We are not ever identified as the “remnant.” As a result, the prophecies about the “remnant” are not prophecies about us. They are primarily descendants of the Lamanites, but have some mixed blood of Nephi as well. They are grouped by the Lord into several different clans, and remain identified as “Nephites, and the Jacobites, and the Josephites, and the Zoramites...the Lamanites, and the Lemuelites, and the Ishmaelites.” (D&C 3:17–18). These are those who, though diminished in numbers, are still with us. They retain both a separate identity before the Lord and prophetic inheritance from previous covenants. They are not us and we are not them.

There are two great books which discuss two different views of where the Book of Mormon geography took place. One is by Sorenson, titled *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*. The other is *Prophecies and Promises* by Meldrum and Porter. Sorenson says Central America, Porter and Meldrum say North America.

It is not necessary to resolve the question of Book of Mormon geography in order to have a discussion of this topic. The place could be either Central or North America. The result of the last genocidal wars was that the fighting spread into the Finger Lakes region of New York, with Moroni ultimately placing the plates in the Hill Cumorah, where Joseph Smith recovered them. Therefore, there were descendants of these people located in the North American area by the time the Book of Mormon record ends. Furthermore, during the time between 400 A.D., when the record ends, and the time of post-Revolutionary American in 1805, when Joseph Smith was born, there were many undocumented migrations of people we know nothing about other than what anthropology tells us, which is not much.

So when we get to Joseph Smith and his comments about the “descendants of the Book of Mormon” he is speaking at a time disconnected from the events in the Book of Mormon. I take Joseph’s comments at face value, and presume them to be correct. When Joseph talks about the ancestors of the American Indians being the Book of Mormon people, I accept that.

Also, I think it is better to let the words of prophecy speak for themselves and not impose our own beliefs or traditions on them. We tend to see in the words meanings that are harmonious with our own preconceptions. It is better to abandon those preconceptions and see if the words give us any better or different explanation of what is to happen. That way we are not misinformed by the traditions of men, even if they come to us from very good men.

I do not judge what others believe, explain or teach. They are entitled to their beliefs. But each of us are entitled to believe and take at face value the words of prophecy in scripture, even if they collide with some other notions. I think it better to abandon the ideas which collide with scripture than it is to wrestle the scriptures to conform with the ideas. But you can do as you choose. I really do claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of my own conscience, and believe it my duty to allow all men the same privilege. I will let them worship how, where, or what they may. That’s not a hollow statement for me. I believe in complete freedom of conscience for you and for me. We are accountable to God only for what we believe. Until the COB correlates that out of the Articles of Faith by editing instead of by conduct, I will continue to believe in, and practice the principle of freedom of belief. [That is why so many comments critical of me appear in this blog and why relatively few of those praising me are allowed through.]

So, with that brief introduction, we turn to the trail we've been on for some time. The remnant....

lc · SEPTEMBER 10, 2010 AT 1:54 PM

sorry for my ignorance, but can someone tell me what the acronym COB means?

Denver Snuffer · SEPTEMBER 10, 2010 AT 4:51 PM

COB or C.O.B. = Church Office Building, or the large 33-story office complex downtown housing all the minions working full time for the church.

Denver Snuffer · SEPTEMBER 10, 2010 AT 9:00 PM

It is a 28 story building – not 33.

SEPTEMBER 10, 2010

Remnant, Part II

The first statement about the existence of the Book of Mormon in our day was made by Moroni to Joseph Smith. Moroni stated, among other things:

he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people. He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants. (JS-H 1:33-34)

The “former inhabitants of this continent” would necessarily be North America.

The remnant came from people who frequently received a place called “this land” in the prophecies. For example:

we have obtained a land of promise, a land which is choice above all other lands; a land which the Lord God hath covenanted with me should be a land for the inheritance of my seed. Yea, the Lord hath covenanted this land unto me, and to my children forever, and also all those who should be led out of other countries by the hand of the Lord. (2 Nephi 1:5)

The relevant “land” is one which the ancestors of the remnant were promised would be choice above all other lands. A land of inheritance for the remnant. And one to which people would be “led out of other countries by the hand of the Lord” to later occupy. This is a reference to Nephi’s earlier vision wherein the unfolding history of the Americas were shown to him. That included the following:

There would be a man separated by “many waters” who would be wrought upon by the Spirit of God and make the journey across the “many waters” to the remnant “seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land.” (1 Nephi 13:12). This identifies Columbus, whose original landfall was in the West Indies of the Caribbean. However, the prophecy continues with greater details, increasingly focusing on a North American setting.

After the original discovery by the man wrought upon by the Spirit of God (Columbus), the same “Spirit of God...wrought upon other Gentiles” who also made the migration across the “many waters.” (1 Nephi 13:13). Again it is not unequivocal because migration included and still includes both North and South America.

When the gentile waves of immigration overtake the promised land, they are humbled, fleeing from captivity (1 Nephi 13:16), and the power of God was upon them (*Id.*). They were delivered by the

power of God out of the hands of all other nations (1 Ne. 13:19). These gentile people are then

lifted up by the power of God above all other nations, upon the face of the land which is choice above all other lands, which is the land that the Lord God hath covenanted with thy father that his seed should have for the land of their inheritance. (1 Ne. 13:30).

That description seems to identify the United States, for there is no historic basis for saying Canada, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Cuba, Columbia or Peru are or ever have been “lifted up by the power of God above all other nations.” The United States, however, as the world’s single recognized “superpower” has fit this description. If it is the area of the United States being identified, then this is the “land that the Lord God hath covenanted with thy father that his seed should have for the land of their inheritance.” Or, in other words, this is where one should expect to find remains of the remnant who inherited and will inherit again the land as their promise from the Lord.

The gentiles who inherited the area of the United States waged a continuing campaign to dispossess the native people, succeeding in causing them to dwindle, but not be utterly destroyed (1 Ne. 13:30–31). It is in the United States, beginning in upper New York State that the gentiles are given the chance to remove the “awful state of blindness” through the restoration of the Gospel (1 Ne. 13:32, 34). The coming forth of the Book of Mormon was a North American event, coming to the gentiles who are occupying the land covenanted to the fathers and upon which we would find the remnant (1 Ne. 13:35–36).

There is enough, therefore, in Nephi’s prophecy to identify the area where the remnant would initially be found. That area is

inside the United States. This is where the remnant would initially be swept away, smitten and afflicted by the gentiles. But they would not be utterly destroyed. A small fraction of them would be preserved, so the promises could be realized (1 Ne. 13:30–31).

So they were here. And some of them remain still. So, when we begin to identify who they are, the initial proof of their identity is found in Nephi's prophecy and our own history. I do not think it was intended to be particularly difficult to see what was prophesied or who was involved. But we need to pay some attention or we miss the information lying before us.

Joseph Smith also made statements identifying the former occupants of the area that is now the United States where the Book of Mormon people were situated. From his mother, Lucy Mack Smith, we have the following description of what Joseph told the family during the four years he was being educated by Moroni in the annual visits to the Hill Cumorah before obtaining possession of the plates:

During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined. He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of traveling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life among them.

The reference to “this continent” being a reference to North America.

There are other references by Joseph Smith, as well. In looking at this I am not trying to identify where Book of Mormon events occurred. Instead I am only interested in the subject of whether

at the time of dispossession of the land, the people who were dispossessed were descendants who had promises extended to them in the Book of Mormon. It seems evident that is the case. It seems almost undeniable that the promised people who are yet to receive the benefit of an earlier covenant with Lehi and Nephi, Jacob and Enos, include those who were occupants of the area of the United States during the early years of American conquest.

SEPTEMBER 11, 2010

Remnant, Part III

To understand our own history and prophecies, we have to look at the events taking place during the time of the revelations. The composition of people and geography were dynamic, and changing. They were anything but static. So when you look at events at a specific moment in time, you have to look at the composition of the land and people to understand what was occurring. If you miss it by a decade, you miss what was revealed.

From the beginning of the United States the Indians were a political problem in need of a solution for both State and Federal government. Various conflicts and battles resulted in temporary solutions. By the time we reach the end of the 1820's, a more general solution was needed. Andrew Jackson came to office with a plan to deal with the problem.

Andrew Jackson wanted the Indians removed from the eastern portion of the United States, from Maine to Florida and from the Atlantic to the Mississippi. He wanted them all relocated. Congress responded and passed the Indian Relocation Act of 1830, forcibly removing all Native Americans to the area owned by the United States and acquired from France in the Louisiana Purchase. The land used for the relocation was just beyond the western border of

Missouri. In fact, the border town of Independence was located immediately adjacent to, and in the center of the relocated Indian tribes. You couldn't get any closer, and you couldn't be any more in the center than in Independence, Missouri.

Joseph Smith, expressing that “one of the most important points in the faith of the Church of the Latter-day Saints...is the gathering of Israel (of whom the Lamanites constitute a part)” seemed pleased that the American government was assisting in a gathering of the Lamanites, anticipating that it would facilitate their reception of the gospel. He even included in his history a positive statement expressing President Jackson's views on the Native Americans (*History of the Church* 2:357–60).

By 1831, after the relocation was well underway, the closest a white man could get to the Indians was Independence, Missouri. When you left Independence heading west, you would encounter the line dividing the land and establishing the territory the Federal Government exercised control over for the benefit of the tribes located there. It was for this reason the revelation given in 1831 refers to the “line running directly between Jew and Gentile.” (D&C 57:4). The “Jew” being the American Indian tribes located across the border, and the “gentile” being the Americans, including the LDS missionaries at the time.

In 1830 the first missionary to the “Lamanites” was called. Oliver Cowdery was told, among other things, the following:

And now, behold, I say unto you that you shall go unto the Lamanites and preach my gospel unto them; and inasmuch as they receive thy teachings thou shalt cause my church to be established among them; and thou shalt have revelations, but write them not by way of commandment. And now, behold, I say unto you that it is not revealed, and no man knoweth where the city Zion shall be built,

but it shall be given hereafter. Behold, I say unto you that it shall be on the borders by the Lamanites. (D&C 28:8–9)

Later the same month, Peter Whitmer was told to join Oliver in this first mission to the Lamanites. That revelation states:

Behold, I say unto you, Peter, that you shall take your journey with your brother Oliver; for the time has come that it is expedient in me that you shall open your mouth to declare my gospel; therefore, fear not, but give heed unto the words and advice of your brother, which he shall give you. And be you afflicted in all his afflictions, ever lifting up your heart unto me in prayer and faith, for his and your deliverance; for I have given unto him power to build up my church among the Lamanites. (D&C 30:5–6)

Both Oliver and Peter Whitmer were assigned to find these Lamanites, preach the Gospel, and at some point a place where the city of Zion would be built would be revealed. So the Lamanite conversion and revealing of the city of Zion were to happen together. The remnant being required for Zion to be built.

You will recall we discussed earlier how the gentiles will only “assist” in building the city. The remnant will do most of the work (3 Nephi 21:23, discussed already). So this mission was to locate the relevant group, and also locate the relevant spot where the remnant would construct the city of Zion.

In addition to Oliver and Peter, Parley Pratt and Ziba Peterson were called to serve this same mission. They went to Indians in New York, passed through Kirtland, and wound up in Independence at the end of the journey some time later. The Kirtland detour resulted in a large conversion, including Sidney Rigdon. Kirtland was the largest LDS congregation.

Well, the asides are interesting, but the point is that the search for Lamanites began in New York, and moved along until its end in a location center of the relocated tribes. It is immediately next to the boundary separating the Indians and whites, or in the language of revelation, “the Jews and gentiles.”

By the following year, Joseph came to visit the area. With the large relocated group of Lamanite nations across the border, and Independence the site from which all of them could be reached, Joseph received this revelation in July, 1831:

Hearken, O ye elders of my church, saith the Lord your God, who have assembled yourselves together, according to my commandments, in this land, which is the land of Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints. Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion. And thus saith the Lord your God, if you will receive wisdom here is wisdom. Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse. Wherefore, it is wisdom that the land should be purchased by the saints, and also every tract lying westward, even unto the line running directly between Jew and Gentile; And also every tract bordering by the prairies, inasmuch as my disciples are enabled to buy lands. Behold, this is wisdom, that they may obtain it for an everlasting inheritance. (D&C 57:1-5)

At that moment in time we had everything in one convenient place. A land to build Zion, the remnant next door, central location, approval from God, and the permission to proceed with establishing a temple.

People, places, opportunities and events would all change between the early 1830's and the mid 1840's. Dramatically. And so

we will follow a few of those events and the accompanying revelations which reflect the dynamic changes among both the Saints and the Lamanites.

SEPTEMBER 12, 2010

Remnant, Part IV

You should already be familiar with the history of the problems the Saints experienced in Missouri. Independence was hostile, and the Saints were driven away from Jackson County into surrounding areas. By 1833 the possibility of building in Independence was lost. A revelation assured the Saints that the place for Zion was not moved. The consoling revelation states:

Therefore, let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion; for all flesh is in mine hands; be still and know that I am God. Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered. They that remain, and are pure in heart, shall return, and come to their inheritances, they and their children, with songs of everlasting joy, to build up the waste places of Zion— And all these things that the prophets might be fulfilled. (D&C 101:16–19)

Zion was intended to be built in the center of the last part of Lamanite land available in 1831. The fact that the gentiles were expelled does not mean the site for building Zion was automatically changed. The Lord reiterated Zion wasn't changed. The gentile children may be scattered, but the site would remain. More importantly, the Lamanite children were being scattered as well. The picture was changing on both sides of the line separating "Jew from gentile" in the years following the 1831 revelation.

By 1838 the conflict between Mormons and Missourians had escalated to the point that it was called the "Mormon War." The

election battle at Gallatin on August 6, 1838 is at one end, and Joseph Smith's surrender at Far West in November, 1838 at the other.

Missouri was lost to the Saints. The natives voted to expel them, and Governor Lilburn Boggs signed the Extermination Order on October 27, 1838 requiring Mormons to be exterminated or driven from the State of Missouri; a curious piece of Americana that was not rescinded until some 137 years later on June 25, 1976 by Missouri Governor Christopher Bond.

The immediate aftermath of the Extermination Order was the battle at Haun's Mill, ultimately leading to the surrender in November by Joseph Smith. He was subsequently tried by a military tribunal and sentenced to death, but the death sentence was not carried out.

Joseph spent the winter of 1838–39 in the Liberty Jail, and in March, 1839 wrote a letter from which we have taken three sections of the Doctrine and Covenants, Sections 121, 122 and 123. The possibility of building in Missouri was lost, at least for the time.

The Saints moved to Commerce, renamed it Nauvoo, and started a new city. This one was also identified not only as "Zion" but as the "cornerstone of Zion." (D&C 124:2). So, although "Zion" was not to be moved, by 1841 the "cornerstone of Zion" was now in Nauvoo. This is not a contradiction. Zion has never been moved. But the Lamanites were moving, the Saints were moving, and the opportunity to locate it in the places where it could have been constructed earlier were no longer relevant.

We read the words of Section 101 to mean that the location remains in Independence, Jackson County. It is possible, however, there is another meaning. That is, the location hasn't changed, although temporary opportunities existed earlier. It wasn't built earlier, and will be built, but when it is built, it will be at the place

always prophesied for its construction. Zion was to be located on the top of the high mountains (Isa. 40:9). Jackson County has no mountains, no mountain range, no possibility of fulfilling the promised environs for establishing Zion (Isa. 2:3). Make the descriptions “spiritual” if you want, but a mountain setting is clearly required for the prophesied Zion (Psalms 133:3; Isa. 52:7; Joel 3:17; Micah 4:2; 2 Ne. 12:3; D&C 49:25; among others).

Zion was always intended to be built upon the mountain top (Isa. 30:17). Even a valley location in Salt Lake cannot answer to the description given in prophecy. A valley floor is not the “top of the mountain” upon which the beacon will be set. Zion has never been moved. Nor will it. In the same revelation which confirms Zion will not be moved, the Lord spoke of the Saints profaning the land earlier identified as Zion.

For all those who will not endure chastening, but deny me, cannot be sanctified. Behold, I say unto you, there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore by these things they polluted their inheritances. They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; therefore, the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble. (D&C 101:5–7)

So the location identified for building Zion was lost. It was lost because of the jarrings, contentions, envyings, strifes, lustful and covetous desires. This caused the land to be “polluted” and rendered it unfit for Zion. It is true, however, that in the same revelation making purchase of land in Jackson County was approved (D&C 101:70–71). There is no doubt a glorious future for Jackson County. But that will be by and by. There is a gathering in the tops of the mountains which must precede that. If there is not a gathering in

the mountains first, then ancient and modern prophecy will fail. There is to be a gathering within the boundaries of the everlasting hills (D&C 133:31–32). Zion will flourish upon the mountains (D&C 49:25). There aren't any places in Missouri that qualify for this preliminary gathering.

If jarring and contending can pollute Zion, are we ready for it now? If envy and strife will make it unacceptable, how prepared are we to gather to Zion now? If lustful and covetous desires will make it unfit for an inheritance, are we above those weaknesses now? So, how soon ought we expect the establishment of Zion to get underway?

All of this is an aside to the subject of the remnant. But it is an important aside. The remnant will build the city of Zion. In 1830, when the earlier inhabitants were relocated to the area immediately adjacent to Jackson County, had the city been built it would have been there. It wasn't time. It also wasn't the place. So, although the future of that place may be glorious at some point, the city of Zion to be built by the remnant, would necessarily be built where the remnant is located. Their location, if it answers to the description of prophecy, would be mountainous, in the top of the mountains, and a suitable place for refuge during a time of upheaval. We'll follow the events of the 1840's with that in mind.

SEPTEMBER 13, 2010

Remnant, Part V

A few additional statements by Joseph Smith and others add weight to the identity of the existing American Indian population at the time of the prophecies given to Joseph Smith.

When Joseph and Oliver went to seek answers about baptism on May 15, 1829, they explained the motivation for the inquiry.

They report they were inspired “after writing the account given of the Savior’s ministry to the remnant of the seed of Jacob, upon this continent.” (*Messenger and Advocate*, Vol. 1, p. 15, October 1834).

“The Book of Mormon is a record of the forefathers of our western Tribes of Indians,” Smith wrote to N. C. Saxton, editor of a Rochester, New York, newspaper. “The land of America is a promised land unto them,” where they would be instrumental in building a New Jerusalem.” [Taken from Ronald Walker’s paper: “Seeking the Remnant”; one of the first publications to take the role of the remnant found in the American Indians as a serious matter of study.]

On their mission to the Lamanites, Oliver and Parley were interviewed by newspapers as they went on their journey. *The Telegraph* published in Painesville, Ohio, on 16 and 30 November 1830, made the following mention about Oliver’s interview:

He proclaims destruction upon the world in a few years. We understand that he is bound for the regions beyond the Mississippi, where he contemplates founding a ‘City of Refuge’ for his followers, and converting the Indians, under his prophetic authority.” Cowdery also reportedly spoke of an about-to-rise Indian prophet, who would bring these events to pass.

Parley Pratt’s autobiography discusses the Mission to the Lamanites. He describes how the missionaries didn’t even hesitate in their mission after their tremendous success at Kirtland. They changed the entire center of gravity for the Church by the Kirtland conversions. But they retained their focus on the target of the remnant, whom they had been sent to teach. This was the first organized missionary effort after the organization of the church, and the target was the Lamanites. The priority and focus was remarkable, when

you consider the abundance of potential white converts all around the tiny start-up church. It gives some indication of how important Joseph regarded the Lamanite remnant to be as an obligation for the restored church.

Winter did not slow their journey toward the western frontier and border with the relocated American Indian tribes. Here's a brief excerpt from Parley's writings:

We halted for a few days in Illinois, about twenty miles from St. Louis, on account of a dreadful storm of rain and snow, which lasted for a week or more, during which the snow fell in some places near three feet deep....In the beginning of 1831 we renewed our journey; and, passing through St. Louis and St. Charles, we traveled on foot for three hundred miles through vast prairies and through trackless wilds of snow—no beaten road; houses few and far between; and the bleak northwest wind always blowing in our faces with a keenness which would almost take the skin off the face....We often ate our frozen bread and pork by the way, when the bread would be so frozen that we could not bite or penetrate any part of it but the outside crust.

After much fatigue and some suffering we all arrived in Independence, in the county of Jackson, on the extreme western frontiers of Missouri, and the United States. (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, p. 40)

Parley's account continues and explains how two of the missionaries took employment as tailors in Independence while the others crossed the boundary and "commenced a mission among the Lamanites, or Indians." (*Id.* p. 41). They taught the Shawnees, then the Delaware, including the chief over ten tribes of Delaware. The sermon delivered to the gathering called by the chief, deliv-

ered by Oliver Cowdery, is set out on pp. 42–43 where it is clear Oliver understood the Delaware were descended from the Book of Mormon people. The chief replied: “We feel truly thankful to our white friends who have come so far, and been at such pains to tell us good news, and specially this new news concerning the Book of our forefathers; it makes us glad in here—placing his hands on his own heart.”

Although the Indian reaction was favorable, the Indian Agents were alarmed at the Mormon success. In particular they did not want the upstart religion to gain a foothold among the relocated Indians, and began to interfere with the missionary efforts.

Of interest to us, however, is Oliver’s mention of the Rocky Mountains as the ultimate destination of the missionary effort, to be “with the Indians.” (*The Telegraph*, Plainsville, 18 January 1831, cited by Walker, above, on p. 9). Walker writes:

Smith gave a revelation requiring Sidney Gilbert to open a store in western Missouri that would allow ‘clerks employed in his service’ to go unto the Lamanites and ‘thus the gospel may be preached unto them.’ He also issued a confidential revelation that presaged the introduction of plural marriage. This latter statement promised that the elders would intermarry with the native women, making the red man’s posterity ‘white, delightful, and just. (*Seeking the Remnant*, p. 10, Citations omitted)

This early focus on the duty to find and preach to the remnant was not a passing concern. It was far more central to the early efforts than we realize as we review the events today. Today the view of the Lamanite remnant’s role is, if anything, superficial. To the earliest converts, they were central. They would remain a focus of interest throughout not only Joseph’s life, but also into the early

part of the western migration. Indeed, the western movement of the church itself was related to locating the remnant.

Now there are a number of prophecies given in the Book of Mormon or Doctrine and Covenants which relate to why the remnant were a priority for Joseph Smith and the early church of this dispensation. The further we get from those times, however, the more we seem to forget the underlying reasons. We have become so successful as an organization, and prosper in every economic, political and social measure that it is hard to remember things. When Presidential candidates, the leader of the United States Senate, the Ambassador to China, business and educational leaders are members of the church, we do not relate as well to the promised cataclysms. Where once we may have welcomed destruction to end our persecutions, now we fear what we would lose. Our former poverty made us fear nothing in the destruction of the world, but now we have a great deal to lose and therefore we want to continue as we are. We have even redefined the term “remnant” to mean us, the Latter-day Saints, as if redefining it will remove the prophetic threat posed to the gentiles (See “Children of the Covenant”, May, 1995 *Ensign*, the General Conference talk by Russell M. Nelson; in particular the interpretation given in footnote 15). The careful distinctions between the remnant of the Book of Mormon on the one hand, and the gentiles on the other, has been forgotten, or altogether lost in our modern teachings. But that does not alter what Nephi or Christ meant in their prophecies that we still read in the Book of Mormon text.

We’ve worked to establish a basis for understanding the distinctions for several months now. With that foundation we will continue our search for understanding where we find ourselves

in history, what group we are identified with and what we should expect in the coming calamities.

Onward, then...

SEPTEMBER 13, 2010

Remnant, Part VI

Another principle that must be included in the mix of understanding the prophecies concerning the remnant is timing and patience.

When you speak of bloodlines and blessings, it is not possible to follow the details of interconnections across generations with any amount of accuracy. Even Joseph Smith, while certain of the remnant's existence and importance, was not certain of their identity. They needed to be found. Although some groups showed promise, they were not, and have not, been identified.

There were rumors of a people in the southwest, who made rugs, that may be the group.

There are those who are convinced the Hopi are the people. Hugh Nibley has spent time with the Hopi and written a great deal about them. He seemed satisfied they were likely the chosen remnant. He studied their year-end dance festivals and believed they contained elements of sacred narrative identifiable with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I have LDS friends who have spent time among the Hopi who have the same view.

I do not believe it is necessary to identify who the remnant is. It is important to realize there is a prophetic destiny of a remnant, and to have a little humility about the limited gentile success which has been prophesied. But to go further than that is not always wise.

Everything in the Lord's plan is timed. You cannot change the timing. If, for example, you hurry to get where you think Zion

will be established, and arrive before the burning and cleansing of that land, then you may have found the right spot, but you arrived at the wrong time. You will be killed, burned off the land as it is purged and prepared. The Lord alone controls timing. And timing is as important as any other portion of the Lord's plan.

Also, to identify the remnant beforehand is ill-advised. *They will be identified in the ordinary course of events.* They will fulfill their prophetic destiny. As it unfolds, it will be natural, appropriate and in accordance with the hand of God. There will be no need to force Zion.

Those who are the remnant may well be Hopi. Or, they may come from Hopi blood, if that is indeed the remnant bloodline. But during the time between the closing of the Book of Mormon history and the opening of American history, how many from that bloodline departed or were captured and carried away to another place. If only one left and migrated into Canada, later to intermarry and leave descendants, who have now intermarried and live in Alberta, Montana and Idaho, then they may have long ago lost any identity with the Hopi. But they may still be heirs according to the bloodline that is theirs.

How do we know the remnant does not now include businessmen in Mexico City, families in Peru, a physician in San Francisco, or a housewife in Florida, all of whom have the blood of the remnant within them, but they are without any knowledge of it? Nor can we know if there were intermarriages and migrations which make northern Mexico and Arizona filled with people who are the remnant, heirs of the promises, and destined to one day return to the faith of Christ.

Who knows but what the in-migration of those regarded as “illegal aliens” currently inside the United States are not in possession of the blood that qualifies them as heirs of the promises.

They exist. They are known to the Lord. There may be great areas and people, as well as disbursed and assimilated individuals who are among those who are heirs. It is not important to “find” them in one sense, but critical that they be found in another. They will self-identify. That is, those in whom the promises will be fulfilled will act consistent with the promises. They will become known as they engage in the prophesied conduct. They will convert. They will become reunited through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They will shake off the dust of history, arise and become glorious. They will blossom as a rose and build the New Jerusalem. We will not control that. It will be them awakening, not us attempting to assimilate them into our culture and society. The Indian Placement Program didn’t work because it was not the means by which they are to be found. Pushing our culture on them will only create errors their return is intended to cure. And so the timing and means are critical for this to unfold in accordance with the Lord’s plan.

If you were to know for certain exactly who was to fulfill the prophecies, and to visit with them today, you may be profoundly disappointed. Until the time is right, they won’t be ready either. They will awaken on time. But until that time, you cannot rouse from slumber those who are not ready to awaken. That it WILL happen is certain. But the time is as important as any other component of the event.

Do the remnant people even know they are the Lord’s and heirs of promises in the Book of Mormon? Probably not. They, the remnant, are to learn of these things from the gentiles (2 Nephi 30:3). Therefore it is unlikely they will know anything about it until the

record of the Book of Mormon is delivered to them by the gentiles. So if they are to learn about these things from the gentiles, the first step will be educational. Gentiles need to become converted to the beliefs of the Book of Mormon, then bring these correct beliefs to the remnant. The remnant may have a glorious destiny, but not until after first the gentiles who believe in the words take them to the remnant and teach them.

Even if you knew the Hopi were the right people, that does not accomplish what the promises foretell. The remnant must be taught the truth. That will be taught by believing gentiles. We don't have many of those yet. So to deliver a copy of the Book of Mormon to a Hopi and expect that to result in spontaneous combustion producing light, truth and glory is at best a naive notion and at worst absolute foolishness. It won't happen that way. The right people must be brought the right message by a believing gentile, preaching the fullness of the Gospel to them. When that happens, Nephi's prophecy may begin to unfold. We lack qualified gentile ministers at present. They labor under condemnation for not taking the Book of Mormon seriously or remembering the covenant made within it. So the first step is to convert a few gentiles.

Nevertheless, this is an important subject and worth taking time to understand. But with this, as with almost everything else in the Gospel, having it measured correctly and weighed in proportion is the only way to understand. So we proceed step by cautious step to try and dismantle false and corrupt notions, and to assemble the true ones. You must be patient to understand the Lord's plan. And therefore we proceed patiently in this subject, as well.

Patience is more than a virtue. It is critical to participating in the Lord's plan.

COMMENTS:

John C · SEPTEMBER 13, 2010 AT 6:34 PM

I read Ronald Walker's paper, "Seeking the Remnant". I was amazed how seriously Joseph and others sought to teach the Lamanites and gather a remnant. Their efforts were inspiring but nothing of long-term significance seemed to have come from it all (as far as I can tell, I may be wrong). I wonder why Joseph tried to push the issue that Denver is now saying has to be in the Lord's own time. What am I, Joseph or Denver missing?

Denver Snuffer · SEPTEMBER 13, 2010 AT 6:41 PM

Joseph tried, as did Brigham. But now we are not even aware of its importance. We're not pushing it because we don't remember it. Joseph pushed because he was aware of it.

Remember that, had Joseph lived to be 85 years old, he would have seen the Lord's coming; though he was uncertain which coming that would have been (D&C 130:14-15).

Our efforts matter. But the first step is to gain knowledge so we can do our part. We're a long way from that. We can't control the others nor even contribute to them until we have first prepared. We aren't aware of that need as yet; at least in the way in which we need to be aware. Then we need to act consistent with that awareness and acquire some understanding so we can teach the truth. Right now we're a long way short of that capability. When the truth is taught, people have some difficulty recognizing it and oftentimes will argue against it.

SEPTEMBER 14, 2010

Remnant, Part VII

When Joseph had made a sufficient "offering" and "acknowledgments," the Lord gave another opportunity for the Saints to receive again what had been taken from them, that is the "fullness of the priesthood." (D&C 124:1, 28).

To be permitted to undertake this, however, there would be a limited time appointed. After that appointment, the church would be rejected (D&C 124:31–32). The time is not specified, but the work was to be undertaken by sending “swift messengers,” (D&C 124:26) and gathering all the Saints together with their gold, silver, antiquities, and precious things to construct this Temple (D&C 124:26–27).

The Saints gathered to Nauvoo and by 1844 the population had swollen to 12,000. There were shops, brick homes, stores, and a Masonic Hall constructed in Nauvoo. There was a gunsmith shop, a university, library and wide streets. Unlike other frontier towns with adobe and log homes, Nauvoo boasted brick houses and affluence. This community was superior to anything else along the western boundary of the United States at the time.

When Joseph and Hyrum were killed on June 27, 1844, the Temple walls were not completed and no portion had been dedicated. After Joseph’s death, the Saints rededicated themselves to finish the Temple. The exterior walls were completed in December, 1844 and the final sunstone put into place with some considerable difficulty.

On March 16, 1845 Brigham Young asked the Saints to rededicate themselves to building the Temple, promising them blessings if they would redouble their efforts to complete the building.

On the following day 105 extra laborers showed up to help (*History of the Church* 7:385–87). It was not until 24 May 1845 that the capstone would be laid.

Joseph was dead for 18 months before the endowment was administered in the Nauvoo Temple on December 10th, 1845. Those who had been given some instruction regarding the Temple in Joseph’s brick store, used what they had learned before Joseph’s death to perform the ceremonies. A portion of the attic was temporarily dedicated for this work, even though the structure was

incomplete. The final endowments were performed on February 7, 1846. On February 8, 1846 the Twelve prayed in the Temple to be able to finally complete and formally dedicate the Temple. The following day the Temple caught fire, damaging the area that had been used for the endowment requiring repairs to be made. A week later Brigham Young's party departed Nauvoo with the Temple still incomplete, but Nauvoo was a magnificent city that showed enormous culture, prosperity and success.

If you have visited Nauvoo since the beginning of the Church-sponsored Nauvoo Restoration, Inc. work, you know how amazing the city was when abandoned by the Saints. It was a tribute to labor, dedication, and perseverance. The Temple was incomplete and still under construction not at all ready for dedication, but the city was a marvel. As the church leadership departed to the west, they left instruction to complete the Temple even though it would not be used.

Finally, on April 29, 1846 the Nauvoo Temple was complete enough to dedicate. The following day a private dedication service was conducted by Wilford Woodruff, Orson Hyde and about twenty others. The prayer was offered by Joseph Young, Brigham's brother. The next day a public dedication service was held with those attending charged \$1.00 entrance fee to help pay those who had worked in completing the structure. In this dedication ceremony Elder Hyde offered the prayer and included the following:

By the authority of the Holy Priesthood now we offer this building as a sanctuary to Thy Worthy Name. We ask Thee to take the guardianship into Thy hands...

The following Sunday Elder Hyde explained that the Temple needed to be completed for the church to be accepted by the

Lord with our dead. He commented that the work had only been accomplished “by the skin of our teeth.” (*Wilford Woodruff's Journal* 3:43)

By September, 1846 a mob overran Nauvoo, and the caretakers gave the keys to the Temple doors to the mob. The mob was eventually shamed into returning the Temple to the caretakers and on October 20th the keys were returned to Brother Paine. The trustees of Nauvoo then tried to sell the Temple, but the best offer received was \$100,000. A Missouri newspaper reported that the Temple was sold in June, 1847 to the Catholic Church for \$75,000, but that the sale failed because of a defect in the title to the property.

On October 9, 1848 the Nauvoo Temple was destroyed by an arsonist.

In March, 1849 the French Icarians purchased the hollow shell of the destroyed Temple. On May 27, 1850 a storm blew down the north wall and made the structure so dangerous that it was further torn down to make it safe. Pieces of the blockwork were then sold and some of them were transported to be used in building projects outside the community, including to St. Louis. By 1865 the city removed what little remained. The site was then used for saloons, slaughter houses, hotels, grocery and drug stores, pool halls and private houses (“The Nauvoo Temple”, *The Instructor*, March 1965).

From the time of Nauvoo until the present day, every President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints either lived in Nauvoo between January 1841 and June 1844, or descended from those who lived there during the time. (Although some were called on missions and abandoned families who resided there for some of that time.)

Church history takes the view that Nauvoo was a triumph, and the Saints succeeded in accomplishing all that was required of

them, and more. The stories of heroism, sacrifice and devotion that focus on the Nauvoo era are endless. Those families who trace their genealogy to ancestors in Nauvoo at that time defend the notion that they are specially favored as families, and are among the noble and great chosen to lead others in mortality because of their great devotion and sacrifice.

The promise of a remnant holding authority and performing a central work in the establishment of Zion, as prophesied by the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants, would be a dramatic change in course for the church. This is something that will occur in any event. Indeed, coalitions, conspiracies and man's arm will be powerless to prevent it. Unlikely history is the stuff of scripture.

Prophecies will be fulfilled. Despite vanity and foolishness, error and unbelief, prophecies will be fulfilled

SEPTEMBER 14, 2010

Remnant, Part VIII

We've seen some of what the remnant is defined to mean. We've seen the definition in the Book of Mormon excludes gentiles. We've seen the converted gentiles comprising the Latter-day Saints are still defined as gentiles after conversion.

We've seen that the first formal mission called after the establishment of the church was sent to the Lamanites to find the remnant. We've seen how the mission went no further than the boundary where the Indian Nations were relocated by the US Government in 1830. What we haven't discussed is the interest Joseph Smith had in locating the remnant throughout his life.

When he was fleeing Nauvoo in late June, he intended to go to the Rocky Mountains. That was the location chosen precisely

because it was where he hoped to find the remnant. He was talked into returning by those who claimed it was cowardly for him to flee. They used the Lord's analogy about the false shepherd who would flee when the flock was in danger (John 10:11-13). He reportedly said "if my life is of no value to my friends, it is of no value to myself." He returned. With that, Joseph's attempt to locate and identify the remnant came to an end.

However, before his final surrender, his intention was to go to the Rocky Mountains to locate the remnant.

The following entry appears on June 22, 1844 in Vol. 6, page 547 of the *DHC*:

About 9 p.m. Hyrum came out of the Mansion and gave his hand to Reynolds Cahoon, at the same time saying, 'A company of men are seeking to kill my brother Joseph, and the Lord has warned him to flee to the Rocky Mountains to save his life. Good-bye, Brother Cahoon, we shall see you again.' In a few minutes afterwards Joseph came from his family. His tears were flowing fast. He held a handkerchief to his face, and followed after Brother Hyrum without uttering a word.

In his final public address Joseph said, among other things:

You will gather many people into the fastness of the Rocky Mountains as a center for the gathering of the people...you will yet be called upon to go forth and call upon the free men from Main to gather themselves together to the Rocky Mountains; and the Redmen from the West and all people from the North and from the South and from the East, and go to the West, to establish themselves in the strongholds of their gathering places, and there you will gather with the Redmen to their center from their scattered and dispersed situation, to become the strong arm of Jehovah, who will be a strong

bulwark of protection from your foes. (“A Prophecy of Joseph the Seer”, found in *The Fate of the Persecutors of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 154, 156)

There is a well known quote that speaks volumes when considered as a whole:

I want to say to you before the Lord that you know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and Kingdom than a babe upon its mother’s lap. You don’t comprehend it. It is only a little handful of Priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world. It will fill the Rocky Mountains. There will be tens of thousands of Latter-day Saints who will be gathered in the Rocky Mountains, and there they will open the door for the establishing of the Gospel among the Lamanites.... This people will go into the Rocky Mountains; they will there build temples to the Most High. They will raise up a posterity there, and the Latter-day Saints who dwell in these mountains will stand in the flesh until the coming of the Son of Man. The Son of Man will come to them while in the Rocky Mountains. (*Millennial Star*, Vol. 54 (1852), p. 605)

We’ve seen how the primary effort to build the city of Zion will be the remnant’s, and the gentiles will merely “assist” in the construction.

To see the remnant’s role is more important than to understand their identity. Their identity will come. But their role is distinct and important. We are not them, and they have a destiny appointed them by covenant and promise. We cannot substitute ourselves for them. Nor can we fulfill the prophetic promises without them.

CHAPTER 8

3 Nephi 20

Christ had some specific teachings about the remnant we have not yet examined. We'll turn to that to add to our understanding of the remnant role:

3 Nephi 20:11

“Ye remember that I spake unto you, and said that when the words of Isaiah should be fulfilled—behold they are written, ye have them before you, therefore search them—”

Christ is speaking and will turn to the future destiny of the Nephites. By the time this statement was made, however, the Nephites were mingled with all other bloodlines. There were shortly to be no more “ites” but only one people (4 Nephi 1:17).

The destiny of the future remnant will unfold in conformity with words spoken by Isaiah. They are adequate to foretell the future of the events involving the people on this, the American land. But we are supposed to “search them” to be able to get an understanding of what will unfold.

There is a plan. It was all foreseen. It will happen as the prophecies describe. However we need to trust the language and not impose other ideas upon the words.

SEPTEMBER 15, 2010

3 Nephi 20:12

“And verily, verily, I say unto you, that when they shall be fulfilled then is the fulfilling of the covenant which the Father hath made unto his people, O house of Israel.”

Isaiah’s prophecies concerning the Israelite covenant will happen at the same time as the fulfillment of the covenants for the Nephite remnant. So things will develop simultaneously for all the chosen people. Not just locally, but globally.

Notice the reference to the “Father” and to “His people.” Why is it the “Father’s people” in this scripture? What significance is there to the covenant being fulfilled for the Father’s people? Are they different from others? Can others have a covenant with Christ? Why is it the Father’s people who will see the fulfillment of their covenants in this final, winding up of history?

How are “O house of Israel” and the “Father’s people” related? Are they the same? Why or why not?

Why would all covenants come to a fulfillment at the same time? What is there of general historical development which requires all of these to be fulfilled simultaneously?

How would you prepare for the time when the fulfillment of all the covenants are to occur? Is there some kind of storage you should be assembling? What about things that put “oil” in a “lamp?” How would you go about getting that put together?

If the judgments of God will begin on His own house (D&C 112:24–26), then how do you prepare to avoid that judgment?

There is an upside to every prophecy, even in those predicting calamity. The upside consists in two things: First, avoiding the judgment by being prepared for it (D&C 38:30). Second, recognizing it so as to not be alarmed or lose faith because of it (D&C 1:3).

When you see the distresses which are to come, recognize them as signs given by the Lord and take comfort (Luke 21:8–13).

Christ uses Isaiah as His source because Isaiah was inspired in what he wrote. We also have a record of his prophecy. Therefore, the Lord could speak in the first person and have us quote Him. However, He pays tribute to His own prophet by quoting the words of Isaiah. This is meekness indeed. Our Lord is not and never has been prideful. He is meek, and willing to let others have credit, share in triumph, and be treated as equals. How unlike Him are the gentile leaders who love to lord it over one another, holding each other as subservients. Christ, however, made Himself a servant of all (Mark 10:42–44). He puts that same meekness on display again here, as he quotes from Isaiah. This shows the Lord’s respect for Isaiah.

Interesting the things which become apparent the closer you look at our Lord. Interesting how much the Book of Mormon adds to the picture of our Lord. What a great volume of scripture we have been given.

Well, back then to our main topic...

SEPTEMBER 15, 2010

3 Nephi 20:13

And then shall the remnants, which shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth, be gathered in from the east and from the west, and from the south and from the north; and they shall be brought to the knowledge of the Lord their God, who hath redeemed them.

Notice “remnants” is plural. This is Christ speaking, and the scope of the message is universal. It is not local. It includes local events, to be sure. But the time of this fulfillment will be global. All the “remnants” will be affected.

It will not matter if the particular “remnant” is anywhere “upon the face of the earth” they will be “gathered in.” Why would they necessarily be “gathered?” What is the purpose of “gathering?”

Why “gather” merely to then return them to their lands of inheritance? (See discussion of 3 Nephi 21:27–28 here).

Which is more important, to gather physically or to gather “to the knowledge of the Lord their God?”

How could people gather “to the knowledge of the Lord their God?” What kind of “knowledge of the Lord God” will be involved? Do you get that knowledge by supporting men in their callings? Do men and their callings even matter? Can you grow in knowledge of God by following, even memorizing, a handbook; following, memorizing talks and inspirational literature? What does a person need to follow, to do, to abide by in order to gain “knowledge of the Lord their God?” What about those who testify to you about programs and personalities, but never preach about Christ and Him crucified?

Do true messengers speak about one another, or about their Lord? How can a man, any man, save you? Who alone has the capacity to redeem you? Is “knowledge of the Lord their God” related also to knowledge that He “hath redeemed them?” Can you “know” Christ and not acquire in the process of knowing Him the knowledge that He “hath redeemed” you?

Do you come to understand He has redeemed you by also coming to know Him?

Do Joseph’s remarks about the Lord coming to visit with the remnant in the Rocky Mountains explain how both those coming from the four corners of the compass will gain “knowledge of the Lord their God” and also know He “hath redeemed them?”

Do you begin to see a pattern of consistent prophetic foreknowledge of the last days? Do Christ's words in this message of the Book of Mormon give any greater reason to believe in the promises?

If these promises are made by Him, should you expect it possible for you to go ahead and "gather in" to Him even before there are others willing to do so? Can this "gathering in" occur in your lifetime, for you? If God is no respecter of persons, then what would you need to do today to obtain the same blessings others will receive as they "gather in" in perhaps greater numbers in the future? Is it possible to do that? Are you willing to try?

It seems to me this doctrine is important in a macro sense in understanding prophetic promises and future gatherings. But it is perhaps more important in the micro sense, in that anything promised to anyone in any age is always available on the same principles to anyone willing to abide them at any time (D&C 130:20–21). Do you really believe these teachings of our Lord? Then why not act on them?

I know these things are truly within the reach of almost all of you. The overwhelming majority of readers of this blog have lived better lives than I have. You are almost all better qualified than I was. I believed these things, trusted the Lord, acted on His promises. As a result, I am among those who has been "gathered in" and I "know the Lord my God," having been "redeemed by Him." It is more than possible for you.

SEPTEMBER 16, 2010

3 Nephi 20:14–15

And the Father hath commanded me that I should give unto you this land, for your inheritance. And I say unto you, that if the

Gentiles do not repent after the blessing which they shall receive, after they have scattered my people—

Christ is speaking to a group of people and their descendants when making these remarks. The Father has commanded Christ to confirm to the Nephites they are given this land. “This land.” So now the question of where Christ was while making these comments becomes important.

Where were they at the moment Christ spoke to them? That affects things, doesn't it? Was it Guatemala? Or the United States?

There are two ways of trying to determine the answer to this question. One would be to study the internal content of the Book of Mormon and try to reconstruct a location based on the clues there. This has been done with varying results. The two leading works on the two leading theories have been referred to in this post. There is another theory that the area was in the Gulf of Mexico. The land was completely reformed, broken up, and altered as a result of the upheavals of the 3 Nephi destruction, and the land no longer appears as it did once. It is now underwater. You can work and justify a number of locations based on the content of the Book of Mormon.

The other way is to take other sources that presumably knew, and accept what they said about the location. I've already quoted from both Moroni and Joseph Smith about the location. Both have placed the events in the area now known as the United States. Moroni's description of the Book of Mormon, and its people, was as follows: *“He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang (JS-H 1:34).* I presume Moroni knew, and that Joseph had no reason to misstate what he said. It would appear that the continent referred to by Christ using the

words, “this land” was North America. And the promise from the Father, made by covenant, was with “the former inhabitants of this continent.”

So the remnant was (at the moment Christ was speaking to this audience, and confirmed this covenant of the Father) located in North America. This does not mean they weren't mobile and subsequently moved about. This does not mean they did not disburse and occupy other portions of the North and South American landmasses. This does not mean that other migrations of these people which scattered them elsewhere into the world have not occurred. Even if you confine everything to a North American venue for the entirety of the Book of Mormon account, there is still a gap between 400 A.D. when the narrative draws to a conclusion and the 1820's when the record comes to light again. Nothing closes that gap.

So if Moroni's comments to Joseph Smith can be trusted, then originally the people from whom the remnant came were people who lived on “this continent” at some time in history.

The gentiles are mentioned again here. They are reminded of the blessings they have received. They are reminded they were given the responsibility of scattering the remnant and disciplining them for the remnant's failings. But, once the gentiles are blessed, once they have scattered the remnant and destroyed most of them (leaving only a remnant of what was here before), then the gentiles are warned. They must repent. Without repentance the fate of the gentiles will be a similar holocaust of destruction, scattering and treading down; leaving only a remnant of the gentiles still upon the land.

So the roles will reverse. At first, the gentiles dominate and the remnant recedes, at last the remnant will dominate and the gentiles recede.

The remnant's role and the gentiles' pride are interconnected with one another. It is for this reason, if no other, the subject of the remnant is important to know something about.

So, we continue.

SEPTEMBER 16, 2010

3 Nephi 20:16

Then shall ye, who are a remnant of the house of Jacob, go forth among them; and ye shall be in the midst of them who shall be many; and ye shall be among them as a lion among the beasts of the forest, and as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he goeth through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.

The descendants of Christ's audience remaining after the holocaust of gentile destruction (i.e., the "remnant of the house of Jacob") would be used by God to deliver judgment upon the gentiles. First the descendants are to be reduced to a remnant by the gentiles, but then the fortunes would be reversed. Initially the gentiles would be the very embodiment of the "wrath of God" to "scatter" and "smite" the descendants (1 Ne. 13:14). Following that, the gentiles are favored of God and "prosper." This land becomes the temporary land of inheritance for the gentiles, as well (1 Ne. 13:15).

But the gentiles would occupy the land on condition. They would need to serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ (Ether 2:12).

Ultimately, they will need to repent, or they will fill the measure of their own cup of wrath by rejecting the fullness of the Gospel. The gentiles would not continue in their humility, but would be offered the fullness of the Gospel, reject it, then turn to their own pride, even more proud of themselves than any comparable people

upon the earth. As Christ describes the latter-day gentiles, they will be full of mischief, lyings, deceits, hypocrisy and priestcrafts. Indeed, they will be full of all this and will also reject the fullness of the Gospel offered them by the Lord (3 Nephi 16:10).

When they do, Christ will “bring the fullness of my Gospel from among them.” (3 Nephi 16:10). Upon removing the fullness, and the gentiles being filled with their pride, priestcrafts, deceits and hypocrisy, the Lord will use the remnant who remain to return judgment upon the gentiles in the same manner the gentiles had earlier returned judgment upon the remnant (3 Nephi 16:15).

As Christ states above, using the words of Isaiah, “a remnant of the house of Jacob” will “go forth among them; and ye shall be in the midst of them who shall be many; and ye shall be among them as a lion among the beasts of the forest, and as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he goeth through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.”

We’ve discussed the “beasts of the forest” and the “flocks of sheep” before. Both categories of gentiles will be swept away. None can deliver them from this coming judgment. The remnant will be the Lord’s instrument of judgment upon the gentiles, and the gentile pride, priestcrafts, lyings, deceits will all come crashing down upon them in judgment. Their idols will be trodden down and torn in pieces, for they are their own idols imagining in their own hearts themselves to be greater than any other people. Their image of themselves as high and lifted up will be brought down low, into the dust. (Compare Isaiah 14:12–17). How like their master Mahon these gentiles have become. But then rejecting the fullness of the Gospel when it has been offered to a people always carries a heavy price.

The remnant will be doing the work of the Father in that day. For the judgment is the Lord's and not the remnant's. The remnant are only the means by which the judgment is delivered.

Cleansing precedes the blessing. And this blessed land will be Zion. But not while occupied by filthy people who idolize themselves, reject the fullness, support priestcrafts, lyings, deceit and hypocrisy calling it righteousness, truth and beauty. They cannot see their own condition, and will not trust the Lord to reveal it to them. They will say the Lord does not speak any more, and we have enough of the revelations of God (2 Nephi 28:27–29). They will say God has finished His work of restoring truth, given His power to men, and now we must follow men to be saved (2 Nephi 28:5).

But the Lord will prove that He had more to say when the gentiles learn, too late, they trusted in the arm of flesh rather than in the Spirit which saves (2 Nephi 28:31). At that day, despite all the gentile petitions for relief from that God whose fullness they rejected, none will deliver.

The interplay between the gentiles and the remnant is a fascinating subject, with prophetic details given so as to allow us to appreciate the peril we find ourselves as gentiles in these last days. It is good we Latter-day Saints know we are safe and are part of a great, saved and favored community to be preserved against the coming judgments, isn't it? It is good we do not need to repent much if at all to be saved, because as we hear so very often: All is well. All is well.

And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. (Isa. 6:9–10)

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · SEPTEMBER 17, 2010 AT 7:30 PM

I cannot think of a single relationship that works well or is anywhere near the place of God when based upon the principles of fear. What parent wants their children to do as they say because they are afraid of them? The only ones I can think of are the ones that lack the understanding of the power of love. How can you say you have truly helped someone come to the Lord when you have only made them afraid of Him? Why is it that the Nephites time and time again turned to the Lord only to forget Him when times were good? And what exactly did the City of Enoch do that was so different? A lot of people follow a “list” compiled mostly of opinions and never come to know the Lord. Why? Because of fear. Fear that they’re doing the wrong thing (which can only make one second guess and weaken faith) and fear that they’re not doing enough (which creates distraction and a belief in unworthiness as long as there is still a list to follow). There is a calling to some to preach repentance, but why is it that repentance must be beaten into everybody with fear? The goodness of God and the message of the atonement ought to be the motivating factors in the process of repentance otherwise complacency will ALWAYS follow when blessings are had. An eye single to the glory of God can only come from a deep, sincere love of the Lord and His truths. I cannot see how fear as the motivating factor will ever bring anyone to truly know the Lord as it only works as long as fear based repentance is being preached.

Denver Snuffer · SEPTEMBER 17, 2010 AT 8:26 PM

This is not about psychology. In fact using the tools of psychology to understand the invitation to come to Christ won’t help.

Repentance is love. It is coming to Him. But coming to Him by learning of Him. It is not fear; though approaching God is indeed fearful. That fear in the approach arises from your own inner worthiness before Him. It is unavoidable because none of us are worthy apart from Him. Therefore the dread of being before God will remain until He removes it by an act of His mercy.

The Lord and His prophets teach plainly what we all understood and all agreed upon before the world was begun. The plan we have is tried, true, and is the path by which all those who have ever ascended to heaven have made that ascent.

Focusing upon whether one's motivation is based upon fear or love is unhelpful. Focusing upon what the Lord says, and then what is meant by what the Lord says, is helpful. The inner man must change. The change is mandatory, and comes from knowing Him and learning of Him. But until the moment of relief is granted by Him, there will always be discomfort because of our fallen state and tendency to sin. This is why He is a "Comforter"—because He removes from us the discomfort we feel from sin. But we surely do feel (ALL of us feel) dread and fear because of what we lack as we approach the throne of grace. He "Comforts" us by freeing us from that terrible burden. But such freedom comes on His terms, based upon the eternal plan for removing sin, or it does not happen at all.

SEPTEMBER 17, 2010

3 Nephi 20:17–19

Thy hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off. And I will gather my people together as a man gathereth his sheaves into the floor. For I will make my people with whom the Father hath covenanted, yea, I will make thy horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass. And thou shalt beat in pieces many people; and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth. And behold, I am he who doeth it.

The remnant will be the instruments of Divine retribution against the gentiles. It will be the remnant's "hand" which "shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries." And it will be "all [the

remnant's] enemies [which] shall be cut off." So, who will be the remnant's "adversaries?" Who will be their "enemies?"

The Lord promises to "gather my people together" — and the only ones He has called His people are the Nephite audience, never the gentiles (See 3 Nephi 16:8–9; 3 Nephi 20:15, 27; 3 Nephi 21:2). The Lord's people to be gathered, the promised inheritors of the land, the chosen and covenant people are the remnant. This prophecy is about them. The gentiles are only included to the extent that a few of them will repent (3 Nephi 16:13; 3 Nephi 21:6).

The "sheaves into the floor" is a harvest image. It is an end-of-times view, because it involves harvest time. "Gathering the sheaves into the floor" is a reference to latter-day Zion, where a group is first "gathered" before the burning of the fields that always follows.

Again the Lord calls the remnant "my people" while clarifying that His people are those "with whom the Father hath covenanted." To covenant with the Father is to receive a Father. The Father does not covenant with strangers. His covenants are with His household. So this is the Family of God.

The "iron horn" and the "brass hoofs" are also symbolic images. What does a "horn" represent? In the context of judgment, does the "horn" hold additional meaning? Why is the horn said to be "iron?" What do the hoofs represent? In the context of judgment do the "hoofs" have additional meaning? Why are they "brass?" How stern and unrelenting will the judgment be? How complete will it become for the "people" to be "beat in pieces?" How terrible will the pouring out of judgment become?

Why would judgment be so severe upon a people who claim to be godly? Think about the introduction to Joseph Smith at the time the restoration of all things was offered (*JS-H 1:19*). Compare

that to the statement made by the mortal Christ when the Pharisees were confronting Him about violating the rituals and practices of the religious hierarchy at the time (Mark 7:5–9). Christ offered them the fullness of His Gospel and they rejected it. The judgment which followed was unlike anything that went before. Christ warned them it would be so (Matt. 24:21). Nevertheless, they refused to accept the fullness offered them, continued on in their religious traditions, and were besieged by Roman legions and slain en masse. The account from Josephus is difficult and shocking to read. Mothers cannibalizing their infants to satiate their hunger pains. It is as if hell itself opened upon Jerusalem.

Rejection of the fullness of Christ's Gospel carries terrible consequences. We have seen it before. And, when it was rejected before, it was done in preference to traditions from men. The arm of flesh and a religion multiplied the commandments of men until every aspect of life was controlled by religion. How one dressed, what they ate, how they observed the Sabbath, what things were considered clean and unclean, how to appear in public in order to conform to the right look, vocabulary and conduct. These were very religious people. I've discussed them in *Come, Let Us Adore Him*. I assume you're familiar with that.

Thank goodness we are not like them. We have the fullness, don't we? We are safe and in the right path and none can molest us or make us afraid. For we are the chosen people.

Well those other people (not us) who rejected the fullness of the Gospel, those are the ones who will be broken into pieces. Then their "gain" and their "substance" will be consecrated to the Lord. So they will live the law of consecration after all! Only it will be postmortem. That is, once killed, the Lord can use their gain and substance to provide for His people.

Lest any forget the author and finisher of our faith, He speaks to us anew to remind us who is responsible for these deeds: “And behold, I am he who doeth it.”

The Lord is, after all, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. When He invites us in meekness to come to Him, we should realize that failure to come risks the judgments that have always been terrible to bear. Those Old Testament events we have a difficult time associating with Christ will become associated with Christ again. Just as His New Testament judgments were His and terrible to behold. He is the same. We should expect that when the time ends and we have not met our appointment, we actually do risk rejection and judgment.

SEPTEMBER 17, 2010

3 Nephi 20:20

And it shall come to pass, saith the Father, that the sword of my justice shall hang over them at that day; and except they repent it shall fall upon them, saith the Father, yea, even upon all the nations of the Gentiles.

Again the reminder is made to the gentiles. We who are associated with the gentiles (D&C 109:60) are numbered among “all the nations of the gentiles.”

So this is Divine judgment, aimed at the gentiles who were offered, and then rejected the fullness of His Gospel. These are those who will be receiving the “sword of [His] justice.” Even now, the “sword of [His] justice...hangs over us.” For we are “at that day” now. So the sword “shall fall upon them, saith the Father” unless we “repent.”

How does one repent when they have rejected the fullness? Would it have been easier to have accepted it when first offered?

When did we neglect receiving it? If taken, how was it taken? How do we obtain it anew?

These seem to be important issues. They seem to involve the very subject of life and death, both mortally and eternally. Why, if so important, do we go about telling one another “odds are you’re going to be exalted” when such alarms as these exist in Christ’s own words in the Book of Mormon? What foolishness have we been given in place of the “plain words” of truth which Nephi and Christ Himself taught?

Do we get angry at the truth like Laman and Lemuel? (2 Nephi 1:26). Do we take the truth to be a hard thing? Why do we get angry at the truth? Do we accept truth and welcome it, or think it is a terrible thing when we hear it? (2 Nephi 28:28). Do those who are offended at the truth really have the spirit of the devil? (2 Nephi 33:5).

The key for gentile survival is repentance. Time and time again the words “repent” or “repentance” are used to let the gentiles know there is an escape. But that escape does not come from receiving a hollow form of godliness without any power (*JS-H* 1:19). What is “priesthood” if there is no power in it?

Well the Book of Mormon continues to invite listening gentiles to repent. Over the heads of all responsible for failure, the Book of Mormon preaches repentance and truth. It preaches against priestcraft which teaches gentiles to worship man and rely upon the arm of flesh, the Book of Mormon invites gentiles to come and receive pure religion and knowledge of their Redeemer.

The Book of Mormon is the cornerstone of our religion; the cornerstone of the religion of Jesus Christ. It is the most correct book. A man can get closer to God by abiding its precepts than any other book. We have had it warning and inviting us for 180

years and we still have not actually either learned its precepts nor begun to abide by them.

The times of the gentiles are drawing to a close. If there is to be any significant gentile repentance, it must happen soon or the sword of the Lord's justice, which hangs over us, will surely fall on us.

So this topic of remnant destiny and gentile destiny are intertwined. It is little wonder why Joseph found reason to send the first missionaries to find them; and sought to flee to the Rocky Mountains himself to find them the last week of his life.

Our current proximity does not matter, however, if our hearts are far from the Lord's invitation to repent.

SEPTEMBER 18, 2010

3 Nephi 20:21–22

And it shall come to pass that I will establish my people, O house of Israel. And behold, this people will I establish in this land, unto the fulfilling of the covenant which I made with your father Jacob; and it shall be a New Jerusalem. And the powers of heaven shall be in the midst of this people; yea, even I will be in the midst of you.

The Lord will establish His people, including all of the “house of Israel.” The plan is global. But when it comes to the Americas, His people are those in the audience at the moment He was speaking to “this people.” And the land of promise for them is “this land.” Meaning that wherever it was that Christ was speaking involved two things: The ancestors of the remnant, and the land of promise.

Now the statement gets interesting because Christ refers to a covenant He made personally with “your father Jacob.” Which

“Jacob” is this referring to? And, if the Old Testament father whose name was changed to Israel, then why refer to him by his earlier name (“Jacob”) rather than by his new name (“Israel”)? I’ve described the reasons for distinguishing between these two names for a single man in *Nephi’s Isaiah*. It is relevant here and I’d remind you of that discussion.

In Jacob’s final blessing to his sons, he blessed Joseph as one “separate from his brethren” to inherit a land “unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.” (Gen. 49:26). The covenant between Christ and Jacob affected this blessing given Joseph. It is in the “utmost bound of the everlasting hills” that Zion or the New Jerusalem is to be built. And it will be Jacob’s posterity, the remnant visited by Christ, who will build it. Christ’s visit to these people reaffirms the prior covenant, and reconfirms the Lord’s intent to fulfill His covenant with Jacob. It is for Jacob’s sake this is done. Covenants between the Lord and His sons are always fulfilled; for the Lord takes His word very seriously. His word cannot be broken (D&C 1:38). But, as I have explained in *Beloved Enos*, these are the words of His covenants. It is not merely vain words spoken using His name as authority by those whom He did not authorize to speak such words (Matt. 7:22–23).

Since the statement involves global gathering of all the “house of Israel,” it would appear this reference to “Jacob” is a reference to the global, overall covenant for the entire collection of remnants (plural) throughout the world, wherever they are scattered. However, the crowning portion of the covenant, the capstone which Jacob was given for his posterity in his covenant, was the promise of the New Jerusalem. When that New Jerusalem has come again, it will be “unto the fulfilling of the covenant which [Christ] made with your father Jacob.”

Implicit in the return of a New Jerusalem is the redemption of a worthy assembly of Jacob's posterity. It is the culmination of history. It is the final redemption of a people among whom the Lord may take up His residency.

This New Jerusalem will involve "the powers of heaven" being "in the midst of this people." Also, the Lord "will be in the midst of you." For the Lord to take up His residence with people requires them to be saved, clean every whit, and to receive at last the "fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." These are not pretenders who claim, but do not do. Even penitent harlots and publicans are preferred to the self-righteous who claim to be something they are not (Matt. 21:28–32).

Why are "the powers of heaven" mentioned first? Must the "powers of heaven" precede the Lord's presence? Is that why they are mentioned by the Lord first, and His dwelling among them is mentioned second? What does that suggest about the manner in which we proceed into the presence of the Lord? How do we experience the "powers of heaven?" What is that power? Is a "form of godliness without any power" a sufficient substitute for the "powers of heaven?" (*JS-H 1:19*).

Do the "powers of heaven" invariably precede and in turn lead to the Lord's presence? Why?

Reading these words you begin to see how our Lord is consistent and determined. His covenants matter. For the sake of those who have obtained a covenant with Him, He will always deliver what He promises. For those who break their covenants with Him, there is no promise. He has always been the same (Lev. 26:15–17).

Read again the words of condemnation given against us, which remain in effect still today:

- 49 And the whole world lieth in sin, and groaneth under darkness and under the bondage of sin.*
- 50 And by this you may know they are under the bondage of sin, because they come not unto me.*
- 51 For whoso cometh not unto me is under the bondage of sin.*
- 52 And whoso receiveth not my voice is not acquainted with my voice, and is not of me.*
- 53 And by this you may know the righteous from the wicked, and that the whole world groaneth under sin and darkness even now.*
- 54 And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received—*
- 55 Which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation.*
- 56 And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all.*
- 57 And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written—*
- 58 That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father's kingdom; otherwise there remaineth a scourge and judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion. (D&C 84:49–58)*

It is not that we haven't been warned. It is that we just will not allow the warnings to inform us. We prefer to pretend rather than to do. We certainly have a form of godliness, but we lament even in General Conference about the lack of power in that form.

SEPTEMBER 19, 2010

3 Nephi 20:23

Behold, I am he of whom Moses spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul who will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people.

If there were any doubt about who was meant in Deuteronomy 18:15–19, Christ clarifies it here. He, Christ, was always meant to be the ultimate Law-Giver. He is the one who must be followed. He may send prophets, but it is Christ alone who is to be followed. Those who draw attention away from Him and turn attention to themselves will always lead astray. For the Lord alone can save. No man can.

We've been trying to make the matter clear for some time. Not merely in this blog, but by my writing and your reading the six books I've written before beginning this effort. The Lord alone is the one to whom each of us must look for hope and salvation. He is the one with whom you can covenant to receive salvation.

In the middle of this prophecy of remnant return and gentile holocaust, comes the reminder again of the Lord's primacy. Look to Him. Him alone. He is the one raised up to save mankind. He is the gentile hope.

The judgments the gentiles have merited by their refusal to accept the fullness of Christ's Gospel is not an impediment to you, if you will come to Him. It was always meant to be a singular event anyway. There is no collective salvation. Each person comes to Him one at a time. Even when He redeems a group, He visits with them individually (3 Nephi 11:13–17).

Those who will not “hear Him” will be “cut off from among the people.” What does it mean to “hear Him?” How do you go about accomplishing that?

What does it mean to be “cut off from among the people?” What “people?” Why is being cut off from those people a curse? Where are you sent if you are not among the Lord’s people? How do you go about rectifying that—joining in to be among those who “hear Him” and are part of His people?

Can you do it now? Do you have to wait till some distant future time or place? Why aren’t you doing more about it now, then?

SEPTEMBER 20, 2010

3 Nephi 20:24

“Verily I say unto you, yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have testified of me.”

The Lord chose and established Israel. He would remain committed to them, although they went whoring after other gods.

Moses held the fullness of the priesthood. He conferred blessings upon others. Although Moses was taken from Israel, the blessings of the priesthood remained. Moses blessed Joshua, and Joshua held the blessings of the priesthood for so long as he lived. But the fullness of the priesthood, that portion which permitted a man to see God face to face, was taken with Moses (D&C 84:20–25).

When Joshua died, both the priesthood that left with Moses, and the blessings from that priesthood were lost. What remained thereafter was a lesser form of priesthood called the Levitical or Aaronic Priesthood. This continued to be ministered from Moses until Jesus Christ.

The prophets, however, were something different. They came through diverse families and from unexpected places. They were

not part of the leading Levitical families and not even from that tribe on occasion. Their priesthood was not reckoned by what was then on the earth, but was given to them directly from heaven itself. Joseph Smith taught:

All priesthood is Melchizedek, but there are different portions or degrees of it. That portion which brought Moses to speak with God face to face was taken away; but that which brought the ministry of angels remained. All the prophets had the Melchizedek Priesthood and were ordained by God himself. (TPJS, pp. 180–81)

The men who held the higher form of priesthood, the fullness that made it possible for them to behold God face to face, were “all the prophets from Samuel and those that followed after.” Having this form of priesthood they could behold God face to face and live (D&C 84:22–23).

The power to see God face to face is not real if the man does not actually behold God face to face. It is powerless. It is theory. It is a notion and not a reality. This priesthood the revelation speaks about is not a theoretical idea, but an actual, real power which allows the person holding it to behold God and live. Therefore, when Christ states that “all the prophets from Samuel and those that followed after” had “testified of [Christ]” this is more than rhetoric. They became prophets by reason of the Lord having appeared and spoken to them; having testified of Himself to them. Therefore their status as prophets and their witness of Him were coequal. They sprang from the very same thing—the same event. This, then, formed the basis for their service as the Lord’s prophets. They knew Him. They could testify of what they knew, heard and saw, rather than what they believed to be true from what others had said. God had made Himself known to them.

Christ was confirming that these prophets had testified of Him because He was the one who had called them. He was the one who qualified them. He was the one whose witness and message they bore to others. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy! (Rev. 19:10). Here He confirms again that those prophets sent by Him have testified they know Him. They do not testify of themselves, but of Him. They do not point to themselves, but they point to Him. They do not promise salvation through themselves, but invite others to come to Christ and be saved. They will understate rather than overstate their calling and standing before God.

SEPTEMBER 20, 2010

3 Nephi 20:25–27

And behold, ye are the children of the prophets; and ye are of the house of Israel; and ye are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham: And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. The Father having raised me up unto you first, and sent me to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities; and this because ye are the children of the covenant— And after that ye were blessed then fulfilleth the Father the covenant which he made with Abraham, saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed—unto the pouring out of the Holy Ghost through me upon the Gentiles, which blessing upon the Gentiles shall make them mighty above all, unto the scattering of my people, O house of Israel.

These verses connect a single doctrine. That doctrine is at the heart of “turning of the hearts of the children to the fathers,” which is the result of any restoration of the Gospel. The definition of “children of the prophets” is that one has accepted, believed, and

followed the Lord's true messengers. They become children of Abraham and receive priestly authority sealing them into the family of God, joining the "fathers." From the time of Abraham until today, all who are redeemed have become a part of his household.

The phrase "turning the hearts of the children to the fathers" is a reference to the restoration of sealing authority, allowing a connection between man living on the earth, and the fathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob). In this dispensation, that restoration occurred when Joseph Smith was given the sealing authority and priesthood whereby he could ask and receive answers (D&C 132:45-47). As discussed earlier, this was sometime between 1829 and 1833, though I think it was more likely the earlier date as I have explained. Coincident with receiving this authority, Joseph's calling and election was made sure (D&C 132:49). I have explained this in *Beloved Enos*. This priesthood, having the hearts of the recipients turned to the fathers, and the promise of exaltation, are interconnected.

Abraham not only held this authority, but received the promise that all who received the Gospel after him would become his descendants. From the time of Abraham to the present, every saved soul has had their heart turned to him, become his son or daughter, and receive that same priesthood (Abraham 2:10-11). When Joseph received this, he was not merely sealed up to eternal life, but he became part of the family of Abraham. If you remember the diagram of the celestial kingdom referred to earlier on this blog, you know Joseph became one of those who was grafted into the family tree, and would then in turn preside over others who were sealed up to eternal life thereafter.

The sealing authority used by Joseph in December, 1832, was to seal others up to eternal life (See D&C 88:2-4). This promise had been previously conferred upon Joseph in that portion of Section

132 referred to above. In fact, Joseph's use of that authority in December, 1832 on behalf of others is evidence that the promise to him recorded in Section 132 was necessarily received earlier than December, 1832. If it had not been received earlier, there would have been no need to make the statement in D&C 132:49 to Joseph, because of what is in Section 88. Why tell Joseph his calling and election was sure in 1843 if it had happened already in 1832? This is another reason you can know Section 132, although recorded in 1843, was in fact a revelation received by Joseph much earlier. It was reduced to writing in 1843 at Hyrum's request.

The reference to "turning the hearts of the fathers to the children" made by Elijah was not because Elijah conferred those keys upon Joseph in the Kirtland Temple (D&C 110:16), for they arrived years earlier than 1836. Elijah was confirming that the keys were now all returned so the hearts of the children could turn to the fathers, and in turn the father's hearts to the children (D&C 110:15). And, so as to signify he was a true messenger, Elijah also showed a sign by his hand to Joseph whereby Joseph could recognize a true messenger (D&C 2:1).

In Christ's statement to the Nephite audience, He confirmed that they were "the children of the prophets" because they followed the prophets' teachings. Therefore, because of their obedience they were "of the house of Israel" and had realized that status because "of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers." That covenant was given "unto Abraham" promising to Abraham: "And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." All those after the day of Abraham who received this priesthood and sealing would become the seed of Abraham. They become heirs of the promise, and children of Abraham. They are sealed up to eternal life and therefore their hearts have turned to the fathers.

Christ was sent to these Nephites because, “The Father having raised me up unto you first, and sent me to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities; and this because ye are the children of the covenant.” Realizing the promises, and being visited by the Lord are also connected. When enough are ready to enter into this order, have their hearts turned to the fathers, receive the covenant, then the Lord will bring again Zion.

SEPTEMBER 21, 2010

3 Nephi 20:27–28

...unto the pouring out of the Holy Ghost through me upon the Gentiles, which blessing upon the Gentiles shall make them mighty above all, unto the scattering of my people, O house of Israel. And they shall be a scourge unto the people of this land. Nevertheless, when they shall have received the fullness of my gospel, then if they shall harden their hearts against me I will return their iniquities upon their own heads, saith the Father.

The reason the gentiles received access to the Holy Ghost was to fulfill the purposes of the Father. The remnant would reject the Gospel, and as a result merit judgment. Judgment would come through the gentiles. For that to occur, the Holy Ghost needed to inspire gentile successes.

The Spirit would be responsible for such great gentile success that they will be made “mighty above all, unto the scattering of my people.” That is, no other people will be able to prevail against the gentiles of North America while the Holy Ghost was with the gentiles. They will be a “scourge” upon the remnant as a result of the Father’s judgments implemented by Christ, using the Holy Ghost.

The Spirit will entitle the gentiles to be offered the fullness. They will qualify by their acts and obedience. When you receive

light and stay true to it, you are offered more light. The gentiles will accept and pursue more light, and will merit an opportunity to receive the fullness of the Gospel.

Gentiles did have the fullness of the Gospel, which requires the fullness of the priesthood that was offered while Joseph Smith was here. It was given sometime between 1829 and 1832, and removed before 1841 (See prior post and 132:45 and D&C 124:28).

When the gentiles were offered the fullness, they displayed little interest in it. Joseph remarked:

I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God; but we frequently see some of them, after suffering all they have for the work of God, will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions: they cannot stand the fire at all. How many will be able to abide a celestial law, and go through and receive their exaltation, I am unable to say, as many are called, but few are chosen. (DHC 6:184–185; see also D&C 121:40)

When the Saints were given a final opportunity to receive the offered fullness extended to all, they needed to show their willingness to accept it by completing the Nauvoo Temple within a short time. They were given long enough to complete it, and if it was not completed in that appointed time, they would be rejected (D&C 124:32). We have seen how the Saints proceeded to build Nauvoo and their own homes rather than the Nauvoo Temple from 1841 to June, 1844 when Joseph and Hyrum were killed (See “The Remnant Part VII”). When Joseph was taken, the Temple walls had not yet been completed to the second floor.

When the Twelve prayed in the Temple on February 8, 1846 that the Lord would bless the Saints to be able to complete the Temple, the Temple caught fire the next day.

Repairs and further work allowed a dedication to finally take place at the end of April, 1846, nearly two years after Joseph's death. The dedicatory prayer petitioned the Lord to "take guardianship into Thy hands," but by September the keys to the Temple doors were handed to a mob which had overrun Nauvoo. It was the position of Elder Hyde that the Saints performed as they were required "by the skin of our teeth," thereby escaping rejection by the Lord. (This was discussed in "The Remnant Part VII").

The prophecy of Christ, as commanded by the Father, foretells that if the gentiles do reject the fullness, then the Father will "return their iniquities upon their own heads." Meaning that the gentiles will, by reason of their rejection of what was offered them, merit condemnation for ingratitude (D&C 88:33-35). They remain "filthy still" because that which would have cleansed them was not received in gratitude. It was rejected. When a people reject the Lord, the Lord, being governed by law, must reject them.

This is the reason the coming judgments are necessary. Where much is given (and we were offered everything) then much is expected (Luke 12:47-48). When everything is rejected, then the punishment merited reflects complete rejection of the Lord. You must keep this in mind as you read the judgments Christ prophesies upon the gentiles.

And remember also that no matter what the collective gentile conduct may be (or fail to be), the Lord approaches each of us individually. The Book of Mormon is intended as the final opportunity for gentile salvation. The church is under condemnation for failing to remember its contents and take them seriously (D&C 84:54-58). That scourge needn't be applied to you, if you will "repent and remember the new covenant" offered to you. There is, for any gentile who will repent and take the covenants

offered in the Book of Mormon, an opportunity to yet become associated with the remnant and an heir of the preservation and salvation offered to them.

As we survey the condition of the gentile church today, there seems to be less and less made of the Book of Mormon's contents. The Correlation Department's teachings are insubstantial and becoming even less so. However, you have the Book of Mormon in front of you. You don't need anyone to prepare a manual for you. You have the text itself.

I am hoping what I've written, particularly in *The Second Comforter*, will show you how the Book of Mormon teaches you the return to the fullness. *Nephi's Isaiah* informs you of the Book of Mormon's prophecies of our days and our failures. *Eighteen Verses* shows how Book of Mormon doctrinal teachings address every major dilemma of our day. *Beloved Enos* shows what the fullness will confer upon you. I believe whatever merit the Lord has conferred upon me arises out of my serious study of the Book of Mormon. Though everyone may treat this covenant lightly, I have not. I would encourage you, therefore, to do the same, and prayerfully study the most correct volume of scripture we possess. It is a lifeline extended by the Lord to us. However, it cannot do you any good if you fail to act on its contents. Do the works, and you will know the doctrine. I suspect our universal failure to know doctrine today is because we do not live as we should. Understanding doctrine is tied to living it. The more you live it, the more you will comprehend it (John 7:16-17). The less you live it, the more elusive it becomes to you. Until at last, you become like Deseret Book, incapable of offering anything other than romance novels, "inspirational" mush, and historical fiction, all with a veneer of Mormon vocabulary. Kitsch and su-

perfidiality, more distracting to the reader than edifying to their soul. Making one think there is some good being accomplished by participating, all the while forfeiting the days which might have been better spent.

COMMENTS:

Anonymous · SEPTEMBER 21, 2010 AT 6:33 AM

Perhaps a silly question. Denver is very well read in scores of material besides just the Book of Mormon. Another blogger who says he/she has received the second comforter talks about taking 20 years to read original manuscripts and materials from the beginning of the church. We all have access to so much information it can be overwhelming. If my study is limited to the scriptures, especially Book of Mormon, and I do my best to observe the things it admonishes me to do, will that alone qualify me to receive the second comforter? Do I have to know the history and make correlations and recall from memory where things are found from a kazillion sources? A simple yes or no will do.

Denver Snuffer · SEPTEMBER 21, 2010 AT 7:08 AM

@Anonymous 7:33

No.

Anonymous · SEPTEMBER 21, 2010 AT 2:20 PM

Michael C,

It probably depends on who Woodruff got the sealing keys from. Was it Joseph Smith? Taylor I believe still had the keys from Joseph when he was Pres, as he received the power in his mortal life from a man who conversed with God (Joseph)... but once Taylor passed on (without obtaining C&E made sure), whoever he gave it temporarily to while he lived, it goes away. That's my current thinking anyway. I wish sealing power would pass on no matter what... but I think that each man has to still obtain a fullness from the Lord or His angels for him to be able to pass it along to others, then they have to do the same. We can't carry the key without the connection with heaven to allow us to pass it on or use it.

Other comments –

We cannot bind anything on earth and in heaven without true sealing power. I cannot seek another person who doesn't have it, even if I think he does, to seal my family and expect it to be binding later. They have to actually hold the power. So the things we do in the temples... if they are not done with valid power, are types and shadows, practice for a future time when power is granted. We need temples, like the one talked about in Zion to have true power (fulness) in them. Israelites still did their rituals once a yr. They thought they could still enter the holy of holies, a mel portion. And half of our endowment is Aaronic, so I think it's still valid if the individual is just. Zacharias held this authority and was officiating in the temple, low and behold an angel appeared. He held the keys to that. But even if we maintain more than we can, they still teach us some important truths, truths that are found on this blog and in scriptures. I think it's safe to assume if the Lord says it's possible that if we reject Him, then he said He would reject us and our work for the dead, it is possible. Luckily, current and future redemption can be made for those who earn it.

Please respond Denver. What do you think or want to relate?

Denver Snuffer · SEPTEMBER 21, 2010 AT 5:21 PM

If you are true and faithful the time will come when you will be called up, chosen and ordained kings and queens, priests and priestesses, whereas now you are only ordained to become such. The realization of these blessings is dependent upon your faithfulness.

CHAPTER 9

The Remnant Continued

SEPTEMBER 21, 2010

Remnant, Part IX

The interplay between the latter-day gentiles and the remnant has been illustrated repeatedly in the Book of Mormon prophecies. We have seen Nephi's prophecies of the event, and Christ's affirmation and expansion on the event.

Gentiles would be offered the fullness and would reject it. Then the gentiles would take the gospel to the remnant who would receive it. The remnant would then blossom with the gospel, ultimately establishing the New Jerusalem. When the New Jerusalem is built by the remnant, a few gentiles who had received the fullness would be able to "assist" in bringing again Zion (3 Nephi 21:23–24).

We have at least a reasonable basis for fearing the gentiles rejected the fullness by not building the Temple in the "appointed time." Inside this Temple, the fullness was to be revealed (D&C 124:28, 32). Joseph Smith, who possessed the fullness, was taken 3 1/2 years after the revelation warning to act with speed in building the required Temple. When he died, the walls had not yet been completed to the second floor.

If we assume the worst, and the fullness was taken by the failure to complete the Temple in the permitted time, what then? Do the gentiles have no further use? Are the gentiles without a role in the latter-day events? That is hardly the case. The gentiles continue to occupy a central role in the latter-days, despite their failures.

The gentiles will bring the Gospel to the remnant (1 Nephi 15:13–14). The gentiles will be commissioned to preach, teach, baptize, lay on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, carry the Book of Mormon forward throughout the world, and preserve truths which will enable others to be saved. The gentiles will shoulder a prophetic burden they alone will be able to bear off in the last days.

When Moses was taken, along with the higher priesthood he possessed, the Lord did not cease to recognize ancient Israel as His people. They were indeed His people, and the ones with whom He worked. He cared for, and watched over them, although we know in hindsight they were a hard hearted and foolish people who rejected something far greater than what they kept. If we rejected a fullness by our own failures, that does not mean we are cut off. We are the Lord's people. We have a form of priesthood, and the right to organize and preach the Gospel throughout the world. We are being watched over. We are the means through which the Lord will bring to pass all of His latter-day plans.

You should also not worry that our collective limitations apply to individuals. That has never been the case. There have always been those who have risen up, shed their sins, repented and come to the Lord individually and been redeemed. That pattern appears throughout scriptures. The Book of Mormon is a product of one family, led by one man who repented in a generation scheduled for destruction. He led his family, preached the Gospel, had sons who accepted the invitation to receive from the fruit of the tree

of life, and established a righteous branch of Israel. The Book of Mormon at its foundation is a testimony that the Lord is ever willing to receive any who will come to Him.

The gentiles are integral to the Lord's work. We should never fear that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is meaningless, irrelevant or without God's watchful care. It is the means by which people are invited to come to Christ today.

In *Eighteen Verses* I describe the phenomena of building a new religion inside the original one established by revelation through Joseph Smith. This new, false religion is designed to interfere with the Gospel, enshrine worship or adoration of a priestly class instead of the worship of Christ. The Correlation Department's effort to correlate teaching has created a new ambition to correlate power and control over everything. Part of that involves the adoration of a person, or as I explained it in Catholic terms—the cult of personality. This is a tried and true pattern for compromising the Gospel and rendering it a means for controlling and dominating socially, politically, religiously, and ultimately dictatorially.

The way the adversary works is always the same. It is not to destroy the work of God by annihilation, but to co-opt it and make it his. Satan wants to supplant God as the god of this earth. Therefore, anytime God has a work underway, Satan is eager to rush in and become the one the Lord's work follows. The “arm of flesh” as opposed to the “Holy Ghost” is the difference between following in the single, strait, narrow path which alone will bring people back to God, and the altered and compromised path that will take you elsewhere.

I thought President Uchtdorf's analogy about the airplane being only one degree off would become 500 miles separated from its target at the equator was particularly apt (“A Matter of a Few

Degrees”, May, 2008 *Ensign*). This is how men and institutions fail. How can mortal man be vulnerable to err, and committees of mortal men are not? It is an almost universal truth that committees multiply errors, not decrease them. And who of you have ever sustained the Correlation Department?

We are fools to believe that the same pattern of compromising the truth that resulted in the apostasy of the church established by Christ will not relentlessly press against the restoration of our day. I know there are quotes saying otherwise—that the church cannot be led astray—but I cannot believe them, try as I might. Joseph, Brigham, John Taylor, President George Cannon **all said the exact opposite**. Even when Wilford Woodruff was claiming he would “not lead the church astray” he did not mean what we have attributed to his words. He was saying, in effect: “Don’t worry, the Manifesto is a lie. We’re not really abandoning plural marriage.” The Manifesto did NOT stop plural marriage and it was not a revelation. He referred to it as “beating the Devil at his own game.” Meaning it was intended to mislead the public. It was a press release designed to stop the persecution of the church and the threatened legislation to dis-incorporate and confiscate the Temples. Criticism by the eastern press resulted in it becoming part of the Doctrine & Covenants. Plural marriages continued from then until after President Joseph F. Smith testified before the Senate in the seating of Senator Smoot in 1905.

When the excommunications of the Apostles Taylor and Cowley in 1911 happened, it was not based on the Manifesto, but on the letter of President Joseph F. Smith actually ending the practice. The fundamentalist groups know this history and use it to persuade others that their current practices are justified. Their practices today are wrong, as I’ve discussed in *Beloved Enos*. But their use of history

to trouble the unaware has been effective in many cases. [Now this is entirely a side issue and I'm not interested in pursuing it at this moment. I'm only mentioning it in the context of another thought.]

So ask yourself which is better:

Presume that no man can err who becomes a President of the LDS Church in direct contradiction to what Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor and George Q. Cannon taught?

Presume that without the ratification of the Holy Ghost bearing testimony to you that a matter is true, no man can be trusted and your salvation is based on what God alone tells you to be true?

If you believe the first, your religion is new, post-Correlation and will damn you. I do not intend to disassociate with you, and will gladly let you practice your faith if you will permit me to practice mine. If you believe the second, you are a Latter-day Saint who accepts accountability for what you believe and will work out your salvation with fear and trembling before God. You believe as I do, that Joseph was the means through which the Lord initiated a work for the salvation of mankind, and that work continues today. You believe in revelation and in God's continuing hand with us still today. You accept such good things as come through The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, rejoice in them, pay tithing to them, and are blessed by what things the church continues to preserve and practice. However, you are not deluded into worship of men. The gentiles include both. The gentiles will be instrumental to the Lord's work in the last days, whether they are Saints or Brethrenites. The remnant will come to the faith, receive the Gospel and become acquainted with their fathers through the Book of Mormon delivered by gentile hands (2 Nephi 30:3-5). Without faithful gentile Saints, the work of the Father will not happen. Therefore, no matter the condition we find ourselves, we have an

obligation to the Lord and to the prophets who went before, to so live as to bring these things to pass.

SEPTEMBER 22, 2010

Remnant, Part X

First, a slight detour because of comments or complaints. I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is the only church I have ever joined. I owe to that church my knowledge of the truth. If you've read my original explanation of this blog, you would know that already. If you've read the books I've written, you'd know that already. I haven't changed my position. I'm still what I was all along—a faithful, active Latter-day Saint.

It is from the church I have received the ordinances of baptism and laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

It is from the church I have received the scriptures, other ordinances, and authority.

I pay tithing to the church, attend regular meetings with other members, and receive the Sacrament weekly. I raise my children to attend and be faithful to the church. I am grateful to the church for its programs for children.

I listen to General Conference, and attend a large gathering on the BYU campus with my sons every six months during the Priesthood Session of Conference. I drive my children by the conference center during conference to see the protesters and read their anti-Mormon signs. This reminds my children that, although we are in the majority here, we are not liked by the majority elsewhere.

I have no intention of ever leaving the church. I see no reason to ever do so. I know the church welcomes me and my family. I know they are grateful that I attend, pay tithing and support the programs as we are asked to do.

I mention that only to make certain that some of those who read here are not misled. I have no ambition to lead the church or any person other than my family. I am grateful others are called to do so. I pray for them and do not think I could do any better job than is being done. On the contrary, I think I would make things worse.

I love my fellow Latter-day Saints. Even those with whom I have deep disagreements over doctrine. I enjoy associating with people who can discuss some of the important issues facing us, even if we hold very different views of what the solutions should be. At the end of the day, in order for the church to survive, it needs to have a mechanism to bring debate to an end and make a decision. That mechanism is in place and I respect it. If it were to be altered, it would likely break the entire system. The system is essential for the church's survival.

I sustain President Monson and do not think anyone other than him has final decision-making authority in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Think about what it would mean if his decisions could be vetoed endlessly from his office down to the lay members. This would cease to be a meaningful organization.

We have tremendous problems facing the church at present. I think they are all due to the abandonment of a pattern originally restored, in favor of innovations recommended by social sciences. The Correlation Department has accelerated this metamorphosis of the church and now leads it. The possibility remains that the church will return to an earlier pattern, but that seems quite unlikely at this point. To paraphrase Deseret Book: "Doctrine doesn't sell now." Doctrine does not matter as it once did, and as a result, the gentiles are not even aware of the content of the scriptures, the messages addressed to us, the responsibilities which have been

laid upon **us**, and the warnings about how **we** are proceeding. The prophetic pessimism of the Book of Mormon prophets is not found in the modern messages. In fact, the feel-good messages seem to be denounced by the Book of Mormon and foretold as a sign of **our own** erring.

As a single, private member of the church, the only tool available to me approved by scripture is persuasion. If what I write does not persuade, I own no office, hold no calling, and command no position from which to insist you trust, believe or accept what I write. Oddly, no priesthood position in the church, from the least to the greatest, is entitled to insist you trust, believe or accept what they say (D&C 121:41). I see very little demanding when it comes to actual presiding authorities. But I see a lot of that being urged vicariously, on behalf of presiding authorities, and in their names. It appears that between the Brethren who preside, and the common members, there is a disconnection wherein the Correlation Department has inserted themselves. Into that arena they have brought increasingly more intolerant and strict rule-making. I think there are talks every General Conference intended to work against that mischief. But, alas, the COB is a difficult beast to ride. It will take a grizzly bear to wrestle it into submission, I suspect.

In any event, the gentiles must fulfill their own destiny. Although there will be failings, limitations, foolishness and apostasy by the gentiles rejecting what is offered them, they will perform a great act. They will be the means of bringing back the remnant. There will be those who believe the Book of Mormon, teach correctly to the remnant about their own fathers, and assist in bringing about the New Jerusalem.

This interplay between gentile and remnant destinies is very real, and requires a work of the gentiles not yet completed.

I do not know how much further to pursue this topic. There are prophecies Joseph made about the Rocky Mountain gathering. There is the controversial “horse-shoe prophecy” about the travel of the Saints before the New Jerusalem would be founded. There is Joseph’s finger on the map pointing where he suspected the New Jerusalem would be built. And the fellow who saw the pointing who speculated it was around where Snowflake, Arizona is presently located.

However, the map had no borders, no states, and Snowflake didn’t exist at the time. So a finger on a map could be hundreds of miles away from Snowflake. I’m not inclined to do much with that right now. I’m more inclined to take up some other stuff and leave the remnant alone for the time being.

As I said when this started, it was going to take a while. I’m thinking it might be better to change topics for a while and turn attention to some other things. The remnant will reappear in its own natural order as we move along in any direction we take. Their appearance is so widespread in latter-day prophecy that it is unavoidable. Many of you hadn’t noticed it before. Now you have some background and ought to be able to pick up the matter on your own and see it for yourselves.

Text of the supplemental readings mentioned

A Remarkable Prophecy By President John Taylor As Told by Edward Lunt, An Ordinance Worker in the Mesa Temple:

He said that faithful Latter-day Saints would go to the south and would form a circle something like a horseshoe, before they return to Jackson County, Missouri. Said he,

Those only will be privileged to help build Jackson County who will be found willing and glad to obey the counsel

and advice of the authorities who will be placed over them, and who will seek counsel that they may be guided and protected from dire want and distress.

President Taylor also said that we will assist the Lamanites in building the New Jerusalem in Jackson county. He said that the vision to him appeared so terrible that he besought the Lord to close it up, but he saw that those who would keep the commandments and adhere to the authorities of the church would be the ones who would survive and not be destroyed. And that the lord would protect them as he did the children of Israel.

Journal of Mosiah Hancock:

Placing his [Joseph Smith's] finger on the map (I should think about where Snowflake, Arizona, is situated, or it could have been Mexico) he said,

The government will not receive you with the laws God designed that you should live, and those who are desirous to live the laws of God will have to go south. You will live to see men down arise in power in the Church who will seek to put your friends and the friends of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Many will be hoisted because of their money and the worldly learning which they seem to be in possession of; and many who are the true followers of our Lord and Savior will be cast down because of their poverty.

CHAPTER 10

3 Nephi II

SEPTEMBER 22, 2010

3 Nephi 11

I have always wanted to do something with Christ's sermons to the Nephites. It seems to me that we've been running through prophecies and warnings which serve one purpose, and leaving another one neglected. Balance requires us to return to another important purpose of the Book of Mormon. Namely, testifying that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of Israel and the whole world.

So for that part, we'll turn attention to Christ's Nephite sermons.

I've already dealt with what I have termed the "Ceremony of Recognition" involved in Christ's initial appearance. That is covered in *The Second Comforter* and won't be repeated here. So I'm going to skip to verses:

3 Nephi 11:18–20

And it came to pass that he spake unto Nephi (for Nephi was among the multitude) and he commanded him that he should come forth. And Nephi arose and went forth, and bowed himself before the Lord and did kiss his feet. And the Lord commanded him that he should arise. And he arose and stood before him.

The Lord has appeared, is identified and recognized by those who were at the Bountiful Temple. (This is probably an open air temple much like what we find in the Parowan Gap. If you consider the entirety of the description, it is not likely a closed structure like we build.) And those who are there have engaged in an Hosanna shout (3 Nephi 11:17). When the ceremony has ended and the place has become sanctified by His presence, and the body there recognizes and accepts Him as who and what He is, the stage has been set for a further ceremonial event.

Christ speaks to Nephi. He calls his name. Important stuff. Being called by name by the Son of God! Now we're seeing something really important. For those whose names are called by God are not merely being addressed. They are, the instant the Lord calls out their name, "called." That is, the Lord will never speak one's name to them unless He calls them to a work. So when we read that the Lord speaks to Nephi we know the Lord has both called Nephi's name and called the bearer of that name to do a work. Nephi knew it. The crowd knew it. All present would have understood that Nephi just became the chief prophet of those present.

Nephi is told to "come forth." It instantly puts us in mind of Lazarus being called forth from the tomb (John 11:43). Like Lazarus, who rose from the dead by the speaking of those words, Nephi now goes forth to a new life. Resurrected from his prior status and put into a minister's role by the Lord of all mankind.

Called, commanded to "come forth," and endowed immediately with the Lord's anointing voice, which bestows power and authority upon a man, (see, e.g., D&C 132:46) Nephi arises from his kneeling position and steps forward.

Every knee remains bowed except Nephi's. For a brief moment, as he walks forward, he alone, of all those assembled in the crowd,

is the one who stands in the presence of the Lord (cf., Luke 1:19). Others kneel, Nephi stands. It is honor, glory and privilege being displayed in this ceremony. Christ as King and Lord calls, His chief servant rises while all others remain kneeling. We are getting informed about the Lord and His ways in detailed ceremony conveying vast information in passing movement. It is too wonderful for words.

Nephi knows what he must do. For the servant who has been called to stand above his peers must then descend below them. Pride is unthinkable when in the presence of such a meek and humble figure as our Lord. It is required that the balance be restored. Nephi, who has been made to rise, must on his own choose to descend and abase himself. Those who seek their own glory will fall, while those who seek to humble themselves will rise again. So Nephi does what any person filled with light and truth would do in these circumstances. He comes to the Lord, falls below all, and descends to kiss the Master's feet. He kneels again, bows to the ground. And in an ultimate sign of humility, he kisses His feet, which on any other being is the symbol of uncleanness itself. Nephi can do nothing more to show his own submission to the Lord. He can do nothing further in ceremonial activity to say he is nothing and the Lord is everything. He can show no greater respect and gratitude. Here is a servant indeed. A chief servant to the Servant of servants! A Master and servant whose hearts are alike. Nephi is, above all else, showing to us all how we ought be.

The gentiles love those who rule over and exploit them (Matt. 20:25). But Christ's true followers do not crave chief seats. They desire to serve. They will hold others up, even if it requires them to descend below to lift them. Nephi is not a gentile, nor one who would ever exercise unrighteous dominion over others (D&C 121:39).

The ceremony now requires the abased to respond to the Lord's command again. Nephi is commanded to "arise." It was not enough to "come forth" to the new life. Now, having been chosen, Nephi must also "arise." It is a terrible burden. How can man "arise?" How can a man assume his position alongside His Lord? How can one who feels more suited to kneel and kiss his Master's feet, rise up and look his Lord in the face? It is all too much. One hardly can bear the burden and difficulty to "arise" when it is the Lord's own countenance you must confront. Too much. Too difficult. Too heavy a burden to lay upon mere man. How does Nephi dare to respond to the command to "arise?"

Through the swirling anxiety following the command, Nephi doesn't have the strength to do so until the realization that "arising" is the Master's will. It is the Master's command. It can be done through faith in Him. For He gives no command without having prepared the means to accomplish it (1 Nephi 3:7). It must be possible for Nephi to actually arise. Though a lifetime's dread and remorse says to remain on your knees, it is the Master's will that you nonetheless arise. And so you begin the dreadful effort, and your trembling knees respond. To your own surprise you find it possible to arise and look into the face of Him who is compassion itself. There can be no pride in this, for rising is by His command, and not by your own will. You may want to join in Moses' chorus that "for this cause you know man is nothing!" (Moses 1:10). But it isn't necessary to voice the thought. It is enough to understand the thought.

No man assumes this honor for himself. He must be called by God to stand in His presence. And so Nephi arose, and stood before His Lord.

SEPTEMBER 23, 2010

3 Nephi 11:21

“And the Lord said unto him: I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people when I am again ascended into heaven.”

Notice the Lord does not touch Nephi. He speaks the words. The Lord’s word is sovereign. If the Lord speaks it, it is so. It is not necessary for the Lord to lay hands on the servant He has just called, only that He speak the words of commission which give the servant “power.”

Notice that it is “power” and not authority. It is the “power” to baptize “this people” which is granted Nephi. Why would “power” be required for a man to be able to baptize? What if the man possessed “authority” to baptize, but lacked any “power” in his priesthood? Is “authority” anything if it lacks “power?” What is the difference? Can a church spread about the “authority” to do ordinances if that church lacks “power” to do so?

Why are “that the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven?” (D&C 121:36). If indeed all rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, can a man who has never felt, experienced or had any connection with heaven hold any power? Hold any priesthood? What connection did Nephi have with heaven the instant the Lord spoke to Nephi the words: “I give unto you power”?

Why is it that “the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness?” What about ambitious men who view holding an office in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as entitling them to direct, preside, control and dictate to others? What are the “principles of righteousness?”

Now, I ask those questions not to give people reason to rebel against those who preside over them. It is not for us to weigh,

measure or respond with accusations against those in positions of authority. I feel a great sympathy and pray for them. However, I offer it as a self-governing, introspective question to anyone who has any calling, family position or power over another person. Whether it is in church, or at work, or in the family, or elsewhere, the way we deal with others ought to be informed by the same standards as use of priestly authority. But these things are for internal use, not as a measuring stick to be applied critically against others.

Often we are able to see clearly the errors of others, but are completely unable to see our own glaring errors. This is why I have said repeatedly that the Gospel is for internal application only, and not for external use in judging others.

In the case of Nephi, he already held power, did he not? He had preached the Gospel, used words having such power that listeners could not disbelieve them, raised his brother from the dead, and cast out devils (3 Nephi 7:17–19). Despite all this, Nephi was called forward to receive from the Lord power to baptize? Why? Why if he already had such great power as to be able to raise the dead, did he need a new grant of power to baptize?

Does the possession of authority in one dispensation (Moses') continue into another dispensation (Meridian of Time)? When a new dispensation of the Gospel opens, does authority need to be conferred by angels (or the Lord) in the new dispensation? Without a commission from Christ, could Nephi continue his ministry into the new dispensation? Why not? Did the end of the prior dispensation of carnal commandments require a new delivery of power to those serving into this era of a new covenant? (Hebrews 8:13).

Does the Lord's reference to "when [He is] again ascended into heaven" reveal anything to Nephi? To us? Does it confirm the Lord's status, power and right? Does it confirm, also, the Lord will

be leaving the Nephites again? Does it reestablish what they saw when He first appeared, that He now belongs to heaven? Do we need to keep that in mind as well?

SEPTEMBER 23, 2010

3 Nephi 11:22

“And again the Lord called others, and said unto them likewise; and he gave unto them power to baptize. And he said unto them: On this wise shall ye baptize; and there shall be no disputations among you.”

Space was limited and the mechanics of writing was difficult for Mormon. Therefore, in his abridgment of the account, for all others “the Lord called,” and the ceremony was repeated for each. In the process, He “said likewise” unto each of them. Every individual person was acknowledged by the Lord as having conferred upon each of them “power to baptize” by the Lord.

None of those who received this power had any doubt about their authority to act in this ordinance in the Lord’s name. None of them lacked the “power” to baptize others. None of those who were present, and still kneeling during the ceremony, or who overheard the Lord’s words had any doubts about those who held a commission from Christ to baptize them. Finally, none of those present would have any doubts about the need to be baptized by this newly bestowed power.

Although every one of them had been baptized previously, it becomes apparent that once new power to baptize has been given by Christ, that power ought to be used. It is not given to be neglected. Nor can power endure through neglect. So when given, the power is to be used, and all who were present are candidates for baptism.

Then comes the instruction from Christ as to the manner for performing the ordinance. “On this wise shall ye baptize...” begins

the instruction. If the Lord provides the power and then gives the instruction, can the ordinance be changed? What if someone else says they hold the keys, and we all accept the person does in fact hold the keys, can such a person change the manner of baptism? If there is a potential convert who is infirm, ill or elderly and is unable to be baptized in the prescribed manner, can the ordinance be changed in form to accommodate the need? That is exactly how the ordinance was changed after the New Testament times. A reasonable need, and accommodation for that need, resulted in an exception. Then the exception became the rule, and the original manner was forgotten.

If the Lord's instruction regarding the manner of baptism in this verse cannot be changed, even by one holding keys and authority to do so, then what about other ordinances? Can other ordinances be changed by one who holds keys if they choose to do them differently? Why not? What happens when the one in a recognized position to perform ordinances decides to make changes to the ordinances?

Assume for a moment the Lord instructs Nephi on how to perform baptism, but Nephi decides thereafter to make a change to it. How would that reflect on Nephi? How would that reflect on the Lord? How would it reflect on the Lord's instruction? What about Joseph Smith's statement: "*Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world, in the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed.*" (TPJS p. 308) If the Lord gave Nephi the "power" to baptize, does that carry with it the "power" to change it as well?

Well, the purpose behind the Lord giving instructions was that "there shall be no disputations among you." Does the instruction given by the Lord end as soon as we begin to see "disputations

among” followers? Can an opinion poll that shows a majority of those who practice the ordinances don’t relate to them anymore and want to see them altered, create a “disputation” that allows the instruction from the Lord to be altered?

As stupid as these questions may seem, there are people who are genuinely confused by them. So I ask them. You must decide if the Lord’s instructions deserve respect and ought to be followed. Apparently men of good faith, honest hearts, and sincere desires can by reason of their status alone, contradict the Lord’s instructions and people won’t even blink. That’s the beauty of the claim that Rome makes to having Peter’s keys and the ability to seal on earth and in heaven. The Catholics can change anything and no one doubts they had the authority to do it. To allow the possibility that God would not support the Pope would be to entertain the unthinkable. So don’t even hold that thought.

COMMENTS :

Anonymous · SEPTEMBER 23, 2010 AT 7:06 PM

Denver said:

You must decide if the Lord’s instructions deserve respect and ought to be followed. Apparently men of good faith, honest hearts, and sincere desires can by reason of their status alone, contradict the Lord’s instructions and people won’t even blink. That’s the beauty of the claim that Rome makes to having Peter’s keys and the ability to seal on earth and in heaven. The Catholics can change anything and no one doubts they had the authority to do it. To allow the possibility that God would not support the Pope would be to entertain the unthinkable.

You’re reaching here Denver. You cite a scriptural example that is instructive, but in no way leads logically to the conclusion that in our day, “men of good faith, honest hearts, and sincere desires [are] by reason of their status alone, [contradicting] the Lord’s instructions.”

We know the Lord gave Nephi power to baptize. We know the Lord told the Nephites the manner he wanted them baptized. Practically everything else you wrote was your own speculation.

Denver Snuffer · SEPTEMBER 23, 2010 AT 7:12 PM

This post was about baptism. However, now that it's been turned into the endowment here's what I understand:

It was not until the 1870's that the endowment was reduced to writing. The first changes were not made to the endowment until 1904. When the first changes were made they were (are) in the handwriting of Joseph F. Smith, the then-president of the Church. Those changes were a by-product of criticism about the oaths of vengeance respecting the killers of Joseph and Hyrum. These oaths were exposed during the Senate Hearings for seating Senator Smoot, and as a result the decision was made to remove the oaths.

I believe if you look at the original documents, that is what you will find. If you have better information, I would welcome it. However, I do not believe it is correct that after the form was reduced to writing in the 1870's that any changes were made until President Joseph F. Smith.

Also, I am unaware of any announcement of a revelation at the time of any of the changes. As I recall, we were all instructed that those who held the keys were making changes to the ordinance. There was no mention (so far as I can recollect) of any revelation. I may be mistaken about that, and someone else can correct my memory on the point. However, there is a formula which gets recited about those holding keys have approved the changes, and they are announced as having been approved. No sustaining of the changes, no claim of revelation to justify them, no comment or mention of God's involvement. Just the holders of the keys have made changes.

Now, again, this post is about the changes to baptism made by the Catholic Church. But the comments have gone into the changes to the endowment.

SEPTEMBER 24, 2010

3 Nephi 11:23

Verily I say unto you, that whoso repenteth of his sins through your words, and desireth to be baptized in my name, on this wise shall ye baptize them—Behold, ye shall go down and stand in the water, and in my name shall ye baptize them.

The candidate for baptism must first qualify themselves by “repent[ing] of his sins.” That’s an interesting **pre**-condition in the Lord’s instruction. Until one has determined to abandon their sins, they are not fit for baptism. They first decide to lay things behind, move forward in following the Lord, determined to serve Him. This decision to make a change must come “through your words.” Meaning that before someone can repent, they must first learn the conditions for repentance and following the Lord.

This is much like the instructions given by revelation to this dispensation about how baptism is to be performed. We were told,

All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church. (D&C 20:37)

After having made the decision to be baptized with a broken heart and contrite spirit, confessing before the church that you have repented of your sins (or be willing to change and follow Christ), determined to endure to the end, a person receives from the Spirit of Christ a witness that changes their behavior. Their works show

they are penitent. At this point a person is ready for baptism. Until then, they are not ready and the ordinance is not appropriate.

Now the instructions in Section 20 are more complete than the abbreviated statement in Christ's instructions to His Nephite disciples, but it is to the same effect. When this pattern is followed, people are converted and follow Christ. Their baptism matters and will change them. When these instructions are not followed, the ordinance is relatively meaningless and people drift off into inactivity. I believe today the numbers evidence that approximately 10% of those who are baptized are actually converted. The rest are just names and numbers used as membership statistics to be reported and proclaimed each April in a worldwide conference.

The Gospel of Christ is quite exact and it works whenever it is tried. It is tried today in about 10% of the cases of those who are baptized by our missionaries.

Perhaps the ordinance ought to be offered to more of our adults as they come to recognize that they may not have actually been prepared to receive the ordinance when given to them. No matter, there's always the Alma exception. (That's when in the course of baptizing someone else, you go ahead and take the covenant yourself. See Mosiah 18:13–15). Clearly Alma was baptizing Helam at the time, and added himself for good measure; he (Alma) feeling the need for the ordinance himself. He went ahead and was baptized again for good measure. This seems to be a precedent that would allow for others to do likewise—perhaps when performing a vicarious baptism for the dead. I leave the Alma exception for your own consideration, and will stop short of advocating such a thing. I just notice things and share what I notice. I'm not trying to convince anyone to do anything.

In Christ's instructions, and in Section 20, the heavy lifting of repentance precedes baptism. Then, after determining to change and follow Christ, leaving behind the foolish errors of the past, the person is fit to be baptized. At that point the baptism symbolizes the new life being undertaken. The presence of the Holy Ghost then ratifies the purging of the repentant, now baptized convert. But that comes next in Christ's teaching.

SEPTEMBER 24, 2010

3 Nephi 11:24–25

And now behold, these are the words which ye shall say, calling them by name, saying: Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Christ prescribes the exact words to be used in the ordinance. However, the instruction we use today is slightly different in wording, but identical in meaning: Instead of: "Having authority given me of Jesus Christ" we say instead: "Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ." (D&C 20:73).

After giving these disciples "power to baptize" Christ's instructions require them to say they have "authority" (in 3 Nephi) or today, hold a "commission" (in D&C 20). Is there a difference between "authority" to baptize and the "power" to baptize?

Why does the authorization come from Jesus Christ, but the ordinance get performed "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?" The power to do the ordinance comes from the Son, but the ordinance is in the name of each member of the Godhead. Why?

Though they are one, the names show they occupy different roles and hold different responsibilities. (As to following and being

sanctified by different laws and receiving different kingdoms, see D&C 88:21–26). We are in the fallen world where the primary means God communicates with man is through the Holy Ghost (D&C 14:8). When, however, a person rises up through the merits of Jesus Christ to receive Him as a minister, they are living in a Terrestrial law and inherit Terrestrial blessings (D&C 76:77). When He has finished His preparations with the person, and can bring them to the Father, the person is brought to a point where the Father can accept and acknowledge them as a son (See D&C 76:54–59, 92). They are then begotten of the Father (Psalms 2:7). Through each of these steps, does baptism matter? Does one receive the companionship of the Holy Ghost without baptism? Do they come to Christ without baptism? Do they inherit what the Father has without baptism? Is baptism critical to the association with each member of the Godhead?

The point at which the person's journey is completed, and they may enter into the rest of the Lord is when the Lord declares by His own voice that the man's offering has been accepted and they are sealed up to eternal life. I've explained this on the blog as to Joseph Smith. I've explained it for Enos and others in *Beloved Enos*. The Gospel is the same now, as always before. Therefore, no matter how you will receive blessings of the Lord in the afterlife, it will be through the Gospel of Jesus Christ and by the ordinances instituted for claiming blessings. These were established as law to govern man's conduct here even before the world was (D&C 130:20–21).

Note also the person cannot receive the ordinance without also having their name stated. Why do you suppose it is necessary to first call out the name of the person before they receive an ordinance? Why would the Lord's instruction require a person to be "called"

first? Though they are submitting to the ordinance voluntarily, why call their name?

Does it matter if the full legal name is used? We do that in the church, of course. But does it matter? If the Lord called Joseph by name at the time of the First Vision (and He did, see *JSH* 1:17), what name do you suppose was called? Was it “Joseph Smith, Jr.”? Or was it “Joseph”? Or was it that name used by his most intimate friend at the time?

Whenever a name is given by an angel in an appearance to parents, the name is always the first name, or the name their friends would call them (See, e.g., Luke 1:13; Luke 1:31). Similarly, when the Lord calls a man’s name, He uses his first, given name (See 1 Samuel 3:4; Exodus 3:4). The Lord does not use formal names, but uses intimate names when addressing His servants.

We call the person to be baptized by name. Our practice is to use the full, legal name.

SEPTEMBER 25, 2010

3 Nephi 11:26

“And then shall ye immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water.”

The manner of baptism is clearly by immersion. To perform the ordinance, they must be put under the water and then “come forth again out of the water” to follow the instruction given by Christ.

The purpose of baptism is to follow Christ’s example (John 10:27, John 14:15). It symbolizes the death of the old man of sin, and the resurrection into a new life in Christ (Romans 6:4). That symbol cannot be mirrored by sprinkling. It must involve immersion.

In immersion we are placed below the surface of the water, in the same way as the dead are buried below ground.

In immersion the breath of life is cut off while under the water, and restored anew when you “come forth again out of the water.”

In the case of the officiator, they are the one who immerses and then brings the recipient up out of the water. Performing this ordinance puts the officiator in the role of the Lord who holds the keys of death (Rev. 1:18) and resurrection (2 Nephi 2:8).

Those who are baptized, and those who officiate, enact, by symbol, some eternal truths regarding the plan of salvation. In the very moment the ordinance is performed there is a renewal in symbol of life, innocence, forgiveness and resurrection. The earth itself is blessed by such things as baptism and other ordinances. The earth itself is defiled when the ordinances are not kept exactly as prescribed (Isa. 24:5; Moses 7:28).

The earth knows that God ordained the ordinances of heaven and earth (Jeremiah 33:25). As regular and reliable as the movements of the sun and moon are, so too should the ordinances of the Lord be kept in their appointed ways (Jeremiah 31:35–36).

The heavens and earth rejoice when the ordinances are kept. They symbolize eternal hope, man’s acceptance of God’s plan, and a presence of righteousness in a fallen world. Our own participation in ordinances are vital to our own renewal, and the renewal of all creation through redemption of each individual soul.

The baptism ordinance, like all those that follow after, is intended not merely to fulfill an initiation rite. It is intended to communicate light and truth into the mind of the individual who is performing and receiving the ordinance. It is meant to enlighten.

I have discussed previously the meaning of “come forth” used by Christ in restoring life to Lazarus (John 11:43) and therefore won’t repeat it again here. It is no accident the Lord employs the same

meaning here as there. We are rising from the tomb of sin which imprisons us into the new life awaiting us in Christ.

The Lord is more than brilliant. He is filled with light and truth. The closer you draw to Him, the more light and truth you begin to receive from Him.

SEPTEMBER 25, 2010

Comment Chaos

It has become apparent that this has changed in the last week from a teaching blog into a discussion blog. As a result, comments are now disabled. There won't be any comments on this blog from now on. Existing comments will not be taken down; but no new ones will be added.

As the next few verses are discussed, it will become apparent that adding or deleting from the doctrine of Christ is forbidden. I cannot, in good conscience, violate the very doctrine I am expounding even as I expound upon it.

It is true that this blog has never vouched for the reliability or accuracy of comments made by others. It is also true that I have freely allowed criticism against me to be published without any defense or challenge to the critics. The decision has nothing to do with criticism of me. It has to do with the fact that the overall content of this blog has become primarily comments and distantly the things I have been interested in explaining or teaching. As the posts become dwarfed by the comments, the whole purpose of this blog is compromised.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2010

3 Nephi 11:27

And after this manner shall ye baptize in my name; for behold, verily I say unto you, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one; and I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one.

The ordinance of baptism is to be done in the names of all three members of the Godhead. And, correspondingly, Christ wants us to understand the unity that exists between these three. They are “one” with each other.

The “oneness” of God the Father, His Son, and the Holy Ghost was discussed by Christ in His teachings of the New Testament. The Intercessory Prayer recorded in John 17, includes His expansion on the idea. There Christ taught:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. (John 17:20–24)

This unity between the Father, Son and Holy Ghost is a point of doctrine raised by Christ in this teaching. It is important for us to understand that the message we receive from the Holy Ghost will be the same as the message we would receive from Christ. It

is also important for us to rely on and have faith in Christ and the Holy Ghost so that we may trust them to bring us to the Father.

It is also a model for us to follow. We are supposed to drop our fears and worries, shed our ambitions and desires, and come together in unity until we are “one.” The non-competitive, fully cooperative manner the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are “one” is the model of Zion itself. Divisions and strifes are unthinkable between the members of the Godhead. In contrast, among us they are unavoidable.

The ideal is always the standard. We push toward perfection. The Father lives in absolutes. Therefore we strive for the absolute, all the while struggling with our relative and incremental improvement. We are in the process of being “added upon” (Abr. 3:26). The Father, on the other hand, dwells where there is nothing but perfection (D&C 1:31). So for us the Mediator and the Savior establish the bridge between where we are forbidden to enter in sin, and the borrowed cleanliness which momentarily lets us enter in.

We are to become “one” with Them. It is a distant goal, to be accomplished after being “added upon” for a long time. Joseph taught in the King Follett Discourse:

Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power... When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive

at the top; and so it is with the principles of the gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave.

To become “one” will be to reach the end of a long journey. We can have promises of that end. We can receive covenants that will bring us there. But our arrival will “be a great while after [we] have passed through the veil” for “it is not all to be comprehended in this world.” Moses was told that, also (Moses 1:5). We may be initiated, but to enter in will be “a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave.”

So the ideal of “one” with the Father, Son and Holy Ghost for us is distant, to be sought, to be kept before us, but not to be obtained until some time later. But to be “one” with each other is another matter. Being “one” is required of us for Zion to return. Zion is required for the Lord to dwell among us again. He is going to return to a Zion, no matter how few may be involved. He will come even if only two or three gather in His name (Matt. 18:20). Zion may be small, but it will nonetheless be Zion before He can visit with her.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2010

3 Nephi 11:28–30

And according as I have commanded you thus shall ye baptize. And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning

the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been. For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away.

The Lord's elaboration on "disputations" and "contentions" is important and consistent enough that all 3 verses should be considered together.

First, He clarifies that baptism must be done as He "commanded you." Deviations are not permitted and should not be asked for, or entertained. That is the thing about ordinances. When given, they are to be kept in exactly the manner they come from Him. When we change them we risk breaking the covenant between Him and ourselves (Isa. 24:5).

The Book of Mormon is silent about the "disputations" which existed among them over baptism. However, when Christ says there has "hitherto been" disputes, we know they existed. It becomes apparent from later passages that one practice which caused some of the argument was the issue of baptizing infants. There were likely others, as well. The Lord wants that to end. Perform the ordinances as He sets them out, and stop arguing about the manner.

The reason arguments arise is because men stop gathering light by righteous behavior. When they lose light they cease to understand the truth. They stray from the correct practice of the ordinance because they are unable to understand its importance. They see no reason to continue the ordinance in one form when another seems to work just as well. The result is a change to the ordinance. It is ever the same. By the time the change is made, the

ones making it are unaware of any importance associated with the ordinance they change. They discard what they view is meaningless. It would require a good deal more light and truth for them to understand the importance of what was given them. But that light and truth has passed away from them because of their conduct.

Into the darkness the devil enters with arguments over the ordinances: *Why do it that way? It really doesn't mean anything. It is arcane and outdated. It doesn't really matter as long as you still have faith in Christ.* [That particular lie is very effective because it allows the person to presume they have faith, when in fact they haven't the faith sufficient to obey Christ.] *People will get more out of the changes if we make them. People will have greater peace of mind if we baptize their infants. We'll save more souls, because by baptizing them when they're infants we include everyone who would die before getting baptized. Our numbers will increase. We'll look more successful by getting more followers by adding their numbers into the group. What we change isn't important, anyway. If it were important, we would know that, and since it doesn't seem important to us, it must, in fact, not be important. Those who rebel at change are not really faithful. This shows inspiration; it's faith affirming. Change is proof that God is still leading us...* And other such arguments and persuasions from our adversary.

On the other hand, Christ is saying to keep the ordinances unchanged. And further, don't even begin to dispute them. They are off limits for argument, dispute and discussion. When you open the opportunity to dispute over the ordinances, you are allowing the devil an opportunity to influence the discussion and change the ordinances.

Disputes lead to contention, contention leads to anger, and anger is the devil's tool. So don't start down that road. Accept and

understand the ordinances. If you are perplexed by them, then let those who understand speak, exhort, expound and teach concerning them. As they do, you will come into the unity of faith and become one. Perplexity cannot exist when there is light and truth. Light and truth comes from understanding the ordinances, not changing them. So do not begin the process through dispute. The purpose of discussion is not to dispute, which leads to contention, which leads to anger.

When the Gospel and its ordinances turn into something angry and contentious, then the Spirit has fled, and souls are lost. It is the devil's objective to prevent you from practicing the ordinances in the correct manner. But, more importantly, it is his objective to prevent you from becoming one. When he uses arguments over ordinances to cause disunity, he is playing with two tools at the same time. First, changing the ordinances brings about cursings, and second, encouraging contention and anger grieves the Spirit, and prevents the Saints from becoming one.

As a result, disputes or discussions over ordinances, which could lead to changing them, should not be entertained. As soon as the ordinances are open to dispute, reconsideration, alteration or to being changed, then you are opening the door to this whole process. It culminates in the souls of men being lost through apostasy. Once the ordinances are changed, the earth is cursed (Isa. 24:5) and Israel is scattered rather than gathered (Jere. 31:36).

The devil knows this, even if men do not. Men are urged to take steps they presume have little effect, all the while being lied to by the enemy of their souls.

When men arrive at the point they are angry in their hearts with one another, they are not united by love as they are intended to

be. These are the end results of the two paths. One leading to love and joy (Hel. 5:44), and the other to anger and wrath (D&C 76:33).

Disputes over ordinances are caused by the devil. Ordinances that preserve symbolic truths and have the power to save are turned into tools for the devil by disputations. It is a complete victory when discussions about changing ordinances are allowed to take place. Even good men are taken in by such disputes.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2010

3 Nephi 11:31–32

Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine. And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me.

When the Lord proclaims there is a “doctrine” belonging to Him, it is important to take note. As He begins His doctrinal statement, He first reminds us again of the unity between Himself, His Father and the Holy Ghost. This reminder of unity has followed the admonition to avoid contention and anger—things which prevent our becoming one with each other.

To understand His doctrine you must first know and understand that the doctrine originates with the Father. Christ has completely accepted and advocates the doctrine. Moreover He embodies it.

The Father’s doctrine is that “all men, everywhere, [must] repent and believe in [Christ].” This is what the whole of creation hangs on: the atonement of the Son. It is through the Son’s sacrifice that

the Father's plan became operational. Now, to return to the Father all must do so in reliance upon the merits of the Son (John 3:16).

The Son preaches the doctrine of, and bears witness of the Father. The Father bears witness of the Son. The Holy Ghost bears record of the Father and Son.

When did the Father bear record of the Son? Did you notice that? The FATHER bears record of the Son! I'm not talking about Matthew or Luke's testimony that the Father bore record of the Son, because that is Matthew's and Luke's testimony. I'm not talking about Joseph Smith's record of the Father's testimony of the Son. I'm talking about the Father's testimony. When did you hear the Father bear record of the Son?

The Father **does** bear record of the Son. But you must go through the Son to get to the Father. When you do, acting in faith according to the conditions established for your salvation, then you will receive the Father's testimony or record of the Son for yourself. But implicit in this statement is the fact that access to the Father is possible by the means provided through the Son. That is a ratification of the fullness of the Gospel. It is an invitation to return to heaven and obtain from the Father a confirmation of your salvation.

The Father's testimony is that our salvation comes through Christ. For us the Father has provided a Savior. If we repent, we can come back into the presence of God and enter into our salvation and exaltation. But it is through the means provided for us: A Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

We are commanded to:

Repent.

Believe in Christ.

To repent is to turn again to Him. To follow Him and leave behind your sinful ways. To abandon the world and worldliness and to choose to always remember Him, that you may have His spirit to be with you always.

To believe in Him is to accept, study, contemplate and ponder His teachings. It is not to just go along with a herd, but to rise up from your position and awaken from your slumber. It is to grow into knowledge about Him. Belief leads to faith and faith to knowledge. But the process is initiated by your belief (**correct understanding**) of His teachings.

The doctrine continues...

SEPTEMBER 28, 2010

3 Nephi 11:33–34

“And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned.”

Imagine the importance attached to the ordinance of baptism! It is an absolute minimum requirement. Upon the proper performance of this ordinance, hangs the difference between being “saved” and “inheriting the kingdom of God” on the one hand, and being “damned” on the other.

[As a complete aside: A few posts back there was a comment about what a burden it would be for “the church” and “the priesthood” if people seek re-baptism to renew commitments. It was made as we approached Christ’s teachings on baptism. The comment was so immediate and so dark in tone and content it has caused me rethink the importance of this idea. Anytime an idea is confrontational and dark, I pause to consider why that is so.

Here's what now occurs to me. What a terrible burden it would be to depart this life without the ordinance of baptism properly performed, by proper authority, in the proper manner, with repentance preceding the event. I would not want a dark and troubled soul to perform baptism for anyone, but a person filled with joy, hope and the Spirit, having a testimony in Christ like Nephi. These people would not find performing such an ordinance troubling.

If there is a hint of doubt held by any baptized member of the church, why would any right-thinking and charitable soul refuse them the right to be re-baptized? Now, I've suggested the Alma exception and how that might be accomplished in a time of reluctance and resistance to re-commitment baptism. But it occurs to me upon further reflection that since the church doesn't recognize or record rebaptisms anyway, why would this concern the "heavy laden priesthood" which has no time for such things? Anyone holding authority, at any place where there is sufficient water to perform the rite, could accomplish it. Since the church doesn't record it, there is no need of witnesses. It could be done in private, at any time, or any place with sufficient water. It could be done by any person holding the office of Priest. It would be good practice for future missionaries if they were given the opportunity. I think the idea is one which ought to be acted upon with regularity, in private and without troubling the busy and overburdened church and priesthood. A close family member could take care of it, and I suspect all involved will soon recognize heaven's approval of the idea.]

Well, back to the subject at hand. Anciently the Jews practiced baptism in "living water." That is, in a naturally renewing body of water, like a river, lake or ocean. Living water was part of the

symbol. We have fonts, and there is nothing wrong with that. But I have always cherished my baptism in the Atlantic Ocean.

Well, believing in Christ precedes baptism. In fact, belief in Christ causes baptism. The one results in the other. Without faith in Him, there is no need for baptism. This then makes the first step belief in Christ, and baptism the second step.

I've heard of those who obtain a testimony of Christ in adulthood, but who were baptized many years earlier at age 8. If belief in Christ is supposed to precede baptism, but in fact follows it, does that recommend repeating the ordinance? Does Christ's establishment of an order to these things, by the commandment of the Father, matter? If it matters, then why not try it? If tried and it "tastes good" then you have your answer. And if nothing changes, then you also have learned something, as well.

I was fortunate to be able to follow the proper sequence. I was 19 years old when I came to the church. I try to follow the proper sequence with my own children by teaching them before baptism and testifying of Christ to them in a way calculated to produce faith in Him. I would take no offense, however, if one of my children were to later want to be re-baptized as an affirmation of their continuing belief in Christ. I can't see why anyone would take offense.

What does it mean to "inherit the kingdom of God?" Would that be important to secure while alive? This work cannot be done after death, you know (D&C 138:33). However, if offered the opportunity now and a person declines it, they cannot afterwards receive it and inherit the "kingdom of God." They inherit another kingdom (D&C 76:74).

This is important enough a matter that I rather think the whole subject is worth careful consideration. Christ's teachings have been carefully preserved at great effort and come to us by way of revela-

tion and direct inspiration from God. From a prophet to another prophet in composition, and through a prophet in translation. It holds a power for salvation in the kingdom of God. It is worth prayerful consideration. The outcome is the difference between the “kingdom of God” on the one hand and “damnation” on the other.

SEPTEMBER 28, 2010

3 Nephi 11:35

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost.

Belief in Christ necessarily means belief in the Father. To believe Christ is to accept His message of the Father’s primacy and authority.

You see in these three members of the Godhead a full establishment of interconnected roles and responsibilities.

The Father ordains the plan. It is He who presides.

The Son implements the plan. It is He who makes the required sacrifice to save us.

The Holy Ghost activates the plan. It is the “fire” of the Holy Ghost which makes new, cleanses and perfects the man’s understanding.

These three are “one” and united. They provide mankind with the possibility for salvation and exaltation.

Christ “bears record of it from the Father.” This means that Christ is the Father’s messenger announcing the Father’s plan. What of the need for two witnesses? (Matt. 18:16). One of the criticisms of Christ’s message was the absence of additional witnesses (John 8:13–14). Is Christ doing that same thing here with the Nephites?

Does His announcement that He speaks for the Father constitute one, or two witnesses? The Father first bore witness of Christ (3 Nephi 11:6–7). Now Christ bears witness of Him.

The Father’s testimony always affirms the status of the Son as His Beloved, and of our need to “hear Him” (See e.g., Matt. 17:5; *JS-H* 1:17; see also Matt. 3:17). The Father can, and does, acknowledge others as His (Psalms 2:7). But, unlike the Son who has repeatedly visited this earth, walked upon it (Luke 24:15–16), been handled by people (Luke 24:36–39; 3 Nephi 11:14–15), and eaten here (John 21:13), the Father does not come into contact with this earth in its fallen state (Matt. 17:5; *JS-H* 1:17). The only time the Father had contact with this earth was before the Fall, in the Paradisiacal setting of Eden—which was a Temple at the time (Gen. 3:8). Whenever there has been contact with the Father thereafter, He has been at a distance from this earth (Moses 7:24; 1 Nephi 1:8; Alma 36:22).

There is a formality with the Father that does not exist with the Son. For example, the Son has eaten with mortal man while He was immortal, both before His ministry in the flesh (Exo. 24:9–11) and after (Luke 24:41–43). As our Redeemer, He is directly responsible for us and has contact with us to perform His redemptive service. The Father, on the other hand, is different in status, responsibility, glory and dominion. The Son can appear to mortal man without showing His glory or requiring any alteration of the mortal who beholds Him (See, e.g., John 20:15–17). To behold the Father, to endure His presence, one must be transfigured (Moses 1:2). Mortal man cannot behold the Father’s works while mortal, for if you comprehend them you cannot afterward remain mortal in the flesh (Moses 1:5).

The primary means to learn of Christ for mortal man is the Holy Ghost. It is this means which brings all things to your remembrance (John 14:26). Once the learning has culminated in preparation of the individual, then the Savior has a continuing ministry (John 14:21). The Savior's ministry is to bring the person redemption.

When this process is complete, then it is the responsibility of those who have been redeemed to cry repentance to their neighbors (D&C 88:74, 81). Indeed, the desire to bring others to receive redemption becomes their primary concern (Mosiah 28:3).

The process then produces those who bear testimony of the Son. If they are called of God, they will use scriptures to testify of Christ. This has always been the pattern ordained by God (Jacob 7:10–11). They may understand the scriptures more clearly, because they have seen the same things as earlier prophets (*JS-H* 1:74). But their testimonies will draw from the scriptures and the words of their brothers in Christ who went before as they testify of Him.

It is through such signs as these you know the Father and Son are one, and the Holy Ghost and the Son are one, and the messengers sent by them will testify of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. These three are the ones in whom faith must be focused for salvation. Though the heavens may include hosts of others, saving faith must be focused in the Father, Son and Holy Ghost alone. Whenever attention and worship moves from the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the result is invariably apostasy and false beliefs (1 Cor. 8:5–6; Deut. 16, 17, 18 & 19; 2 Kings 17:13–16).

The doctrine of Christ is to be strictly followed. It alone delivers from destruction. All other paths lead to error, foolishness and the dark, where you will perish (Deut. 8:19).

From following this process we obtain the necessary “fire and the Holy Ghost” which redeems, purges, purifies and changes us into a new creature in Christ.

I have said very little of my personal experiences because of how quickly people turn from following Christ to following men whenever attention is drawn to a man. Mankind is inclined toward idolatry. The church has become a great idol. I do not intend to supplant the Lord, nor to call attention to myself, nor to offer myself as an idol for others. **I cannot save anyone.** If not for Christ and His atonement, I would have only dread for my eternal state. The doctrine of Christ is what the Father ordained as the means for salvation. Anyone who interferes with the process, or offers another means for salvation, cannot deliver (Mosiah 3:17). Whether it is an institution or an individual, no one other than Christ can save. Hence His title as Savior. For some reason mankind is so prone to error, so quick to leave the path, and so vulnerable to being deceived, that focus must remain on the Son, as empowered and sent by the Father, through the witness of the Holy Ghost, or we go astray. Joseph cautioned: *“How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God, than the vain imaginations of the human heart! None but fools will trifle with the souls of men”* (TPJS p. 137).

SEPTEMBER 29, 2010

3 Nephi 11:36

“And thus will the Father bear record of me, and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me; for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one.”

The phrase: “And thus will the Father bear record of me” is referring to the Father visiting “him with fire and the Holy Ghost.”

This means that to the recipient of the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost comes a witness to the person of the Father. When the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost come to you, so does the Father's testimony of the Son.

You cannot receive this baptism and not have a testimony given to you by the Father of the Son.

In the Book of Mormon we read accounts of conversion experiences which include visitations of angels or opening of the heavens (See, e.g., Mosiah 27:11–24; Alma 22:16–18, 23; Alma 19:12–19). These converts' experiences did not come after a lifetime of study or reading a library of scholarly works. Indeed, in some cases the only information they had before the encounter came from the words of a missionary testifying to the truth.

Becoming converted is a question of sincerity, real intent, and asking God. It is not about the library you have read. Indeed, approaching it on purely intellectual terms has never produced a single convert. I've written a chapter on this in *Eighteen Verses*.

The problem is always obtaining a connection to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It is not a matter of scholarship. Joseph was anything but a scholar when he encountered God in the First Vision. He was young and ignorant. He read the Bible, believed in God's existence, and trusted the promise by James that if he were to ask God he would not be upbraided but would be answered (James 1:5–6). Therefore he decided to ask, with real intent, trusting in the promise (*JS-H 1:12–13*).

Because he asked, he met God. Walking into the grove near his home that morning he was a foolish and ignorant boy. Walking back he was a prophet. Though it would be many years following that encounter before he appreciated how far he would have to go to gain knowledge of godliness and the mysteries of salvation.

But all of his study and effort was informed by the scriptures and revelation. In my view, this is how it should be.

Scriptures are an essential anchor of understanding. All truths should find a comfortable setting inside existing scripture. If a notion or teaching is jarringly contradictory of existing scripture, then there must be a very good reason or explanation before it should be accepted. It has been my experience that revelation does not contradict, but opens up meaning of the scriptures. This was Joseph's and Oliver's experience, as well (*JS-H 1:74*).

When I study other materials, I do so to inform my reading and understanding of scripture, not to supplant it. I spend as much time with scripture study as I do with other writings. Although I could recite things using my own words, I find the language of scripture describes truths better than new wordings and therefore often use the language of scripture even if I do not show them in quotes. I also make frequent reference to scripture in this blog to show the reader that the scriptures are an existing library of material dealing with every part of Christ's Gospel. Since we have scripture made available to us at great effort from God and the prophets, it would be terribly ungrateful for us to fail to study what they have provided.

The "record" we already have of the Father's testimony of the Son, the Son's testimony of the Father, and the Holy Ghost's interaction with mankind is found in the scriptures. Although you may not see it fully without further revelation, it is nevertheless there. I have found the scriptures often open up further revelation. This is how Section 76, the First Vision, Section 138, Section 93, Section 132, and many other revelations have come to us. Search the meaning of scripture, and then ask God for what you do not see through your own effort. Appreciation for what has been given already produces further revelation.

The Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one. And the primary means for obtaining access to their “record” spoken of in this verse, is through the scriptures. Although I may try to shed additional light upon the meaning of scripture, I try to keep the scriptures an integral part of anything I write. (Excepting only the parables, where I felt free to let another tradition inform how and what I have written. And the proverbs; which I titled “Sayings” at the end of *The Second Comforter*; which was another tradition as well.)

SEPTEMBER 29, 2010

3 Nephi 11:37–38

And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things. And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.

Repentance is not likely unless a person is willing to undergo a change to become more “childlike” in perspective and attitude. I’ve written a chapter on this in *The Second Comforter*. I used that as the basis for my comments at the recent Chiasmus Conference. It is more than just an analogy or good advice. It is a prerequisite. It is the only way you can “inherit the kingdom of God.”

Children are open to change and willing to learn. They welcome new ideas for all ideas are new to them. The world is new to them. They feel their ignorance and are anxious to fill it with information and understanding. They know they are unable to cope with the world they live in unless they obtain more understanding than they have. So they relentlessly search to know more.

On the other hand, adults are generally closed. They believe they already know something, and therefore are unwilling to receive more (2 Nephi 28:29).

Adults learn disciplines of study and then think the Gospel should be viewed by the tools of the scholar. To the economist, all of the Gospel appears to be financial. To the philosopher, all of the Gospel appears to be dialectic. To the lawyer it is a legal system. But the Gospel is separate from the understanding of men. It requires us to surrender our arrogance and foolishness and come as a child to learn anew everything about life and truth. This is why the Gospel always begins with creation, informs of the Fall, and preaches the Atonement.

We must “repent” because the foundation of accepting new truth begins with the realization that we’re not getting anywhere by what we’ve already done. We need to abandon old ways and begin anew. Until we are open to the new truths offered through the Gospel, we can’t even start the journey. We’re headed in the wrong direction and don’t even know it. First we need to realize our direction is wrong. Then stop going that way. When we turn to the new direction, we’ve begun repenting (2 Cor. 5:17).

From repentance comes light and truth. At first, just turning to face the new direction is a great revelation. But you’ve not seen anything until you walk in that direction for a while. As you move toward the light and receive more, the world itself changes meaning and nothing you used to think important remains important (Isa. 65:17).

Becoming as a little child, or repenting, must precede baptism if you are to be saved. Otherwise, you cannot “receive these things” or, in other words, you cannot accept the new truths and perspectives the Gospel will require you to know and accept. Unless these steps

are taken you cannot “inherit the kingdom of God” because only such people will be able to enter.

Teachable. Open. Willing to receive more. Able to endure difficulties as a result of the changes which come to them. Patient. Submissive to God. And eager to learn more (Mosiah 3:19).

Not arrogant. Not trying to fit the new truths into your existing framework of false notions (Mark 2:22). Not resisting truth and arguing against it (1 Tim. 6:4–6). Not proud or boastful, secure in your own salvation (Luke 18:11). Not holding a testimony that you will be saved while others around you will be lost because they do not believe as you do (Alma 31:14–18).

How few there will be who find it (Matt. 7:14; 3 Ne. 14:14; 3 Ne. 27:33; D&C 132:22). Most people are simply unwilling to repent. They have such truth as they are willing to receive already, and want nothing more (2 Nephi 28:14–15).

Even Christ is unable to persuade them to accept His Gospel.

SEPTEMBER 30, 2010

3 Nephi 11:39

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.”

This is the reason for this doctrine. It will allow those who accept and follow it to endure against all enemies. It will allow them to prevail.

Even the “gates of hell shall not prevail against them.” Meaning that death and hell can have no claim upon them. They will not be taken captive either in this world (Alma 12:11) or when they leave this world (Alma 40:13).

When we consider the Father is to bear record of the Son, and the Son bears record of the Father, and the Holy Ghost bears record of the Father and Son, then we realize this doctrine of Christ is designed to put us in contact with all three members of the Godhead. We are to join them. We are to be one with them.

There is no separating us from God when we have the record of each given to us.

It is interesting that the “rock” upon which we build is the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. There is abundant evidence of other “gods” and of “goddesses.” It is beyond dispute that the “image of God” includes both “male and female.” (Gen. 1:27; Moses 2:27; Abraham 4:27). It is inescapable, therefore, that the God we worship includes a Father and a Mother. However, we are only to seek after the Father, Son and Holy Ghost as the “rock” upon which our salvation is to be built.

Oddly enough, mankind prefers a female deity over a male deity. Catholicism has reconciled this preference by the doctrine of Immaculate Conception and the cultic veneration of Mary. Pope John Paul II was an ardent believer in the Cult of Mary and made no secret of that veneration. It is almost beyond dispute that Mary’s status is preferred over Christ’s in the lives of the common Catholic.

In the Old Testament, the goddess Ashtoreth, (in her various iterations) was a leading figure in apostasies of ancient Israel. She was the female consort to Baal (who also had various spellings). The Egyptian counterpart being Hathor, whose image appears in figure 5 of Facsimile No. 2 in the Book of Abraham. The representation there being Egyptian, that is, emerging through the great cycle of life, afterlife and resurrection coming through the womb. An understanding of which Hugh Nibley was setting forth in *One Eternal Round*. This work was reduced in volume by half before

publication. This resulted in problems with the published text. That, however, is another subject not relevant here.

Notwithstanding man's preference for the female god, for salvation we must anchor ourselves to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. They are the "rock" upon which we must build to avoid the gates of hell, despite our knowledge of heaven, salvation and the necessary unity of the sexes before salvation is obtained (1 Cor. 11:11). It is through the union of the sexes that mortals imitate immortality, for all of us will die. Yet if joined together we will continue through the seed forever, as the gods (D&C 132:20-22).

There is also the continuing trouble about polygamy which so often afflicted the discussions on this blog before comments were discontinued. Those who preach on the subject often speak out of the coarseness of ambition and insecurity (for those always go together), and without understanding how a marriage must work to warrant preservation beyond this life.

Ask yourself what kind of a relationship would be godlike? What association between a man and a woman would be something the heavens would want to preserve and continue? Is an ambitious man who looks upon a woman as someone to rule over worthy of heavenly preservation? Is such a man worthy of one wife, let alone several?

Wouldn't you expect the relationship between a man and woman worthy of eternal preservation to evidence such things as equality, respect, kindness, joyful and voluntary interchange of thoughts, and to be grounded in love? Wouldn't you expect such a marriage to be part of heaven, though the parties live as mortals on the earth? Why would you expect a form of marriage, having as its chief output, unhappy but frequently pregnant women, having an absentee husband to be godlike?

Have you read the tenth parable? If you have and still think you need a “brood” of women to become godlike, then you haven’t understood the tenth parable.

Foolishness never was enlightenment. Ambition is unbecoming in a candidate for exaltation. We will keep going into Christ’s sermons to the Nephites and, as we do, you will find He emphasizes how to become like Him through service and abasing yourself. By sacrifice and devotion to the best interests of others. Not by compulsion, dominion and ruling over others.

If you want to prevail against the gates of hell, then Christ’s simple doctrines need to become yours. They need to be how you live and what you do. They are the only rock upon which you can build and have something which will endure the buffetings of hell itself.

If a man hasn’t made a single woman happy, why would he be trusted to have more wives? Why would he want them? What does such a man think the purpose of marriage to be? Gratification? Industrial baby-production? What’s the reason? If happiness is the end of our design by God, then wouldn’t you need to find someone who can live in peace and happiness with another person as their husband as the first step? If that is true, then why isn’t that challenge enough in a marriage between one man and one woman? Until that has been conquered, why should misery be multiplied by adding additional spouses into a failed interpersonal relationship?

Too many people are advocating too many alternatives which distract from the simplicity of what is really needed. There aren’t enough marriages worthy of preservation. Make yours one of them. That is a very good work and challenge enough for all of us at present.

Onward, then...

SEPTEMBER 30, 2010

3 Nephi 11:40

And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them.

Here is Christ's explanation of why we must focus on these doctrines to be saved. I've heard more words of caution about speaking "more" than I've ever heard cautioning about "less." Both are a problem. It is more fashionable today to speak less about Christ's doctrine, or to circumscribe it into so narrow a meaning as to render it powerless in effect.

First, as to "more." When we "declare more" we are getting ahead of the process. We aren't to worship the "hosts of heaven," nor a heavenly mother. Despite all we may know about Her, that knowledge won't save. Other personages or ministers cannot save either. Gabriel will not. Enoch will not. Michael will not. Only the Son will save; and the Father will bear testimony of Him. Interesting stories about individual spiritual encounters or experiences will not save. They are evidence that heaven is still attending to us, but the details are for the individual. The experiences that will save have already been recorded in scripture for our general instruction. Outside of scripture those individual experiences are only useful to the extent they shed light upon scriptural accounts. If a person can help you understand Daniel's visionary encounters by what they have been shown, then their personal experiences are not as important as the light they may shed upon Daniel's prophecy. Similarly what I've written is helpful only to understand scripture,

and not otherwise. Even the account of Gethsemane is anchored in scripture and useful only to the extent it sheds light upon what has been given to us in the New Testament Gospels, Nephi's prophecy, Alma's testimony and D&C 19. I do think my account goes further to explain what occurred than any other writing which has come to my attention. Nevertheless the scriptures are needed as the primary tool for understanding our Lord's atonement. So the definition of "more" would include such things that supplant scripture or suggest anything is more important than the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; but things as may shed additional light on the meaning of scripture.

Interestingly enough, when we "declare less" we are also condemned. It works both ways. It's a two-edged sword. Not "more nor less" is permitted. We sometimes greet preaching "less" with applause, because we want less. But that is no better than missing the mark while preaching "more." Perhaps it is worse, because it represents a rejection of truth. It is active suppression of what needs to be proclaimed.

All of us must be concerned about declaring less. Deleting or omitting is as serious a matter as adding. Either will allow the gates of hell to prevail.

When you adopt creedal Historic Christianity and amalgamate the Father, Son and Holy Ghost into a single cosmic siamese-triplet construct, you are declaring them as less. The disembodiment of God the Father was a lie to supplant and replace Him by another disembodied pretender claiming to be the god of this world.

Christ's teaching here is preliminary to the Sermon that follows. In the coming Sermon we will read a better preserved version of the Sermon on the Mount from Jerusalem, called here the Sermon at Bountiful. But this explanation of doctrine is given by Christ first. The foundation of doctrine of the oneness of the Father, Son

and Holy Ghost, the conferral of power to baptize, and manner of baptism come before the great Sermon. First we receive the instruction to avoid disputes. These disputes lead to contention that lays the foundation for anger between men. This doctrine is so foundational that Christ covers it before any other teaching. Therefore, you should realize its importance.

We will be captured by hell if we do not understand and follow these teachings. Though they are Christ's very first instructions, we almost never discuss them. You may want to re-read these verses again, and realize their fundamental importance.

Christ is saying it is "evil" to do more or less with His doctrine. It surely is, for ignoring, altering, omitting or enlarging leads to evil.

OCTOBER 2010

OCTOBER 1, 2010

3 Nephi 11:41

"Therefore, go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth."

This is the charge given by Christ to the twelve whom He had called and given power to baptize. It was overheard by those who had been witnessing these events. But the charge is to the twelve.

The obligation to declare the doctrine of Christ, preach repentance, baptize with authority and make known the Father, Son and Holy Ghost is imposed upon the twelve. This burden, therefore, rests on them and is theirs to bear off "unto this people." They are to warn everybody of these obligations. Not just those who were there.

The extent of the duty runs "unto the ends of the earth." From where they were at the time Christ was preaching, to the entire

North and South American continents and all those who may be living there at the time were the assigned mission field to whom the doctrine of Christ was to be declared.

The break between this portion of Christ's teachings and what would follow is interesting to consider. The remainder of His teachings will form the primary message foundational to Christianity. It is the new, higher law which replaces the earlier Law of Moses. Yet this portion, declared by Christ as His "doctrine" is the part to be taken first and declared everywhere. Why?

A fair conclusion to reach is that before you consider the new, higher law you must first:

- Repent
- Be Baptized
- Receive the Holy Ghost
- Have a correct understanding of God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Ghost

These things precede His replacement of the older, lower law with His new, higher law. It is reasonable to conclude you will not comprehend His follow-on teachings if you have not first repented, been baptized, received the Holy Ghost, and understand the Godhead. Or, even more to the point: You will never be able to LIVE His new, higher law unless these steps are taken first. Until then you may aspire, but you will not be able to live them. They address the heart, rather than just conduct. They go to the deepest convictions inside you, what motivates you, and the reasons for your conduct. Your conduct will follow these precepts when you have been changed. For the required change, the tools discussed first must be acquired.

He will return to the themes of this opening statement, declaring nothing more or less than what He has taught should be given as His (See 3 Nephi 18:12–13).

So we turn from this introductory, first statement of His doctrine to His great foundational Sermon at Bountiful in which the higher law is first given in one, complete statement of what we are to become. It is not merely direction to us. It is also a revelation of what kind of person Christ was. He explains it Himself...

CHAPTER 11

3 Nephi 12

OCTOBER 1, 2010

3 Nephi 12:1

And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto Nephi, and to those who had been called, (now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize, was twelve) and behold, he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them, saying: Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants; and unto them I have given power that they may baptize you with water; and after that ye are baptized with water, behold, I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost; therefore blessed are ye if ye shall believe in me and be baptized, after that ye have seen me and know that I am.

Nephi and the other twelve heard and recorded the words we've been reviewing in Chapter 11. But here Christ makes certain all others who were present also knew the same doctrine. Notice the following:

“He stretched forth His hand.” What does that mean? Why is it noted in the record? Why would the fact that He stretched forth His hand be significant enough to etch into metal plates?

Why does it say Christ “cried unto them?” How loud would He need to make His voice before it would be considered “crying” out to the audience? This suggests that what was covered in Chapter 11 was not loud enough for all those present to hear. But what follows He wants everyone to hear.

The Sermon at Bountiful begins with a new beatitude. “Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you.” A commenter recently suggested this means that any person ever called to any council of twelve is entitled to the same kind of status. Is that correct? Does membership in a group entitle someone to respect? Would receiving power directly from Christ entitle a person to respect? What if someone were to receive power from Christ, but not be included in some presiding group? For example, John the Baptist received power from an angel to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews at eight days old. He was never among a presiding group (D&C 84:28). Paul was given power directly from heaven, calling himself “born out of due time” because he became a witness after Christ’s resurrection and was not among the leadership when first visited (1 Cor. 15:8–10). Which does this apply to: those called to preside, or those called directly by the Lord (as the scriptures testify is sometimes the case)? Or does it only apply to the twelve disciples the Lord was referring to standing before the crowd on that day? Is limiting it to that narrow an application appropriate? Is expanding it to include anyone ever called to preside too broad an application? How are you to decide that question?

Is it appropriate for Christ to couple “minister to you” with “and to be your servants?” Can a “servant” exercise authority over you as the gentiles do? (Luke 22:25–26). Why not?

When Christ says these people have “power to baptize you” and then promises that He, Christ, “will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost” does this promise mean that Christ will send the Holy Ghost if you are baptized by one having power from Him? Always? If it hasn’t happened, does that mean the one who baptized you did not have this “power?” Why or why not? What is the relationship between the power to baptize, and the promise of the Holy Ghost? What role does your own repentance have to play? Christ has previously given the order of things, and included repentance first.

What does the statement mean: “blessed are ye if ye shall believe in me and be baptized, after that ye have seen me and know that I am.” How likely would it be for you to “believe in [Christ] after that ye have seen [Him]?” Do you suspect any of those who were present would not believe in Him? Why?

Would you expect those present to believe in Him after seeing Him descend from heaven, hear the voice of the Father testify of Him, see His wounds, witness Him healing all their sick, and beholding angels minister in tongues of fire to their young children? Would you be able to do so? What about reading the record of the events in the Book of Mormon; is that enough to testify of Him? Can you ask in prayer if these things about Christ are true and get a testimony of them for yourself? Have you done so? Have you acquired belief in Him as a result of praying to know if they are true? Can you then believe in Him? Are you “blessed” for it? Do you “know that He is?” What more do you need to do in order to “know that He is?” Why haven’t you done that yet?

OCTOBER 2, 2010

3 Nephi 12:2

And again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized, for they shall be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.

Some people are given knowledge (D&C 46:13). This would include the Prophet Joseph Smith. Others believe on their words and trust in Christ through what they have learned from witnesses of Him (D&C 46:14). This would include President Thomas S. Monson, who in last General Conference testified he has no question about the testimonies of those who have seen Him. As President Monson testified:

I have read—and I believe—the testimonies of those who experienced the grief of Christ’s Crucifixion and the joy of His Resurrection. I have read—and I believe—the testimonies of those in the New World who were visited by the same risen Lord. I believe the testimony of one who, in this dispensation, spoke with the Father and the Son in a grove now called sacred and who gave his life, sealing that testimony with his blood. Declared he: ‘And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives! For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father.’ The darkness of death can always be dispelled by the light of revealed truth. ‘I am the resurrection, and the life,’ spoke the Master. ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.’ Over the years I have

heard and read testimonies too numerous to count, shared with me by individuals who testify of the reality of the Resurrection and who have received, in their hours of greatest need, the peace and comfort promised by the Savior. ("He is Risen!", Sunday Morning Session, April, 2010 Session; footnotes omitted)

Why would someone be "more blessed" because they "believe in the words" of those who have "seen Christ" than those who have seen Him? What is it about believing on the words of those who **have seen** which is "more blessed" than the ones who see Him?

Notice once again the connection between having seen the Lord and "ye know that I am." Notice the use of "I am" in the statement of the Lord about Himself.

Now note too how the "believing in the words" is not enough, because He adds action to the belief. That is, those who "believe in your words" are required then to "come down into the depths of humility and be baptized" for the "blessing" to have any effect. It is not enough for someone to be moved to believe when they hear a witness of Christ, they must also respond to His invitation to be baptized. Before being baptized they need also to "come down into the depths of humility." The intention and inner meaning are everything. But the outward act confirms the inner change which takes place.

Action is married to belief and intent. Both are necessary.

When it is done in faith, sincerity, complying with the steps the Lord has prescribed, He promises to visit the obedient "with fire and with the Holy Ghost." This is how a person will know they have received "a remission of their sins."

The instructions of the Lord are intended to change lives. Change is repentance. And repentance leads to redemption. He

expects our behavior to mirror our beliefs, because if behavior does not model our professed beliefs then we are hypocrites—not converts.

This is why commandments are given to us. They tell us how we can continue to receive and renew a continuing conversion to Christ’s way of life. Commandments are not a burden to bear but a roadmap to follow. They are not a measuring stick to judge and then abuse others. It is a light for us to follow.

These explanations by Christ are beyond the question of “faith verses works” because Christ is telling us we act from our heart in faith, receive ordinances because of our faith, then have our hearts filled again. We proceed from grace to grace. This is how Christ received the fullness, and the only way we may receive the fullness (D&C 93:12–14, 19–29).

The task of knowing God always begins by trusting on the words of those who have seen Him. But it should never end there. Everyone is invited to lay aside their sins, call upon God in faith, obey His commandments, listen to the voice of inspiration and do as you are told, thereby coming to see Him face-to-face (D&C 93:1). This is the reason for the book *The Second Comforter*. It is a manual for how any person can come back into the presence of the Lord and join those witnesses who can testify they have seen Him.

He lives. And He is the same, yesterday, today and forever.

OCTOBER 3, 2010

3 Nephi 12:3

“Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

The blessing referred to for those who are “poor in spirit” comes as a result of “coming unto” Christ. Any who come to Christ will receive “the kingdom of heaven.” However, to obtain it, you must “come unto [Christ].”

Christ is approachable. But the approach is determined by the Gospel. The earlier “doctrine of Christ” taught in Chapter II tells you how to “come unto Christ.”

Belief on His teachings, then repentance and baptism are all essential prerequisites to coming to Him.

What does it mean to be “poor in spirit?” Does that make you more open to Him? Have you ever had a season in which you felt “poor in spirit?” Were you more open to Him as a result?

Before I converted, though I did not consider myself a candidate to convert, I also felt a hollowness in life. There was something missing. The void inside us was meant to be there. Filling it was always the responsibility of the Gospel. We were all meant to feel “poor in spirit” until we find truth. Then, upon finding truth, we were meant to “come unto Christ” so the void may be filled. Coming to Christ is the return to life and light. It is the journey back to that light from where we originated.

Converting was more of a homecoming than anything else. The Gospel rings true and His sheep hear His voice (John 10:27) because these are things we long ago accepted and decided to follow (Abr. 3:26–27). Each of us needs to be converted. Even if you were raised in the church, you still need to convert. The steps Christ is outlining are the ones each of us are expected to follow. Whether you do so as an adult, or did so earlier in life, we are all required to “come unto Christ” and be converted.

We are not meant to remain “poor in spirit” but to “come to Christ” and move beyond that. Moving beyond it we find ourselves

joyfully informed that “ours is the kingdom of heaven.” We cannot claim it for ourselves. But Christ can claim it for us. This is how our poverty of spirit is to be cured. The Lord juxtaposes poverty with the riches of heaven itself. The contrast is designed to make us think, and to make us grateful. We were always intended to have joy. Above all else, Christ is a Deliverer from sorrow (Rev. 7:17).

OCTOBER 3, 2010

An Aside About Alma

In response to a question about re-baptism and power to perform the ordinance, I would add the following:

Alma was one of the priests of King Noah. In hindsight he knew what he did among them was wicked (Mosiah 23:9). It was in the position as a priest in King Noah’s court that Alma received his priesthood authority (Mosiah 11:5). Unlike his peers, Alma was converted by the message of Abinadi, and was moved to repentance (Mosiah 17:1–2). **When he repented, he received from God authority to proceed in using his priesthood** (Mosiah 18:18). The moment Alma’s authority was conferred came after he repented, preached righteousness, asked if others were willing to receive baptism, and proceeded to perform the ordinance. It was at that moment Alma received power through the Spirit (Mosiah 18:10–14).

This pattern is in scripture for a reason. It is intended to be a guide for us as we ask questions such as: *Although the priesthood has been conferred upon me, what must I do to obtain power?* (D&C 121:36–37). It is almost always the case that the priesthood is merely «conferred,» and there is no power within it. Through repentance, the powers of heaven are accessed and the priesthood’s power becomes real. Alma is a prime example of this transition from

powerless and error-filled pride into repentance and possession of the Spirit of God.

OCTOBER 4, 2010

3 Nephi 12:4

“And again, blessed are all they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

This is unconditional. “All” are included. “All they that mourn” will be blessed.

Between sessions of conference Saturday I attended a friend’s funeral. Mourning because of death is the first cause we associate with this promise. Over death, however, He has gained the victory. It was His mission and ministry to bring about victory over death. “And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death” (Alma 7:12). This done now, though death continues to claim all of us. We know we will have part in His victory. Comfort from that victory will come to us all.

Death is not the only cause of mourning, however. We all experience afflictions, troubles, temptations, and pains while mortal. He has gained the victory over all of these also:

And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities. Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he

might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me.
(Alma 7:11–13)

Do you mourn because of afflictions? Temptations? Pains? Sickness? Infirmities? The troubles of the flesh? Sins and transgressions? It does not matter the cause of your mourning, Christ has suffered all these things so that He may understand the troubles of the flesh and, by understanding them to overcome them all. By overcoming them all, He then in turn can share the victory.

Your failures are not going to be reason to punish you. If you repent, they will be lessons from which to learn. The guilt will be removed, you will be comforted, and the lessons will remain. Your mortal trials will confer upon you the taste of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3:17–19). You will have learned from what you suffer the difference between the two, and have the benefit of Christ’s atonement to remove all guilt (2 Nephi 2:26).

All will be comforted from every offense they have ever suffered. All that remains will be the choices you have made (Moroni 7:16–17). The offenses you suffered at the hands of others will be made up to you. All infirmities you have been plagued with while mortal will be removed (Alma 40:23). Only your choices will remain as either a continuing blessing or continuing affliction. But that is your choice (Alma 41:13–14; Moroni 7:18–19).

Earth’s valuable lessons will remain with you, and inform you eternally with knowledge of good and evil. In this you will have become like God (Gen. 3:22). But the experiences you suffer, which are the means of learning good from evil, will all be removed. You will no longer “mourn” for anything. You will, however, remain accountable for your choices.

This is the perfectly balanced experience. Through it we learn and gain experience (Abr. 3:25–26), but we are only burdened by what we voluntarily impose upon ourselves through our choices (1 Nephi 15:32–33). The promised “comfort” against our mourning will be complete if we have chosen to follow Christ, and incomplete if we have chosen to reject Him. Because He can only remove all the burdens of nature and mortality imposed as a condition of life here, He cannot remove those voluntarily assumed by wrong choice while living here (Mosiah 16:8–13).

The balance between necessary experience and accountability is maintained. Through Christ are all things made possible.

OCTOBER 4, 2010

3 Nephi 12:5

“And blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

This earth abides by a Celestial Law (D&C 88:25). Therefore, it is destined to become a Celestial Kingdom because it will be sanctified by a Celestial Law (D&C 88:25–29). The destiny of the earth is glory (D&C 84:101). Therefore, to “inherit the earth” is to inherit a Celestial Glory.

Since this is so, you need to understand the definition of “meekness.” Elder Hales made these remarks about “meekness” in General Conference: “To be meek, as defined in Webster’s dictionary, is ‘manifesting patience and longsuffering: enduring injury without resentment.’ Meekness is not weakness. It is a badge of Christian courage.” (“Christian Courage: The Price of Discipleship”, October 2008 General Conference, Elder Robert D. Hales).

I’ve given another explanation in *Beloved Enos*. There I explained it is necessary to be meek first before being trusted with

great power. The power to seal on earth and in heaven is something which cannot be handled apart from meekness. Without meekness a man cannot be trusted with such a power. When Enos used the power, he did so meekly. He asked rather than pronounced. He petitioned rather than decreed. Though the Lord would hearken to his words, he refrained from acting.

This is because the proper way to use such authority is only and strictly in conformity with the Lord's will. The reason Nephi received the authority was because he was meek. The account of the conferral is also the account of his qualification:

Blessed art thou, Nephi, for those things which thou hast done; for I have beheld how thou hast with unweariness declared the word, which I have given unto thee, unto this people. And thou hast not feared them, and hast not sought thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments. And now, because thou hast done this with such unweariness, behold, I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will. Behold, thou art Nephi, and I am God. Behold, I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels, that ye shall have power over this people, and shall smite the earth with famine, and with pestilence, and destruction, according to the wickedness of this people. Behold, I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and thus shall ye have power among this people. And thus, if ye shall say unto this temple it shall be rent in twain, it shall be done. And if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou cast down and become

smooth, it shall be done. And behold, if ye shall say that God shall smite this people, it shall come to pass. And now behold, I command you, that ye shall go and declare unto this people, that thus saith the Lord God, who is the Almighty: Except ye repent ye shall be smitten, even unto destruction. (Helaman 10:4–11)

This is meekness. First, Nephi had conducted his life meekly. He did not fear others. He was not afraid to lose his standing, even his life. He kept God's commandments to him above all else. He possessed an iron will, his face like flint, unwilling to waiver from what the Lord would have him say and do. He could not be tempted to betray the Lord's will. Therefore, the Lord knew by the way Nephi lived his life that he would "not ask that which is contrary to [the Lord's] will." Never.

Therefore, when the Lord had tried him and determined he was willing to serve Him at all costs, he qualifies to receive trust from God. That trust allows the Lord to confer upon the man great power (See also *TPJS* p. 150:

After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, is baptized for the remission of his sins, and receives the Holy Ghost (by the laying on of hands), which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness and living by every word of God. The Lord will soon say unto him, 'Son, thou shalt be exalted.' When the Lord has thoroughly proved him and finds that the man is determined to serve him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and election made sure).

Meekness is required to qualify for great power. And you know a man is meek when, having great power, he uses it strictly in conformity with the Lord's will; never varying from the Lord's

command, and never pursuing his own agenda. This kind of meekness in men is a rare thing. Nephi, after receiving that power, was instructed that he was to deliver the Lord's message: "thus saith the Lord God, who is Almighty: Except ye repent ye shall be smitten, even unto destruction." It is the Lord's judgment. It is a meek man who delivers it. But such judgments only come after the Lord has a meek soul upon whom He can place this trust. For He has covenanted to always first employ such a servant before imposing judgments upon mankind (Amos 3:7).

Therefore, when the Lord teaches the "meek shall inherit the earth" it is a statement which includes exaltation for the meek. It is one of the Lord's deepest teachings, and most profound descriptions of those who will be exalted and why.

OCTOBER 5, 2010

3 Nephi 12:6

"And blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost."

This is not about hunger or poverty. This is about fasting and seeking after righteousness.

You qualify for this blessing by hungering "after righteousness." You qualify by thirsting "after righteousness." In other words, you receive the Holy Ghost in proportion to the hunger and thirst you display to receiving it.

Fasting is a promised means for increasing the Holy Ghost in your life. We read this about Alma when he served as High Priest over the church:

And this is not all. Do ye not suppose that I know of these things myself? Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things

whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety? Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me. And moreover, I say unto you that it has thus been revealed unto me, that the words which have been spoken by our fathers are true, even so according to the spirit of prophecy which is in me, which is also by the manifestation of the Spirit of God. (Alma 5:45-47)

Fasting and praying opens the Spirit. It allows you to know a matter through the power of the Holy Ghost. Again, we read this about the Sons of Mosiah who were completing their service as missionaries:

...Alma did rejoice exceedingly to see his brethren; and what added more to his joy, they were still his brethren in the Lord; yea, and they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God. But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God. (Alma 17:2-3)

They not only searched the scriptures, but they also spent time praying and fasting, that they might show God their earnest commitment to know the truth. The result was the “spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation.” Or, in other words, they were filled with the Holy Ghost.

The Lord speaks in simple formulas. They work; when tried in sincerity, acting no hypocrisy, with real intent, they work. Half-hearted efforts are not so effective. But when a soul, any soul, hungers and thirsts after righteousness, they are filled with the Holy Ghost.

This sometimes presents a problem for those who have medical conditions which prevent them from fasting. In *The Second Comforter*, I've suggested there are other ways to subordinate the desires of the flesh as a way to "hunger and thirst" while keeping medical needs satisfied. Reducing calories, or doing without some other thing as a form of "fasting" can be substituted. The decision would be between you and the Lord, but there are always ways provided for meeting what the Lord asks, including fasting by those who are medically unable (1 Nephi 3:7).

This sermon is a blue-print of the Lord's new charter for mankind. It is the new, higher way of living. It is intended to result in a new spiritual life for those willing to live it. Therefore you should not dismiss "hunger and thirst for righteousness" as something trivial. If you are among those who does not believe the Lord speaks with them, take these invitations from the Lord seriously. They are designed to reconnect you with God. They have the power to accomplish it.

Also, in the case of the Sons of Mosiah, there was actual "power" which came through this means. These missionaries could teach "with power and authority of God" because of their fasting, prayer and study of scripture.

OCTOBER 5, 2010

3 Nephi 12:7

“And blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”

The standard applied to us is the standard we apply to others. This is repeatedly set out in scripture:

Alma teaching his son Corianton recorded:

Therefore, my son, see that you are merciful unto your brethren; deal justly, judge righteously, and do good continually; and if ye do all these things then shall ye receive your reward; yea, ye shall have mercy restored unto you again; ye shall have justice restored unto you again; ye shall have a righteous judgment restored unto you again; and ye shall have good rewarded unto you again. For that which ye do send out shall return unto you again, and be restored; therefore, the word restoration more fully condemneth the sinner, and justifieth him not at all. (Alma 41:14–15)

Moroni’s final discussion about the Gospel included these words:

And now, my brethren, seeing that ye know the light by which ye may judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged. (Moroni 7:18)

Peter asked a practical question about the extent of forgiving others. He wanted a mathematical limit to be set. The Lord, however, raised the limit beyond an ability to reasonably count: *“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven”* (Matt. 18:21–22).

There are others. I'd commend the chapter on the Atonement in *Come, Let Us Adore Him* for a more complete explanation of this doctrine.

If you want mercy from the Lord, you must give it to your fellow man. If you do not show mercy to your fellow man, the Lord cannot provide it to you. There is a law which binds the Lord to the same standard you set for yourself. It is an irrevocable law. Therefore, the Lord teaches us to show mercy so that we might merit mercy. We are the final beneficiaries of all the mercy we show to others.

It really is true that "what you send out shall return unto you again," to quote Alma. This is called "karma" in another faith. It is a true principle. Perhaps it operates within an larger time frame than just this life, but it operates, nonetheless. Alma knew the truth and was teaching it to his son.

It was Laban's judgment of Nephi and his brothers that got him killed. I've discussed this in *The Second Comforter*. It was his decision that a robber was worthy of death (1 Nephi 3:13) which sealed his fate. For when he became a robber (1 Nephi 3:25), then the Lord was free to show him the same judgment he had rendered (1 Nephi 4:11). Sometimes what you send out returns to you again in this life.

OCTOBER 6, 2010

3 Nephi 12:8

"And blessed are all the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

This is a remarkable promise. Would you like to see God? Then first purify your heart.

Notice this is not just ritual purity, which had been the focus of the Law of Moses. Christ is replacing earlier ritual based purity with internal purity.

He speaks about the heart, rather than the hands and feet. Christ is speaking about beholding God, unlike the retreat Israel took from the offered opportunity at Sinai (See D&C 84:22–25). He is returning to the time of Moses, when a higher way might have been chosen.

Purity of the heart is a borrowed benefit from the Savior. Man cannot become clean before God without the necessary offering of a sacrifice. The Law of Moses taught this, but Christ would actually bring it to pass (See, e.g., Alma 34:36).

Christ's atonement cleanses us (Alma 13:11; Ether 13:10).

When we repent we turn to Christ and listen to and follow Him. Until then, we are not even facing the right direction in life.

Some reminders of how the heart may be purified:

- Let virtue constantly prevail in your thoughts (D&C 121:45).
- Pray to the Father with a devoted heart (Moroni 7:48).
- Repent and call upon God with a contrite spirit, asking the atonement to be applied to your sins (Mosiah 4:2).
- Fast and pray often, that you may become humble (Helaman 3:35).
- Follow what light you have to receive more light, until you have the “perfect day” in which you are a vessel of light (D&C 50:24; D&C 93:28).

It is also interesting that what must be “pure” is the “heart.” There are so many other things one might measure. But what the Lord looks upon to determine purity is the “heart.”

I've said that there is almost nothing about us that can become perfect in this life. The only thing that can approach perfection, however, is our intent. We can mean to follow God at all times. Even if the dilemmas of life make it impossible to actually do so, we can still intend to follow Him. We may not even know if what we are doing pleases Him, or how to resolve conflicting interests or commandments. We may even be making a mistake, but if our intent is right, our hearts may be pure.

This is also one of the reasons we cannot judge another. They may be weak, foolish and error prone, but if they intend to be doing the right then God alone can measure their heart and decide whether they are approved. It would take a God to know if the person's life, training, understanding and intent are pure before Him. I suspect there are those we look upon as deluded and even evil but the Lord views them with compassion and understanding. He may find their hearts to be perfect even before the heart of the proud who claim they have and follow the truth. Though a person may misunderstand a great deal, still if they have love for their fellow man, relieve suffering where they can, give patience to the foolish and water to the thirsty, they may be perfect before God (Luke 18:9-14).

There are so many illusions here. Some who are regarded as high and lifted up by God, temperate in their conduct, studying how they are seen by others before acting; are in fact wretched, miserable, poor and naked (Rev. 3:14-17). I say with authority that there are some regarded as the very chiefest of the righteous among the Latter-day Saints who are before God wretched, miserable, poor and naked. They cannot survive even a glance from His all seeing eye. Yet they pretend they share in His vision, when they do not.

How few hearts are pure before God. How rare a thing it is to contemplate such a person. How few we produce in this restoration of the Gospel. We remain as a people too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending to be called of God. No wonder we stumble and fall backward and many are taken in snares (Isa. 8:11–17).

OCTOBER 6, 2010

3 Nephi 12:9

“And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.”

More often than not those who are “peacemakers” will be abused. They will at least have to endure aggression and give a soft word in return (Prov. 15:1). There will be no end to the peace which comes from Christ because there was no end to the suffering He was willing to endure (Isa. 9:7).

When we hearken to the Lord’s commandments we have peace like a river flowing (Isa. 48:18). This is because the Lord will fight for you, and you can hold your peace (Exo. 14:14). The Lord will fight Zion’s battles (D&C 105:14).

When a man is right before God, even his enemies are at peace with him (Prov. 16:7). At least until his time comes and his mission is completed (D&C 122:9; John 19:10–11).

When the Lord was taken with violence and crucified, He was at peace (Luke 23:24). He purchased peace through what He suffered. He alone can share that with all (Isa. 53:5).

Through Him, the “peacemakers” have found this peace. This is why they have become His “children” for He has begotten them (Mosiah 27:25).

In a world of violence and abuse, it is peace we seek. But that peace comes only to the children of God and only because they

know they are the children of God. At their rebirth, they are at rest from the cares of this dreary world, and informed by a better promise of things to come (See Alma 13:29, and our earlier discussion about that verse; see Moroni 7:3).

Those who bring peace bring hope to this world. This world is filled with tribulation, but the Lord has overcome this world (John 16:33). Many have experienced this peace, become children of God, and then been persecuted, hated, reviled and killed (Hebrews 11:33–35).

Peace is a gift from Christ, and His peace is for this world and for the world to come (John 14:27). But the promise of triumph is hereafter, when the world can no longer make any claim upon a child of God (D&C 122:4 and 135:6–7).

Though a man may declare peace, the world will not be at peace until the Lord slays the wicked (Rev. 19:11–16). Peace, as all other sacred things in our day, must be internal. We live in a day of overwhelming ignorance, foolishness and wickedness. It is not possible to obtain peace except on the terms which allow it. If you live those, you will have peace. But the world will not live them with you.

Patrick Henry put the problem of peace in this world into immortal words:

Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace—but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

The war remains today, but now it is against all righteousness. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph. 6:12). Elder Packer cannot even preach a sermon to a congregation of Saints belonging to a church over which he holds office without the anger and vilification of the homosexual community and others being aroused.

If you are to find peace, and to become a peacemaker here, then it is through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The world will not know peace again until He returns. To be a child of God and know peace is, in our day, to cry repentance and to bring others to Christ.

OCTOBER 7, 2010

3 Nephi 12:10

“And blessed are all they who are persecuted for my name’s sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

It is not just persecution, but persecution “for [His] name’s sake” that makes you blessed. When you are doing what you should for His name’s sake, you are likely to provoke persecution. He will later explain this is almost inevitable. It won’t be because you are provoking it by your obnoxious behavior. It is because people will question your sincerity and commitment. The world expects hypocrites. They regard everyone with suspicion. And, let’s face it, most charlatans adopt religion as one of their cloaks. We’ll get to that a little further into this sermon from the Lord.

The kind of persecution which produces the “kingdom of heaven” is, of course, martyrdom. Originally the word “martyr” meant witness, but so many of the early Christian witnesses were killed that it came to have the modern meaning, that is one who dies for their faith.

Martyrs were seen in John's vision below the altar of God (Rev. 6:9). This of course means they were holy because of their sacrifice. The heavenly altar being a symbol of them having shed their blood as witnesses. Joseph Smith and Hyrum joined those who qualified for such a witness (D&C 135:7).

Zenos, author of the Olive Tree allegory (Jacob 5:1), prophet of the three days of darkness upon the isles of the sea (1 Ne. 19:10), witness of the Lord's burial in a sepulcher (1 Ne. 19:10) seven centuries before His birth, was slain for his testimony (Helaman 8:19).

Stephen was killed for his testimony but clearly inherited the kingdom of heaven (Acts 7:55-59).

There are many others, including Able, Isaiah, Peter, Paul and Abinadi.

Blessed are those who are willing to endure persecution for His name's sake. For they are those who are willing develop faith which cannot be obtained in any other way. It is through the sacrifice of all things that faith necessary for salvation is developed. Read again the post on Lecture 6 of *The Lectures on Faith* on April 21, 2010.

Beginning with faith to follow Him, then enduring persecution as a result, to offering the sacrifice necessary to develop faith, then inheriting the kingdom of heaven, the Gospel of Christ is one great whole.

Sometimes we bring persecution upon ourselves because we are unwise. The Lord will address that. We are to take offenses, but not give them. When we unwisely give offenses and cause persecution, that is not for His name's sake. There is a balance between wisdom and righteousness.

As an aside on the subject of persecution I wanted to add this:

I've thought about Elder Packer's talk and the homosexual community's reaction to it. Elder Packer was right, and he was

addressing a community of believers who look to him for teachings like the ones given in that talk. Nobody ought to take offense at that. If you can prevent Elder Packer's teaching in that setting, then you can invade and stop talk in any setting on any subject.

However, nothing in that talk would encourage or justify invading the privacy and causing the shame visited upon the Rutgers University student who committed suicide. The invasion of his privacy was cruel, the act of publicizing it was a calculated act of terrible insult. His grief, despair and subsequent suicide are the fault of those who invaded his privacy and exposed his weakness. It was wrong. Elder Packer's talk was to benefit a community of believers, not to persecute an audience of unbelievers.

I have friends I ride Harley's with who have absolutely no interest in Mormonism. One of my dear friends hates my church, thinks it barbaric and unenlightened. But that does not stop our mutual friendship nor define the areas about which we find common ground. Another person's differing views are only offensive when they demand I accede to them. If they will suspend judgment against me because of my faith, I am willing to suspend judgment against them because of theirs. This ought to define the boundaries of conduct, not militant demands for conceding the argument on questions of faith and belief. I can believe that my friend's lifestyle is corrupt and even immoral. But so long as he does not expect me to join him, I am pleased to be a friend, share what we have in common, and leave our differences for polite disagreement.

There are some sins I simply do not understand. But if my friendship may help someone to understand my faith, then I would sooner be friends with someone of another faith than one of my own. I do not expect many people to accept what I believe. In fact, I think there are very few fellow Latter-day Saints who believe or

understand the Gospel as I do. If I were to limit my friends to those with whom I have everything in common, then my wife and children alone would be my friends.

Elder Packer should have the right to speak and preach the truth as he understands it. Those who would censor him are wrong.

If he is mistaken, then point out his error in a kindly way and seek to reclaim him. But condemning, protesting and attacking only shows intolerance and coercion which all of us have a responsibility to resist and condemn. It is wrong when the homosexual community does it, and it is wrong when the church does it. Win the argument with persuasion and strong reasoning. Yelling, condemning and protesting only attempts to silence thought, not to provoke it into correct understanding.

Now I'm off topic...

OCTOBER 7, 2010

3 Nephi 12:11–12

And blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake; For ye shall have great joy and be exceedingly glad, for great shall be your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you.

If your actions are misjudged, that is only normal. There have been charlatans using religion to cloak their evil deeds from the beginning of time. They are so widespread, so often exposed for what they really are, that humanity has a legitimate skepticism about those who come in the name of the Lord.

From Jimmy Swaggart's prostitutes to Ted Haggard's homosexual encounters, the evangelical world has been rocked by the

sexual misconduct of ministers. Catholic priesthood sexual abuse has been so widespread that there is a whole legal industry devoted to bringing and defending claims from victims of that abuse. The LDS Church has quietly settled a number of claims on both coasts and adjusted how membership records are documented and what precautions are taken when calling a man to teach in Primary because of sexual misconduct and associated legal claims.

The Burt Lancaster film *Elmer Gantry* was based on the Sinclair Lewis novel and illustrated the life and deeds of a false prophet. Indeed, the term “prophet” is rarely used in modern vernacular outside of LDS circles unless coupled with the term “false.” “False prophet” is expected. What is unexpected is the contrary.

So when first reactions are taken, it will always be to sneer, to jeer, to mock and to suspect those who come in the name of the Lord. They are right to do that. Everyone OUGHT to question motives. Everyone OUGHT to think you’re a fraud. They should expect you are like all those others in whom society trusted. No one wants to follow Jim Jones to their death, drinking strychnine laced Kool-Aid in another mass-suicide. That has happened too often already. Indeed, the fruits of such false prophets have been so devastating, so evil, so wrong in spirit and result that only a fool would be eager to trust you even should you have a pure heart and a true message.

The first reaction should be skepticism which will result in an attempt to measure your sincerity. Until you’ve been tested by the world, there is no reason for the world to believe anything you have to say. They will revile you, thinking you just another fraud. They will persecute you as if a charlatan, though you are His disciple. They will say all manner of evil against you falsely, all the while thinking they are only giving you what you deserve.

This is how the world decides if you are following Him. They have seen and heard no end of those who have claimed to follow Him, and you are no different in their eyes. That is, until you have actually followed Him; borne their criticism, returned good for evil, and shown how devoted you are in fact, as Christ will address in coming verses. When you have proven your devotion, then some few will soften their hearts. Others will remain unwilling to admit the truth, even when it is apparent you are His.

This is the way in which Christ lived His life. These teachings are an explanation of Him. And, in turn, it is also an explanation of the lives of any who follow Him. To follow Him, and to learn of His ways always requires experiencing some of what He experienced. While He assumed a full measure of these teachings, we are required to experience some of what He did only to allow us to understand Him. But these teachings are meant to be lived. They are meant to be applied and tested. If you test them, you will discover Him through them.

You will also come to know and understand the prophets who went before. This is a timeless brotherhood. Some of them invariably also come to succor their fellow Saint. This is always the same when the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is lived on the earth.

OCTOBER 8, 2010

3 Nephi 12:13

Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the salt of the earth; but if the salt shall lose its savor wherewith shall the earth be salted? The salt shall be thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.

Salt is a preservative, but in this case it is for the culinary benefit. It produces “savor.” That is, the taste of the whole is affected by the presence of a little.

You don’t need much to preserve the whole. Abraham’s negotiation to preserve Sodom demonstrated that only a little of the “salt” is required for an entire population to receive the Lord’s blessings (Genesis 18:17–33). *Progress* is enough in our day (Luke 13:30). As long as the wheat is still growing, it is enough.

How can salt “lose its savor” except through contamination or impurities? When that is lost, the salt cannot preserve. There is no remaining savor. Then the salt is nothing more than common dirt, to be cast aside and trodden under foot.

This is the gentile predicament in the last days. They will, of course, lose their savor. They will reject the fullness offered to them (3 Nephi 16:10). When they do, they will be torn apart and trodden under foot (3 Nephi 20:16; 3 Nephi 21:12).

Notice it is the Lord who “gives unto you to be the salt of the earth.” This condition is a gift from God. Through repentance, or turning to Him, you can receive this. Without repentance you cannot become the salt.

There are no private lives. Every life counts. Your private devotions are more important than your public notice. The salt which preserves may be unknown, likely is unknown, to most people. But if you are the salt, then your private life of devotion to the Lord is saving the lives of many others. The angels want to begin the harvest. They are impatient to begin reaping and cutting down the wicked now (D&C 86:5). There is only time given because of a few who deserve more time to grow in faith before the harvest begins (D&C 86:6–7). Your growth is all that is keeping the harvest from

beginning now. Therefore, how you proceed has consequences far beyond your own life.

When wheat is ripe it will be protected. When tares are ripe they will be burned. But the tender plants worthy of preservation are the only ones allowed more time (D&C 86:4). I advocate for them and realize how tenuous a position humanity itself is in at present. But you are the ones in the balance and for whom time is granted. How much longer no one knows, but your sins are not private. Your repentance is critical to all of creation. Do not think your life is your own. All of us have a share in your good works.

Do not think the Savior's words are without cosmic significance. I define "cosmic" to include the cosmos or organized creation here. Even the earth itself longs to be freed from the burden of sin upon her face (Moses 7:48). It is the Lord alone who has granted you time to repent. This current state of the creation we live is affected by the promise held in those who are repenting. As soon as that hope ends, and no further repentance is to occur, then the harvest will begin. Therefore, becoming salt has never been so important as it now is.

OCTOBER 8, 2010

3 Nephi 12:14–16

Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the light of this people. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Behold, do men light a candle and put it under a bushel? Nay, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house; Therefore let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Here, again, is a reference to Zion. Zion will be that city upon a hill which cannot be hidden. It will tower over the landscape,

elevated both physically and spiritually. It will be the mountain of the Lord in the top of the mountains (Isa. 2:2–3). He will dwell there (2 Nephi 14:5; D&C 76:66; 84:2). I’ve already addressed this and won’t repeat it again here.

What is the “light” which you are to be to “this people?” Who are “this people?” What is to be a “light of this people?”

If you have light, how is it to be shared? Within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints the obligation to preach, teach, exhort and expound is imposed upon everyone having the office of Priest and above (D&C 20:46). Members of both sexes were commanded in 1832 to teach one another the doctrines of the Gospel (D&C 88:77). If you have light and refuse to share it with others, are you putting a candle under a bushel?

How do you let the light you have shine through “good works?” That is how it is supposed to be shown. Christ’s teaching explains that people are to see your “good works” as the means for your light to shine. How would that be accomplished?

Most interesting of all is that upon seeing your good works, the glory is to be given “your Father who is in heaven.” How would your works reflect on Him rather than on yourself? What would you need to do in order for those benefited by your efforts to turn their thanks to God, rather than to you?

If you were interested in your good works reflecting credit to “your Father who is in heaven” how many monuments would you want built to your memory? How many buildings would you want named after you? How many statutes would you want carved of your likeness and put on display for men to admire?

The light should point to the Lord, who can save. It is nevertheless the case that some have become subjects of adoration or veneration despite their inability to save anyone. Those who are

distracted from following the Lord become Telesstial and continue to suffer the deaths of false religion (D&C 76:99–101). These are no better than the liars, adulterers and whoremongers (D&C 76:103–104). They became these vessels of God's wrath because they worshiped men, rather than God. If, therefore, prophets such as Moses, Elias, John, Peter and Enoch have such followers despite preaching that salvation is in Christ alone, then how much worse is it for a man to intentionally cultivate adoration for himself? How much worse is it to deliberately invite this error?

What steps should you take to make certain there are no thunderous celebrations broadcast on television on your birthdays? How quick would you be to reaffirm you are nothing and no-one, and salvation is through Christ and not a man? How clear would you be about your own weakness, foolishness and inability to save another? How often would you point to the Lord who alone can save?

It is not enough to be religious. Hell will be filled with the religious. It is not enough to proclaim you have light if you do not live according to its principles. The sermon we are looking at now is the Lord's careful formulation of the principles which will save. He delivered it often during His mortal ministry. When He was resurrected and ministered to lost sheep, including the Nephites, He delivered the same address to them all.

Above all other sources of information about the path back to God, this is the greatest message of all. Within it are the very steps that are required for life and salvation, spoken by the author of salvation.

OCTOBER 9, 2010

3 Nephi 12:17–18

Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil; For verily I say unto you, one jot nor one tittle hath not passed away from the law, but in me it hath all been fulfilled.

The Lord sends ministers with a commission to transition from one dispensation of the Gospel to another. From Adam until Enoch there was an order, but with Enoch that order changed. Wickedness and rebellion required a new approach, and Enoch was commissioned to bring it about (Moses 6:32–34). Mankind was in such a state of rebellion that their time was to end. Enoch gathered together people upon a high mountain where he established a city which would survive the destruction by becoming Zion (Moses 7:17–21).

Soon after Enoch was called, the Lord called another, giving him also a dispensation of the Gospel. He, however, was to remain on the earth (Moses 7:42–43; Genesis 6:12–14). With him a new covenant was made (Genesis 9:8–9).

Both Enoch and Noah were contemporaries, but each had been given a dispensation of the Gospel. The covenant with Enoch did not disannul the covenant with Adam. Nor did the covenant with Noah contradict the covenant with Enoch.

Abraham also received a dispensation of the Gospel (Abr. 2:8–12; Moses also: Moses 1:3–4).

Christ also received a dispensation of the Gospel in the same manner as all those who went before (Matt. 4:11; Matt. 17:1–3).

Christ fulfilled all the law. Not merely the Law of Moses, which indeed pointed to Him (Galatians 3:24), but also every part of the

Gospel from Adam to Christ's earthly ministry (Jacob 4:4; also 7:11). All have testified of Him and He has completed His ministry in strict conformity with all that was foreshadowed, all that was prophesied, all that was anticipated of Him. Just how completely He did this is not possible to understand with the current state of our scriptures. But He did fulfill all righteousness, complete every assignment, accomplish every task and live in conformity with every prophesy concerning Him.

Not one matter respecting Him was left undone. From His hair to His feet, all that was foreshadowed or prophesied was done by Him. He turned not His face from those who spit at Him (Isa. 50:6; Matt. 26:57). He let Himself be shorn as a sheep and kept silent as it was done (Isa. 53:7).

He inherited Kingship, but deferred His reign to another time (John 18:36).

He fulfilled, but did not destroy. In this He was like those whom He sent before to complete and open anew. In one hinge point of history a dispensation closes and another opens. Enoch and Noah, Abraham and Moses were all commissioned to open and close. For the Lord, however, He divided the spoil. He sent John to close (D&C 84:27–28), leaving it to Himself to open (John 8:12). Mankind cannot measure humility or meekness, but in Christ was a fullness of both.

Men in their insecurity and vanity want honors, awards, recognition and fame. The Lord has hidden from us most of what He did, most of what He is. He is content to confine the record of His doings to the minimum necessary for our understanding so we may have faith in Him. But the extent of His doings mankind has yet to find out (D&C 76:2). This is more than a tribute to Him. He has understated His accomplishments. He has hidden

His glory from us. He has made less of Himself, that we may not be unable to identify with Him. He is meeker and more humble than mankind understands.

He can be trusted with all power because He will never abuse it (Matt. 28:18). He will use it to serve others (Luke 22:27).

In Christ was all fulfilled. In Him is all fulfilled. In Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9). He is the light who came to His own, but we will not receive Him (John 1:10–11).

He was, He is, and He has risen. Above all others and all else, He has risen. And because of this He has made it possible for others also to rise. Everything He has done was in fulfillment of the law, pointing for us the way. Now it is only left for us to follow, trusting in Him.

OCTOBER 10, 2010

3 Nephi 12:19

And behold, I have given you the law and the commandments of my Father, that ye shall believe in me, and that ye shall repent of your sins, and come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Behold, ye have the commandments before you, and the law is fulfilled.

This hearkens back to the doctrine of Christ given preliminarily to the audience. Repent. Be baptized. Receive the Holy Ghost. These commandments are the foundation upon which all else is to be built.

To all that He explained before, He has added, “repent of your sins, and come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit.” Repenting will be accompanied by a broken heart and contrite spirit. When you turn to Him and see clearly for the first time how dark

your ways have been, it should break your heart. You should realize how desperately you stand in need of His grace to cover you, lift you, and heal you. You can then appreciate the great gulf between you and Him (Moses 1:10).

If you had to bear your sins into His presence it would make you burn with regret and fear (Mormon 9:3–5). Your own heart must break.

When you behold how little you have to offer Him, your spirit becomes contrite. He offers everything. And we can contribute nothing but our cooperation. And we still reluctantly give that, or if we give a little of our own cooperation we think we have given something significant. We have not. Indeed, we cannot (Mosiah 2:20–21). He honors us if He permits us to assist. We should proceed with alacrity when given the chance to serve.

How patiently He has proceeded with teaching us all. We have the law, we have the commandments. Still we hesitate. Still He invites and reminds us: Repent. Come to Him. Do what was commanded. The law is fulfilled, and He is its fulfillment. Look to Him and be saved.

The heart that will not break does not understand the predicament we live in. The proud spirit is foolish and blind. Our perilous state is such that we can forfeit all that we have ever been by refusing Christ's invitation to repent and turn again to Him.

But we still hesitate. We still hold back.

He really can save you. He has that power. He holds those keys. Even death and hell are conquered by Him (Mosiah 15:7–9). But His victory cannot become ours unless we repent and turn again to Him.

Think of those you have lost to the grave. All those living will likewise be lost unless we come to Christ. We have hope only in Him.

It seems too simple a thing to achieve so great a result. It has always been like that (1 Nephi 17:41). Look to Him and be saved. Keep His commandments. Repent. He can and will lead you from wherever you find yourself at present back into the light. It really does not matter what foolish traps you have surrounding you. So soon as you turn to face Him, He will direct you back safely. Repent and keep His commandments and they will bring you to Him.

OCTOBER 11, 2010

3 Nephi 12:20

“Therefore come unto me and be ye saved; for verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

There goes the argument that all you need do to be saved is “confess Jesus.” It doesn’t work that way. You must keep His commandments. If you don’t, then “ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” It is not possible to “come unto [Him]” and “be saved” without also keeping His commandments. It is the only true measure of coming to Him. And “except ye shall keep [His] commandments... ye can in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Entry is barred unless you follow Him. If He needed baptism to enter, then clearly we do as well (2 Nephi 31:5).

There is no space between faith in Christ and behavior evidencing that faith. There is no dichotomy between “grace” and “works” because it is by our conduct we merit grace. Christ received grace by the things He did (D&C 93:11–14). The manner by which we receive grace is through keeping His commandments (D&C 93:19–20).

Grace, or power to move closer to God, is also an increase of light. Light grows only as you move closer to it. But you have choice, and must elect to move closer to the light (D&C 93:27–28; D&C 50:23–25). The great proof text for salvation by confession of faith alone is Romans 10:9: *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”* This is offered as if Paul had priority over Christ, if the two conflict. However, Paul does not conflict, for in the same letter he teaches:

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. (Romans 6:16–17)

Righteousness comes by obedience. Obedience requires action. Without conforming conduct to the Lord’s commandments, it is impossible to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Paul understood this, and lived his life accordingly. Who worked more than Paul to spread the Gospel? If his life was filled with works from the time of his conversion to the time of his martyrdom, then does not his example prove the necessity of obedience to the Lord’s commandments? How then are his words twisted to mean confession alone, without obedience, can save? Even if someone were mistaken and in good faith sincerely believed Paul to justify salvation by confession alone, how did Paul become greater than Christ?

The Lord’s instructions are clear and obedience to His and the Father’s commandments are a threshold requirement for salvation. Without obedience to them you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

Grace is a gift, but the gift must be received. Only those willing to “receive” it, merit grace (D&C 88:32–35). It is “received” in the way the Lord ordained and in no other way (D&C 130:21).

Only the deceived or the wicked would contradict the Lord’s teaching that “except ye keep [His] commandments” then “ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Yet there are those who both make this claim in the various Protestant denominations, and are trying to advance this position into the LDS faith, as well. We would be better served by forgetting how to make ourselves seem more Protestant, and instead accepting and teaching what Christ established as the sole basis for entering the kingdom of heaven.

OCTOBER 11, 2010

3 Nephi 12:21–22

Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, and it is also written before you, that thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment of God; But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of his judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Christ is elevating the Law of Moses by raising the expectation for human conduct. He moves from mere outward conduct into the inner soul of the man. You are not doing as you should if all you do is refrain from killing. Instead, you need to remove anger.

The prior obligation (“said by them of old”) focused only on your conduct, now it is your motivation.

You can judge another based-on conduct. They either do or do not do something. The conduct is observable, and therefore capable of being judged. Now, however, Christ moves the battleground

inside a person. It is now in the heart. On such terrain as that, man is incapable of knowing, and therefore, of judging.

With anything involving truth and rules of conduct, there are always some reasons to depart from the rule. Christ departed from this rule. So we must consider the departures to understand the rule.

First, however, we need to know and understand the rule. The “judgment” which you are “in danger of” by being angry with your brother is not your brother’s anger, but God’s. The judgment of God is provoked by those who are angry with their brother.

We are not to be angry with our brother because that is the beginning of a whole sequence of events, the culmination of which may be killing. Before killing, however, there are other troubles and offenses along the way. Anger leads to abuse. It leads to discourtesy, dishonesty, and cheating. It justifies miserable conduct because you think it right to give offenses to another. It corrodes relationships and makes society sick.

If you can prevent this at the heart, you can heal society. Refrain from letting offenses turn into anger. Deal with them inside, showing forgiveness and compassion. He will stress this further in subsequent verses.

The terms “Raca” and “fool” are derisive names. Christ is saying that applying derisive names to others is wrong, even damning. He is not preventing you from identifying foolishness. He often spoke of fools and foolishness (See, e.g., Matt. 23:17, 19; Matt. 25:2–8; Luke 12:20; Luke 24:25—after His resurrection; and 2 Nephi 29:4, 6). He would even use the term “foolish” in this same sermon (3 Nephi 14:26). So it is not at all inappropriate to use the term “fool” or “foolish” when discussing foolishness. What is wrong it to regard your fellow man with derision and use terms of derision to describe them.

Even with this rue of conduct, however, Christ applied a derisive term to King Herod. He called him “that fox.” (Luke 13:31–32). This was a term of derision, but appropriately applied to a wicked king meriting derision. He was corrupt, evil and vile. Therefore, with respect to Herod, Christ’s example allows for terms of derision to be appropriately applied to those who merit them. Christ was able to weigh the heart. For Him to make that conclusion was a matter of Divine prerogative. I suppose that we are equally entitled to apply such terms of judgment and condemnation, including terms of derision, if we obtain them by inspiration from the Lord. That is, if the Lord inspires such a term of derision to be used, then it would be appropriate despite this verse. For whatever we do, even if sharpness is involved, is appropriate when moved upon by the Holy Ghost (D&C 121:43). So, also, even killing another can be done when the Lord is the one deciding life and death (1 Nephi 4:10–13).

The tendency is to always think the exceptions allow your anger. I would suspect the best approach is to do as Nephi did. That is, insist upon following the one standard of conduct and always refrain. Always. Then, if the Lord is going to have it otherwise, leave it to the Lord to make that insistence so dramatic, so undeniable, so compelling, that you know it is the Lord’s judgment and not your own. Removing anger from the heart is a difficult enough challenge to last the rest of your life. To start thinking any passing offense justifies an exception because it may be “inspired” is the way of a fool. Do as Christ bids you to do in this sermon. If He wants a different approach, you ought to require that to be made absolutely clear by Him before you depart from this standard.

Remember how often great souls have interceded for their fellow man. I’ve written about that so often in my books I won’t repeat it again. However, intercession for your fellow man, in-

cluding those who give offense to you, is one of the hallmarks of the saved soul. This is who Abraham was, and why he became a friend of God. I've hesitated to even discuss the exceptions to the rule because everyone wants the exceptions to apply to them. No one wants to comply with the rule. The higher way is, however, found in following the rule. It should be an absolute sacrifice, and a painful one at that, for the exception to be applied in your life. If an inspired condemnation is required at your hand and by your voice, then immediately afterwards you should make intercession with the Lord for those condemned. That is the way of those who know the Lord. Those who have been forgiven much—including those who have been forgiven everything—always love much in return (Luke 7:47).

OCTOBER 12, 2010

3 Nephi 12:23–24

Therefore, if ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee— Go thy way unto thy brother, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I will receive you.

Notice the offense is taken by the brother, not by you. It is presumed that you haven't taken offense against him. If he, however, 'hath aught against thee'—meaning that if you have done anything to cause him an offense, you have steps to take.

Notice that your relationship with the Lord comes second, *after* you have made amends with any you have offended.

You can't bring "full purpose of heart" when there is a lingering offense you have not attempted to cure. This kind of mental distraction alters you.

If you realize you've offended someone it likely means you know your conduct has been uncharitable. You did something wrong. You hurt another.

Inventory of your conduct is something to be done before approaching the Lord. If you have offended someone you need to take the steps to free your conscience from it. Only then can you bring "full purpose of heart" in approaching God.

When the heart is right, then the Lord can "receive you." When the heart is not right, you cannot be received.

He's said this before, of course. His doctrine in the preceding chapter required repentance before baptism precisely so you could be right in the heart before the ordinance takes place (3 Nephi 11:23).

Other Book of Mormon writers said the same thing as well:

For behold, God hath said a man being evil cannot do that which is good; for if he offereth a gift, or prayeth unto God, except he shall do it with real intent it profiteth him nothing.... And likewise also is it counted evil unto a man, if he shall pray and not with real intent of heart; yea, and it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such. (Moroni 7:6, 9)

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism—yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel. (2 Nephi 31:13)

“But as oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with real intent, they were forgiven” (Moroni. 6:8).

You bring your whole heart to Him. That He can receive. That He can work with. Less than that, it is not possible for Him to offer you anything. You will invariably reject what He offers. Acting as the hypocrite will neither fool you or Him. Hence Nephi’s counsel in 2 Nephi 31:13 quoted above, and discussed previously in this blog.

OCTOBER 12, 2010

3 Nephi 12:25–26

Agree with thine adversary quickly while thou art in the way with him, lest at any time he shall get thee, and thou shalt be cast into prison. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence until thou hast paid the uttermost senine. And while ye are in prison can ye pay even one senine? Verily, verily, I say unto you, Nay.

This notion of agreeing with your adversaries is difficult for most people. It requires you to submit to what is sometimes unjust demands. He is saying to submit anyway. Do not rebel against the adversaries in life, but accommodate them.

Give to the unjust what they demand, so that they may see your good works and understand there is a higher way. Without your example, they cannot understand.

Retaliation continues the cycles. Someone eventually needs to lay down their just claim for retribution and simply take the injury without returning anything in return. This was what Christ did. He took everyone’s injuries and returned only forgiveness.

Now He asks for His followers to do some of the same. The failure to tolerate injustice can spiral into continuing the conflict,

until there is prison. The prison to fear is not one made by men. But if you are cast into that prison then you cannot come out until you have paid the highest price (D&C 76:84–85, 105–106). It is better to repent because this payment made even God, the greatest of all, to tremble with pain and shrink from the burden (D&C 19:15–18).

It is not possible to pay the price while in prison. The price must be paid by a person while in the flesh (Luke 16:22–26). Any who are consigned to prison dwell in darkness, awaiting deliverance from Him whom they rejected while in the flesh (D&C 138:20–22). They become dependent upon others working to pay the debt on their behalf (D&C 138:33).

The sermon delivered by Christ is the foundation of how man ought to relate to fellow-man. It is the pattern on which it becomes possible to dwell in peace with one another. It is the groundwork for Zion.

We need to look at this sermon as the guideline for changing our internal lives, so we may become a fit and proper resident with others who are Saints. Even Saints will give inadvertent offenses. Even Saints will disappoint one another from time to time. To become “one” in the sense required for redeeming a people and restoring them again to Zion is beyond any person’s reach if they cannot internalize this sermon.

The purpose of this sermon is not to equip you to judge others. It has no use for that. It is designed to change you. You need to become something different, something higher, something more holy. That will require you to reexamine your heart, your motivations, and your thoughts. It will require you to take offenses and deliberately lay them down without retaliation. When you do, you become someone who can live in peace with others. Living in peace with others is the rudimentary beginning of Zion. It will

not culminate in a City set on the hilltop until there is a population worthy of dwelling in the high places, in peace, without poor among them (Moses 7:17–18).

Christ's sermon is not merely a description of what kind of person He is. It is a description of what kind of person will qualify to live with Him (Luke 9:23).

OCTOBER 13, 2010

3 Nephi 12:27–29

Behold, it is written by them of old time, that thou shalt not commit adultery; But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery already in his heart. Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that ye suffer none of these things to enter into your heart;

Here it is again—the heart. It is the intent and not just the act. It is not enough that you stop short of doing the thing commanded in the Law of Moses. Christ is attacking the root cause, the internal trouble which causes the mistakes.

The Law of Moses is not being replaced with a new era of easy grace triggered by confession for salvation. The Head of the new Dispensation, Christ, is instead providing a much higher standard for mankind to adopt in place of carnal commandments.

You must raise your thoughts to a higher level. Sexual appetites and passions must be kept within the bounds the Lord has prescribed. For this new, higher standard, it is not enough to just refrain from immoral acts, but you must purge thoughts. Neither lust of a woman, nor any of “these things” should “enter into your heart.” This uniform standard applies to all: male and female, married or single, without regard to who or what causes your lusts. It is universal.

The raging controversy going on at present over President Packer's last General Conference address entirely misses the point. Whether your sexual attraction is male or female, it is to be confined in thought and deed to the bounds prescribed by the Lord, and the Lord has rather clearly identified the bounds in this sermon.

The heart is where sin begins. So it is the heart which Christ would have us cleanse. All else will follow.

No one knows how formidable an obstacle this is until they have confronted it themselves. Nor can a person who confronts this challenge succeed at the first attempt. C.S. Lewis made such a profound observation on this subject it is worth quoting here:

*No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good. A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find out the strength of the German army by fighting against it, not by giving in. You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down. A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in. We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it: and Christ, because he was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation means—the only complete realist. (CS Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Chapter 11)*

Those who would rather settle into a comfortable enjoyment of their sins find discomfort in being reminded they are wrong. So when President Packer reminds them of this, it is painful, and

they want him to retract his words. It would be better to consider them, for whether he retracts them or not, it will not change the underlying problem of sin. Only by confronting and overcoming sins within us will we ever become people who will be preserved in the coming harvest.

Imagine, if you can, the idea of impurity being a compound which exists within you. A compound that could be identified by the Lord and burned away. Think of it like the fuller's soap or the refiner's fire, where impurity is removed and something pure and clean is left behind (Mal. 3:2–3). To survive that burning purge there must be so little to burn away that the injury from the burn will not threaten life. It is a useful way to examine what is inside you. And a useful way to reconsider your thoughts.

This leads to the final question: What is the difference between the mind and the “heart?” This commandment addresses the “heart” in you. What is the “heart?”

OCTOBER 13, 2010

3 Nephi 12:30

“For it is better that ye should deny yourselves of these things, wherein ye will take up your cross, than that ye should be cast into hell.”

Each person's cross is individual. Carrying “your cross” is not the same as carrying mine. Therefore, when you “deny yourself of these things” what you surrender and what you take up will be “your cross” and never mine.

It is odd how we are able to spot from a distance the weaknesses of others. We have highly acute sensitivities about others' flaws. But we rarely appreciate the crosses they bear.

How hard a burden a man carries when he disciplines himself to rise daily, and work to sacrifice for his family, is not at all the

same across the economic scale. Nor, for that matter, is the daily service carried on by mothers who have deprived themselves of other pursuits to raise sometimes ungrateful children.

But “hell” is where we are cast when we are pained by the regrets of having lived without discipline, having lived selfishly (Mormon 9:4–5). We will stand “naked” before God. All of what we want hidden will be before us, revealed and exposed to view.

The “hell” of it all will be our regret, for we are our own tormentor. The torment of a disappointed mind will be like fire and brimstone to the regretful (*TPJS* p. 357).

Christ is advising us in a kindly way how to prevent that moment of fear, regret and torment. He is telling us how to escape it. These teachings are not a threat addressed at us, but a caution about the future moment when these teachings apply to us all.

It is as if the Lord wants us to know clearly beforehand what we are going to wish we had done instead. Now, in mortality, while we can still change how things will turn out, He is telling us how to accomplish that. In an understatement, He advises: “it is better to deny yourself” than it will be to indulge. You may find it a “cross” as you do, but if you deny yourself now it will let you escape “hell” in the future. It is kindly advice, without a threat. It is a warning about the road you have taken, and guidance on how you can avoid the collision that is coming.

Whatever the “cross” is you take up in your daily effort to live inside the bounds prescribed by the Lord, it will be worth it. By heeding His counsel, you will become someone better and avoid becoming devilish.

The temptations each of us face are unique to the individual. What is universal, however, is the limit placed upon temptations. They are never too great to resist. There is always an escape

provided by the Lord (1 Cor. 10:13). Nor are you given any commandment you cannot obey (1 Nephi 3:7). However, that is not to say temptation is easily overcome. Weakness is our lot (Ether 12:27).

What then are you to make of your cross? If you've tried to deny yourself and failed, does it mean you are hopeless? Is the persistent failure to lift the cross you have been called to bear proof that you are just unable to merit salvation? Does the relentless return to temptation mean you are lost? Are you necessarily doomed because you have not found the escape promised by Paul's writing to the Corinthians?

Life is filled with cycles. When we battle and fail one day, then join the battle again, but fail again; then another, and another and another, what is the use? What do we make of such persistent failure, such continuing weakness? Is the lesson that we are lost? Or is it that we are weak? Weaker than we had ever imagined. Weaker than you could ever suppose man to be (Moses 1:10). Is this evidence that you are doomed? Or is it merely a patient God proving to your utter satisfaction that you are indeed in need of saving grace to rescue you from where you find yourself? Is this the moment when, while filling your belly with husks along with the swine you've descended to accompany, you wake up? (Luke 15:11-17). If you will finally surrender your pride, come forward with a broken heart and real intent, returning to your Father, He will joyfully receive you still (Luke 15:18-24). There is joy in heaven over you when you awaken.

Weakness is nothing, for all are weak. It is a gift, given to break your heart. Your broken heart will qualify you for His company. Whether a leper, an adulteress, a tax collector or a blind man, He

can heal it all. But what He cannot do, and you must alone bring to Him, is that broken heart required for salvation.

William Ernest Henley wrote “Invictus”:

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.
In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.
Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.
It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll.
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

Orson F. Whitney penned the response in “The Soul’s Captain”:

Art thou in truth? Then what of him
Who bought thee with his blood?
Who plunged into devouring seas
And snatched thee from the flood?
Who bore for all our fallen race
What none but him could bear. –
The God who died that man might live,
And endless glory share?
Of what avail thy vaunted strength,

Apart from his vast might?
Pray that his Light may pierce the gloom,
That thou mayest see aright.
Men are as bubbles on the wave,
As leaves upon the tree.
Thou, captain of thy soul, forsooth
Who gave that place to thee?
Free will is thine—free agency
To wield for right or wrong;
But thou must answer unto him
To whom all souls belong.
Bend to the dust that head “unbowed,”
Small part of Life’s great whole!
And see in him, and him alone,
The Captain of thy soul.

We choose. We live with our choices. It is better to deny ourselves and take up our individual crosses.

OCTOBER 14, 2010

3 Nephi 12:31–32

It hath been written, that whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whoso shall marry her who is divorced committeth adultery.

First and foremost, this is a verse dealing with male conduct. The verse is masculine in orientation and word usage, and deals with a male’s prerogative under the law that existed then. So applying this new, higher law, beyond that is not warranted, as will be more clearly seen in the discussion below.

The ease with which a divorce could be granted made the serious nature of the act unappreciated. Today it is still unappreciated. Divorce rates among Latter-day Saints have risen to practically mirror the population at large. We follow all the surrounding social trends, but are a little slower in getting there. We are not “peculiar” any longer. We are just slower.

Christ was re-enshrining the significance of marriage. It should not be easy to end a marriage. But, then again, perhaps the kind of marriage Christ is speaking of is one of a higher order and rarely exists here.

Although there are reasons for every marriage to be treated as sacred and worth preserving, it was always intended for there to be a higher purpose in marriage. It was intended to be an eternal union, inside of which sacred acts mirroring heaven itself take place. Bringing into this world new life by the loving union of two partners is a mirror of heaven. Such things are, or ought to be, most sacred.

But a higher kind of union, where love is the prevailing rule, is not often established here. More often than not, the marriages of this world are corrupted, just as society itself is corrupted.

I hardly dare offer a different view of these verses, because people think they know what they’re reading in them. I’m not sure we have ever seen what Christ is actually speaking about. Though caution would suggest otherwise, I’m going to go ahead with offering a different view.

First, this is always interpreted to be discussing things which are coarse or material, but it comes immediately following a discussion about the inner or spiritual self. This suggests our normal reading of this language may be incorrect. When the focus of Christ’s new

and higher law is the inner man, then to read this as applying to outward behavior (fornication/adultery) may miss the point.

Second, notice the contrast between the only justified reason for terminating the marriage (fornication) and the subsequent results (adultery). Two different words are used, suggesting two different meanings are present.

I've consulted with John Hall about the New Testament language in the Matthew account of this sermon, where "**porneia**" is the typical rendering. There the meaning of the first word which we render "fornication" could be a variety of things including: prostitution, sexual permissiveness or merely a sexual act. But, if the word was "**poneria**" then it could, by broad measure, mean bad acts (with no sexual connotation at all).

There is a possibility that the correct way to read this could be rendered in this way: "Whoever puts away his wife for any reason other than the lack of marital intimacy..." That would mean the only justified reason to end the marriage is that the marriage has ended within the heart. There is no longer any love in the relation. It has died. It is no longer worthy of preservation, and therefore, the death of the heart justifies the death of the relation.

However, the focus is on the woman's heart. That is, if the woman still retains marital intimacy for the husband, he cannot be justified in putting her away. He is obligated to retain as his wife the woman who loves him. If he puts away such a wife, then he causes her to commit adultery.

This, then, raises the issue of the meaning of adultery. We tend to view it as a physical act involving sexual union with another. But adultery also holds the connotation of unfaithfulness, as in Israel becoming unfaithful and playing the part of an adulteress, worshiping other gods (See, e.g., Jeremiah 3:8). When forced away by the man

she loves, a woman is then “adulterated” by the act of the man. He is accountable for the treachery involved in dissolving the marriage which the woman wanted, and forcing her into the relation with either no one, or with another man. Either one is “adulterating” the marriage which she had with him. He is accountable for that uncharitable, unkind, and unjustified treatment of the woman.

On the other hand, when she has lost affection for him, and the union has become hollow and without love, then the marriage is dead and continuation of the relation is a farce. It is not a marriage. In fact, it is a pretense and an abomination unworthy of preservation. It will not endure. It is not eternal and not possible to preserve beyond the grave.

No union that has not been sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise will endure beyond the grave (See D&C 132:7, 18, among other places). The reason for sealing such a marriage by the promise of the Spirit is because it replicates the kind of holy union found in heaven. It is like unto the unions between gods and goddesses. It is worthy of preservation because it is eternal. It is enduring. It is worth preserving into all eternity. It is sealed because the gods recognize on the earth a mirror of what is found in heaven itself. Therefore heaven ratifies and approves the relationship. They do not create such relations in heaven, but instead recognize them here, and approve them for eternal duration. Without such a relationship, the parties are worthy of continuation as angels, but not as spouses, as Christ would put it elsewhere (Matt. 22:30; see also D&C 132:17).

It is true enough that the restored Gospel allows everyone the opportunity to come to the Temple and receive ordinances which hold the promise of an eternal union. But those are relationships where the parties are on probation. They are given as an opportunity to work out your salvation before God. They are given so that if you

are true and faithful, the time may come when you are called up and chosen by the Holy Spirit of Promise to be kings and queens, priests and priestesses, whereas now you are only given opportunity to prove yourself worthy to become such.

There are many unhappy Latter-day Saint marriages which exist in name only. The notorious high record use of anti-depressants by women in Utah is driven in large part by unhappy marriages they believe ought to be preserved because of a misunderstanding of these verses. Yet the underlying reality that the union causes suffering rather than rejoicing cannot be escaped. So they alter their natural reaction to the unhappy union by altering the brain with chemicals. Such a marriage cannot endure into eternity. Though the woman may sacrifice herself to preserve her heart's desire to be a faithful, married mother, her unworthy marriage is not what will endure. It cannot be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, though she may be otherwise qualified.

Now, to be clear, I do not advocate divorce, particularly where minor children are involved. But I do advocate a higher view of the marital union where the prevailing reason for the union is love. This should be the whole preparation for marriage. Before contracting the union, the parties should look for that spouse with whom they can find heaven on earth. Unhappy marriages might all be saved if the parties would repent. The higher ideal is not impossible for any union to seek and find. That is the right of every party here, if they will but seek after it. If however, after every effort has been made to both find, and cultivate such a union, it proves to be an impossibility, then the parties ought to use the precious time allotted to them in mortality to find a union which will be worthy of continuation. Not at the expense of their children, who are entitled to have both parents raise them. The Holy Spirit

of Promise was intended to be shed upon many marriages, rather than a comparative few. Happiness was the design of our creation. When we avoid it by our misconduct and foolishness, we do not please heaven. Nor does gritting our teeth, putting up with miserable relationships, and enduring an unholy union please heaven or merit some eternal reward.

These words of Christ are speaking of a higher way to conduct our lives. To read into them exclusively outward behavior, when the whole import of the sermon addresses the inner-man, is out of context. I think we hardly understand the Lord's meaning. But, then again, perhaps it is best if we do not understand His full meaning until we are ready to see for ourselves what great things the Lord has in store for those who love Him (D&C 76:114–117). Perhaps it is best that man is not capable of making them known.

Now, as to the woman, there is another standard. He does not articulate it here, but can be found throughout scripture. A woman's love of and fidelity to her husband is more often than not a product of her nature. It takes quite a fool to turn a wife's natural affection for him into distrust and bitterness. But there are churlish men, as we know from scripture. Sometimes they marry an Abigail (See I Sam. 25:3).

OCTOBER 14, 2010

3 Nephi 12:33–37

And again it is written, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths; But verily, verily, I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair black or white; But let

your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever cometh of more than these is evil.

This revokes the oath making of the earlier Dispensation. When an oath was taken it was to be performed without fail (See, e.g., Numbers 30:2). It was binding. Ancient Israel relied on vows to govern their conduct (See, e.g., 1 Nephi 4:33–37). Oaths were relied on because they bound your conduct before God.

Christ is putting an end to the practice. No further vow-making was to take place. In its place say “yea” or say “nay,” but nothing further to bind your soul before God.

Swearing by men who possess nothing is foolish and prideful. Particularly when they swear by heaven, because it is not theirs to promise. Nor should they swear by the earth, because it is not theirs either. A man cannot even offer his own life, because it belongs to God who gave it. Indeed, there is nothing we own or can offer (Mosiah 2:20–25).

The comment regarding the inability to make a single hair “black or white” is emphasizing how little control we really have over things. Even our own bodies will take a course assigned it by God. They will age, and eventually die. We have our body as a stewardship. It is ours for a season, then we will lay it down. Until then, we serve a probation in which we are given power over these elements we occupy. But that stewardship is one designed to “prove” us, and show what we really are. When we gratify the body at the expense of others, or destroy our bodily temple housing our spirits by indulging uncontrolled appetites, we are unwise. We will lose these bodies before long and then, left with the same spiritual emptiness which caused the cravings in the first place, will find ourselves suffering. Whereas, if you discipline the body, keep it

under control and subject to your spirit, then death can bring a release and freedom from suffering. It will be an odd reversal. One known only to those who go through it; at which point it is too late to change the outcome.

Additionally, Christ is suggesting that we speak in plain language, without the rhetoric of grand threats or promises. Speak simply. Speak out of an abundance of humility. Mean what you say, and do not obligate yourself to do what you cannot do.

Live simply, prepare to deal honestly with one another. And leave the heavens out of your promises if you cannot control them.

Do not commit yourself to do anything by swearing to God it shall be done. You have no control over when you will die, whether you will have another day of health to accomplish what you have vowed, or even if the thing about which you committed yourself will continue to be possible. Be humble about what you are given. Be grateful.

These verses address a social standard that needed to be left behind. Coming out of that should be a replacement of plain speaking, humility about what we are able to do, and caution about words we use.

In this reformation alone Christ proves Himself to be a sage. He was more than a wise teacher, He was the Great Teacher. This concept alone makes Him one of the greatest social reformers of the ancient world.

OCTOBER 15, 2010

3 Nephi 12:38–39

“And behold, it is written, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; But I say unto you, that ye shall not resist evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also;”

This is reforming the law of retaliation or *lex talionis*. When first adopted, the law of retaliation was designed to limit retribution. It was merciful in the context of the time. It prevented taking a life for an eye. The scope of the injury suffered put a limit on the scope of the retaliation permitted. I taught a class on this ancient law in the BYU Education Week some years ago. It is too much to cover in this post in order to fully understand the ramifications of this law.

The popular understanding of that law is quite a distortion. The injury permitted was not actually exacted under the law. “An eye for an eye” meant that the victim was entitled to take the eye of the one causing the injury. In practice the eye was not taken. The value of the eye was agreed upon between victim and perpetrator. They sealed the agreement before two witnesses in the gate of the city. Then the debtor was obligated to pay the agreed sum (called “satisfaction”). If he defaulted the elders could take the eye as penalty for the default in payment, which stood as collateral for the debt.

Payment of “satisfaction” was permitted and given for offenses under the *lex talionis* except in the case of a limited class of offenses, including murder (Numbers 35:31–32). In such cases it was considered too dangerous to allow satisfaction, and therefore the penalty needed to be carried out.

Here, Christ is replacing that entire body of law by substituting forgiveness and mercy for justice and recompense. The victim is being urged to seek nothing in return for his injury. Instead, the victim is to bear the injury and allow evil against themselves without retaliation for the offense.

This may seem odd, even wrong. However, there is an example of this in the Book of Mormon. Although many lives were lost

in the process, it resulted in the salvation of many souls. The Anti-Lehi-Nephites were unwilling to take up arms to defend themselves, instead allowing their enemies to slay them. The result broke the hearts of those who were killing them, and many were converted by this example (See Alma 24:19–27). But the people of God were joined by more than the number who were slain.

The book by C. Terry Warner titled *The Bonds That Make Us Free: Healing Our Relationships, Coming to Ourselves* explains how the actions of those who forgive are able to break the hearts of those who are forgiven. There is not merely freedom in forgiving others, there is power in it as well. Terry Warner's book is an examination of the principles of sin and forgiveness, and worth reading if you have not done so before.

We gain power by what things we suffer for the Lord's sake. Christ who loved the most, sacrificed the most. Those two things are linked together.

This teaching was not only given by Christ, but it was lived by Him also. In this statement, as in no other, He is defining who He is and revealing what His conduct invariably will be. This is the Lord's standard. This is the Lord's manner. The choice of turning the other cheek is taken from the Messianic standard described by Isaiah (Isa. 50:6; also 53:5). We can also heal others by the things we willingly suffer. We can endure and forgive. As we do righteousness increases on the earth.

Saint Francis Assisi believed this, practiced it. In an age of darkness and apostasy, the Lord spoke with St. Francis, and sent angels to minister to him. He is appropriately referred to as a Saint. He lived the Sermon on the Mount. It is perhaps St. Francis, who above all others, proves a mortal may walk in the Lord's steps.

Christ did it first and more completely than would any other. But St. Francis surely followed.

I have little doubt that the Lord's teachings are impractical in this world. But, then again, we are not called to live for this world, are we? The reason Zion always flees from this world is precisely because the Lord will not permit the world to overwhelm those who would surely be overthrown if not for His grace and protection. He will fight their battles to spare those in Zion from the necessity of becoming warlike (D&C 105:14).

I am amused by the martial inclinations of the Latter-day Saints. When the lamb and lion lie down together I suppose many of the Latter-day Saints expect to be able to hunt them both.

OCTOBER 15, 2010

3 Nephi 12:40–42

And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also; And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn thou not away.

This is the point Mark Twain quipped included him in the Bible. He suggested “Go with him Twain” is Divine notice given him.

The cloak covers the coat. If someone wants one, give them both. Without conflict. Without retaliation. Give those who demand.

The law allowed a Roman soldier to compel a civilian to bear a load for a mile. Christ said submit, and go a second mile to demonstrate you have not been compelled at all. You have chosen to give the service.

When asked, give. When someone needs to borrow, let them. What a markedly different world this would be.

The results of an entire society behaving in this manner would be Zion itself. There would be no poor. Those with the means would share, those in need would ask. The resulting cooperation and mutual assistance would solve many social ills. But such a society would necessarily be voluntary. To attempt to level the economic circumstances of society by force would be an imprisonment, not a liberation. Government cannot impose it, but men can voluntarily implement it.

In our early post-Nauvoo distress, there was a brief time when we flirted with notions like these. We did some voluntary collective work on providing a social system to benefit everyone. Those ended because of the bickering and turmoil. We went back to tithing, which still today allows us to retain our individual fortunes and limit sharing our individual misfortunes.

The question is what happens when a society continues to suffer from all the ills of our own, but a single individual chooses to live these principles. What then? Can a person really live like this when he or she alone is guided by these principles?

Common agreement is that this sermon's admonitions are impractical. They won't work. They can't be lived by a single person acting alone, or a small group acting together, because a larger corrupt society will overwhelm and exploit them. Therefore, Christ is teaching what cannot be done. At least cannot be done by anyone who is unwilling to try it. Occasionally we get a Mother Teresa or a Saint Francis, but they're Catholic. Surely it can't work with Latter-day Saints who are busy studying Steven Covey's books, polishing their resumes and looking to find a secure middle-management position from which to launch their successful careers. Maybe a handful of good, believing Catholics will found Zion. Then we can come in and help manage the re-

sults after it becomes well enough established. After all, we have the true franchise from which Zion will be built. We even own a bank already named for the venture.

It makes you wonder why Christ would preach something which only a handful of Catholics have successfully accomplished in an individual setting.

OCTOBER 16, 2010

3 Nephi 12:43–45

And behold it is written also, that thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy; But behold I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.

Loving the ones you care for, associate with, and live nearby is sometimes easy. Hating those who show you disrespect or cause you injury is normal. Nevertheless, Christ teaches to love enemies, bless those who are trying to do you harm, and pray for your persecutors.

This is the only way to become like Him. He is an intercessor. As I've explained in *The Second Comforter*, becoming an intercessor for others is part of development, through grace, to become as He is. It is through this that charity becomes a part of your character (Moro. 7:46). And charity is a necessary attribute in character (2 Nephi 26:30; Moro. 7:47).

This treatment of enemies is how you prove your inner self. Only by suffering, do we learn if we are converted. If you receive only praise and adulation, authority and wealth, prestige and

acceptance as a result of following Christ, then you've never been proven. It is through the sacrifice of your good name, reputation, position, wealth and social standing that you learn if you truly trust in Christ.

When you actually do sacrifice all earthly things for Him, you will have knowledge that the course of your life is pleasing to Him. Anything less than this will leave your mind in doubt (See Lecture 6 discussed previously).

If you follow this teaching by Christ, you will convert yourself first, then others. No-one can doubt the goodness of a life lived as this teaching commends. Though such a life may not convert others immediately, it will triumph.

Sometimes people die teaching the truth. They surrendered all they were on the altar, thereby coming to know God. This teaching would allow anyone to do the same. You would have to not only accept the idea, you would need to implement it.

Abinadi returned to bear witness of the truth, and then die. Alma was his only convert. But from the moment of Alma's conversion to the end of the Book of Mormon, every character who wrote in the plates descended from Abinadi's single convert.

Abinadi was a hinge character around whom the story of the Nephites would pivot from his life onward. But he had little success, and was killed by those to whom he ministered.

In some respects, dying for the cause of Christ is easier than living it. This teaching, however, shows how you can begin to live it.

It is not designed to be easy. As I discussed in *Beloved Enos*, sometimes it takes quite a bit of effort to come to terms with what the Lord requires of us. But that does not alter in the least

the importance of doing it, or lessen the quality of the results obtained.

Keep in mind the Lord's admonition: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15).

Remember also the Lord's statement that the things He is teaching "at this time" are necessary to enter into the kingdom of Heaven (3 Nephi 12:20). These are not just sayings. They are meant to be acted on. It is in the doing of them you will meet Him. When you descend below where you are at present, you will find the Lord. For He is condescending whenever He is seen.

Finally, Christ reminds us that the Lord blesses all with the sun, light, life and abundance. Both good and evil are blessed by Him. Therefore, the petty differences between the good and the bad are so insignificant when compared against an absolute standard of perfection that the relative goodness and relative badness is inconsequential. So inconsequential that for any of us to be redeemed will require the atonement. Therefore, we all owe everything to Him. Only the redeemed come to realize and accept that while here. Everyone will eventually grasp that reality.

Accepting Him is the means for healing us. His open invitation to all can be seen in the sun shining on "both the evil and on the good." Everyone is bidden to come to the throne and receive healing, grace and forgiveness. To merit it, you must first give it. To obtain forgiveness you must give forgiveness. To have Him suffer for your sins, you must first suffer and forgive others of their sins committed against you.

Every balanced life surrenders claims for justice and shows mercy, thereby making a claim for themselves upon mercy.

OCTOBER 17, 2010

3 Nephi 12:46–47

“Therefore those things which were of old time, which were under the law, in me are all fulfilled. Old things are done away, and all things have become new.”

Christ will elaborate on this later as the audience puzzles over what is removed and what remains. But here Christ introduces the concept that the Law of Moses is now “fulfilled.” Importantly, He says: “in me are all fulfilled.”

When He walked on the Road to Emmaus on the day of His resurrection, He began with the Law of Moses and explained: “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Luke 24:27). I’ve spoken on this and then published the talk in the Appendix to *Eighteen Verses*. The talk shows how the rites and temple of the Dispensation of Moses testified to the details of His life. It ought to be noted that the thing “under the law, in [Christ were indeed] all fulfilled.” His life was foreshadowed by the rites of Moses. His healing and His ministry, His history and His sacrifice, all were foreshadowed by the Law of Moses.

Since the Law pointed to Him, and He came to live His mortal life in conformity with that Law, it was now completed. The signpost was no longer necessary. The event had happened.

When He says, “Old things are done away” it is not because they are terminated. It is because they were fulfilled. He completed the circle. He lived and died under the Law, fulfilling every jot and tittle of its requirements.

Now it was time to push the meaning of the earlier Law deeper into the souls of His audience. “All things have become

new.” It is a new beginning, a new Dispensation, a new message. This message was delivered by the author of the Law of Moses not through an intermediary. This message comes from the Author in person.

Dispensations have their bounds. Beforehand, the prophets give, through prophecy, a limit on the things which are to come. When the prophesied events have unfolded and the measure has been met, then one Dispensation comes to an end while another opens. John the Baptist closed the Dispensation of Moses. Christ opened the Dispensation of the Meridian of Time. He recognizes the transition in this statement.

Whenever things are “become new” again, it is important to recognize the signs of the time (Matt. 16:2–3). Those living contemporary with Christ who did not recognize the signs remained at Jerusalem and were destroyed (JS-M. 1:13–18). It is important that you be on watch, for in the very hour you think it unlikely for Him to act He will act (JS-M. 1:48).

Everything was fulfilled by Christ, and everything prophesied will happen before He comes again. There is no more scrupulous a follower of the prophetic promises than the Lord. He inspired the prophecies, and intends that they all come to pass. In Him have all things been fulfilled, and in Him will all things yet remaining be fulfilled.

OCTOBER 18, 2010

3 Nephi 12:48

“Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.”

In the Matthew text Christ unequivocally limited this to His Father (Matt. 5:48). Here “perfection” is achieved by both Christ and His Father.

Assuming the Matthew text is correct, the difference is significant. It is another confirmation that anyone who is mortal, including the Lord, stands in jeopardy every hour (See 1 Cor. 15:30). He simply could not claim perfection while in mortality because mortality is a time of change, challenge and temptation. After all, He was tempted while mortal just as every human soul is tempted (Heb. 4:15). Though He chose to give no heed to it, He was nevertheless tempted (D&C 20:22).

While mortal He looked to the Father in all things (John 5:30). After concluding His time in mortality, achieving the resurrection of the dead, He was given all power in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18).

Therefore, if the Matthew text is correct, and the differences are accounted for in what we have just reviewed, then the admonition of Christ for our own perfection is not just an earthly endeavor. It is an invitation to follow Him and His Father into a loftier state, as well (Abr. 3:26). One where the final realization will come only as we are able to endure greater glory than a mortal may possess (Moses 1:5).

It is good we know this commandment is possible to accomplish (1 Nephi 3:7). It is hard to conceive of following the Son in this way. Yet it is He who pronounced it, and He who has promised to share the throne of His Father with all who will come to Him (Rev. 3:21).

I am not perfect, nor anything like it. I have seen Perfection, know what it is, and can confirm I am nothing like it.

A harmonious symmetry of light, majesty, holiness, glory and power are all around Him who is perfection. When I read the ad-

monition to “be ye therefore perfect, even as I or your Father who is in Heaven is perfect” I can hardly grasp how that gulf between us could be bridged. I understand about the Lord’s atonement. I have certainly been the beneficiary of it and will continue to be so. When I consider the infinite gulf between His and His Father’s perfection, and my own imperfection, I am left completely stupefied at the idea it is even possible. Nevertheless, He gives no command which He does not provide means to obey. Therefore the means do exist.

When I hear from the casual observer of the LDS faith the stupidity about how we are going to “get exalted,” I wonder at what the reaction will be when they finally realize how great the gulf separating us from that result is. I have some appreciation for what will be required, and know it will be eons before that end can be attained by any of us. It will not be magic. It will be through incremental improvement, being added upon, growing in light and truth, and perfectly natural in the process. Joseph Smith put it in these words in the King Follett Funeral Sermon:

When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave.

We are not left without warning about how great the gulf is we are to cover in this bridge we are to cross. Even now it seems the best use of our time would be to meditate on the things of God day and night. The revelations inform us that “Whatever principle

of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come.” (D&C 130:18–19). Yet we seem collectively often pedestrians in a crowd milling aimlessly about presuming Christ will furnish us an easy time of it. His atonement removes from us all guilt and shame. But for perfection, we must acquire it bit by bit, grace for grace, line upon line, growing by accepting more until at last we have obtained what is needed. That will be our own doing. He provides the means, and His Father ordained the laws by which it can be done, and they provide us with free will and the capacity to choose, but we must choose. We must accept. We must press forward holding Their hands in order to arrive at last, after an infinitely long journey, in the courts of Heaven itself, fit to reside there.

Be ye therefore perfect. And start on that this moment. For you haven't another moment to spare.

CHAPTER 12

3 Nephi 13

OCTOBER 18, 2010

3 Nephi 13:1–4

Verily, verily, I say that I would that ye should do alms unto the poor; but take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father who is in heaven. Therefore, when ye shall do your alms do not sound a trumpet before you, as will hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; That thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.

Giving should be done for its own sake, and not for a reward. Recognition for what a person has done is its own reward.

If this is a larger principle, and the reasoning underlying this applies throughout your service or good acts, then any recognition is your payment. In fact, the only way to reserve for yourself a blessing is to be either anonymous when you do it, or to be reviled, hated or persecuted for it. Otherwise you have your reward.

Applying this to like things it might be said:

- When men name buildings after you for your achievements, you have your reward.
- When institutions heap awards upon you for your philanthropic acts, you have your reward.
- When they fill an auditorium up with people singing praises and paying tribute to you on your birthday, you have your reward.
- When honorary doctorate degrees are awarded to you for your life's work, you have your reward.
- When the Boy Scouts of America gives you a plaque, a title, and a commendation for your long support of their cause, you have your reward.
- When you sit at the head of a congregation, exciting envy from others wishing to hold your position, and are honored with praise, acknowledged as presiding and accepting deference for your status as local, area or regional leader, you may very well have your reward.
- If you minister to the downtrodden, the ill and infirm, then recount endlessly to others these acts, do you not “sound a trumpet before you” to be seen of men, and thereby collect your reward? When Christ was called “good,” He rebuked the one rendering praise with the retort: “Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God.” (See Luke 18:18–19). **He would accept their persecution, derision and shame, but discouraged any praise.** He accepted Peter's confession of His status as “the Christ, the Son of the Living God” but followed up that confession of faith with the admonition to not speak of it: “Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.” (Matt. 16:20).

How can His servants exalt themselves to be more than He? How can the Servant's own servants make themselves greater than He? When the Master came and lived the most common of lives, how can His disciples build monuments named for themselves, tolerate no criticism, accept honor, praise and adulation and expect to be counted as His?

How can any man redeem or rescue another? Are not all in need of rescuing by Him who alone can provide deliverance? Acclaim and praise in this life preclude recognition from the Lord in the afterlife. Therefore, only a fool would welcome praise, adulation and recognition for good things done in mortality. Indeed, such recognized deeds are often a veneer covering a malignant character. As a result, the Lord offers a test to prove sincerity: Do it in secret. Do it without notice or praise. Do it not to be seen of men. Do it as an act in private between you and the Lord alone, without any earthly party becoming aware of the deed. Then the beneficiary will indeed give glory to your Father which is in heaven, and not to another man (See 3 Nephi 12:16).

This new standard challenges not merely the acts of a person, but also the underlying reasons and intent for any acts that are done. Your conduct is not the measure. It is your heart. For that, it is best if men do not understand you. It is best if they misjudge you, attribute foul motive when motive is pure, ascribe evil to you when you are on the Lord's errand, and reject you though you are His. Only then can your heart remain true to Him and uncompromised by the praise of your fellow-man.

It is this teaching, if followed, that will result in the anonymous acts and unrecognized deeds that exalt a person. It will make you private in your devotions and obscure to your fellow man.

OCTOBER 19, 2010

3 Nephi 13:5–6

And when thou prayest thou shalt not do as the hypocrites, for they love to pray, standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

Like the previous verses, this verse is saying prayer ought to be private, not public. It should be between you and God. Others do not need to know of, see, or participate in your prayers. Most importantly, your prayers ought not be put on display for others to notice and admire.

There are public prayer occasions, of course. Those come every time a meeting opens and closes with a prayer. For such opportunities there will always be a prayer offered by one person, acting as the voice for those assembled. But the prayer is not the individual's. It is the prayer of all those assembled. This warning is about personal prayer, not group prayer.

These verses are confirming the principle that prayer should be kept private between you and God. It should not be put on public display to call attention to yourself. Those whose prayers are offered “for to be seen” are really not praying to God anyway. They are using the pretense of prayer to call attention to themselves. They want recognition. When they get recognition they have their reward. They got what they wanted: public notice.

As a result of this teaching I have some hesitation about praying at a public restaurant before a meal. If I do, it is private, unspoken,

and only thought. I have always thought this teaching proscribed public prayer whenever it attracted notice.

This counsel, and the counsel immediately before, show just how solitary a journey it is back to the Lord's presence. It is not a group event. It is done in the privacy of your own heart, your own intent, and your own private conduct. It is your personal devotions which show the Lord who and what you are. By keeping these things secret between you and Him, you gain a power of familiarity with Him which will permit Him to comfort you.

I've tried to avoid ever speaking of personal matters, choosing instead to only focus on the Lord's teachings. Some people have expressed frustrations at the absence of personal details in what I've written or said. Those complaints reaffirm to me that I've weighed the matter correctly. It is not, and never has been about me or any man. It is about the Lord and His teachings. I have testified to His teachings and that they are both true and applicable to everyone. I've testified that high office and notoriety are not required, but the least are invited. When Zion finally comes, I doubt there will be many notable people there. It will be the man from Tennessee who is handy with mechanical repairs, whose calloused hands show dedication to labor for others. It will be the patient Temple worker-couple who, despite the regimentation seen all around them, have pursued the Lord's will and found Him. It will be the patient and obscure people whose private devotion to the Lord is known to Him, acknowledged by His voice. The invitation to gather will come to them directly from Him.

It is in these teachings that I will be justified and required to end my public efforts. As they end, you will need to do as He has taught, and as I have endeavored to do. I will soon be ending this blog. I will be finishing up this phase of what I've been asked to

do for the last several years, and hopefully be shown the courtesy of being allowed to return to my family and ward. The things I have written require a real person to stand behind them, to testify of them, and to take responsibility for what is said. I have allowed you to know who it is. But enough has been done. I look forward to returning to my own closet and laying down this more public effort.

Christ would have us all know the Father in the privacy of our individual lives. That is as true of Him as it is meant to be for us. How often He spent the night in private prayer. How often he separated Himself from His followers and prayed in secret to His Father. That is what we should accomplish more often. That is how we draw closest to Him.

You can as readily gratify your vain ambition by praying to be noticed as you can by aspiring and receiving a church position or rank. It is all vanity. There really is none who are good, except God alone.

OCTOBER 19, 2010

3 Nephi 13:7–8

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him.

Here is wisdom indeed. There is no magic formula for communicating with God. No list of what is to be said or repeated. No vain — meaning ineffective — repetitions. He “gets it” even before you speak. So the act of prayer is a formal way of showing:

- Respect (by doing what He has asked)
- Devotion (by showing submission to Him)

- Obedience (by keeping a commandment to pray always)
- and Companionship (by taking the time alone with Him).

He knows what you need before you ask. Indeed, sometimes the needs we think we have are not what He knows we need even before we pray.

We think we need to get a solution to interior lighting for 8 barges. We come to Him in prayer expecting to receive help for that. He knows what we really need is redemption from the Fall, instruction in the history of mankind, and knowledge of Him. He solves the lighting problem with a touch of His finger, but then goes on to reveal all things.

We think we need to know what church to join. So Joseph comes asking that one question in sincerity. He knows, however, the world needs a prophet to re-establish the long absent Church of Jesus Christ upon the earth.

We think we need to understand how to baptize. So Joseph and Oliver ask. He knows, however, the Aaronic Priesthood must be restored, and sends an angel to return it to the earth.

We think we need to know what our standing is before God. So Joseph asks, fully expecting to learn if his life has been acceptable. God knows, however, the time has come to send an angel having the everlasting Gospel to declare. So Moroni comes to declare the restoration of the book.

You take thought about what your cares are, but they are not what the Lord knows you need. Your cares are merely the tiniest of obstacles given you to remind you to pray. The Father operates on a much grander scale, dealing with the salvation of souls. He will use the man or woman of prayer as the means of accomplishing a great deal more than they imagined.

Pray. Ask simply. It is not necessary to be elaborate or long winded. State clearly what you believe you need. Accept what then comes in His answer. Trust He knows more than you. Trust He can give you what you need, even if you hadn't even thought about it as a need.

OCTOBER 20, 2010

3 Nephi 13:9-13

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Simple. Direct. Plain.

Christ assures us that He is "Our Father" and not just His. We are all united in sharing that status with Christ. We are a family.

First He identifies the Father as "ours" and then, least we should presume too great a familiarity, He adds "hallowed be thy name." A name is important for many reasons. In the case of Deity, it was an ancient presumption that if you knew the name of an angel, demon, or god you could summon such a being by using that name. Here, however, Christ is applying sacred status to the Father's name. It is His Fatherhood that is emphasized, not His hallowed name.

The Father's will is not done on earth. Here, there is rebellion, rejection, chaos and despair. Here, order is imposed by the strong upon the weak. Men exploit, abuse and misrule. In heaven, however, the Father's rule establishes order, kindness and equity. Anyone who is aware of the fallen conditions here will ask for the Father's will to be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

That petition can also be read to mean: “Let me live on earth as if I were in heaven.” Or, “let the Father’s will come to earth by the life I live here.” Or, “let me prove myself worthy of heaven’s companionship, though I live here on earth.”

The prayer links forgiving others to being forgiven. This is not merely a wise petition, it is also a statement of cause and effect. We merit forgiveness as we give it. It is by forgiving that we are forgiven.

We pay our debts by giving others forgiveness of their debts to us. I’ve written a chapter about this in *Come, Let Us Adore Him*. We merit what we give to others. We establish the criteria by which we will be judged as we decide how to treat others. He will return to this concept in 3 Nephi 14:2.

When the Father leads you it will never be into temptation, but will always deliver you from evil. This is a petition which reminds us to be willing to be led. We are literally to ask the Father to help us be led by Him. Through Him we will obtain deliverance.

The Father owns the kingdom, the power and glory. Mankind does not confer that upon Him. It is His. But mankind can acknowledge it. By making that acknowledgment we are able to have confidence in Him. We can trust His power to deliver, His ability to bring again His kingdom, and to bear and share in His glory as He has promised.

Many of these simple statements are confessions of our own desires and clarify we have understanding. God’s kingdom, power and glory exist independent of our prayers. But when our prayers attest that we understand this, we are making our submission and meekness known to Him. We are stating our trust in Him.

We acknowledge His kingdom is His, to be restored in His time, with His power. It is His to control. We do not envy that control, nor attempt to force Him to do our bidding. We acknowledge that His right exists, independent of man's will or ambition. He will decide and we will accept. We can ask, but He will determine the events that will take place and when they will unfold.

This prayer is an acknowledgment that we are not trying to control God, but instead are willing to be subject to Him. He is the sovereign, we are the subjects.

We ask, He decides. If He determines to do a work we defer to Him. The greater the recognition of His kingdom, power and glory, the greater the confidence we have in His decisions. The less we are inclined to argue with Him or to substitute our desires for His.

When the Lord decides to bring again Zion, it will be because the Father has decided it is time to do so. It will not be because a group has volunteered to accomplish it. When He decides, and He is the author of it, no power under heaven will stand against it. When men have ambition to create what is in His power alone to do, then they will not just fail but will be swept away.

This petition to the Father instructs us in patience and faith.

OCTOBER 20, 2010

Ecclesiastes 3:1

I have written six books and published nearly a year's worth of posts on this blog at a frequency of two a day on average. They represent what I think, what I believe to be true, and what I teach. I do not have a spokesman. I have not authorized anyone to say something different than what I've made publicly known in my writings. Therefore, when someone claims there is some private conversation

where they have learned some insider tidbit regarding what I think about plural marriage and Joseph Smith, or any other topic, they are making fools of themselves and anyone who listens to them.

I have explained my views on plural marriage in this blog. In a series of posts on Section 132 and in *Beloved Enos*, I have explained what I think. If you want to know what I have said, read those sources. DO NOT trust a private conversation attributed to me.

When I have met with people for lunch, or listened to them in a private moment, I do not always feel inclined to argue with them, or to correct them. Particularly when there is limited time to do so. It is completely inappropriate and wrong for such private discussions to be interpreted to mean that I have done more than just listen to the speaker. **Silence is not agreement!**

It is apparent that some people are unwilling to allow me to confine my work to what I've been specifically limited to do. Therefore, as much as I would like to have associations with all of you, I cannot.

I will finish the discussion on the blog currently underway. Then, should I have anything further to say, I will confine it to books. I am not willing to be misquoted. I am not willing to have things attributed to me that have been misinterpreted in a "private" or "secret" meeting. I am not willing to have people contradict what I have written, or what I have said publicly.

If you want to know what I think, read what I've written. If it is a second-hand, allegedly "private conversation" then don't trust it.

Some private correspondence has been the catalyst for what I've written on the blog. The responses have been posted here publicly, available to all to read. That way I do not have to confront any accusation that I've said something in private or written some secret thing. I put it here so that what I think, and what I believe

is clear. You don't have to rely on some verbal grapevine to know what I think is important.

Further, **I am not important.** Some of the ideas spoken of in what I've written are important, but I certainly am not. None of you should be a "fan" or think I'm someone worth following. I don't want to lead anyone. I have no intention of doing so. **There is a universal need to take the Book of Mormon more seriously and to repent.** That is clear from the text itself. I've elaborated on it using other scriptures to support the Book of Mormon's message. That is quite important. Other things are less so and I am not at all important.

If anything I've written is to have value, it can only acquire that value by the Spirit testifying to you it is true. Then it becomes a matter between you and the Spirit, and not you and me. At that point I cease to have any importance, for you have it from the Spirit.

Prove all things. Hold fast to those things the Spirit testifies to you are true.

I've been trying to teach you to take the Book of Mormon seriously. But more importantly, I've been trying to get you to read it for yourself. I'm trying to work my way out of a job. I hope that at some point you need nothing more than the Book of Mormon, your scriptures, prayer, and the Lord to find everything you need. You should develop to the point that you do not need anyone to tell you "know ye the Lord" because everyone of you, from the least to the greatest, will know Him. Then all will be equal, and the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters do the sea. Then no one will need to teach you, because He will be your tutor and not any man.

You need to find the Lord. Soon I will stop posting here for your good, because it is becoming a hindrance rather than an aid for many of you.

OCTOBER 21, 2010

3 Nephi 13:14–15

“For, if ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you; But if ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

This is an absolute condition. It is mandatory.

If you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespass. You can't be forgiven by the Father if you do not forgive others.

It can't be done.

That grudge you harbor prevents the Father from forgiving you.

Those resentments you think are justified are keeping you from being forgiven by the Father. Those injustices imposed upon you by others who are unthinking or cruel must be surrendered.

The early Saints were victimized by mobs in Missouri and Illinois. They wanted revenge. Brigham Young implemented a covenant to seek vengeance upon the murderers of Joseph Smith until the third and fourth generation. They did not build Zion.

The opposite of this is forgiveness. If you forgive, your Heavenly Father WILL forgive you. Offenses are opportunities for you to gain forgiveness. All you need to do is forgive them.

It is a simple, direct cause and effect. It was ordained before the world was founded, and applies universally in all ages and among all people.

The world is in Satan's grip largely because the world seeks vengeance and refuses to forgive.

Zion, on the other hand, will be filled with those who forgive. Of course that puts an absolute limit on those who can dwell there. ...Very few indeed.

OCTOBER 21, 2010

3 Nephi 13:16–18

Moreover, when ye fast be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

Again our devotion is to be entirely private. Your inner struggle to come into God's presence should be yours. Private. Personal. Individual. Secret.

The time may come **after** you have found Him that He will bring you into contact with others. The journey back to Him will be individual, and private.

After you find Him, you will be His. He can do with you as He chooses. When He appears to you in the flesh, He will give you commandments (2 Nephi 32:6). He will teach you doctrine. He will direct what you should do. But that is later. Until then, the journey is private. There is nothing to announce. There should be no notice of your fasting, tithe paying, or praying. There are no notable deeds to be seen of men.

Men should see your washed face and never detect the fasting you are performing for Him alone.

Men should see your comfortable behavior and never appreciate what great things you have put on the altar in sacrifice to Him.

Men should never notice the mighty wrestle you are having with God.

When the wrestle has produced a covenant between you and God, even then the particulars of what you learn, what has been promised, what has been committed into your hands, and the things the Lord and you share should be kept between you and Him.

As I have said in *The Second Comforter*, some great things can be learned but not taught. Also, the Lord will never entrust truly sacred things to a person who is incapable of keeping them confidential. It is surprising how few people really believe in that principle. It is surprising how many people want that principle violated because they are curious, anxious and think it their right to receive what is purchased by someone else at a terrible personal price. It is surprising what things people will ask for and expect to be given, despite the fact that they haven't worked for them. It can't be shared by anyone other than you and the Lord. Whenever you disrespect that limitation by your questions, or demands you make to others, you postpone the time when you might have received greater things. You do not need a guru. You need the Lord. You do not need another John, Moses, Elias, Esaias, Isaiah, or Enoch (See D&C 76:100). You need Him.

We see in scripture how easily and often messengers are made into idols. That is not what is to happen. It is even more of a perversion for men to set themselves up as idols, to be followed as if they were God. That is Satanic and evidence of a falling away (2 Thes. 2:3-4).

The private devotions of a sincere Saint are more worthy, more ennobling, more developing than any public display has ever been, or will ever be. Small gatherings when He directs may be of aid from time to time. But almost all the sacred events involving Him will take place between you and Him alone. When a few have approached Him by themselves - alone, then at some point it may be possible for Him to gather with them in small numbers (Matt. 18:20).

Would you like to see Zion return? Then approach Him in private, keep your journey from the notice of others, gather to Him in secret. Then, when He has a few who can gather in His name, He will gather them. Ultimately there will need to be occupants for a city before a city will be founded by Him. But it all starts with these teachings we are presently reading.

This Sermon is first a description of Him.

It is also a description of His disciples.

It is a formula for returning to His presence.

It is the basis for the coming Zion.

When the Father at last rewards you openly, it will be time for His arm to be revealed in terrible majesty (D&C 105:14; D&C 45:67-75). He will reward you openly indeed!

OCTOBER 22, 2010

3 Nephi 13:19-21

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal; But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Things here are in constant change. There are two great forces always at work. Entropy and decay are affect everything. All things grow distant, cold and less organized. The opposite is the force that creates and brings anew. Between decay and recreation, we find ourselves in a world where our hold will eventually slip away, and we will no longer be found among the living.

What will endure?

The monuments men build to themselves and their causes break down, decay, rust, erode and fade. They all pass away. The most enduring things are not what we build with our hands, but the truth that we teach. Truth will endure for eternity. It may be lost, fought or suppressed, but it will return. Truth will triumph.

The closest thing we have to eternal living is found in the great ideas and great revelations of the prophets and poets, philosophers and sages. The things made in our minds are what change humanity and elevate us to be more godlike. It is not the structures where men craving immortality engrave their names. It is not the statues in bronze and marble where because of vanity they enshrine their images. They will all pass away.

But an idea, a truth, a testimony from heaven - those will endure despite all hell raging. Send the moths, the rust and thieves against truth, and the truth will prevail despite this fallen world's conspiracy against it.

Where is your heart? What do you meditate on day and night? Do you dream of wealth and power, of fame and recognition? Do you ponder how you might acquire more and receive more? Do you meditate on the lusts of the body? What occupies the spare moments of your life?

Do you let virtue garnish your thoughts so that your confidence may be strong in the presence of the Lord? (D&C 121:45).

Do you meditate constantly on the things God has shown to you? (2 Nephi 4:16).

Have you prayed and pondered so you may understand a great mystery? (D&C 138:11). Have you prayed and fasted so as to be filled with the spirit of revelation? (Alma 17:3).

Where your heart is, there is your treasure. Where your treasure is, there is your heart. They are linked. You can tell what is treasured and where the heart is by what things you meditate upon night and day with idle moments.

I've deliberately had a morning and afternoon post on this blog to assist in giving something to ponder twice during the day, at widely separated times. It is my view that there is nothing better to meditate on than the scriptures.

Here's a recent random reflection I had on one matter answered by scripture:

- In a recent Gospel Doctrine discussion I was told about a teacher who was reluctant to admit David was a prophet, because David fell (D&C 132:39). The notion that a prophet could fall undermines the current false notion that a President of the LDS Church cannot fail. That is rubbish, of course. But it is well circulated and ardently defended rubbish.
- The need to preserve the idea means that the teacher needed to disqualify David from ever being accepted as a prophet. The reasoning goes that if David isn't a prophet then his fall proves nothing.
- When Peter was preaching after Pentecost, he freely acknowledged David's status as a prophet (Acts 2:29-30). So even if the Gospel Doctrine teacher won't admit David's status, the scriptures do.

- I wonder how it is plausible to some folks to believe prophets cannot fall today, when they fell anciently? It seems to me just a lazy way to shift responsibility for salvation away from each individual and onto an institution. Clearly the institution wants this idea to be accepted. No doubt someone will be damned for that notion.
- Anyone can fall. Seems to me that it is more important for me to worry about my own fall than it is to foolishly trust in some other person's success or failure. We are all accountable for our own sins (Art. Faith 2)
- In the Topical Guide I read every entry under "Accountability" and could find nothing to support the notion that there is accountability shifting from individual onto church president.
- Why do the gentiles always wind up having someone whom they regard as their benefactor boss them around? (Luke 22:25).
- When you make one mistake (prophet can't fall or lead astray), then you compound it by needing another (David wasn't a prophet). Little wonder doctrine is not studied as much. Our foolishness would become exposed. Who was it that removed from a prophet his right to choose? When did moral agency to choose get taken away from a church president?

OCTOBER 22, 2010

3 Nephi 13:22–23

The light of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

The “eye” is better put “your mind’s eye.” It is what you meditate on, what fills you. You choose what you fill yourself with by what you give attention. What you notice is what you care to notice.

Christ’s admonition is troubling because the cares of this world distract us all. They impose upon us all. But Christ advises us to search endlessly for light.

The difference between filling yourself with light and filling yourself with darkness is what thoughts you entertain.

Everything begins in the mind. Words and works flow from thoughts (Alma 12:14). While all three will be judged, it is in the mind where all else begins.

It is not enough to attempt to avoid evil by memorizing hymns. You can spend as many wasted hours humming hymns as singing rock songs. Neither one will particularly elevate you. Meditating on doctrine, pressing understanding, pondering deeply and engaging the mysteries of God are what will fill the mind with light.

There is so much in our faith that distracts and substitutes for light and truth. Think about these verses and filling your mind with light and truth:

And that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness. That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day. And again, verily I say unto you, and I say it that you may know the truth, that you may chase darkness from among you; (D&C 50:23–25)

The Psalms were quoted by Christ more than any other scripture. They are filled with truths worth meditation.

Having darkness within you does not require an effort to be deliberately vile. The cares of this world, and coping with Babylon

is all that is needed to keep you from acquiring light. Finding light requires a deliberate effort to notice it and take it in.

When we are filled with light the heavens notice. In fact, it is the light within us that heaven notices even from afar.

OCTOBER 22, 2010

Blog To Remain

I intend to leave this blog up. I will be taking the first year's postings and putting them into book form. The book format will be chronological order, rather than the reverse chronological order as it appears on the blog. Look for it no sooner than April or May of 2011.

Hopefully, having it available as a book will spare me thousands of conversations. Hope you will all enjoy.

OCTOBER 23, 2010

3 Nephi 13:24

"No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

This is Christ's great division. We all have but one Master. Choose carefully.

This is another way to describe the "jealous God" of the Old Covenant (Ex. 34:14). Since He requires everything of you, any holding back is infidelity to Him.

Christ is reaffirming God's primacy. Your affection for Him cannot be shared. It simply can't be done. When attempted, it shows you "hate" or "despise" Him, because when you share your fidelity, you reject His direction.

It is this principle that justified the earlier prophets in likening Israel to a "harlot" or a "whore" when she worshiped other gods

(See, eg. Jeremiah 3:6; Hosea 9:1; Judges 8:33). It is not possible to be converted to the Lord and not be devoted to Him.

All of what is “Mammon” is subordinate to God. The Lord’s ways require the things you have in this life to be used for His purposes and according to His desire. His commandments cover all things, and you cannot divorce your temporal concerns from His teachings (D&C 29:35).

Devotion to Him requires that what you do, say, and think be aligned with Him. Conversion is a progressive process where you develop to be more like Him throughout life. You can’t just “get a testimony” and then not be completely converted to Him. He expects to completely remake you. This sermon is the blueprint for the new creation you are to become.

This statement deals in absolutes because the Lord’s way is the way of absolutes. He can accept nothing less than all. The adversary knows this and is content with getting even a little from you. The adversary knows that a little compromise is everything when compromising your faithfulness to the Lord.

The world will accept anything half-hearted. The world knows you love it, if you will just give in a little to its persuasion. Contamination is contamination and will eventually poison you. So any degree of unrighteousness is enough to please the world. For the Lord, however, it is all or nothing. It is complete fidelity to Him which alone will satisfy. Keeping one foot in the world, while giving lip service to Him will never meet the requirements for loving Him (D&C 1:31).

Those who think the Lord is announcing a new, easier system to replace the earlier, more demanding Law of Moses do not understand His teachings. This is far more exact and moves the battleground into your heart. He is asking you to transform the

soul. He is asking you to become like Him. **This is not outward observances.** However troubling and wearisome those may have been, they were at least something that could be done without battling in your heart with motive, intent and desires. Here Christ wants you to conform everything, even your desires, to be instruments of your salvation.

This is a call to a much higher way of life. It is a much deeper and more meaningful way to approach God. It is inside you.

OCTOBER 24, 2010

3 Nephi 13:25

And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he looked upon the twelve whom he had chosen, and said unto them: Remember the words which I have spoken. For behold, ye are they whom I have chosen to minister unto this people. Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

The preceding teachings were given to all who were there. Christ changes the audience at this point, and addresses the twelve whom He had given power to baptize. To them He addresses the admonition: “Remember the words which I have spoken.” These are two things: First, a Divine admonition to follow. Second, an empowerment to make it possible to do as He asks. Without both, they would have been unable to preserve the record of the teachings. As will become apparent from the text, they will later meet following His ascension and reduce the words taught to a transcript that all twelve will be able to present to the audience that assembles the next day.

The reason these same twelve who had power to baptize were given power to “remember the words [Christ] had spoken” was because they were “chosen to minister unto this people.” When Christ chooses a minister to speak for Him, He enables them to accomplish the mission or ministry assigned to them (See, e.g., D&C 132:59). They receive His support. That makes them more than equal to the assignment given them.

It is the chosen twelve, and not the multitude, who are told to “take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what he shall drink.” It is those who are to minister who are freed from the earthly cares of providing for their needs. Their lives are to be given over to ministering to others, and not to work for their support. The Lord intends to provide for them.

This is a very narrow group to whom this promise is made. It does not include others in the audience. For the rest, we are required to provide for our families. If we fail to provide for them by laboring for their support, we have denied the faith (1 Tim. 5:8). Wives are to be supported by their husband’s labor (D&C 83:2). Children are to be supported by their parents (D&C 83:4). This requires all to labor (D&C 42:42). But as to these twelve, their labor is the ministry and their support will come from the Lord.

It is a small thing for the Lord to provide for His ministers. To Him property is nothing (D&C 117:4). He can provide for His ministers even if there is no apparent means to accomplish it (See, e.g., 1 Kings 17:8–16). The Lord has provided food for thousands when necessary (Luke 9:13–17). Providing food for His people when needed is within His Divine power (Ex. 16:11–31).

Why would the Lord give this commandment to the twelve? Why would He do it publicly? What responsibility does that impose upon the twelve? What responsibility does it impose upon the

audience? If the twelve today were to be supported by only food given them by believers, clothes provided by followers, material given through donations from those to whom they ministered, would it be different than the system we have in place today? Would that be different from tithing money used for salaries paid them today? Would the supplemental income from book sales, service on boards of directors (which has been greatly reduced and was planned to be entirely eliminated) fit into the system Christ describes here? [President Monson's General Conference talk about his wife's surgery a while back included a reference to paying taxes. She was emerging from an eighteen day coma and her first words to him were about failing to pay the "fourth quarter income tax payment." ("Abundantly Blessed", *Ensign*, May 2008). These kinds of "quarterly income taxes" are self-employment taxes and would arise either from book royalties or service on boards of directors. His paycheck from the Church would have withholding and would not require quarterly deposits.]

Is the different, more simple and very direct connection between the disciples and those to whom they ministered of value today? Is our modern sophisticated society unable to provide similar support today? Is Christ's teaching on this point outdated? If it is, then can we disregard other portions also as outdated? How do we decide what to discard and what to keep?

OCTOBER 25, 2010

3 Nephi 13:26–32

Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought

can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, even so will he clothe you, if ye are not of little faith. Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Christ illustrates His teaching of how His disciples are to be supported by analogy after analogy. He likens the principle of how His disciple-ministers are to be supported to:

- Fowls of the air, provided for by God.
- Lilies of the field, whose glorious appearance comes from God.
- Grass of the field, which are adorned by natural beauty from God.

Inherent in these analogies is the message that so long as fowls shall fly, this principle ought to be followed. So long as lilies remain on the earth growing wild, this manner of supporting His disciples ought to be followed. So long as grass shall be here, this principle should be followed.

The hopelessness of man's presumed independence from God is stressed in His statement that by taking thought none of us "can add one cubit unto his stature." Our lives are not ours. They belong to Him. We have no independence from Him. We are NOT self-existent beings. We borrow all we are and have from Him. Even, as it turns out, the dust from which we are made belongs to Him (Mosiah 2:20–25).

If God gives us air to breathe, power to exist, the capacity to move, and sustains all of us from moment to moment, then how

little faith is required to rely on Him to provide His disciples with food and raiment?

The analogy to Solomon is also telling. “Solomon, in all his glory” is a useful way to think of the greatest man can hope for himself. The glory of Solomon was legendary. The Queen of Sheba came and marveled at what she saw in his court (1 Kings 10:1–13). This was splendor, wealth and power indeed! However, Christ reminds us that these man-made marvels are nothing compared with the beauty He can supply those who are “not of little faith.” He can cover a man in glory indeed. Not as the world defines glory, but the real glory (See D&C 93: 28, 36).

The purpose of putting a man in such a dependent state before God is not to find out whether God can take care of him. God already knows what a man needs before he should even ask. But the man will, by becoming so dependent upon God, acquire a broken heart and a contrite spirit, always quick to ask, quick to listen, quick to do. Vulnerability makes a man strong in spirit. Security and wealth make a man incorrectly believe in his independence from God.

He wants His disciples to be dependent upon Him. He wants them praying, and then grateful to Him for what He provides. He wants them, in a word, to become holy.

Such a system would be impractical in a post-industrial society like ours, wouldn't it?

OCTOBER 25, 2010

3 Nephi 13:33

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

What comes first? Why?

How can “all these things” then “be added unto you?” What are “these things?” Is it the food, raiment, etc.?

Why would the Lord want the disciples to first seek the kingdom of God before promising that the things would be “added unto” them?

If they don't first seek the kingdom, then will things not be added to them?

What is “the kingdom of God?” Is there a difference between:

- The Church of Jesus Christ
- The Kingdom of God
- Zion?

What is the “kingdom of God” if it is not the church? When is the “kingdom” to be found? What is necessary for it to exist? Joseph Smith taught:

What constitutes the Kingdom of God? an administrator who has the power of calling down the oracles of God, and subjects to receive those oracles no matter if there is but 3, 4, or 6 there is the kingdom of God. (William Clayton Journal entry January 22, 1843, capitalization as in original)

If we accept Joseph's definition, why would the disciples be encouraged to “seek the kingdom of God?”

What does the clarification that the “kingdom of God” should be sought first tell us about everything else?

Has the “kingdom of God” been here before now? Is it here now? What does it mean to call down the oracles of God?

Does man control this or does God?

What is man's role in establishing the "kingdom of God?" Is man's role confined to "seeking first" for it to come? How would man seek it?

If you want to "seek the kingdom of God" how would you go about doing so?

What does your "seeking" have to do with the return of the "kingdom of God?"

The Lord will not bring again Zion without there being a people who are prepared to receive what He intends to bring. How can you do that?

OCTOBER 26, 2010

3 Nephi 13:34

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient is the day unto the evil thereof."

This is the child's view of life. A child is perpetually in the "now" and does not regret yesterdays or plan tomorrows. It is all about what happens to you at the moment.

Each day's challenge is the end goal. In addition to severing the disciples from regular income, regular work for support, dependence on those to whom they minister for bread, drink, shelter and clothing, the Lord adds to their burden the heavy responsibility to "take no thought for the morrow." For them their ministry is to be moment to moment. No planning and rehearsals. No staging and frantic preparation. No three-year budgets. Only now. Forever only now.

It is an interesting position Christ wants to put His chief disciples into. It forces us to carefully consider why He would do so?

Is it to keep them humble?

Is it to prevent pride and arrogance?

Is it to require they remain in constant direct touch with at least some of those over whom they minister?

Is it to keep them keenly aware of the necessity of relying on Him?

If they cannot plan for more than the day's events, how can they plan a busy travel schedule to take them all over the world? Is that somehow built in already to the "sufficient is the day unto the evil thereof?"

What kind of life would this create for His disciples chosen to minister to others? Would they ever be able to minister to more than just a few at a time under this system? If they are limited to serving only a few at a time, then how would an entire church receive benefit from this kind of spontaneous ministry? What kind of changes would that make in how a church is run and organized?

Just how impractical do we think this manner of organizing would be in a multi-national, multi-lingual, 13 million member church? If it is impractical, should the Lord's teachings be revised or should we change our way of thinking about His church and system?

If this were to be implemented, how would you go about organizing it? Would you divide the world into twelfths? Within that division, would you expect the disciple assigned to "drop in" to stake conferences and ward meetings unannounced? Would that prevent central planning and budgeting by the chief disciples? Would it force the Presiding Bishop's office to take concerns for all temporal concerns and budgets? Why would letting an Aaronic Priesthood office be concerned with temporal affairs and freeing up Melchizedek Priesthood for spiritual concerns be an unwelcome change?

Would this fundamentally transform the role of leadership? How? Would it be chaos, or would it be an improvement? Why?

Just how dumb an idea is this that Christ is teaching to the chosen twelve? If not dumb, then it is at least of limited practicality when growth in numbers and locations makes it burdensome? Was Christ's teaching here short-sighted? Did He fail to make provisions for the modern church, with its global spread and cross-language needs and budgets?

When the Book of Mormon was restored, this sermon was restored to us. When restored, it clarified how this portion of the sermon was addressed to the presiding twelve disciples. Was there a Divine purpose or message behind it? Should it be considered as meaningful to us today? Christ lived an interesting life. He more or less followed this counsel, though in truth He understood and fulfilled the prophecies concerning Himself. Yet, throughout it all, He also seemed to surrender control to the Father in everything (See, e.g., Mark 13:32). He commented on how spontaneous a life He lived, and how unpredictable things were when following the Spirit (John 3:6–8).

from the desk of
Denver Snuffer

VOLUME 4

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VOLUME 4

OCTOBER 26, 2010—APRIL 19, 2012

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

A Note to the Reader:

This multi-volume series covers blog entries beginning in 2010. Scripture references in the text refer to the LDS versions of scripture found in the King James Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. Beginning about March 2018 the scripture cites change to the Restoration Edition of the scriptures. Cites of the Restoration Edition scriptures are typically denoted with OC, NC and T&C references e.g., (NC Matt. 8:10), or alternately (1 Ne. 1:22 RE) setting them apart from the former LDS scripture version references. For those interested, a scripture reference conversion tool that allows navigation between the various scripture references and versions can be accessed at: <https://scriptures.info/Scriptures/ReferenceTranslator>

CHAPTER 1

3 Nephi 14

OCTOBER 26, 2010

3 Nephi 14:1–2

And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he turned again to the multitude, and did open his mouth unto them again, saying: Verily, verily, I say unto you, Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

This reiterates the doctrine in the Lord's instruction on prayer. Your judgment of others will become the basis for your own judgment by the Father. Apply mercy to receive mercy. Apply forgiveness to merit forgiveness. Act harshly to receive harsh treatment. Show strict judgment, and receive it in return. It is the perfect balance. What you send out returns to you. It is karma. The words are right out of Christ's own mouth.

More importantly, notice how He transitions from speaking to His twelve about their new, spontaneous ministry into the public judgment of what was to follow? In other words, if these thoughts are related, (and I think they are) then He is saying His twelve disciples may take a while to get to the needs of those as-

sembled. Therefore, be patient. This new lifestyle for the disciples will be difficult on them. In order to receive a reward, those who are being ministered to need to bear patiently with the ensuing efforts of the twelve.

This was to be a new community formed among these people. In it, there will be servants called to minister (the twelve), who will be limited in what they are able to do. They will be needy, dependent, and vulnerable. They will have needs. Supply the needs without being put off by what they are not able to do. View them with compassion as they seek to do as they have been told. Don't withhold substance, food, raiment, or housing from them because you are unhappy with what little they have been able to do. Show them kindness.

The statement is broader than that, of course. It implies similar patience with everyone. But the point that this practice should begin with these twelve ministers ought not be lost.

The context of “judge not that ye be not judged” is framed by the statement that “with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” We do “judge” one another because we must. But the judgment should err on the side of forgiving. It should err in favor of trusting motives to be pure, and intent to be good. We should be generous with our gratitude, evaluations and suppositions. When we know someone is misbehaving, we should make allowances for their shortcomings, forgive them before they ask, and impute no retribution because of their offensive conduct.

This does not make us better than another, it makes us whole. It allows the Lord to forgive us for our own, much greater offenses against Him. For when we are generous, we merit His Divine generosity. It is how we are healed. It is the means for our own

salvation. Instead of thinking ourselves better than an offender, we should look upon them with gratitude for they provide the means to obtain salvation—provided we give them forgiveness from all their offenses. This is why we should rejoice and be exceedingly glad (3 Nephi 12:10–12). They enable us to obtain salvation by despitefully using us, as long as we measure them by the same standard that allows God to forgive us.

What perfect symmetry: You measure to others using instrument that will be used by God to measure back to you. So your ready forgiveness is how God will treat you. All those grudges can be replaced with petitions to God to forgive those who abused you. As you lay aside all those sins against you, committed by others, it will purge from you all your own sins.

Straight and narrow indeed.... But oddly appropriate and altogether within your control.

OCTOBER 27, 2010

3 Nephi 14:3–5

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother: Let me pull the mote out of thine eye—and behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye.

The defect in judging is the position from which we proceed. We are blind. We have too many subjective problems in our background. Our training, education, culture, presumptions, prejudices, “things we *just know* to be true”, ignorance, preoccupations and impatience interfere with our perceptions. We act on errors and

reach wrong conclusions. We measure with defective tools, then decide the matter from the wrong measure.

Christ is reminding us that whenever we are inclined to correct another person, more often than not, we suffer from whatever defect we see in others. This is why we notice it. We see it because it is really us. We are sensitive to the problem because we own the problem.

First, whenever we see something amiss in another, start with the realization that we are seeing ourselves. Start inside. Ask, “why does this bother me?” “Am I really seeing myself in a mirror?” Then be grateful you saw another person display your problem. You now know what is wrong with you. Forgive them, fix you.

The tendency to withhold patience is more often than not because their “mote” excites your notice through your own “beam.” A “mote” is a speck, a bit of sawdust. A “beam” is a board. Yours is the greater defect. For in you is not only the defect, but the tendency to judge others harshly. Both are wrong.

When you have at last purged the defect, struggled to overcome and conquer the temptation or tendency, perhaps the price you pay to do so will make you humble enough to assist another. Not from the position as judge and condemner, but from the position of one who can help. When you “see clearly,” then you may be able to “cast the mote out of thy brother’s eye.” For now you see him as your “brother.” And in a kindly and affectionate manner you may act to reclaim him. Not as a judge, but as a brother.

This is a continuing petition to make things better. But the only way you make them better by starting inside. It is not for you to work on others, nor move outside your own range of defects, until you have first fixed what you lack. When you can proceed with charity to assist others to overcome what you have overcome

yourself, then it is appropriate to approach your “brother” in kindness to help. Until then, stop judging and start removing “beams” from yourself.

Brilliant and peaceful. Revolutionary and kind. Christ is the ultimate True Teacher. He could teach such things because He was such things. His disciples will, in turn, take His teachings and His example and do likewise.

OCTOBER 27, 2010

3 Nephi 14:6

“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”

This is a preamble to what immediately follows. It is a caution about how to weigh what can be said, and what is to be kept private between a person and the Lord.

Almost without exception, people who are unable to keep *sacred* things which are **most sacred** will never receive exposure to the **most sacred**. The Temple ordinances are an elaborate test of ones trustworthiness. There are a variety of things designated as “most sacred” which are then “guarded by covenants and obligations” that require they not be revealed “except in a certain place” which will always be limited. The material then revealed is to be kept as “most sacred,” though in truth, it is a test where symbolic information is imparted to allow the spiritually mature to learn by symbol some hidden meaning and mystery about God. To the immature, the material is worthless and meaningless. Nothing of value is gained. It is a symbol without an interpretation. It can only be an idol to them as they mistake the symbol for underlying meaning.

When a person treats the information in an appropriate way, they “prove” themselves (Abraham 3:25) worthy of weightier information to be given them (D&C 132:20–21). Then they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart, only according to the heed and diligence which another should give to the word (Alma 12:9).

What is holy belongs to those who make themselves holy through their repentance. It does not belong to the unclean, who are “dogs” and unrepentant.

When the price is paid, the person trusted, and the mysteries shown them, they possess pearls of great price. Such things do not belong to “swine” who are unclean and unrepentant, unwilling to do what is needed to qualify for the Lord’s presence, unthankful and unholy.

Entrusting the things that are in truth “most sacred” to those who are not qualified will arouse their anger. They will “turn and rend you” because you have shown them something which excites their envy, jealousy, hatred and fear. They know you have something they lack. They resent you because of what they cannot easily obtain. Therefore, you must measure carefully what you give to others. The final arbiter of the decision to impart is not made by you, it is made by the Lord.

Those who are eager to share with others any tidbit of information they learn about the sacred are not helping anyone, and may forfeit things themselves. Why would they do such a thing? Is it to make themselves look good; therefore vanity? Is it to try to help others? If it is to help, then the information should not be shared; the manner in which the information is gained should be shared. Teaching another the way to receive sacred information for themselves is charitable. Showing off sacred information is worse

than foolish, it will bless no one, and destroy both the unprepared audience and the unwise speaker.

I have tried to be an example of this principle. First I learned something, then I began to teach it. When teaching, I have carefully measured anything I have taught against the Lord's cautions and limitations. I have affirmed in the fewest words that the promises made by the Lord are true, and that I am a witness of their truth. But I have not shared anything beyond the process, which I have taught so others may learn how to proceed. It has not been about me, or about anything I may know. It has been about the Lord and the process to know Him. It is clear that some people are completely uninterested in anything other than some new disclosure, some new mystery unfolded. They are not interested in anything other than to be titillated. I cannot help them. I have nothing to offer. But if someone wants to approach God, then I may be able to teach something of value in what I've written. But not if they are unwilling to start at the first and proceed through everything I've written in the order they were written. Jumping to the end of the process is worthless. Gathering tidbits is unwise as it gives you only enough information to be dangerous. It is the path to follow Christ that matters.

Getting to know the Lord is the definition of salvation (John 17:3). Getting to know me will save no one. **It is foolish to consider anything or anyone more important than learning the means to come back to the Lord.**

OCTOBER 28, 2010

3 Nephi 14:7-8

Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth;

and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.

Just after the caution to not give holy things to the unworthy, Christ reminds all of their obligation to ask, seek and knock. If you will ask it will be given to you. If you seek, you will find it. If you knock, things will be opened to you. But be careful not to give what is holy to the unworthy.

These ideas are related in two ways:

First, if you want what is holy, then stop being a “dog” or a “swine.” Ask, seek and knock.

Second, if you are one who is qualified and will receive holy things by your willingness to be repentant, then press forward by asking, seeking and knocking. If you do, the things which are most holy will be given.

”For every one that asketh, receiveth.” Really? Everyone? Even you? That is what Christ is saying. However, the manner in which you will receive is illustrated by “The Missing Virtue” in *Ten Parables*. Meaning that the effort to receive what you have asked the Lord could take nearly two decades, and a great deal of internal changing before you acquire what you lack. Receiving may include not only what you’ve asked to receive, but also everything you do not have in order to finally qualify to receive what you seek.

What do you associate with “findeth?” Does it suggest to you active effort, or passive receipt? To “find” something you are missing (even a small thing) what must you do? If searching is required to locate, then what do you suppose the Lord is implying by the word “findeth?”

What does it mean that “it shall be opened?” Does “opening” imply merely a view? Does it suggest also ‘entering in?’ If it

opens to view, and you then fail to 'enter in' has "opening" been worthwhile? Has anything been accomplished? Does it suggest that there is activity required of someone who has something "opened" unto them?

It is my view that the words chosen all imply a burden upon the one who asks, seeks and knocks. They are not entitled to anything just by speaking the words. They must make the effort to search into and contemplate the things they seek. Then they must change and repent of everything amiss in their lives that is revealed to them. This is to be done before they can see what is to be shown to them. If, for example, a person wants to see the other side of the mountain, they can ask daily for a view to be opened to them without ever seeing the other side. But if the Lord prompts them to take the path to the top, the Lord has given them the means to "find" and "have opened" to them the very thing they seek. Provided, of course, they are willing to walk in the path to the top of the mountain. When they remain on the valley floor, asking or demanding more, they are not really asking, seeking and knocking. They are irritating and ungrateful. The Lord's small means are capable of taking the one who seeks to the very thing they desire (Alma 37:7). But without cooperation with Him they can receive nothing.

The Lord's small means are how great things are brought to pass (1 Ne. 16:29). But for some people the Lord's answers are never enough. However, when the humble who ask, seek and knock follow Him in these small means, they will eventually stand in His presence and partake of eternal life. But not until they have done as all others have done before them. Faith is only replaced by knowledge when the faith is strong enough to rend the veil. At that point, there is no great advantage to the person

who has already attained to this understanding by their faith. I've written about this in *The Second Comforter*. It is a true principle and remains true even today.

OCTOBER 28, 2010

3 Nephi 14:9–11

Or what man is there of you, who, if his son ask bread, will give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

This is not self-evident. If it were, then there would be more people with faith. The truth revealed here is that God is always going to bestow a worthy gift upon the person requesting it.

He will not give you a “stone” if you request “bread.” He will give you “bread.” He knows the difference. He will not disappoint you.

He knows better than any kind and caring earthly father what the needs of His children are. He intends to meet them.

However, when His children ask for something, (“bread”) and they do not yet qualify to receive, He sets about preparing them to receive it. He is willing to give. We are not always prepared to receive. Therefore, when He intends to bestow the gift upon the person requesting it, He first prepares the vessel.

We are impatient. We want quickly what can sometimes only be obtained in patience. We are in a rush, but our development requires patience. Some things require time and persistence to prepare us for the blessing we seek. Joseph remarked: “The things of God are of deep import, and time, experience, and careful and

ponderous, and solemn thoughts, can only find them out.” This is the way of God. It is adapted to give us what we lack, even if we are unaware of what we lack.

The Father always intends to give to those who ask, seek and knock just as Christ has explained. However, the Father knows “much more” than do we as to how to “give good things to them that ask.” He will not merely give the thing requested. He will add to it such things as are needed to prepare you to receive them.

This, then, is the process: We ask. Without a request, the laws governing things prevent bestowal. We can’t be given until first we ask.

When we have asked, the Father will give. He will give “every good gift” needed, and not just what has been asked. If there is, (as is almost always the case) a gulf between what you have asked of Him, and your capacity to receive it, then He will set about giving you every needful thing to enable you to receive.

If you ask for strength, He will provide you with that experience necessary to develop the strength you seek. If you seek for patience you will be given Divinely ordained experiences by Him that are calculated to develop in you what you have sought. He knows you and knows what you need. Whatever is asked of Him, He will set about to ordain.

It will come in a perfectly natural progression. It will occur in accordance with both natural and eternal law. If you fight against it, you prolong the time when you will receive what you have asked of Him. If you cooperate, it will flow unto you without compulsory means in a natural progression (D&C 121:46).

If you do not ask, it will not be given. If you do not seek, you cannot possibly find. If you are unwilling to knock, the door will

remain shut to you. But if you do these things, then you must cooperate with Him as He prepares you to receive what He will bestow.

After asking, seeking and knocking, then a process is invoked in which the Father prepares you to receive. You will receive as soon as He can prepare you by experience, by careful, thoughtful, ponderous thought through time and experiences adapted to give you what is asked. When, at last, you have been adequately prepared, you will have gone through exactly what every other soul before you has experienced to prepare them. There are no shortcuts. There are no exceptions. It is in accordance with laws ordained before the foundation of the world. Everyone who has obtained what you seek will have done so in conformity with the very same laws. The Father will work with you to prepare you to receive what you seek.

This is a reaffirmation by Christ of the process and the Father's role in bringing it to pass. If you trust Him, trust also His Father's deliverance of you. You will be delivered. You will receive from Him who knows how to bestow every good gift what you have asked of Him.

OCTOBER 29, 2010

3 Nephi 14:12

“Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets.”

This thought has been taken from the talk and made a law unto itself. Perhaps it belongs there. But it also integrates into the sermon as well.

Remember what preceded this comment. The Father is the giver of “good gifts” and will give you “bread” when you ask it. He will never give you a “stone” when you ask of Him bread.

This follows. You must also become the giver of good gifts. You must also provide to others what they need from you. How *you* give, unlocks the Father's ability to give to you. Every principle is eternal. Every life requires the balance.

When you seek, you must free the Father's hand to give to you by what you give to others. Without equitable treatment of others, the Father cannot give you.

Your relationship with your fellow man defines your relationship with the Father. Your kindness towards others establishes the conditions of His ability to give kindness to you.

Be careful how you treat others. It affects how the Father is permitted to treat you. It is an eternal principle (Alma 41:15).

The law and all the prophets were attempting to teach us to deal equitably with one another. What Christ is summarizing is the intent of all that has been given to us in the law and prophets.

Give what you want. Be fair, even generous. It will return to you. No matter how this life disappoints, discourages or frustrates you, keep pressing forward with good cheer. It will be for your good and, as it all concludes, will return to you glory.

This is how the world can be redeemed. This is how Zion will be brought again. It will be the Lord's doing, because it will be through following His commandments that people can be prepared. Those who will participate will necessarily need to heed His commandments. If they do, there will be no poor among them. They will be of one mind and one heart, because they will share the same vision of how to live. They will give one another what they would like to receive, and the result will be the return of a society that has rarely existed on this earth. Heaven can guide and teach us how it is to be done. But we must do it.

Even if no one else will live this principle, you can. If you do, the Lord is able to “take up His abode with you” and even bring you to the Father (John 14:23). Not in some distant time, nor merely “in your heart.” It is literal (D&C 130:3).

The way to prove these teachings is to live them. If you do, you will know the doctrine’s truth (John 7:17).

In this brief statement Christ has captured the underlying message of all the prophets from Moses to Christ. It is the reason for God working with Israel. It is the way for any person to find their way back to God.

This message is succinct, profound, and able to transform life. Christ was the Master Teacher. In this brief statement He has proven His standing as the greatest source of truth of all those who have instructed others. It is because of this ringing truth that Christ’s message has endured through millennia of apostasy and darkness. Words such as these will outlast empires, shine in darkness and subdue critics. He was and is indeed the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6).

OCTOBER 29, 2010

3 Nephi 14:13–14

Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, which leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat; Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

This is re-affirmation of man’s tendency to reject the right way. The narrowness of it requires surrender of the selfish, parting with pride and sacrifice of self-will.

Many prefer their ignorance to light. Therefore, they will not draw toward the light when it is revealed to them. Without drawing closer to the light they cannot comprehend what the Lord is teaching. It makes no sense to them. For it requires light to comprehend light. Therefore unless a person is willing to increase in light they are left in darkness and unable to apprehend any of what saves them. It remains a mystery to them.

The way to darkness is broad and easy. It requires no effort. It welcomes you. It tempts you with its ease. Because there are “many who go in thereat” it is also popular. When, therefore, you take opinion polling and focus group testing as the measure of a proposition you are only joining to the wide, broad way which will be popular.

Truth challenges. It requires change. It informs you of your faults and mistakes. It is difficult because you are called to rise above what the world is doing, what the world is saying and what the world accepts as good and true. This tendency to want to be popular can twist you away from truth quicker than any other corrupting influence here. This is why Nephi cautioned about the latter-day churches which crave popularity and acceptance (1 Nephi 22:23).

There will only be a “few who find it.” Even in the day in which we live, the measure will always be “few.” Not in a relative sense, but in an absolute sense. Few. Period. Only a small number.

Looking down through the ages, speaking with the vision of a prophet, the number of those who, living in the last days would have the Father’s name upon their forehead, were only 144,000 (Rev. 7:3–4). Though from all ages the number would be in the millions (Rev. 7:9, 13–14). Still, we live in the time when a living number who are prepared for the return of Christ will be but few in an

absolute sense (D&C 77:11). Even if they have wives and children, yet the number will remain but few.

It is foolish to believe the conditions for salvation are any different for you than they were for Enoch, Moses, Abraham, Isaiah, Elijah, Peter or Joseph. This Gospel is the same. Always and in every generation it is the same. The odds are that but few of those who are living will go in thereat. All the opinion polling to test for popular acceptance of a message cannot deliver a message from God to mankind. It can only entice you to the broad, wide gate “which leadeth to destruction.”

The Lord could not be more plain. The teachings which preceded this statement are His invitation. Here He gives His prophetic description of the audience’s response. From all those who will read or hear His words, every soul will be accountable. From among those, like you, who are accountable, there will be but “few who find it.”

Why is that so? What is so important about the world’s acceptance that a fool will treasure it before their own salvation? What can the world offer in exchange that you tempt you to give your soul? (Matt. 16:26). How many will lament when the summer is passed, the harvest has come, that their soul has not been saved (D&C 45:2).

This is a sobering remark by the forgiving Lord. He invites all to come to Him. But He is realistic about how few will respond. It requires repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost and living by every word which comes from Him. It is strait and therefore narrow. But it lies in a straight path before you. You can know you are on it when you encounter the gate-keeper, for He has no servant there. He alone maintains that gate through which entry to salvation is gained (2 Nephi 9:41).

Study, therefore, to show yourself approved (2 Tim. 2:15).

OCTOBER 30, 2010

3 Nephi 14:15–20

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them.

This test is only necessary if He intends to send prophets. The test is given so you may identify both true and false prophets. Implicit in this, is the obligation to personally account for your response to those He sends, and those who claim to be sent by Him. You must choose. Your choice will count for and against you. You must grow to apply the test correctly.

The concept of “sheep’s clothing” is worth pondering. Why is it even possible for such a thing as “sheep’s clothing?” Think about it. The attire or mantle they pretend to possess is necessarily “sheep-like” to the casual observer. That is, the “office” or the position or conduct or credentials of the false prophet must be misleading. They should appear bona fide. They need to seem authentic.

Now, lest you be confused about the “wolves” who occupy these positions, it does not mean an utterly corrupt, completely perverse man. It only requires the “wolves” to be unable to deliver a true message from the Lord. It only requires that they not be sent with an authentic message from Him. They must pretend to be His, but He has nothing to do with their message.

So, how are we to distinguish between the “sheep” and the “wolves” who come as “prophets” from the Lord? In a word, it is the “fruit.” What does the message produce?

A false prophet’s message will produce as its fruit vanity, corruption, evil, foolishness, arrogance, self-assuredness, error, distance from the Lord, poor understanding, popularity, wealth, success, ease, false hopes, ingratitude, pride, displays of popularity, worldliness, hard hearts and ten thousand other meaningless or deceptive fruits.

A true prophet’s message will produce repentance.

The only good fruit which can be offered in this world is repentance. When mankind lays down their sins because of a message, that message comes from Him. All others are distractions and invite you to err. The fruit which gives eternal life is repentance and a return to Christ.

When the message comes from a false prophet, you can know the messengers, along with those who listen to it, and the message itself will be “hewn down, and cast into the fire.” It will be purged.

When the message comes from a true prophet, you can know the message, along with those who heed it, and the messenger will survive the burning which is to come, because they are purged by repentance and can abide the day of wrath.

Few there be that find it, indeed.... It needn’t be so. But as Joseph Smith commented:

The world always mistook false prophets for true ones, and those that were sent of God, they considered to be false prophets, and hence they killed, stoned, punished and imprisoned the true prophets, and these had to hide themselves ‘in deserts and dens, and caves of the earth’ (Heb. 11:38), and though the most honorable men of the earth, they banished them from their society as vagabonds,

whilst they cherished, honored and supported knaves, vagabonds, hypocrites, impostors, and the basest of men. (DHC 4:574)

I suppose that will always be the case. However, we have a guarantee the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is unable (and will always be unable) to lead us astray. It is little wonder we cherish, honor and support that office as we do; preferring it even above scripture (See “Fourteen Fundamentals for Following the Prophet”, Ezra Taft Benson, BYU Address February 26, 1980; the second fundamental; recently spoken of in our last General Conference).

OCTOBER 31, 2010

3 Nephi 14:21

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.

This was a favorite quote from President Kimball. It really puts Christ’s followers on notice that confessing with the lips with no accompanying action to obey Him will not allow anyone into the kingdom of heaven.

Christ could not be more clear in this statement. The evangelical crowd quotes Paul’s statement, “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation,” as proof to contradict the Lord (Romans 10:10). Paul does not explain salvation in that brief aside. Confession requires the confessor to go forward and present their entire life as a living sacrifice, continually obedient unto God (as he explains later in the very same letter) (Romans 12:1–2). This foolish error is creeping into Mormonism with each passing day.

From Professor Steven Robinson's rapprochement in *How Wide the Divide?* to Alonzo Gaskill's awful mistake called *Odds Are You're Going To Be Exalted*, the erosion of doctrine to conform to the evangelical "market" continues apace.

They teach for doctrines the commandments of men. Their creeds are an abomination. The professors of these creeds are all corrupt. (I'm only quoting Christ.) (See *JS-H 1:19*). We would be better informed to draw the starkest, widest and clearest distinctions between ourselves and them, rather than seeking to be regarded as another brand of mainstream Christianity.

Calling Christ "Lord, Lord" will accomplish nothing. There will be those who claim they are "of Christ" but who are no better than the liars, thieves and whoremongers (D&C 76:99–104). It is not a "brand name" to associate with. It is a Teacher to follow.

Christ teaches the will of the Father. Conforming to the will of the Father is required to "enter into the kingdom of heaven." Confession without conformity to His will is worse than meaningless. It is evidence that you are superstitious and foolish. You want Christ as a magic talisman, to be invoked to control the outcome of your life. But you do not want to honor Him by doing as He teaches. You do not want to live as He would want you to live. You do not want to surrender your sins and seek after truth and light.

The simple life which Christ describes in this sermon is how we are to conform to His will. We have taken it bit by bit to examine how living that life should be accomplished. This is the blueprint for understanding the Lord and meeting Him. It is not intended to cause pride, but to provoke repentance. It is the means by which we can know Him.

As the sermon is ending, He reminds those present that calling out to Him and honoring Him with the title of “Lord” will never be enough. You must do as He taught.

There is no other way.

The path is identical for everyone.

You are as capable of doing this as any person who ever lived here. The difference between you and those who have succeeded only exists so long as you refuse to repent. Repentance will cure your lack of faith. Your confidence will increase in the Lord as you lay aside the sins which beset you.

The symmetry of Christ’s sermon is astonishing. The closing call to follow Him is unmistakably sobering. It is not enough to sit in an audience honoring Him by showing brief attention to His talk. The talk must become alive in you.

NOVEMBER 2010

NOVEMBER 1, 2010

3 Nephi 14:22–23

Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them: I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Another group will call out to Him in the Day of Judgment saying, “Lord, Lord” showing respect and honor by their lips. It is not the lips which honor Him. The heart must follow His path (JS-H 1:19).

Who will claim to have “prophesied in [His] name?” Who will claim to have “cast out devils in [His] name?”

Who will claim to have done “many wonderful works” in His name?

What will their conduct in mortality have been in order to justify this claim in the Day of Judgment?

Despite claims to have “prophesied,” and to have “cast out devils,” and to have performed “many wonderful works,” these people are unknown to Him. He will respond: “I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

How can “prophesying in Christ’s name” be a work of “iniquity?”

How can “casting out devils” in Christ’s name be a work of “iniquity?”

How can a person do “many wonderful works” in Christ’s name yet still be doing “iniquity?”

How can people use the Lord’s name with apparent success in claiming to have “prophesied,” and to have “cast out devils,” and done “many wonderful works” yet still be someone He does not know.

How would you determine if you were known to Him?

What would He (not you) need to do in order for you to be known to Him? How would you come to know Him and He to know you?

Do you now see why I have written what I’ve written? The message is an invitation to come to have Him know you. To have Him take up His abode with you. To affirm to you what your true standing is before Him. Joseph Smith could not know what his standing was before God until he asked the Lord, and received a manifestation from Him (*JS-H* 1:29). How can you know if you do not similarly ask.

This teaching by Christ does not challenge the reasons men claim to be justified. He does not say they “falsely claim” to have

prophesied in His name. He merely accepts the claim without criticism. These people will genuinely believe they were prophesying, casting out devils, and doing what they believe to be many marvelous works in His name. Yet their hearts are far from Him.

Therefore, take care that you do not mislead yourself by presuming the things which are done by you in His name are accepted by Him. It is a terrible thing to take His name in vain. To claim He has sent you when He has not, is not only wrong, it is inviting the Lord to say to you in the last day: “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

The commandment at the front end is to not take the Lord’s name in vain (Exo. 20:7). The result at the back end is revealed here. Take care in how you presume your acts are in harmony with Him. Until He speaks to you, and affirms that you have a work to do for Him, you may only be working iniquity.

NOVEMBER 1, 2010

3 Nephi 14:24–25

Therefore, whoso heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock—And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

The “wise man” is the one who is saved.

The “house” is an eternal family, continuation of seed, or eternal life. The “rock” is Christ.

The descending storm represents the waters of chaos that destroyed the lives of the rebellious at the time of Noah. The rain, winds, floods are descriptive of God’s judgment of mankind at that

moment. Any soul must build their character, the light they possess, and their choices on Christ to withstand the day of judgment. If they do not, they construct their life on the unstable sand of this broken world, and nothing will endure.

Stability into eternity is built upon Christ's teachings. He came to us to show by example and to teach by word the things which all who are saved must become.

Few are interested in becoming what He was.

This summation is brief, cutting to the heart of the matter. But it is powerful in its plain language.

Christ was the Master Teacher. He said, with great clarity, in a few direct words what He wanted us to understand.

If we fail to heed this warning, then our eternal weakness is because of our choice. If we heed it, then He has provided both the teaching and the example to let us follow.

It is interesting how history has been affected by Christ's teachings. Wars and empires have claimed Christ as their sponsor. He has been a shield for every excess and wickedness imagined by man.

These comments are not about how to build a country, empire or corporation. It is about how to build your life. You cannot control anything other than your choices. But you can choose to follow Him, build your life on the teachings we have been looking at in this sermon. If you do, you build upon the Rock of Heaven (Moses 7:53).

NOVEMBER 2, 2010

3 Nephi 14:26–27

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand— And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the

winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it.

This is where it ends for most people. They “hear” what Christ has to say, but they don’t “do” anything to change what they are, how they live, or if they will repent.

We are all in need of repentance, more or less continually. Repentance is required for a lifetime.

There comes a point when passions and tempers cool with age. But for most people, even with the Lord’s help, it will be some time before they obtain the upper hand on their weaknesses. What is it, then, that repentance does to cure us?

To repent is to turn to Him. To turn to Him is to face Him, listen to Him, heed Him and pay attention to what He is, says, does. It is to seek to be in contact with Him.

If you are in contact with Him, He will teach you all things you should do (2 Nephi 32:6). Constant contact between you and Him can and will occupy your desires, thoughts and deeds. But turning to face Him is left to you. He cannot enter where He is not invited. He may want to be a part of your life more than you want Him to. It is your choice to let Him in.

Hearing alone will not save you. Doing is the thing which saves.

Implicit in this is that there is no new great secret you need to uncover in order to be built upon His rock. It is only necessary to do what you already know needs to be done. Discovering mysteries, particularly borrowed ones from others who have had them revealed to them, is little more than eavesdropping on a conversation you have not been invited to share. It avails you nothing. Go have your own conversation with Him.

The means to having that conversation is within your grasp. Do what you already understand is required of you. I’m not speaking

of a list of do's and don'ts out of some church manual. I'm talking about asking with real intent, repenting and seeking to have His will revealed to you. Act without hypocrisy. Be willing to take upon you His wishes for you. We've been going through that for months now. It is the "system" He has ordained for us can come to Him. It is not enough to hear it, or read it. It must be done. So do it.

Some people have reacted to the earlier discussion on this blog about rebaptism as if that were a radical idea. It is only taken from the Book of Mormon. I noted, however, that in the early church of this era, it was customary to be rebaptized.

There was a time when stake presidents were told to issue temple recommends to members after they were rebaptized. However radical it may seem today, it is not foreign either to the Book of Mormon or to practices of the church in this dispensation.

Most of you have more than enough left undone at the moment. You needn't find some new tidbit if you have not become a "doer" of the things already in your possession.

When the Lord asks anything of you, do it. Do it even when it is something you would greatly prefer not to do, because that is when He will draw close to you.

CHAPTER 2

3 Nephi 15

NOVEMBER 2, 2010

3 Nephi 15:1

And now it came to pass that when Jesus had ended these sayings he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and said unto them: Behold, ye have heard the things which I taught before I ascended to my Father; therefore, whoso remembereth these sayings of mine and doeth them, him will I raise up at the last day.

Christ affirms that the sermon He just delivered was His sermon and teachings “before [He] ascended to [His] Father.” This sermon was likely delivered at many gatherings by Him during His mortal life. For example, when Mark mentions Him teaching without any discussion of the content (Mark 2:13), this sermon was likely being repeated by Him. There are other occasions when His message was not preserved, but where He was clearly teaching. The remark here suggests the sermon was not a one-time event. Rather it constituted His mortal ministry’s primary message.

Why do you suppose He “cast His eyes round about on the multitude?” Was that mentioned because it was important to your understanding? What should you understand by this act?

Why does He mention “ascending to the Father?” Why is it important for these people to know of that event? What does that event tell you about Him?

What is the difference between “remembering these sayings,” and “remembering and doing these sayings?” Do you both remember and do them?

What does the promise to be “raised up at the last day” mean? Unto what would the Lord raise one up? Can you rise from the dead and be “raised up at the last day?” Would there be more to His “raising up at the last day” for someone who had done as He taught?

The way Christ lived His life gives Him the right to teach us all what we need to do in order to be saved. He understood because He lived these principles.

He “looks upon” each of us because we can all live these teachings. Adding a little at a time, bit by bit, precept by precept, we can all live them. Not in a rush, but deliberately and with appropriately measuring each of life’s events against His teachings as they come to us.

We are capable of much more than we think.

In fact, we are capable doing and being everything He has been teaching us. He hasn’t given this talk to govern the lives of some special, small group of distant icons. They were meant to be the means for healthy living. They are how we are supposed to deal with one another.

Remember them. Then live them. He will “raise you up” not only in the last day, but each day as you have His Spirit to be with you.

NOVEMBER 3, 2010

3 Nephi 15:2

And it came to pass that when Jesus had said these words he perceived that there were some among them who marveled, and wondered what he would concerning the law of Moses; for they understood not the saying that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new.

In the preceding verse I asked why Christ was looking at the group. Now we see the answer. He looked about at those who listened to Him because He was taking in their presence. He was listening to them. Not with the ears, but with His eyes and His heart. He “perceived” what concerned them.

These people derived their security from the Law of Moses. It was the tradition they were raised with; it was what they understood. The Lord’s declaration that it had “passed away” was disorienting.

It is troubling to find your religious tradition has run its course, and will be replaced. People crave certainty and order. This desire is so strong in people that they will endure almost anything in order to keep what is familiar to them.

Once the Lord declared that the law of Moses was fulfilled it raised concerns about how, if at all, the Sabbath was to be kept. How were disputes to be managed? What were the laws respecting interest or usury? Servitude for debt? Punishment for certain crimes? What were the rules to govern society as life went forward?

What does it mean that “all things had become new?” Were the things He just said to take effect now? What of animal sacrifice? What of the other offerings? How were religious festivities to be kept, if they were to be kept at all? Which? When?

The Lord recognized these people did not understand what the old things passing away meant. He realized there was fear and confusion because of the statement. They needed more teaching. They needed further explanation.

Moments of transition in religious epochs are troubling. Most people simply do not want to accept the new acts performed by the Lord, and those He sends. They want to wait. They want to see if the new change prospers; let others decide first, and then join after there is proof of success. They want the security of following along with others. When there are 20 million followers of a new movement, then they can accept the new movement. Not before. The problem is that by the time a movement has acquired 20 million followers, the world has required such compromises to have been made that the original movement has been diluted, altered, compromised and weakened. It may be moving forward claiming to have authority, but it will likely have lost much of its power along the way.

Followers of the Lord who were there on the day of this sermon were being told how the new movement was to proceed. He perceives the insecurities of those who are listening. He will take time to explain what is coming next.

The Lord is patient. He will instruct those who follow Him sufficiently that they can go forward with His new dispensation. However, He will expect them to perform exactly as He has taught before they can receive exactly what He has promised.

It is perfect. It is ever the way of the Lord. When He makes an offer, anyone can accept it. But it must be accepted on the terms He established. If you cannot understand, it is not because He did not make it clear enough. Rather, it is because you will not obey in order to gain the light necessary to comprehend what He is

teaching. It is your choice to draw away rather than toward Him. As a result, you cannot understand.

NOVEMBER 3, 2010

3 Nephi 15:3–5

And he said unto them: Marvel not that I said unto you that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new. Behold, I say unto you that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses. Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel; therefore, the law in me is fulfilled, for I have come to fulfil the law; therefore it hath an end.

Here is the Lord's announcement that He who gave the law to Moses. He was on the mount. He was the great I AM of the earlier covenant. He is Jehovah. He covenanted with "[His] people Israel." Indeed, it was He who both made the covenant, and then fulfilled it. He is the one who went before and the one who came after. He was the beginning and the end of the law of Moses. In Him it was fulfilled.

All the sacrifices offered in the Mosaic system of worship were designed to point to, and testify of Christ's ministry. He established the system beforehand to point to His mortal life. They testified of Him as the great and final sacrifice. From the Passover sacrifice of an unblemished lamb, to the altar of incense before the Holy of Holies, the entire Mosaic covenant was made to symbolize His life.

This was the reason He spent most of the day of His resurrection on a seven mile walk explaining to two of His followers that the entire system of worship they followed pointed to Him. His sacrifice was necessary because Moses and the prophets all

pointed to Him (Luke 24:13–27). I've explained this further in the Appendix to *Eighteen Verses* and won't repeat it here. He is affirming to the Nephites what He had earlier affirmed to Luke and Cleopas the day He was resurrected (I've explained why I believe Luke to be one of these two in *Come, Let Us Adore Him*, and won't repeat it.)

When the original revelation was given to Moses, it pointed to His great mortal ministry. This is His way. He will tell us beforehand so that when the events occur we can recognize His hand (Amos 3:7).

These Nephites are not unlike us. They wondered at the transition from one era or dispensation to another. So also in our day there is to be a transition from the original message and promise into the fulfillment of the revelation and promise. The revelation given to us in 1830 when the Book of Mormon was published to the world was intended to inform us about the coming changes we will see through the Lord's hand. We have yet to see the larger fulfillment of the promised events contained in the Book of Mormon. Gentiles are in the spotlight. But as they fade economically, militarily, socially and politically from center stage, they will fade in significance from the Lord's final great work, as well. We spent months covering those promises and prophecies. They will all certainly come to pass. As they do, false traditions will not be able to keep pace with the rapid changes to come. The law given to Moses served to point to a greater work. The Book of Mormon prepares and points to another greater work soon to come, as well.

Do not think the Lord changes. He is ever the same. As a result, the tests, trials and experiences of believers in any generation will mirror one another. Some wondered at the Lord's fulfillment

of the earlier law. There will also be those who are struck with wonder as the Book of Mormon prophecies unfold. If there was ever a time when the caution to be careful about false prophets pretending to be sheep, it is certainly in our generation. Keeping your eye on the Lord, and His promises is more important now than ever before. He is reliable, even if governments, others and institutions fail you.

The fulfillment of the Lord's covenants is a wonderful thing. When it happens it proves He cares (D&C 133:52), He keeps covenants (Deut. 7:9), and He is in control (Psl. 93:1-5). It is not something to fear, but instead to welcome. As things change, and the pace of change itself accelerates, take heart. Though there will be perplexities of nations with distress (Luke 21:25), there is still the promise Abinadi reminded us of that the Lord will bring again Zion (Mosiah 15:29-31).

We ought to identify with the message Christ gave these Nephites. We are going to see similar fulfillment of covenant promises made by Him in the not so distant future.

NOVEMBER 4, 2010

3 Nephi 15:6-8

Behold, I do not destroy the prophets, for as many as have not been fulfilled in me, verily I say unto you, shall all be fulfilled. And because I said unto you that old things have passed away, I do not destroy that which hath been spoken concerning things which are to come. For behold, the covenant which I have made with my people is not all fulfilled; but the law which was given unto Moses hath an end in me.

The Lord does not make a promise and fail to fulfill it (D&C 1:38). Therefore, when a promise has been made by Him, it will come to pass. But the promise must be His. No agent or spokesman can speak in His name and obligate Him to perform unless the words spoken are His. Even if a man should qualify to hold sealing power, that power will only bind what is in conformity with His word (Helaman 10:5). There is no obligation on Him to perform what is not sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise (See, e.g., D&C 132:18 and D&C 88:3). So it is not every person who speaks, even if in a position of leading others, claiming “Lord, Lord” as they do, whose words obligate the Lord to fulfill. But the opposite is also true. If the person is clothed with nothing other than the Lord’s private commission to speak, if he speaks the Lord’s words they will “all be fulfilled.” Abinadi was so obscure a character that we don’t know if he was Lamanite or Nephite. He is the only person in the entire Book of Mormon record with the name Abinadi. He came from nowhere, was imprisoned by the leading authorities of the church, and was killed by those who presumed to exercise judgment over him. Yet it was he who bore the Lord’s words. The entire society he preached to were held to account for both his words and how they reacted to them (and him).

When the Lord speaks of fulfilling the things to come, He is both ratifying the past prophets whose words have not come to pass, and He is establishing an eternal principal. It is as true today as it was anciently. When a message comes from Him, it is binding. The message is His. The power to make His message binding upon mankind is His. The right to govern all mankind is His.

The first clarification the Lord wants the people to understand is that His words are, and will remain sovereign. They will not be rescinded. It is not the prophets, nor the promises of His great

unfolding work foretold by prophetic messages that will end. It is only the law of observances given through Moses that has now been fulfilled. It is not abandoned, but rather it is fulfilled. It pointed to Him. He lived it. He fulfilled every foreshadow, every type, every promise under that law. It was His to give, and it was His life that fulfilled it.

The intergenerational work of saving mankind is always the same. The promise to save through the chosen lineage all of mankind is still in effect. It existed before Moses, and will continue after the fulfillment of the law of Moses. The great prophecies and promises pointing to His second coming remain in effect. His first coming only fulfilled Moses' law. His second will fulfill the rest of the promises concerning Him as the great Deliverer, the world's judge, and the one whose right it is to rule as "King of kings and Lord of lords."

The crowd entertained apprehensions that the prophets were now "destroyed" by Him. He made it clear that was not the case. This is why Isaiah and Zenock remain relevant to our day. This is why He will even quote from Isaiah and add Malachi to the Nephite scriptures. This is why the Lord continues to entrust men with messages which bind Him to do His final, strange work. He intends to both fulfill and inform us so we may prepare against the day of judgment. His mission is to redeem, not to surprise or confuse the worthy. If a person will but listen to Him and those He sends, they will be prepared for the coming calamities.

The consistency of this message is so profound that it reconfirms that Joseph Smith is not the source of the Book of Mormon. This is a record of the Lord's doings among an ancient and fallen people. It is not an invention of a New England farm boy. The idea Joseph Smith wrote this account is beyond incredible. It simply isn't true.

This is from the Lord, not a man. A person can get closer to God by abiding its precepts than from any other book. It is the lifeline given to us for our day. We ignore it and dismiss it at our peril.

NOVEMBER 4, 2010

3 Nephi 15:9–10

Behold, I am the law, and the light. Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life. Behold, I have given unto you the commandments; therefore keep my commandments. And this is the law and the prophets, for they truly testified of me.

It is Christ who is “the law.” Not a man or men. Nor even those sent by Him. They are relevant only to the extent they point to Him. When they attract notice for themselves, they interfere with His great work. He alone is the “law.” He alone is the “light.”

He answers the concerns these listeners have about the source they are now to look to for life and salvation. “Look unto me” He proclaims. He, not the law, is their future. They are to seek for and establish a more direct line of communication between themselves and Him.

He is the “law” — meaning that His words (both in the preceding sermon and in the revelations He will grant them) is to govern. Not a prior set of performances and ordinances.

He is the “light” — meaning, understanding will increase as they choose to follow Him. They will understand with increasing clarity as they move closer to Him. He will illuminate their understanding, because some things can only be apprehended when you draw close enough to Him for them to emerge from darkness and confusion.

“Look unto [Him]” — meaning, it is not a rule-book, ordinances or traditions which are to guide them. He will. Personally. By His

involvement in their lives, through revelation, and with the comforter or Holy Ghost which He has promised to send.

“Endure to the end” — meaning, both here and in the hereafter. It will be a great while beyond this life before you have reached the “end” He desires you to attain. Therefore, enduring requires you to fight against all that opposes truth for so long as you are allowed to participate in the battle. Not passively, taking in what is wrong and showing tolerance for it, but instead actively standing for truth as long as you exist, here and hereafter.

“Ye shall live” — meaning, the kind of life which Christ gives. That life is not mortal, though you will begin it as a mortal. That is life eternal, which is to know Him and His Father. It was designed to begin here.

“To him that endureth to the end I will give eternal life” — meaning, such people will come to live as Christ and His Father live. Or, in other words, to know truth and be filled with light (D&C 93:28, 36).

“Keep my commandments” — meaning, listen and respond to what He directs. Take what He offers. Do not decline to go and do as He bids you to do; not what you presume will please Him, but what He has counseled you to do. If you do not know what that is, then you do not read the scriptures and ask. You are deliberately without knowledge of what He would ask of you.

“This is the law and the prophets” — meaning, the culmination of all that has been given by Him is for man to come to know Him. This was the purpose behind all the symbols, all the rites, all the ordinances. It is still the purpose underlying it all. Come to Him. Not to a building and think yourself redeemed because you are part of a select group welcomed there. Come to Him. Not to

a man who will promise you heaven itself, but to Him who will open to you the heavens.

“For they truly testify of [Him]” — meaning they have and do testify of Him. Not of themselves. Not of a program. Not of an organization. Not of men. They testify of Him. Continually. Not intermittently, occasionally and without knowledge of Him. They do not borrow light from others, but they testify of the things which they know from Him. They will always do so. This is one of the ways you can detect “wolves” from “sheep” as they come professing religion. The true sheep will testify of Him whom they know. The wolves will ask you to follow men, and they interfere with knowing Him. Though you do all the wolves bid you to do, yet you will grow more distant from Him.

Our Lord is indeed a consuming fire, and is unwilling to share adoration with mere men claiming themselves to be worthy of adoration (Deut. 4:24).

NOVEMBER 5, 2010

3 Nephi 15:11–14

And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he said unto those twelve whom he had chosen: Ye are my disciples; and ye are a light unto this people, who are a remnant of the house of Joseph. And behold, this is the land of your inheritance; and the Father hath given it unto you. And not at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell it unto your brethren at Jerusalem.

Christ has identified Himself as the “light.” “Now refers to His chosen twelve disciples as His “disciples,” and a “light unto this people.” Why? How can He be the “light” and also make

disciples who follow Him a “light” to others as well? What would a disciple need to be in order for them to also reflect His light to others? How would that be accomplished? What happens if the disciples no longer reflect His light, but instead seek to be a light unto themselves? (See 2 Nephi 26:29).

Notice He identifies them as a “remnant of the house of Joseph.” This would be Joseph of Egypt. Why is “this...the land of your inheritance” if it is the tribe of Joseph? How was Joseph given the Americas as his promised land? Was that foreseen? If so, how long has the Lord had in mind the establishment of Joseph in the promised land of the Americas?

Why is the “Father” the one who has given the land of inheritance to Joseph? Why not Jesus Christ? Why does the Father keep in His authority to divide the land for inheritance?

What does it mean that the Father did not give Christ “commandment that I should tell it unto your brethren at Jerusalem?” If Christ knew it, why wouldn’t He tell it to the “brethren at Jerusalem?” Why would Christ know something of this significance and keep it to Himself?

I’ve explained in *The Second Comforter* the subject of the failure of the Nephites to ask about the “other sheep” which will occupy some of this phase of the sermon. I’m not going to repeat it here, but would refer you to that discussion on the topic.

Why do you suppose the Lord would point out this monumental failure of the disciples at Jerusalem to ask about the “other sheep?” (3 Nephi 16:4). What is it about the failure to seek knowledge from the Lord that makes people both stiffnecked and filled with unbelief? (3 Nephi 15:18).

When the Lord will tell those who ask of Him, why is it offensive to Him that people fail to ask?

Is the admonition to “ask, seek, knock” more than an admonition? Is it in fact a commandment? Are you required to search into the mysteries of God, and know more day by day as a result of inquiring of Him? Can you substitute for that by asking others about mysteries? Why not? Why is it essential to gain your knowledge from Him?

Does the Lord’s phrasing tell you something important? (“not at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell it unto your brethren at Jerusalem”)? Is Christ constrained to not disclose until those at Jerusalem ask of Him? (3 Nephi 16:4). What does that say about how this area of revelation is governed? Must the inquiry precede the revelation? What does it mean about the duty to inquire? Again, I’ve explained this in *The Second Comforter*, and would refer you to that discussion.

There must be a “living relationship” between you and the Living God. If it is not alive, then God must be dead to you. And you dead to Him. Ask, for He has promised to answer. Seek, for He has just promised you will find. Knock, for He has just assured you it will open to you. Now He is walking through a subject where much could have been revealed had the inquiry been made. It will be followed in turn by the Nephite failure to ask about the “other sheep” just as those at Jerusalem failed to ask. Again, see the discussion in *The Second Comforter* for more on this.

The next portion of this sermon is dealt with in *The Second Comforter*, or in an earlier series of posts on this blog. I’m going to skip forward at this point to cover portions I have not discussed before.

CHAPTER 3

3 Nephi 18

NOVEMBER 5, 2010

3 Nephi 18:1–2

And it came to pass that Jesus commanded his Disciples that they should bring forth some bread and wine unto him. And while they were gone for bread and wine, he commanded the multitude that they should sit themselves down upon the earth.

The Lord requires His disciples to bring some bread and wine to Him. It suggests that all 12 of these disciples were asked to retrieve the items. “While they were gone for bread and wine” suggests that all 12 were involved. Perhaps there were others, as well. What is to take place next would likely require the effort of more than 12, for it will involve all 2,500 of those present. (3 Nephi 17:25).

We know what is coming. But taking this from the perspective of the Nephite audience, what would gathering “bread” foreshadow? Would they associate it with the Table of Shewbread? Would they expect a wave offering? What might their anticipation be as they awaited the arrival of the bread? How might their expectations have prepared them to receive a new ordinance? Would what follows have reaffirmed Christ fulfilled the law of Moses?

Why did the Lord ask for “wine?” What is there in the symbol of “wine” that testifies of Him? We know that in exigencies we can substitute water for wine. (D&C 27:2). But the Lord requested “wine” to be brought for the ordinance He was about to introduce.

Section 27:2 was given because the Prophet Joseph was on his way to procure wine from an enemy who wished him harm. The possibility of the wine being adulterated was significant. Since an angel met Joseph on his way and revealed that a substitute could be used, it is likely if wine had been procured it would have been poisoned. The revelation gives precautions to be taken in preparing wine for the sacrament (D&C 27:3–4). The Saints were to prepare their own wine, and know it is safe for use in the sacrament.

To conform to this revelation, when the Saints moved west there was a “Wine Mission” established in Southern Utah. The Mormon Wine Mission did not have a formal separate existence, but was within the boundaries of the Cotton Mission of 1861. The Saints made their own wine because of D&C 27:3–4. If the Saints did not make the wine themselves, they were to use water. Therefore, to conform to the pattern of the Lord, and the revelation to guard against the mischief of enemies, the wine mission was established to produce wine for the sacrament.

Master vintner John C. Naegle was called by Brigham Young to establish and operate a winery in Toquerville and to instruct people in the wine making process. The operation that Naegle presided over built a rock house for production which included a wine cellar underneath large enough to accommodate a wagon and a team of horses and allow them to turn around. In the production house were located the vats, presses, and other production equipment to produce and ferment the wine. They produced 500-gallon casks. The wine was shipped in smaller 40-gallon casks. It was distributed

through ZCMI. Wine making became an important Southern Utah industry. As President Grant elevated the Word of Wisdom from wise advice to a strict commandment, the practice of using wine in the sacrament came to an end. Since that time Latter-day Saints have taken a dim view of using wine in the sacrament.

Ask yourself, however, which is a more appropriate symbol of the Lord's supper: water or wine? If water were more so, then why did the Lord not institute use of water among the Nephites in the ceremony He is about to introduce in the verses which follow? Why is the sacrament prayer in both Moroni 5 and D&C 20:78-79 spoken for "wine" rather than water?

Are we morally superior because we use water instead of wine? Have we replaced a powerful symbol with a fanatical rule? Is there such a risk of adulterated or poisoned wine by anti-Mormon suppliers that we are justified in not using wine in the sacrament?

Well, the stage is being set by the Lord for the Nephites in this verse. He is gathering attention for an ordinance to be instituted. For His purposes, our Lord asks for bread and wine. We should not impose a false cultural assessment on these words. We should not rewrite them because of our prejudice and bigotry into something other than what they say.

From the symbol of the crushed grape, its blood spilled and then allowed to ferment, comes a symbol of the great work of the Lord. The grape juice changes through fermentation from something which affects the senses. As the Psalmist puts it wine gladdens the heart (Psalms 104:15). His blood was spilled and then grew into a new power intended to gladden the heart of all those who will receive it.

The Prophet was overshadowed with foreboding on the day of his death. The reason Stephen Markham was not with them in

the jail at the time the final assault took place was because he had been sent to purchase wine by the Prophet. The jailer allowed the wine to return to Joseph, Hyrum, John and Willard, but Steven Markham was excluded. There were only four in the jail when the killings occurred. The reason they sent for wine was to gladden their hearts and lift their spirits from the oppression which hung over them. It was a day of triumph for evil and the spirit of that day was heavy. The wine and John Taylor's singing were to console them in the terrible moments preceding the attack by 200 conspirators intent on killing Joseph and his brother.

We have become so fanatical about being teetotalers that the story of Joseph's use of wine on the day of his martyrdom is largely unknown today. Instead the tale of him refusing to drink whiskey as a sedative for the bone operation in his youth is retold. This is used to reinforce President Grant's harsh view of the Word of Wisdom.

Now, I am advocating nothing. I abstain from all forms of alcohol, possess a temple recommend, and accept the current view of absolute abstinence from any form of alcoholic consumption. But I do not believe it is a virtue. Nor do I believe substitution of water for wine increases the sanctity of the sacrament. It may do just the opposite. It is often the case that when men attempt to "improve" on the Lord's teachings they go backward.

NOVEMBER 6, 2010

3 Nephi 18:3–4

And when the Disciples had come with bread and wine, he took of the bread and brake and blessed it; and he gave unto the Disciples and commanded that they should eat. And when they had eaten and were filled, he commanded that they should give unto the multitude.

It is interesting these 12 are consistently referred to as “disciples” and not as “Apostles.” There isn’t a single “Apostle” in the Book of Mormon record. Only “disciples.” There are 12 of them, and they are treated exactly as were the Apostles in Jerusalem. This was a distinction David Whitmer believed to be significant. He disliked the claim to restore Apostles.

Well, the disciples are described as “twelve” or “the twelve” in the first references. Then they are called “disciples.” In the printing we have the “D” capitalized. This is an attempt by typesetting to distinguish and make more important these “big- D” disciples from other run-of-the-mill “small-d” disciples. But printers should not trick your mind into accepting the distinction. The Lord leveled these twelve. He made them merely disciples, which is a term applied with equal meaning to any of those who were present on that day.

The twelve are taught, then asked to teach. The twelve overhear the Lord break and then bless the bread. The record at this point does not include the words Christ used to bless the bread. Moroni corrects that by adding it in at a later time in the account. Here is what Christ taught when He blessed the bread:

The manner of their elders and priests administering the flesh and blood of Christ unto the church; and they administered it according to the commandments of Christ; wherefore we know the manner to be true; and the elder or priest did minister it— And they did kneel down with the church, and pray to the Father in the name of Christ, saying: O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it; that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal

Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him, and keep his commandments which he hath given them, that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen. (Moroni 4:1-3)

Notice in the narrative the Lord “commanded that they should eat.” This is an interesting phrasing. It is more than an invitation. It is more than an offering. It is a commandment. Why? What is it about partaking of His sacrament, eating in remembrance of the body of Christ, that **must** be done? Why is it a commandment?

Notice, also, the disciples ate until they were “filled.” Does this mean their stomachs were sated? Does it mean their souls were affected? Does it mean both? How were they “filled” by partaking of the bread?

Did they need to be “filled” themselves before they would be permitted to minister to others? Was that why the Lord required them to first partake then be filled before they were commanded to minister to the others?

When they ministered to the multitude, what was it they “gave” to the multitude? Was it the bread alone? Was it also something that had “filled” them? What was going on in this ceremony?

Why would people who had seen, touched, knelt at the feet of the risen Lord, need to partake of the bread as a “witness” and “remembrance” of Him? How can this add to what they had already received? Why is the sacrament sacred enough to be celebrated by the Lord with people who are in His very presence?

Does this change in any respect how you view the sacrament? If so, how?

NOVEMBER 7, 2010

3 Nephi 18:5

And when the multitude had eaten and were filled, he said unto the Disciples: Behold there shall one be ordained among you, and to him will I give power that he shall break bread and bless it and give it unto the people of my church, unto all those who shall believe and be baptized in my name.

Notice now the “multitude” takes part in eating the bread and “were filled.” This raises the question of how they were filled. Were their stomachs filled because of the amount they ate? Did they eat until they were filled, or did they get filled on just a small amount of bread? Or was this a spiritual filling where each heart was touched and each person’s countenance before the Lord filled with light?

This is a group which has just a few hours before engaged in a “hosanna shout” before the Lord (3 Nephi 11:17). Now, however, they are “filled.” It is a profound moment with deep significance.

The Lord then tells the disciples that “there shall be one ordained among you” to break the bread. Notice it is “one.” All twelve have been asked to pass the sacrament to the multitude, but from among them “shall one be ordained” to receive “power that he shall break bread and bless it.” Why would only “one” be chosen to do this? All twelve had been given the power to baptize (3 Nephi 11:21–22). Only one of them is to bless the sacrament. What does that suggest about the sanctity of the sacrament, if it is performed in the correct manner? Should it be viewed as a “higher ordinance” because of the more exclusive reservation of the “power” conferred by the Lord? What does that tell us about the manner we ought to proceed? Have we missed something in our reading of these verses?

Now the record is written by Nephi (3 Nephi 1:2). He is the first one called by the Lord (3 Nephi 11:18). He is the first one given power to baptize by the Lord (3 Nephi 11:18–21). But the identity of the person given “power that he shall break bread and bless it” is not recorded. We can know it is Nephi because he was always the one given the other power first. More to the point, however, we can know it was him because he kept the record. Had it been another, he would have told us. But since it was him, he declined to draw further attention to himself. Identifying himself previously was necessary for the narrative to be complete. Here, however, identifying himself would call undue attention. As a humble follower of Christ, it was not appropriate for him to do so, therefore the disciple is unnamed in our account.

Why is “power [to] break bread and bless it” conferred separately from the power to baptize? In our Section 20, the authority is co-extensive (See D&C 20:38–39, 46). Why does the Lord separate it among the Nephites? Since we have this account, does it add any instruction for us about the significance of the sacrament?

Sometimes we neglect things because of our familiarity with them. We presume wrongly that we understand them because of their frequent repetition. Here, however, the sacrament seems to take on greater significance. It achieves a pinnacle that exceeds even touching the risen Lord.

When we share food with one another, we become part of the same material. We share substance. When a meal is shared, life is shared. We become one of the same substance.

The substance which binds us is the “body of Christ” in symbol. Christ “broke” the bread before it was blessed. What does breaking the bread symbolize about Christ? How is His broken body intended to unite us with one another, and with Him?

Why is the broken bread distributed to those who “shall believe and be baptized in my name?” Does the order matter? Can a person be baptized before they believe, later come to believe, and then receive the sacrament correctly? Or must they come to believe first, then receive baptism second, before it is proper to partake of the sacrament? We’ve been working our way through the Lord’s commandments deliberately trying to unlock their specific requirements. They are simple. They can be done by anyone. But they are specific and should be followed in the same manner the Lord instituted them. This is the “straight path” which He says is narrow and few will find. Perhaps it is not found because we proceed with inexactitude to do what He has laid out before us with exactness.

The Lord occupies the role as Master and as Example. He bids us to follow Him. And He tells us His way is plain. If we confuse it, muddle it, and fail to do it as He has asked us to do, then it is not His failure, but ours. He has made it clear that He respects no one, but is open to all. But it is open on the exact terms. And some times the terms are exacting.

NOVEMBER 8, 2010

3 Nephi 18:6–7

And this shall ye always observe to do, even as I have done, even as I have broken bread and blessed it and given it unto you. And this shall ye do in remembrance of my body, which I have shown unto you. And it shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.

If the last post did not make the matter clear enough, the Lord emphasizes here the formula He has provided in this ordinance:

- “Always observe to do.” It is to be done, and when it is done it is to be done in an “observant” way.
- “Even as I have done.” His example is intended to clarify and define the manner the ordinance is to be observed. He regulates it by what He has done.
- “Even as I have broken bread and blessed it.” The manner, the process, the gestures of breaking it first and then blessing it second, are to be followed exactly.
- “And given it unto you.” When it is broken, then blessed, those who qualify by having repented and been baptized receive it as a gift or token from Christ. It is His body.

Now the Lord clarifies in explanation what He has earlier clarified in the blessing: This is to be done “in remembrance of [His] body.” It is through His body that He, the living sacrifice, shows us the way. A loving God has died for us. His body is a testimony of life, obedience, sacrifice, cruelty, forgiveness, death, resurrection, immortality, power and glory. When you remember His life you should remember all that is associated with it.

Here the Lord reminds the Nephites they are to remember the body “which [He] has shown unto [them].” The sacred embrace and ceremony of recognition (a term I coined in *The Second Comforter*), should return to the mind of those present whenever they received the bread again. The Lord could give no greater testimony of what He had done, who He was, and how He served them than by showing to them His risen body still bearing the marks of crucifixion.

The act is intended to be a “testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember [Him].” The act of testifying is not composed merely of the act of eating the bread. To actually testify to the Father you must:

Repent

Be baptized

Receive the bread after it has been properly blessed with power

Remember His body and the ten things symbolized through it

This is the acceptable sacrifice the Father will receive as a “testimony” of Christ.

Should you perform this, then you will receive power to “have [His] Spirit to be with you.”

These are simple steps. They are possible to be performed. When they are, the Father receives the act as a testimony before Him of the truth that you do always remember His Son. It will be recorded in heaven, and will be a witness for your salvation in the Day of Judgment.

These are solemn things. It is clear enough that we accomplish these things. But it is not clear how often they are performed, even in a church, which at one time, conducted a ceremony twice each Sunday, and today conducts it once each Sunday.

It is interesting the Lord should give us language that makes “observing to do” and “as He has done” a required part of the process. Those words are probably best when viewed in their clearest meaning, and accomplished with exactitude. Though He measures our hearts, when instructions are given in simplicity, one fair measure of the heart is how closely we follow the instruction.

Since the result is to have His Spirit to be with you, it should be a simple matter to determine by reflection if you have His Spirit as your companion. If you can feel that He is always with you, then you have an acceptable testimony to the Father. If you do not, then perhaps you should revisit the steps He has provided to see what you might improve. There is a law irrevocably decreed before the foundation of the world upon which all blessings are predicated.

And when we receive any blessing from the Lord, it is by obedience to the law upon which the blessing is provided. Therefore, it makes sense that you can determine the extent to which you have followed the formula by the result promised. Having Christ's Spirit to be with you is significant enough proof that you should know the truth of the matter. Since you know the means by which to judge, see that you judge the matter correctly (Moroni 7:18).

NOVEMBER 8, 2010

3 Nephi 18:8

And it came to pass that when he said these words, he commanded his Disciples that they should take of the wine of the cup and drink of it, and that they should also give unto the multitude that they might drink of it.

In this description we do not have mention of the blessing pronounced upon the wine. Moroni will later clarify that it was blessed and provide us the words of His blessing:

The manner of administering the wine—Behold, they took the cup, and said: O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee, in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them; that they may witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they do always remember him, that they may have his Spirit to be with them. Amen. (Moroni 5:1–2)

Once again it is a “command” to partake. The Lord, knowing how critical this act is for salvation and a testimony before the Father, makes it a command that the disciples drink of it.

Wine was generally either purple or red. Our blood is purple when deprived of oxygen in our veins, and red when filled with oxygen in our arteries. These two colors of blood inside our bodies are akin to the predominate colors of wine.

Once again it is the disciples who partake first. Then, after having partaken, they pass it to the multitude. This illustrates the practice of receiving it before being able to pass it to others. It is not possible to pass along what has not first been received. This is true of all the Lord's ordinances. It is one of the reasons Alma rebaptized himself the instant he first began to baptize others (Mosiah 18:14). Those who bless are to be sanctified by partaking, then they pass the sacrament as sanctified ministers. Those who are passing are not more important, but rather they are first purified. Then those to whom they minister may receive the ordinance from those who are already clean.

Our modern practice is to pass the sacrament first to the "presiding authority" who is present. The presiding authority (who is always mentioned at the beginning of the meeting) is identified, and then the priests who pass the sacrament bring it to that person first. After he partakes, the sacrament is passed to others. We show great deference to authority in our system. In the Third Nephi events presided over by the Lord, He shows great deference to purity.

The Lord's commandment to the disciples is followed by the instruction to provide the wine to the multitude "that they might drink." The ones officiating are "commanded," whereas the multitude is provided the opportunity to follow by example. Instead of a "commandment" to the multitude, there is an invitation. Clearly the Lord understands the importance of example and respects free will. Those who want to follow Him closest will be told what they

must do. Then others are invited to follow of their own free will, and not by compulsion.

This systematic progression begins with knowledge of the Lord. They met Him. They felt the prints in His side, hands and feet. They had no veil separating them from Him. Yet, despite this knowledge, He walks them through ordinances where they qualify to return permanently to His presence. The ordinances are important enough for the Risen Lord to personally conduct and instruct on how to perform them. It is not merely what we believe, nor what we understand, but it is also what we do that matters. We must follow Him and His Divinely ordained ordinances. But to do so we need to perform them as He has instructed.

We require a priest to repeat the entire sacrament prayer if he gets a word wrong or adds a word while pronouncing the blessing. In this we show how exact we believe the ordinance is to be followed. That is a proposition with which I wholly agree. We should perform it in every particular as the Lord has instructed. When we do, then the promise of having His Spirit to always be with us is realized.

NOVEMBER 9, 2010

3 Nephi 18:9

“And it came to pass that they did so, and did drink of it and were filled; and they gave unto the multitude, and they did drink, and they were filled.”

Partaking of the broken bread filled the disciples, and then the multitude, so again drinking the wine filled both.

What were they filled with?

Since this is an ordinance where the promised result is to “have His Spirit to be with them,” (3 Nephi 18:7) is any meaning of “filled”

adequate apart from being filled with His Spirit? Clearly this ceremony is not performed to merely fill the belly. It hearkens back to His promise to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, that they are to be filled. What the Lord presents in ceremony is the fulfillment of the earlier promise in His sermon. There is a beautiful symmetry to His sermon, His promise, the catalyst ordinance, and the reality of being “filled” which is missing from the New Testament record. In this respect, as in so many others, the Book of Mormon is the preferred, and more revealing account of the Lord’s ministry.

The Lord’s work is to bring about redemption for mankind. He redeems. In ceremony, and now in reality, He is working with a multitude to bring about their preparation and redemption. It is a Master Teacher, proving by His words and deeds, that He knows how to lead souls to salvation.

It is of interest that the record prepared by Mormon in such a painstaking effort takes the time to include these details for our instruction. They are intended not merely as history, but also as a guide. The plan of salvation is to be shared, so that others may follow it and themselves be “filled” with His Spirit.

Now note the prayers all refer to Christ’s Spirit. This is something apart from the Holy Ghost. It is Christ’s Spirit which is to “always be with them.”

What does it mean to have Christ’s Spirit to be with you? To guide you?

This is an important point, and worthy of some discussion by Joseph in *The Lectures on Faith*. If you haven’t revisited that little book and that discussion for a while, you may want to do that. I’ve recommended that it be read once a year. *The Lectures on Faith* was added to the scriptures as part of the Doctrine and

Covenants. It was subsequently removed without a Church vote to agree to its removal. However, the new publications adding sections were sustained, and the tradition we have is that by sustaining the new versions with additions, it implies we also sustained the deletions. Therefore, they stand removed. Despite that, it is worth another read through, much like reading any scripture, it should happen at least annually.

The Spirit of Christ is also referred to in Section 84:45–47. It is also described using the word “light” instead of His Spirit, in Section 88:5–13. If you read those carefully you realize that connecting with His Spirit or His light will also put you in contact with everything else governed by Him. He is the light which “enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings;”

This is why Joseph commented that the closer a man draws to God the clearer his understanding will be on all subjects. Greater light means clearer perception. It involves discerning between truth and error. It allows you to see what is dark, and who is dark, and what is light and who is filled with light. The light of a person’s countenance is upon them, and if the Lord’s Spirit fills you then you can see others just as He sees them.

It was His Spirit that enabled the Nephites to become one. With it, Zion becomes possible. Without it, Zion is only a theory to be abused and misunderstood. Without it, Zion is a vain ambition of conspiring men. It will not come to pass. With His Spirit, Zion is inevitable, because He will bring again Zion. If you would like to see the course of this doomed people changed at least as to your part, then these teachings and following these ordinances are the means by which the Lord’s Spirit becomes available to you.

NOVEMBER 9, 2010

3 Nephi 18:10

And when the Disciples had done this, Jesus said unto them: Blessed are ye for this thing which ye have done, for this is fulfilling my commandments, and this doth witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you.

The phrasing is ambiguous but becomes clear from context. The reference to “big-D” disciples actually introduces the ambiguity. If the printer had left it “little-d” disciples then the meaning would be clear. The “thing which ye have done” is a reference to partaking of the wine. By introducing the “big-D” disciple term it can change the entire thing to be “the thing which ye have done” is to pass the sacrament, rather than to partake of it.

Well, the “thing which ye have done” that prompts the Lord to proclaim “Blessed are ye” is to have symbolically partaken of His blood. They have a part of Him by having eaten of His flesh and drank of His blood. They are now among those who demonstrate they hunger and thirst after righteousness. They are disciples indeed. Followers of the Master. Obedient to Him and willing to take His name upon them.

This is again identified as a “witness unto the Father” rather than a witness unto anyone else. It is not even a witness unto Christ. Nor is it a witness unto one another. It is a witness unto the Father.

This sacred event marks the testimony of faith by those who follow the Lord as a witness to the Father. These people prove they have faith in, and will obey His Son. The Father provided the Son as the Redeemer of all mankind. The only way back into the exalted state of the Father is through the saving sacrifice of the Son. It was the Son who opened the door for that return by the burdens

He assumed while in His mortal body. He came under the same circumstances we did. He was separated from the Father by the veil. He suffered weaknesses of the body. He suffered the temptations of mankind, and He gave them no heed (D&C 20:22). This made it possible for Him to bring many others to glory (Heb. 2:10).

To have part in His glory, we must partake of His flesh and blood. Both symbolically by our own bodies being made a living sacrifice, (Romans 12:1) and through ordinance by partaking of the symbols of His life, death, resurrection. For the body of Christ rose from the dead, and we have that same hope. If we are to follow Him, we must be like Him. Taking upon ourselves His flesh and blood is not optional. It must be done to testify to the Father, who alone accepts us into His family. If we think to take upon us the name of Christ, but fail to have this witness before the Father, then we have failed to secure the required testimony before the Father.

This is a required process for those who are His.

NOVEMBER 10, 2010

3 Nephi 18:11

And this shall ye always do to those who repent and are baptized in my name; and ye shall do it in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you, that ye may witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.

The prayer pronounced upon the sacrament reflects these same aspirations. However, this is not a petition in prayer, but a promise from the Lord. He affirms that for those who have “repented” of their sins, and “are baptized” in His name, He promises a result.

When, having done as He has asked, a person remembers His blood through this ordinance, bearing in mind that it was shed “for

you” then you can properly “witness unto the Father.” The witness you make to the Father by this remembrance is that “ye do always remember Christ.”

This memorial before the Father, when done right, results in the promise of Christ that “ye shall always have His spirit to be with you.”

This is a covenant. This is the Lord promising. His word cannot fail. He is establishing for you the means by which you can have as your guide and companion His Spirit. His light. His presence in your life.

This is more intimate than touching His side, hands and feet. This is to have His Spirit within your touch at all times. You become an extension of Him, properly taking His name upon you. For you are then, indeed, a Christian.

He will christen or anoint you, not with the symbol of oil, but with the reality of His Spirit. This anointing is the real thing, of which the oil was meant only to testify.

The Holy Ghost was intended to become a companion at the time of baptism. The Spirit of Christ is intended to become a companion in your very person as well. When there are two members of the Godhead represented in your living person, then it is the Father who receives this testimony of you, about you, by you and for you. You become His, for these three are one.

There is more going on here than an ordinance and a testimony. This is the means by which a link is formed that can and will result in the Father taking that which is corruptible and changing it into that which is incorruptible. Though, like Christ, a man or woman may be required to lay down their life, they shall have power given them to take it up again. For that which has been touched by the incorruptible power of His Spirit cannot be left without hope in the

grave. All such people die firm in the knowledge they are promised a glorious resurrection (D&C 138:14).

This, then, is eternal life.

NOVEMBER 10, 2010

3 Nephi 18:12–13

And I give unto you a commandment that ye shall do these things. And if ye shall always do these things blessed are ye, for ye are built upon my rock. But whoso among you shall do more or less than these are not built upon my rock, but are built upon a sandy foundation; and when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon them, they shall fall, and the gates of hell are ready open to receive them.

The Lord again returns to the earlier sermon’s language and meaning. He reiterates how building upon the rock belonging to Him is done by observing the ordinances established by Him.

You should not do “more” than He has commanded. You must not do “less” than He has instructed.

You must do as He has commanded, instructed, and shown. He does it to provide by His example, the way it is to be done. If we err it is not because He failed to teach. He has made it plain to us that we may know the way to follow.

When we do more or less, we find ourselves in the sand, and no longer standing upon Him, the Rock of Heaven (Moses 7: 53).

Those finding themselves in the tempest of this life, tossed about by the turbulence of the sins and errors found at every turn, will fall if they are not built upon Him, the Rock of Heaven. They cannot withstand the storm because they are not anchored in Him who has the power to endure, to preserve and to save. They may cry out “Lord, Lord” but they did not do what He said. He will

respond He never knew them. To be known by Him in that day will require the testimony before the Father to have been made. For the means by which He can recognize and protect them from the gates of hell is found in that testimony before the Father, given as a result of this ordinance.

The way is plain, simple, even easy. It is marked by Him at every turn. There is no great elusive mountain to climb. If we fail, it is because we are unwilling to look to Him and be saved. It is because we despise the simplicity of it all, and look for something more. We refuse to look upon Him who alone can save (1 Nephi 17:41).

It is always amusing to see those who wrongly conclude that the Lord has abandoned His people because they fail to experience any power from Him. They do not do what the Lord commands, then they fail to receive the blessing He promised. When it is not received, they blame Him. When all along it was their own failure to do as He commanded that caused their problems (D&C 58:31–33).

Those who claim to be His, calling out “Lord, Lord,” but who do not do what He has instructed cannot blame the Lord. They have only themselves to blame.

NOVEMBER 11, 2010

3 Nephi 18:14

“Therefore blessed are ye if ye shall keep my commandments, which the Father hath commanded me that I should give unto you.”

The Lord’s whole purpose is to bless us. He offers blessings freely. But we will not accept them. We refuse to offer an acceptable sacrifice before the Lord. It will be a long time yet before the sons of Levi offer an offering in righteousness to the Lord (See D&C 13:1; JS-H 1:69). The sacramental offering is a type of the earlier Levitical offerings.

However, when an acceptable offering has been made, the Lord will always bless those who keep the commandments respecting His ordinances.

Changing these things in the least robs the ordinances of the very power they were intended to confer (Isa. 24:5).

If you keep His commandments, the inevitable result is a blessing from Him. The greatest of these blessings is, of course, to be remembered by Him in the day of judgment. The next greatest is to always have His Spirit to be with you.

It is of note that Christ points to the Father in all things, and therefore points to the Father in this teaching, as well. The commandments He teaches are those “which the Father hath commanded [Him] that [He] should give unto you.” In every respect the Son points to the Father. It is always the Father’s will and the Father’s glory Christ seeks to uphold (Moses 4:2).

The Son seeks our glory and exaltation, while giving credit to the Father for all He does. Though the Savior occupies the central role in the process, He serves others. Selflessly He instructs us on how we may be blessed and glorified. Selflessly He points to the Father as the one to receive your testimony by obedience. Selflessly He explains the Father is the one who has commanded these things. But through it all, it is Christ who has been the messenger of salvation. He is the one whose sacrifice made possible our redemption. It is Christ whose body and blood we must partake for redemption. It is Christ of whom the Father testifies (See, e.g., 3 Nephi 11:7; Matt. 17:5; Luke 9:35). Christ bears testimony of the Father. The Father bears record of the Son. In one eternal round, they form a circle. It is Christ’s work and the Father’s commandment which invites us to join in that circle and become one with Them.

How simple the ways provided for us in this condescension of God. How plain the way has been given. Yet we find reasons to do “more or less” than what is asked. For that we forfeit blessings which might otherwise have been ours.

This is powerful material. Assuming we decide to “do” rather than to “say.”

NOVEMBER 11, 2010

3 Nephi 18:15

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye must watch and pray always, lest ye be tempted by the devil, and ye be led away captive by him.”

The caution is always added to “watch and pray always.” It is not enough to fall into the correct way. You must prevent, at every turn, a misstep taking you off that path.

The devil always tempts to “do more or less” than we are instructed. To accomplish his desired results, the devil only needs to persuade you to do a little more, or do a little less, and he will have succeeded. He does not need to cut you off by a great big sin when a small one will work just as well.

Lately, we’ve been looking carefully at the details of the account of the sacrament among the Nephites. As with anything, varying this by “more or less” is a temptation. That temptation comes from the devil. He knows better than any of us that changing ordinances is intended to rob them of their efficacy.

When good intentions lead to the conclusion that you can or ought to change an ordinance in any particular, it does not matter how well intended the underlying reason is for the change. The purpose is to defile. As Isaiah put it: “The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the

laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.” (Isa. 24:5). For what reason would you change the Lord’s ordinances:

- People are not interested in them?
- People are offended by them?
- They seem to include unimportant details?
- They seem to conflict with your understanding of another scripture?
- The performance is uninspiring to the skeptical mind?
- The performance can be improved by a change?
- They seem to hold no real meaning?
- They can have better acceptance if altered?
- People no longer know or understand them?
- People just don’t care enough to observe the details?

Perhaps there are ten-thousand reasons for making a change. Maybe you are not tempted by all, but just one of those reasons. But so long as there is one reason which persuades you, that is enough. The devil knows he must only persuade you on one point, one time to get you to change the ordinance. Once he has managed that, he has robbed the ordinance of power, defiled the earth because of its inhabitants, persuaded you to transgress the law, and destroyed the everlasting covenant.

This is a wonderful teaching from Christ. He would like us to be ever watchful precisely because the devil intends to interrupt the Gospel every time it appears on the earth. In general, it takes less than 200 years for an apostasy to set in among the people chosen by God to receive a dispensation of the Gospel. Only in a few isolated instances, among a few people, have there been occasions where the ordinances remained unchanged. Those people successfully resisted every argument presented in favor of changing the ordinances and breaking the covenant with God.

The goal of our adversary is to lead us into captivity. When we lose the key to knowledge because we forfeit the light given by ordinance to us, then we struggle about in the dark. Left to your own reasoning, it is possible to establish all kinds of aberrations, calling bad good, and the light darkness. Then only isolated voices remain to challenge the overwhelming majority who believe they have improved things by their tampering.

This pattern is warned against by the Lord. He lays bare the source of such things. It is all of the devil. He is the architect of that ruin.

So it is with the entire sermon the Lord has delivered, along with the new ordinance He has just introduced. The whole is meant to be understood and followed. It is the path back to truth and light. It was meant to become our guide, our way of life. For the most part, we have very good reasons why we do not follow it.

NOVEMBER 12, 2010

3 Nephi 18:16

“And as I have prayed among you even so shall ye pray in my church, among my people who do repent and are baptized in my name. Behold I am the light; I have set an example for you.”

The “prayer” referred to here is the sacrament prayer. There is one among the twelve disciples who is given power to dedicate the emblems of the sacrament. But all of them are to do likewise in the Church in the future.

He has provided the example for them to follow. He has taught them how, and then demonstrated how. He has explained why. Now He tells them to do “even so” in His church.

But notice once again the Lord defines His church. It is those who “do repent and are baptized in [His] name.” This ordinance is

not for those who are casual investigators of His doctrine. It is not for those who, though baptized, have not repented. It is reserved for those having the proper qualifications. Without having done these things first, the sacrament of the Lord's body and blood are eaten and drank to their condemnation. Instead of it being a testimony before the Father of their faithfulness, it becomes a testimony of their unfaithfulness.

Notice the Lord explains His role as "light." He "set an example for you" and therefore is "the light." The "light" is the guide. It is the pattern. It shows you the way to go. He has done that in word and in action, so that He can claim to be the "light" for those to follow.

In turn, He has told these disciples they must also become "a light unto the people." (3 Nephi 15:12). To accomplish that it is essential they must "set an example for" them; meaning that they follow as the Lord has led them. Not an example of vainglory or superiority. Instead to meekly do as He has bidden them to do. Adding nothing, leaving nothing undone. Honing in on the things He would have done, and going about to do them.

The "light" must reflect the Lord's teachings and the Father's will. Otherwise it is darkness. A light cannot shine as His if it is distorted to reflect credit upon the man rather than the True Light, our Lord. When an erring soul entertains mistaken admiration for a man, they are damned (D&C 76:99–101). Therefore, if a person is called upon to be a light, they cannot seek to attract notice for themselves.

The Lord saves. Messengers sent by Him point to Him. They mirror His acts, teachings and practices. They do not seek their own will, but only the will of Him who sends them.

Throughout this visit between the Lord and the Nephites, we are given an extended view of how the Lord establishes His church

and doctrine. So long as it is followed, it has the power to allow mankind to always have His Spirit to be with the followers. However, when they depart from the practices and keep merely a form of godliness, they lose the power He sends to us.

These teachings are important enough for the Lord to dwell on, and Mormon to etch them into metal plates. They should be carefully studied, explicitly followed, and greatly appreciated.

NOVEMBER 12, 2010

3 Nephi 18:17–18

And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto his Disciples, he turned again unto the multitude and said unto them: Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, ye must watch and pray always lest ye enter into temptation; for Satan desireth to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.

The image of Satan “sifting as wheat” is interesting for several reasons. One involves the early claim, now discredited, that the ancient Nephite civilization did not cultivate wheat. Under that argument they would not have understood the analogy. However, once stores of ancient wheat and barley were discovered, the criticism was debunked. There’s a BYU article on this by Robert R. Bennett titled “Barley and Wheat in the Book of Mormon.”

Satan “desires to have you.” You are wanted. Not because he has your best interest in mind, but because he wants control. He wants to gain power over others, limit their choices, and make them his slaves.

The manner wheat was sifted was to use a sieve to separate grain from husks, tares, stones and other chaff. The wheat would be kept, the refuse tossed into a pile to be discarded. Sifting was

vigorous and tossed the grain about to separate it. This suggests being completely under Satan's control, being tossed about, and being discarded. It is a horrifying image, because the result would be domination by the adversary of your soul.

Satan's great desire has always been to separate men from their agency. He seeks to enslave those who fall under his power. Using wickedness, appetites of the flesh, drug dependence or other addictions, the end goal is always the same. He seeks control. He craves the god-like power to have dominion over others. Since he forfeited any right to gain power in a godly way, he seeks now ungodly power through coercion and compulsion.

Whenever you find compulsion, dominion, control, or force being employed, you have found Satan (D&C 121:37–41). He wants to cut you off from heaven, and uses control to limit access to the heavens. When people voluntarily surrender their responsibility to follow the Lord, Satan has acquired by persuasion what he craves to acquire through force.

The antidote for falling under Satan's control is to "watch and pray always." Why watch? Why "pray always?"

To watch is to be observant and detect elements of control, dominion and compulsion. It is to become vigilant in separating the will of men from the will of God. It is to keep the Lord's teachings in mind, and to measure any person's teachings, actions and persuasions against the standard the Lord has explained.

To "pray always" is to retain a personal connection with heaven. Particularly, to retain that connection through the Holy Ghost, and through Christ's Spirit, you seek to always have with you. If this is a lively connection, you are able to avoid being "sifted." If it lapses into darkness, you are vulnerable to being taken captive.

These are simple expressions anyone can understand. It is not the difficulty of the teaching, but the difficulty of the implementation which keeps people bound in darkness. Traditions, widespread acceptance of false ideas, excuses for failure, and rationalizations for why things are as they are, all prevent us from reading these teachings with the eyes of a child. The Lord's teachings are distorted even as they are being read by the blinders we wear. When the eye is filled with darkness, how great is the darkness within. Christ spoke about that in the previous sermon.

NOVEMBER 13, 2010

3 Nephi 18:19–20

“Therefore ye must always pray unto the Father in my name; And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you.”

When you “always pray unto the Father” in Christ’s name, there will be an inevitable closeness between you and Him. You draw closer to those with whom you associate. Praying always triggers that association. As with everything else, it is dynamic, not static. You move closer or you move farther apart, but you do not remain static.

What does “whatsoever ye shall ask” include? If you think Christ is inviting you to turn the Father into a short-order cook, jumping to your will, you do not understand this process. However, this is how some people view prayer. It is a list of wants, desires and aspirations to be imposed on the Father.

What does the limitation “which is right” do to modify “whatsoever ye shall ask?”

What does the phrase “whatsoever ye shall ask, which is right” mean?

Who determines whether a request you make “is right?” What about those occasions when the Lord invites someone to “ask anything of Him”? (See, e.g., 1 Kings 3:5; 3 Nephi 28:1—if you do not understand this concept it is explained in *Beloved Enos*. It occurs in a very specific setting.) Is there any limit to what might be asked at that moment? What does that suggest about those persons this offer is extended?

The purpose of this teaching by the Lord is to invite harmony between those who ask, and the Father, who gives. Inspired requests to Him are intended to come to you by revelation, so you may understand what you should ask. Then, when you have conformed your will to His, what you receive is according to His will, and not your own.

Throughout, the Lord is leading those who will follow into a condition of unity with the Father and the Son. The goal has always been the same. The teachings have always been the same. The Lord’s great Intercessory Prayer taught the same concept (John 17:1–26). The ability to be “one” with them is not accomplished by men persuading God to follow man’s will. It is accomplished in the same manner as Christ accomplished it. That is, by conforming to the will of the Father even when it is painful, or terribly burdensome (See, e.g. D&C 19:18–19; 3 Nephi 11:11).

The whole meaning of this promise is captured in the qualification that it must be that “which is right.” If you acquire an understanding of what “is right” then by asking for it, you submit to the Father’s will. Even if you would shrink from it, beg that it may pass from you, and cower at the thing required of you. When you “ask of the Father in Christ’s name” for whatsoever “is right” despite your desire for things to be otherwise, you are going to become one with Them. Then you will be like Them.

At this time you will learn the great truth that the will of the Father is indeed “whatsoever is right.”

Joseph Smith explained it:

When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve Him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and his election made sure, then it will be his privilege to receive the other Comforter, which the Lord hath promised the Saints.

The way heaven knows a man has arrived at that point is by the offered prayers. When they seek to do the will of the Father, and the requests are “what is right,” then the heavens cannot withhold anything from that man. Indeed, the Lord will prompt the right questions by what the Lord says to that man, so that the knowledge of that man will reach into the heavens (See Ether 3:9–20).

Therefore, you must not only “pray always unto the Father in Christ’s name,” but you must also grow in understanding, humility and meekness so you may “ask the Father” for that “which is right.” This is a process. Christ is explaining it in His sermon.

NOVEMBER 14, 2010

3 Nephi 18:21–23

Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed. And behold, ye shall meet together oft; and ye shall not forbid any man from coming unto you when ye shall meet together, but suffer them that they may come unto you and forbid them not; But ye shall pray for them, and shall not cast them out; and if it so be that they come unto you oft ye shall pray for them unto the Father, in my name.

Interesting that the admonition to “pray in your families” is so “that your wives and your children may be blessed.” This puts the burden on whom to pray? For whom are blessings sought? Why?

What does it mean to “meet together oft?” Is that weekly? If so, then why didn’t the Lord say “each Sabbath” instead of “oft?” What does meeting “oft” suggest?

Why would you be told to “not forbid any man from coming unto you when ye shall meet together?” What kind of meeting is it? What kinds of meetings are open to the public? Is it appropriate to close some meetings from the public? If so, what distinguishes between those meetings which are to occur “oft” and anyone is invited, and other meetings which are to be private?

What does it mean to “suffer them that they may come unto you and forbid them not?” Why would you be admonished to keep the meetings open for public participation? Why would anyone want to “forbid” others from meeting with them?

Why would you be told to “pray for them, and shall not cast them out” for those who are not part of your group?

Why does the Lord phrase it: “and if it so be that they come unto you oft ye shall pray for them unto the Father, in my name?” Does this suggest that you don’t pray for them until they have “come unto you oft?” Why would that be the condition established before you “pray unto the Father” for them?

This is an interesting passage involving an interesting process. Essentially it deals with the un-baptized, the unrepentant, and the unprepared. They are to be welcomed. They are not to be excluded. If they are persistent enough to return frequently, then you have an obligation to pray to the Father for them. Once they have seen the manner of worship, if they remain interested, they are to be prayed for, and perhaps brought in to the group. Not in a frantic,

“we-need- another-baptism-today” kind of way. No rush. Instead, they need to “come unto you oft” of their own free will. They must be interested. They must be motivated by their own desire to know more. They should not be force-fed and “converted” by argument, persuasion, or aggressive marketing. They should be gently brought to see the truth of the Lord in the worship they observe first.

This is an interesting concept. This is inviting to come to the light by the light the believers possess. It is meekness, gentleness and ultimately love unfeigned. It is quite Christ-like.

I suppose a convert who came to believe in this manner would have thought it through before joining with the believers. Such a person would be unlikely to ever depart from the way. They would have ample opportunity to know beforehand whether they find it enticing, inviting, and desirable. Good fruit, so to speak. Something they want to have for themselves.

The Lord’s ways are indeed interesting to contemplate. This great God of heaven proceeds in meekness in all that He does. He teaches meekness to those who will follow Him, as well

NOVEMBER 15, 2010

3 Nephi 18:24–25

Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do. Behold ye see that I have prayed unto the Father, and ye all have witnessed. And ye see that I have commanded that none of you should go away, but rather have commanded that ye should come unto me, that ye might feel and see; even so shall ye do unto the world; and whosoever breaketh this commandment suffereth himself to be led into temptation.

Here is another clarification for the earlier sermon. When admonished to “let your light so shine before this people that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (3 Nephi 12:16) what the Lord meant is that it is He who should be held up. He alone. Not you, or your good intentions, your conspicuous acts or philanthropy. Not you at all. Him.

The obligation to hold up a light is circumscribed by His direction that He “is the light which ye shall hold up.” Nothing and no one else. He is the lifeline. Therefore, when you offer, preach, teach, exhort and expound, He must be at the center of this prophesying, or you are engaging in priestcraft (2 Nephi 26:29).

The Lord has “prayed unto the Father” in their presence. Therefore, His example points to how prayer is to occur, and to whom it is addressed. They “all have witnessed” this, and know for themselves how it is to be done.

He has not told any of those who were present to go away. He has brought the same message to all. He gives them His example of liberality: “Ye see that I have commanded that none of you should go away, but rather have commanded that ye should come unto me.” No one is refused. All are welcomed. Whether those in the multitude thought someone was unworthy, or whether there were some with conflicts, it did not matter. All were invited. None were refused. They are all “commanded that they should come unto Him.”

What is the reason we are commanded to come to Him? It is so “ye might feel and see.” So that you might know Him. So that you can also be a witness of His physical evidence of suffering, crucifixion and death. The wounds He bears could not be received without death. His body testifies that He died. His body also testifies of His resurrection. Despite the wounds which

memorialize His suffering and death, He lives! He stands before you in life! He has risen!

As you testify of Him, you must invite others to likewise come “that they might feel and see” Him. This is how witnesses of Him are commanded to “do unto the world.” This is their ministry, their burden, their witness, and their command from Him. When they fail to testify, teach and proclaim, they “break this commandment and suffer themselves to be led into temptation.” This is why the Lord required at my hands the book *The Second Comforter*. That is how He directs all those who are “commanded to come unto Him, that they might feel and see.” It will not be in vague innuendo or veiled language. It may not be in a published book, and may well be in private. But they will all be required to invite others to likewise “come unto Him” that everyone “might feel and see” our Risen Lord.

He is accessible. He invites. More than that, He commands. All are commanded and “none of you should go away.” We think it a great thing when someone testifies of Him. Yet He wants all to “come” so that everyone “might feel and see” Him.

If we have the same Gospel, we have the same commandments.

The Book of Mormon is, as I have testified in everything I have written, not merely a book of scripture. It is the preeminent volume of scripture for our day. All other volumes of scripture are not just inferior to it, but vastly so. It is the covenant we are condemned for neglecting. It is the reason I have found Him. For above all else, I have used the Book of Mormon to direct my thoughts, actions, teachings and understanding. Here in these verses we see again - He is inviting us, using the text of the Book of Mormon to find Him, individually, for ourselves.

This Book is the restoration of the Gospel. Unfortunately, most people have missed that. Nevertheless, it is true.

NOVEMBER 15, 2010

3 Nephi 18:26–27

And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he turned his eyes again upon the Disciples whom he had chosen, and said unto them: Behold verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you another commandment, and then I must go unto my Father that I may fulfil other commandments which he hath given me.

Christ first introduced Himself by reference to the Father in 3 Nephi 11:11. He reiterates the connection between Him and the Father again in this scripture. He does not only testify of the Father. He makes it clear that everything done is by the will or command of the Father.

If Christ is the example in all things (and He is). Then in this He serves once again to clarify things for us.

Christ did not come to do His own will, but submitted to the will of the Father. Just like Christ submitted to the will of the Father, we too are invited to submit to the example and teachings of Christ. We ought to put away our own agendas. We ought to give credit to Him. We follow Him, we trust Him, we seek His will.

This is not just a passing point. It is the central point. Studying to know, and then working to do the will of Christ is our responsibility.

As Christ served the Father, we are to serve Him.

Christ becomes our Father when we are born again. He is the one who liberates us from sin, and will liberate us from death. Our resurrected bodies come to us as a gift from Him. Therefore, He

is literally the Father of our bodies, because they return to us as a gift from Him.

As Christ has set an example in following the Father, He has thereby become our Father. We follow Him if we are hoping to go where He is.

Notice also the Lord has “other commandments” which He knows He is obligated to fulfill. The Lord has a continuing ministry under the direction of the Father. His ministry is not confined to the appearances we have in current scripture, but comprehends visits to those who have faith in Him throughout the world. He continues that ministry today, as promised in John 14:18.

Part of the “commandments which [the Father] hath given” to Christ include the ministry to save, redeem and teach those who abide the conditions to be taught. Today as in times past.

NOVEMBER 16, 2010

3 Nephi 18:28–29

And now behold, this is the commandment which I give unto you, that ye shall not suffer any one knowingly to partake of my flesh and blood unworthily, when ye shall minister it; For whoso eateth and drinketh my flesh and blood unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to his soul; therefore if ye know that a man is unworthy to eat and drink of my flesh and blood ye shall forbid him.

This commandment about partaking of the bread and wine is the one He needed them to understand. They should take precautions to prevent those who they know to be unworthy from partaking. The reason is merciful. When they partake of His flesh and blood unworthily, they establish a testimony before the Father of their unworthiness.

Remember the bread and wine become a testimony to the Father (See 3 Nephi 18:10). The observance comes to the attention of the Father. It is a witness before Him. Therefore, when the flesh and blood are taken by those who are unworthy, the witness which comes to the Father is of their unworthiness. The Father cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance (D&C 1:31). When a person comes before the Father in a witness of their unworthiness, such a person “eateth and drinketh damnation to his soul.” This person has asked the Father to take notice of their unworthiness.

It is the responsibility of those who minister these things to “forbid him” in such circumstances. They are their brother’s keeper. Though it may be difficult for the person to be warned, it is merciful to do so. The sacrament is to be offered to the worthy, never offered to the unworthy. The worthy should “forbid” the unworthy from taking.

This is not an unkind teaching. It is not exclusionary or discriminatory. It is based on the doctrine Christ teaches, and the import of the act which witnesses to the Father. That witness occurs whenever the sacrament is properly administered, with appropriate power to bless, in a setting the Lord has authorized, by those who have repented and are properly baptized. Among such people the bread and wine should be given only to those who are worthy.

Now, the responsibility is on the ones administering the bread and wine. But the duty only extends to those who are “knowingly... unworthy.” That is, the ones who administer are not obligated to police others. They are not required to interview and determine worthiness. They are only to take note of such things as come to their attention and require the conclusion that the recipient is “unworthy.” Obvious misdeeds are important, private matters and

individual failings are not consequential to the ones administering the rite.

“Therefore, if ye know that a man is unworthy to eat and drink [Christ’s] flesh and blood ye shall forbid him.” But only if you “know” such is the case. Then, you should “forbid” him from doing so. Not by force, but by refusing to minister the sacrament to him. This becomes impractical, however, when it is a tray passed down a row of people, who cannot be forbidden to partake. In that kind of ceremony, the individual cannot be forbidden except through general teaching and warning. Then the individual is free to choose for themselves whether to heed the caution or to ignore it. The question remains, however, if that relieves the persons ministering the sacrament from their obligation to “forbid him” if he is known to be unworthy.

These are interesting points. All the more so because the Lord has taken the time to teach us these principles. And for Him to teach them, and provide them to us as part of restoring the Gospel to our day, I presume that informs us these points are to be followed.

Whether we choose to follow His teachings or not becomes, for most of us, a matter of convention and acceptance of popular behavior. If these teachings are found in the Book of Mormon, but not observed by us in how we proceed each Sabbath, then we tend to feel comfortable that what we do is right and the text has been corrected by modern practice. It is an interesting conclusion to draw. One which, upon careful examination, does not always leave us with the same feeling of comfort.

Well, the Lord had this to say about us in 1832:

your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received—

Which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all. And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written—. (D&C 84:54–57)

I am glad others are responsible for enacting the Church Handbook of Instructions, and not me. I was glad to attend the leadership meeting and be again informed about this newly revised handbook for use today. It was just a few short years ago President Hinckley's administration reduced it by a third. Now it has been further reduced by 12%. That is, in my view, a very healthy trend. If this keeps up we may eventually wind up with nothing but the scriptures to guide us.

NOVEMBER 16, 2010

3 Nephi 18:31–32

Nevertheless, ye shall not cast him out from among you, but ye shall minister unto him and shall pray for him unto the Father, in my name; and if it so be that he repenteth and is baptized in my name, then shall ye receive him, and shall minister unto him of my flesh and blood. But if he repent not he shall not be numbered among my people, that he may not destroy my people, for behold I know my sheep, and they are numbered. Nevertheless, ye shall not cast him out of your synagogues, or your places of worship, for unto such shall ye continue to minister; for ye know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them; and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them.

Even if you know someone has violated the commandment, has partaken unworthily after you have forbidden them to do so, **even then** you are “not to cast him out from among you.” Instead the Lord puts on His disciples the burden of making intercession for him, praying “unto the Father, in [Christ’s] name” for such a man. For the Lord reminds us that, “if it so be that he repenteth and is baptized in [His] name” then the man’s repentance will take care of his failure.

Notice the burden on His disciples. What does it mean to “minister unto him” who has transgressed? What does it mean to “pray for him unto the Father” when you know he has eaten and drank “damnation unto his soul?” Why would the Lord have His followers first forbid, then, when the forbidding fails, to follow it up with patience and prayer for the offender? Is this another extension of the teachings the Lord gave in the sermon previously? Does this again testify to you of how serious the Lord is about how kind and patient we are with others?

How long are you to bear with the offender, hoping for his repentance? When do you decide that he is determined to “repent not?” What does it mean, after you have determined the man will not repent that “he shall not be numbered among my people?” What does that suggest about further fellowship with that man? Why would that be coupled with “that he may not destroy my people?” What would such an unrepentant man need to do before you could decide he was attempting to “destroy my people?” How would you decide that?

Now, even if you think you have a basis for deciding all this against the man, “nevertheless, ye shall not cast him out of your synagogues, or your places of worship.” Did you see that? We are not to forbid even the man who is intent upon destroying the Lord’s

people from our places of worship. What selfless behavior is this? Enduring persecution! It is as if the Lord expects His followers to bless those who curse them, to do good to them who spitefully use them.

Why such patience? Because “ye know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them; and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them.” If there is a chance for repentance, the Lord wants us to bear with, succor and uplift the non-repentant soul who drinks damnation. How often we would do otherwise. Christ instructs us to be more like Him in all we do. It is only by this patience, kindness, gentleness and meekness that He has been able to save my soul. Can a grateful person do anything less for another? Can we expect to forebear any less with the unrepentant than the Lord has with us?

How godlike the Master is in all His teachings. How much higher are His ways than are ours.

The Lord affirms that He knows His sheep. Not only knows them, but “they are numbered” to Him. He cares for each of them.

If we can add another to His fold by our own patient ministrations, then we ought to readily do so. If we do, then He will give us the credit for what we have done: “ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them.” Did you catch that? He gives us the credit for the success! We merely follow what He instructs us to do, and if there is any benefit realized He gives us the credit for doing so. Our Savior is more than a good example. He is perfect in all His doings. It is little wonder that in the end every knee will bow before Him. Gratitude will bring some to their knees. Shame will bring the rest. No one will expect to stand or sit in His presence.

For in Him we find a soul of such greatness that kneeling alone can give vent to the feelings He inspires.

NOVEMBER 17, 2010

I Have Finished What I Needed to Cover

I have finished what I needed to cover.

This blog will become a book. As it gets into final form I may add a few things from 3rd Nephi that haven't been covered here. When it's out, I'll let you know.

There is another book completely unrelated to this blog I need to begin to work on. I need the time I have spent on this to turn to that instead.

When I've finished the next book I'll make it a point to include news of that here. I'm going to leave this up, and will add to it from time to time. In the event I have something to say, I will post here. Check back occasionally.

Here's an important closing thought—it seems Youkilis, Pedroia and Ellsbury are all recovering nicely. The Red Sox have resigned Ortiz, and will be a force to reckon with again next year (barring injuries). I have to say, however, that the AL East was altogether a playoff disappointment. I get why the BoSox were out of it, but the Rays and Yankees were a complete disappointment. I was hoping the Rangers would win, but I'm good with SF Giants.

NOVEMBER 19, 2010

Update

Here are a couple of updates:

First, I still receive requests for copies of the talk. I get those and will respond. We (Steph and I) like to wait till there's five or

more and respond to them as a group. But we do respond and you will get copies of the talk.

Second, I just finished speaking with the publisher and printer and we have set in motion getting all of the books available on Kindle. That process takes a few weeks before it is actually available. However, it has been set in motion and all the titles will be available on Kindle as soon as the process is completed.

The blog will become available as a book soon, as well. At present the footnoting of scripture references is occupying the effort. Once that is completed we will submit it for printing, as well and it will become available on Amazon.com thereafter.

NOVEMBER 20, 2010

Information

The update entry posted yesterday refers to “the talk.” This talk is the same talk referenced here and here. The title of the talk is “The First Three Words of the Endowment.” It is also referred to as the King Follett discussion. They are one in the same. Many readers have already received this talk.

If you are a new reader or are being introduced to this talk for the first time, and you would like a copy of it, you need to leave your email address in the comment section. I can still get the comments, but I will not put any of them up. Your email will be private.

There is NO other way to receive a copy of this. If you would like it leave a comment on the blog. Thanks—CM

NOVEMBER 25, 2010

Your Life in Context

I’ve been reading modern church history, recently from primary sources including diaries as part of my work on a new book. I’ve

been struck by how difficult it is for people to put their own lives into context as they live them. The history inside of which they live dominates their thoughts, beliefs, perceptions and interpretations. It is almost impossible for people to disconnect from their surroundings and view history as they live it.

We rarely have it occur to us that we are part of a current, a flow of people, events and even thought in all the moments of our lives. But we can act independent of that flow by making a choice.

I am astonished by the arrogance of office, position and wealth. When any person is put into a position in which their circumstances grant them advantages over their fellow man, it is hard to retain empathy for how well intended but terribly misinformed actions always affect others.

Such things certainly do not make any person a bad man, but always reduces them from what they might have become.

It was essential to Christ's life that He be born in obscurity, associated with the least of His society, be deprived of wealth and official power. He could not have accomplished His mission were He in a position to preside. He needed to be persecuted to fully awaken to the injustices men impose on others. Even so little a matter as tempting Him by interrogations designed to trip Him up made Him greater than He would have been had people deferred to His standing. He was challenged, not coddled. He grew from grace to grace until He was called the Son of God, because of the things which He suffered.

Almost without exception when a soul awakens to the historic context in which they live they immediately find themselves at odds with the surrounding culture. In this also the Lord was The Great Example.

On Thanksgiving I find myself appreciating our Lord and His difficult life all the more.

CHAPTER 4

Restoration and Apostasy

DECEMBER 2010

DECEMBER 5, 2010

Dolores Umbridge

In the Harry Potter series, I like how Dolores Umbridge turns questioning her actions into questioning the Ministry of Magic. And by extension questioning the Minister of Magic. What a power-hungry wench she was. She parlayed herself and her every move or decision by extension into the acts of the very pinnacle of their social authority. It is a sort of pathology you only see in very unhealthy social groups who are ruled by fear and intimidation. I thought it was brilliant of J.K. Rowling to envision such a character.

Perfect love casts out all fear (Moroni 8:16).

Peter gave instruction about how the church ought to operate. It was never through fear or intimidation; but through gentle example:

I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre,

but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. (1 Peter 5:1-4)

What a marvel the Gospel of Jesus Christ is in all its details. When it appears on the earth, it appears in weakness, does not force itself upon the world, and persuades others to the truth. When it is lost, then religion turns into the means to control and exercise compulsion. It becomes all that Catholicism was. Though, in truth, once the Protestant Reformation gathered power it greatly improved Catholicism by reducing its capacity to rule and reign with compulsion and intimidation. By disposition men tend to abuse power whenever they think they hold it (D&C 121:39-40). Just like men, institutions are best when humbled, and worst when they reign with pride and power.

How delightful it is when fiction, like the Potter series, captures a character which puts a timeless conflict into a modern yarn.

DECEMBER 17, 2010

Provo Tabernacle

The destruction of the Provo Tabernacle by the fire last night makes me mourn. I heard President Kimball speak there. We had some of our student Stake Conferences there. Later I attended the funeral of Rex Lee, the Dean of the J. Reuben Clark Law School while I attended. I also attended Hugh Nibley's funeral there. It was hallowed ground because of those memories.

I assume it was arson, because of so many recent fires in LDS owned buildings. Seems a foolish gesture, even if you hate the Church. Nothing important is ever accomplished by destroying

the creative labors of others. If someone hates the Church, perhaps they ought to go build up their own. There is no equivalency made by tearing down. A person may be able to burn a building, but it does not make them any more important or great. A man may have shot John Lennon, but that did not alter the killer's importance. It merely made his insignificance more public.

There are two great forces at work. One is entropy. Everything is getting colder, darker, and dissolving. This force is unrelenting, and can be found everywhere in the physical world.

Opposing it, however, is something which is creative, renewing, and equally unrelenting. I believe this force which renews life, introduces new energy and forms new systems to be God's work. It is, in a word, love. Or, in the vernacular of the scriptures, it is charity.

When the labors of hundreds have been assembled to create a place of worship, a thing of beauty and a refuge for Saints, that act of charity will endure beyond any subsequent act of vandalism. It cannot be lessened; though it may be broken or burned. The testimony of sacrifice establishes an enduring legacy.

I hope the Tabernacle will be rebuilt. I hope also the memory of the original will not fade from those who went there for such events as Brother Nibley's funeral, Dean Lee's funeral, and President Kimball's address.

DECEMBER 18, 2010

Solstice

Tuesday marks the darkest day of the year, with the longest night. During that night the moon will be eclipsed, most prominently in the North American continent.

Traditionally that night marks the moment when darkness has its greatest reign, to be then conquered by the returning light.

The following day beginning the return of light and the defeat of darkness.

This moment in nature marks a profound moment for those who believe nature has something to say. It is an invitation to us to allow the light to begin to grow within us; to begin our own journey back into the light and to leave behind the darkness.

I think I'll accept the invitation again this year, and mark the moment by renewed effort. The particular alignment required for us to pass through the eye of a needle and enter the Lord's presence is indeed possible. For anyone. On the same conditions. It is a balance worth the time required to train ourselves.

Nature testifies endlessly of the Lord. It also invites us endlessly to turn back to Him. This continuing patience and enduring initiation shown in nature is a reminder of how loving and patient, how persistent and committed the Lord is to our salvation. Salvation is predicated upon the same, universal standard for all who would return to Him. In that respect it is as exact and unchanging as the cycles of nature. Despite its exacting requirements, it is endlessly inviting and continually encouraging us to accept that standard and to live it. Not just to say, but to do.

I intend to do something, then, to show Him I want to return to the Light.

DECEMBER 24, 2010

Kingdom of Heaven

Luke recorded a confrontation between the Lord and the Pharisees in which they demanded He tell them of the coming of the kingdom of heaven. These foolish men thought the kingdom of heaven which might be acquired and controlled by men. They wanted something over which men could rule.

The account reads:

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. (Luke 17:20–24)

When the kingdom of God reappears on the earth, men like the Pharisees will not be able to observe it. It will not come in a way observable to those outside. Instead, the kingdom will be “within” those who are included. For them, the “observation” comes from the Lord making Himself known to them (See Numbers 12:6). But such experiences are not public. So for the Pharisees, it will be “without observation.”

For His disciples, however, He went on to explain the time would come when they would want another day with Him, but that time will have passed. They may wish it, but the time to draw near Him is while He is available; not after His departure. When He has departed, then it will not be possible to find Him among those who say He is here! Or, He is there!

Though He may make Himself known on the same conditions to any who prepare themselves to receive Him, when He appears again it will be as lightening which lights heaven itself from one end to the other. It will be entirely unmistakable.

The Pharisees were interested in the subject because they envied the kingdom of heaven. They wanted to own it. They wanted to control it. If they could locate it, and usurp it, then they would have power over others who sought it.

Christ's answer completely frustrates man's capacity to control the kingdom of heaven. It is not a franchise, giving Pharisees any authority or right. It is not even capable of being "observed" by those who are blind to its appearance. But it is nevertheless real. It is "within" some few who qualify.

DECEMBER 29, 2010

Books on Kindle

While all the books will become available on Kindle shortly, two of them are now available. Both *Ten Parables* and *Beloved Enos* are now up. I'm hoping that the rest will be there within the next ten days, but the process is somewhat complicated.

DECEMBER 29, 2010

Sacrifice of Isaac

There were ancient Jewish traditions which held that Abraham actually killed Isaac on the mount and the Lord brought Isaac back to life. The reference in Hebrews 11:17–19 seems to be based upon this earlier tradition; in contrast to the Genesis account (Gen. 22:9–13).

If Abraham actually slew Isaac, and Isaac was raised from the dead, the trial of Abraham and the test of Isaac is more analogous to Christ's sacrifice than we imagine.

Hugh Nibley writes about these earlier traditions in *Abraham in Egypt*, pp. 329–344, 372–375.

We imagine the difficulties of the ancients to be less than they were. Their faith was established through trial, sacrifice, obedience

and consecration. Not to the will of man or men, but to the will of God. When men attempt to displace obedience to God into submission to the will of men, then it is not merely an error, it is idolatry. It is an abomination.

More often than not, obedience to God causes conflict with your fellow man. It did not get these ancient Saints applause, position, praise or notice.

JANUARY 2011

JANUARY 5, 2011

Religion in Rome

The following is taken from *Cicero: The Life and Times of Rome's Greatest Politician*, by Anthony Everitt:

Religion was not so much a set of personal beliefs as precisely laid-down ways of living in harmony with the expectations of the gods. In fact, by the end of the Republic educated men believed less in the literal truth of the apparatus of religious doctrine than in a vaguer notion of the validity of tradition. (p. 55)

How controlling are traditions.

They blind us to any view other than the one we've inherited and keep us from examining what, exactly, the source of the tradition was or what it was originally intended to accomplish.

JANUARY 11, 2011

Updates on Writing

We're close to getting the blog-book done. Should go to the printer this week. Then it's up to them to get the process completed. It now has a title: *Removing the Condemnation*. It's about 540 pages

in length; without a word index. The blog will remain up and you can use it as a word index.

All but one of the titles are now available on Kindle. The last one (*Eighteen Verses*) should be up this week, as well. I'm a few chapters into the new book. It will be out this year, but I have no clue when.

I'm getting tired of the cold weather. But it does allow me time to write, since there's no temptation to spend much time outside. Even skiing in this cold is less fun.

JANUARY 13, 2011

The Battle

The battle we are all called upon to fight is not external. Some people spend their time stirring people up to alarm them about carnal security. They are trying to sell something. There are fortunes being made by proponents of fear. But the audience for such things are only being distracted from a much greater, more immediate battle. Until the internal condition of the individual has been conquered and brought into alignment with heaven, there is no amount of political, social, economic or military security which will matter in the long run.

I think it more advisable to seek for and listen to the Lord, and secondarily those teachers who will convert you to the Lord; rather than any other advice or movement advocated by those promoting causes. Teachers ought to point to Him. Not to themselves. No one but the Lord is coming to rescue you; and no group will be able to overcome error apart from Him. Ultimately the battle we each face is the Lord's. We must cooperate with Him for Him to be able to win it. When He does, however, the victory is ours for we are the ones who He redeems.

The path back to the Lord's presence is an individual one. It is not likely to be accomplished while in an audience. There is no "support group" needed. It is you. What goes on inside you. What you love most. He will one day associate with a group in a city; but that group will be comprised of individuals who have previously met Him.

It surprises me how little discernment there is among those claiming to seek truth. Many of them will take in ideas from foolish, vain and proud sources with as much enthusiasm as from a true one. How is it that people cannot tell the difference between them? Does not a true message sound much different from a false one? Is merely associating some lesser virtue with a cause enough to have it distract? What is more plain than the admonishment to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness?

JANUARY 22, 2011

Restoration and Apostasy

There really is no static position in nature. The full moon of two nights ago is now replaced by the waning gibbous immediately as the light begins to be lost. Nor does the half-moon last longer than a single night, followed by the waning crescent. When the moon's light is altogether stricken, the new moon phase begins with the waxing crescent which is, at first, only a sliver. But it follows nightly through the waxing crescent, to the half moon, to the waxing gibbous, to the full moon. Always in motion. Always either growing or receding in light.

So also with the sun. From solstice to equinox, to solstice to equinox, it grows, then dims. Never static. It is impossible to freeze the light. It will grow or it will fade.

All things in nature testify of the truth. This includes things in the “heavens” or sky above, as well as things on, in and under the earth (Moses 6:63).

It is not possible for an individual, nor a collection of individuals, to remain static. They are either involved with restoring truth or in apostasy from it; never merely “preserving” it. Those who claim to merely preserve the truth given them are concealing the fact of their apostasy. They are soothing their conscience. Caretakers simply cannot exist.

All great truths are simple, and they are testified of in nature as well as in scripture.

FEBRUARY 2011

FEBRUARY 3, 2011

Zion is Not Yet

In response to a question I received earlier today about whether Zion presently exists in some form I responded:

Zion has not begun in an organized city-form and could not do so at the moment. Some of what would be required to establish Zion may have been returned, but only in the most incipient form at present, and not such that it can stand on its own. If the hounds of hell have been released to balance things because of Zion’s “appearance” then it is wholly disproportionate at present. The evil is far more numerous, far more widely planted, far stronger, and securely fastened here than the tiniest shoots of a diminutive Zion. Even the idea of starting a small gathering is not possible at present.

It was an interesting enough question I thought the answer worth posting.

I've been learning more over the last months about many things of interest to me. It is wonderful to have more time to study and meditate. The Gospel as restored through Joseph Smith contains a great deal more than we've chosen to respect and explore. This is a mixed blessing, of course. We neglect it at our peril. But we are still in recent enough time to the events that the record is with us. Wars, unrest, upheavals and destructions have not eliminated the libraries of material still available for our study. So, if we are interested, we can learn a great deal in our day.

It is foolish to trust your salvation to another. It is more foolish to trust anything to a committee or organization where compromises and agendas conflict with truth almost at every turn.

History has no ego, but the purveyors of legacies who hope to mold history to support their agendas are always driven by ambition to trim, add, censor, reinterpret, and contradict. If religion matters, and if Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet, then we ought to try and get as unfiltered an account as possible. Then, with what account you settle as true, you ought then to inquire of the Lord to see if He by revelation has something further to open to your view.

I'm amazed at how much the Lord would want us to know, if we only showed interest enough to make an inquiry, with real intent, having faith in Him.

If the mammalian prophet from Punxsutawney (or Al Gore for that matter) can be trusted, things are going to be warmer soon. I'd like that. Trading light and warmth for dark and cold is an annual pilgrimage nature takes us through to remind us of eternal things.

FEBRUARY 3, 2011

Book of Abraham

The last lesson I taught the Priests in my ward I went over the history of the Book of Abraham. There are a host of arguments made against Joseph Smith, his translation and the authenticity of the Book of Abraham which rely upon ignorance to persuade.

The Book of Abraham is one of the strongest proofs of Joseph Smith's credibility as a prophet who restored ancient knowledge and did so using the power of God. But only if you have read enough to know the lay of the terrain.

I brought the following books with me to the class:

Abraham in Egypt (Nibley)

The Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment (Nibley)

Astronomy, Papyrus and Covenant (Hauglid) *An Approach to the Book of Abraham* (Nibley) *One Eternal Round* (Nibley)

The Blessings of Abraham (Clark)

Traditions About the Early Life of Abraham (Tvedtnes, Gee)

The Hor Book of Breathings (Rhodes)

A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri (Gee)

Vol. 2 of *The History of the Church* (Joseph Smith)

Critics of Joseph have provoked a tremendous effort to account for the Book of Abraham. If you are interested in the topic, the results of that effort are worth reading. I find that all topics related to the restoration are interesting to me.

I've spent a few days with scholars with backgrounds in Egyptology. There is a great deal to learn about the earliest days of Egypt and the Egyptian influence on ancient Israel. Many of our Psalms are taken directly from Egypt. Abraham sojourned there, Joseph served there, the twelve tribes resided there, Moses was raised there

in the royal courts, Jeremiah fled there, and Christ lived several years there. Egypt was a repository of arcane knowledge which remains interesting to Latter-day Saints.

FEBRUARY 25, 2011

Ten Parables

My purpose in writing *Ten Parables* was to take an ancient literary form and use it to illustrate the path back to God. It was intended to replicate the underlying meaning of the temple endowment, but without employing theatrical presentations, signs, tokens or key words. Instead the process is portrayed through parables involving characters in the stories moving from a state of disassociation with God, through understanding His attributes and manner, adopting His virtues and conduct, then back to a reconciliation with Him, at last reaching His presence by satisfying angelic sentinels and obtaining His tutelage.

The book is actually only one story: the process of redemption. It was written to be readable in the same time as it would take to attend a temple endowment session. However, its meaning can take many days of reflection to fully unlock. It is intended to provoke action or changes within the reader who sees the messages.

Some people have seen the value of that little book and, as a consequence, have gained some considerable benefits in their own search into the mysteries of godliness. Others have regarded it as nothing more than a little story book, and I suppose gained varying degrees of entertainment from it.

We are all entitled to see as much or as little as we choose to see. That is the beauty of communications that employ symbols. It does not force the listener to understand a thing. It only invites.

MARCH 4, 2011

Beloved

The Lord inquired of John, who is called “Beloved:”

“John, my beloved, what desirest thou? For if you shall ask what you will, it shall be granted unto you” (D&C 7:1).

This is what the Lord offers, at some point, to those who meet with Him as He confirms their exaltation. I’ve explained this in *Beloved Enos*. It is part of the privilege He extends to those who come to know Him.

A person could ask anything of Him. In the case of John, however, the request was completely selfless (one of the reasons he is “Beloved” by Christ). It reflects the same heart as the Lord’s.

“And I said unto him, Lord, give unto me power over death, that I may live and bring souls unto thee” (D&C 7:2). That is, John desired this not for his own sake, but for the sake of those to whom he could minister. He wanted to bring souls to Christ.

“And the Lord said unto me, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, because thou desirest this thou shalt tarry until I come in my glory, and shalt prophesy before nations, kindreds, tongues and people” (D&C 7:3). The ministry of John would continue. There would be “nations” who would receive his prophesy. What do you suppose it means for John to be able to prophesy before “nations?” Do “nations” mean modern states, or do they mean family divisions or subsets, like the ancient tribes of Israel, which were called “nations?” Do the terms “nations, kindreds, tongues and people” have a family meaning? What family? Has the gospel been intended primarily for one family of redeemed souls all along? If so, then, how does one connect to that family? What is John doing?

The Lord explained to Peter that, concerning John, “he has undertaken a greater work; therefore I will make him as flaming fire and a ministering angel; he shall minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth (D&C 7:6).

It is an interesting question to ask what John has been doing. What do you suppose it means to be “as flaming fire and a ministering angel?” What jurisdiction does John have if he “shall minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth?” Does this require John to be involved with all who are to become “heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth?” In what way would he be involved?

These are interesting things to contemplate. All the more so because these ideas are somewhat at odds with the idea that God has finished His work and given his power to men, as we claim. Nephi disagrees with the idea (2 Ne. 28:5), but that hasn’t affected our views much. We’re really quite certain we have everything we need without John.

MARCH 6, 2011

Winning Isn’t Everything

KSL News did a news piece involving my daughter. Here is a link for anyone interested.

ksl.com - High 5: Coach teaches team that winning isn’t everything

MARCH 15, 2011

My Kingdom

I was asked an interesting question. I thought the question and answer might be worth posting. Question:

In 3 Nephi 28, the 9 disciples are promised that when they die they will go to “my Kingdom” meaning Christ’s. However, the other 3 who tarry are promised to go to the “Kingdom of my Father.” Are they different? They must be, but how? In what way? Different levels of Exaltation? This same thing is discussed in D&C 7. Peter is promised “My Kingdom” while John is promised the greater blessing. I’m assuming it’s “my Father’s Kingdom” like the 3 Nephite disciples.

Answer:

I’ve written about this in *Beloved Enos*. The offer is extended to all those whose calling and election is confirmed. The 9 chose to move into the post-mortal inheritance at their death. That is, they would not be required to return here for anything else, but would be judged, crowned and exalted upon death. Because this is a blessing conferred by the Son, it is “His Kingdom” into which they will move. When the work is at last completed and delivered to the Father—at the end of the earth’s temporal existence—it becomes the Father’s at that point. The 3 will be awaiting that moment to receive that inheritance. The 9 will enter into the “Son’s” until then, and will likewise be among those who are received by the Father, in the due order of things.

[My answer provoked a follow up question:]

But doesn’t Peter, James and John have the earthly role of teaching Adam and Eve (us) further light and knowledge as shown in the temple? Do they send ministering angels or maybe even John since Peter and James don’t come to earth anymore?

I answered:

Peter, James, and John were added to the endowment by Brigham Young, but weren’t part of what Joseph originally

portrayed. They were added to remove required narration. When added, they are a “type,” and not intended to be the personalities or individuals. Much like Elias is a “title” and not a name. Peter, James, and John are in the endowment types, or “titles” —not intended to be the actual persons who were known by those names while in mortality.

The endowment used to include the words, “You should consider yourselves respectively as if Adam and Eve. ...This is simply figurative so far as the man and woman are concerned.” The same could be said about other roles—which all represent truths, but the truths are not tied to personal identities. You are Adam. The endowment is about your life. Those true ministers who are sent are explained in D&C 130:5, which include those who do (i.e. currently living individuals who have gained a message from the Father and Son to be delivered) or have (i.e., those who have left mortality and are returning as angelic, or resurrected, or translated individuals, who have gained a message from the Father and Son to be delivered) belonged to this earth.

I should add: Without ministering of angels there is no longer any faith, as Moroni explained (Moro. 7:37). Only a fool would take their own message and portray it as coming from God. As Joseph Smith put it, “only fools trifle with the souls of men.” [I’ve noted, however, an endless abundance of fools here. The Historic Christian religions are filled with them. ...Unfortunately, they’ve crept into the restored faith, as well.]

P.S. A reminder—I do answer questions from time to time. However, before you ask me a question, **read** or **review** the books I have written (there are 6 of them). Much of what is written in

the books following *The Second Comforter* is written because of the questions I am asked most often. Therefore, I suspect you'll find things in what I've already written which make it unnecessary to ask.

MARCH 27, 2011

Home Evening

We have Family Home Evening on Sunday night, because of all the activities our family has. Between softball, soccer, lacrosse, girl scouts, Young Women, school play, and gymnastics we don't have an available evening other than Sunday. Today the sister Missionaries were visiting, and were included in the lesson and treat. One of the sisters has been out five days. She's from Hawaii. The other is from Ohio and is the trainer senior companion. Our next door neighbor has a daughter currently serving a mission in Kirtland, Ohio. She returns home in four days.

We are going to have the returning sister missionary speak to the Priests Quorum next month. The Bishop had to approve it, but he agreed a returning missionary is appropriate to instruct the Priests, even though she is a sister.

I was thinking about my home ward. We have a doctor who has serious physical ailments due to another physician's malpractice. He is going to undergo experimental surgery at the U of U Medical Center to attempt to undo the serious disability currently afflicting him. (My ward includes so many physicians that as I write this I can't be sure I've counted them all.) We have a member of the Draper Temple Presidency, Inner City Missionaries, English as a Second Language Missionaries, a Federal Judge, several families who have experienced the deaths of children, former Mission Presidents, skeptics, musicians, accountants, the strong and the

weak. We have the faithful and the faithless in my ward. We have a family in which the father served a mission in Madagascar, where he met his wife. We have several families from Hong Kong and two from Korea. Our ward is a remarkable mix of ages, backgrounds, personalities and abilities.

I was thinking about how wonderful it is to have this arbitrary ward boundary where we are associated together by geographic division and not by preference for one another. We are expected to serve one another and with one another. Of all the benefits which come from the church, the association as a ward family with different, diverse people you have not sought to find is perhaps one of the greatest. It lets us stretch to serve. In many ways it mirrors our own families, where relationships are given us by God and choices others make in marriages. We do not control the make-up of our extended families, but are expected to love them anyway.

APRIL 2011

APRIL 5, 2011

About “Eternal Lives”

There’s a buzz going about some blogs on the book titled *Teachings of the Doctrine of Eternal Lives*. I was asked to put a note on my blog informing people that it can be obtained through Amazon.com or through Digitalegend.com at present in a printed form.

Apparently the book may not be available for long. I’m not sure what that fully involves, but I’m putting the announcement up as requested.

APRIL 5, 2011

Elimination

I was asked about elimination of penalties in the temple ceremonies. It made me think of the following:

There was a general unease about the use of penalties. The solution was to eliminate them. Perhaps if temple goers were instructed in the value and the significance of the penalties, they would not have been uncomfortable with them. They may have even been kept in the endowment ceremony.

In an abstract way, God sending His Son to be killed is an idea that could cause unease. However, we've made a great effort to study the Lord's sacrifice, to understand it and appreciate it. His sacrifice is not viewed as offensive, but rather as the source of gratitude, even awe, about what the Father and the Son were willing to do to rescue us from eternal disappointment.

Similarly, there are reasons to value, even cherish the penalties which were once a part of the temple rites. But not everyone considered their importance. A significant number of active saints just associated them with Masonic rituals, thought they were borrowed anyway, and never attributed anything more to them.

Old Testament covenant making was always associated with cutting. A marking, or cut, upon sacred clothing anciently also testified to the willingness to undergo a penalty if a vow or covenant with God was not fulfilled. God's covenant with Abraham involved God swearing by His own life (for He could swear by nothing higher); the covenant being sealed by the divided carcasses of sacrificed animals (See Gen. 15:8-21; Heb. 6:13-15). That great horror of darkness (Gen. 15:12) was a revelation of outer darkness into which God would descend if He failed to keep the covenant.

The burning lamp (Gen. 15:17) which passed between the slaughtered, divided carcasses was the Lord's act sealing the covenant and swearing by His own life to fulfill all He promised to Abraham.

We may have lost respect and understanding, but that does not alter truth. Our loss of light does not make God's brilliance any less. It just reduces our own association with, and understanding of Him. Today we seem pretty content to have others speak to God for us rather than to undertake the fearful responsibilities associated with coming into the presence of a living God (Heb. 10:31).

And so we settle for inspirational ditties in lieu of doctrine.

Pleasantries in place of repentance.

Humor in place of sobriety.

We prefer our guides to be blind, because we think they hold onto the handrail better. Of course, when we proclaim them to be the handrail, it doesn't matter what path they take any longer, does it?

We've become (or perhaps stayed) "too low, too mean, too vulgar" to claim we are the people of God—as Joseph Smith put it from Liberty Jail.

We'll all arrive in Hell stained with deplorable sins of every magnitude but all with a good self image. The lessons there will be titled:

"Why Fire is Good for Us"

"Burning Shows God's Love to Us"

"When We Feel Pain, We Get Gain"

"God Loves a Fiery People"

"Odds Are We're All Glorious"

"Burning Will Keep Us Bright"

"The Fire Belongs to the Refiner"

"Fissile not Fizzle"

“We are the Refining and Becoming Refined”

I never took offense at the penalties. I regret their elimination. However, I attended the temple so often that they are indelibly etched into my mind. Even today, I cannot attend without walking through in my mind the remainder of the covenant. They assure me of the exactness expected of us when we enter into a covenant with God. I like that reminder. It helps me to hold myself up to scrutiny which I might not otherwise expect. Though I fail, it is not because I approach the altar of God with anything less than complete respect for Him and His ways. My own impurity cannot detract from His complete purity. My weakness does not limit His forgiveness and mercy. But I have never detected in Him the least particle of imperfection, darkness or unholiness.

APRIL 12, 2011

Patience

I was recently in a discussion with a fellow regarding the topic of patience.

Moses spent 40 years in the Pharaoh's courts. He apparently knew most of that time that he was to deliver Israel out of bondage. He killed the Egyptian, in part, because of his knowledge he would one day deliver them. Stephen explained, just prior to his martyrdom, the story of Moses. Stephen declared that Moses knew his calling from God made him the deliverer of Israel (Acts 7:24–25). Moses presumed the Israelites would recognize him as the one promised to deliver them. He killed the Egyptian to identify himself to the Israelites. They were unimpressed, did not recognize him, and rejected his claim.

Seeing he had been rejected and betrayed by the Israelites, Moses fled for his life (Acts 7:26–29).

Then, after another 40 years passed while he made a new life for himself in the wilderness, the “voice of the Lord” came to him and called him at last to perform as Israel’s deliverer (Acts 7:30–34).

Moses knew his mission from his youth. But when he attempted on his own to begin that mission, his attempt failed. He was nearly killed for it and had to flee for his life.

After 40 years spent in the wilderness of Sinai, the time came and Moses was commissioned directly by the Lord to go forward.

WE control nothing. **WE** have no right to move the Lord’s hand. We may ask, but He alone commands. **Timing is entirely the Lord’s.** Although we may know what we have been assigned to do, it is the Lord alone who will decide when the assignment can be performed.

Christ wanted to begin His Father’s work at 12 (Luke 2:41–49). It would be another 18 years before the Lord would be permitted to begin. In the interim, He—

waited upon the Lord for the time of his ministry to come. And he served under his father, and he spake not as other men, neither could he be taught; for he needed not that any man should teach him. And after many years, the hour of his ministry drew nigh. (*JST-Matt. 3:24–26*)

Although fully prepared for “many years” before, the Lord “waited” on His Father for 18 years.

If Moses waited 40 years, and produced only disaster when he attempted to begin his mission early, and Christ waited “many years” for “the hour of his ministry to draw nigh,” then what possible reason can any of us give for refusing to submit in patience to the Lord’s timing for our lives, mission, ministry, assignments and calling?

Among the many lessons of mortality, Christ learned patience (Heb. 5:8). **How arrogant must we be to presume we can tell better than the Lord when a blessing should come?** How little understanding would we get if the Lord responded to our impatience and excused us from the necessity to first learn this noble trait of patience?

APRIL 14, 2011

Learning and Living

There is a considerable gulf between being aware of a teaching or doctrine and living it. I've noticed how it is often the case that we confuse our knowledge about an idea with the notion we are in possession of the attribute.

Learning doctrine and living it are two entirely different things.

The query by Alma the Younger in the Book of Mormon, "Are ye stripped of pride?" is more than meaningful (Alma 5:28).

It is clarifying. The lens we see ourselves through is distorted as long as pride is part of our makeup.

I don't know of any way to strip ourselves of pride other than to suffer setback, loss, difficulty, disappointment or anguish. I've never been able to do so on my own. Without suffering, I cannot see myself in the correct light.

There are only a few people I know who have received God's greatest approval; who have had the heavens opened to them and heard the voice of God. Almost without exception, they suffer from physical ailments, struggle with aging and reduced physical abilities, have losses, or bear anguish. These burdens have benefited them. Without a strong, corrosive encounter with difficulty they could not strip themselves of pride.

For the most part, organized religion does not do what is necessary to break down the hard, prideful hearts of followers. The prophecy of Isaiah is as current as this moment:

That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us. (Isa. 30:9–11)

We want to be taught a positive religion. We want praise. If something challenges our good self-image we think it unhelpful, negative and even devilish. But the truth is that until we have broken down before God, seen ourselves in our horrible weakness, foolishness and pride, and acquired a broken heart and contrite spirit, we will remain lying children that will not hear the law of the Lord. When our prophets will only speak smooth things to us we are only being deceived. We are compelling the Holy One of Israel to cease from among us.

But we do feel good about ourselves. We do think we prosper, and all is right.

More blessed, therefore, are those who will do the will of the Lord and not merely acknowledge it. Those who will break down their pride and realize they know nothing until they know God.

When they meet Him, He will “reveal all things” to you (D&C 101:32), because you will at last see yourself as you really are (1 John 3:2).

Everything else is vanity.

APRIL 25, 2011

The Game's Afoot

I was asked the following question:

I ordered the book The Doctrine of Eternal Lives, but not yet received it. I am a little caught off guard. Is this teaching true? I haven't read enough to pray about it and I haven't received the book to study it yet. Can you tell me if it's true?

My response:

I've never propounded this view, because whether true or not, it does not change a single thing about your life now. You have a challenge before you which can only be met by keeping every requirement established by the Lord for your redemption **now**.

I fear those who are most enamored by this teaching are only distracted by it. They speculate about their own past history (or histories), and don't realize their present life is slipping into history without adequate attention being given to the moment-to-moment responsibilities we are called upon to meet every second of this life.

So, I leave it to you to decide if there's something to it or not. But, I'd remind you, even if you decide there is truth in it, nothing should change. The game's afoot and you have a challenge to live your life well **now**.

APRIL 27, 2011

Easter

I was the speaker in my ward on Easter Sunday. Although the talk was not written I'm going to try to summarize what was said. (I never "write" a talk. Just take a list of scriptures with me, which on this occasion I never used.)

In the months before I entered law school, I worked in Provo alongside a fellow named Jay Wirig. Jay had been a missionary in the 70's in Hong Kong. While there, he suffered a collapsed lung. He was diagnosed and then sent by the doctor to see a specialist to be treated. His companion took him to the specialist's office, which was up a flight of stairs. That isn't much of a problem unless you have a collapsed lung.

When he arrived in the office, an unpretentious, elderly, Chinese fellow—in a spartan office—used a stethoscope to listen all about his chest and back. Then the fellow got out a tool that looked like a phillips-head screw driver, but had four razor tips on the end. Without warning or anesthetic the doctor stabbed him in the upper chest. It hurt. Then he fished a tube in the hole he'd just made, attached the tube to a suction bottle, and within a short while the lung re-inflated and pain went away—except for the wound on the upper chest. The doctor has no bedside manner, did not bother explaining what he was going to do or why. He just proceeded without regard to the patient's feelings to administer what would cure the ailment.

When Jay returned to home after the mission ended, he suffered recurring collapsed lungs. Eventually, they recommended surgery. The surgery required them to enter his chest cavity through his underarm. When you open on the side, rather than through the solar plexus, the rib spreader crushes cartilage, pulls muscles and ligaments, and inflicts a great deal of trauma. He was kept in the same post surgical ward as the heart patients. The much older heart patients had their chests opened through the far less traumatic means of opening and spreading at the solar plexus. Therefore, the elderly patients were feeling quite well post-surgery, while Jay was in agony. He took some grief from the older patients, because

here was a 20-something year- old young man complaining while they were not.

Poor bedside manner by physicians can make the patients they treat feel anxious and alienated, even if the medical treatment they provide is curative. Even if they ultimately do what is right, good and healing, doctors can leave the patient feeling victimized rather than cared for.

Similarly, lawyers can be insensitive to client's feelings, becoming far more attentive to legal principles, theories and arguments than the underlying people affected by the dispute. When I was in law school, I co-authored a book on family law. Because of that, I wanted to practice family law when I graduated. In Utah that means primarily divorces, although it includes the occasional adoption and guardianship. I took divorce cases for about three years before I just could not stand that area of law any longer. It was too bitter, too divisive and too inadequate. It would take another three years before I finished all the cases I had pending, but when finished, I stopped practicing family law. Although I got good results for my clients, I was unable to identify with their emotional needs.

Some years later, after my own divorce, I saw this in a whole different light. As a result of going through the legal process for my own divorce, I concluded the law should not be used to deal with family dissolution. It should be handled by mental health counselors, who have adequate sensitivity for the horror and pain experienced any time a family is broken apart by divorce.

We have a ward infested with lawyers and doctors. I would venture, perhaps every one of us can look back and see those we have helped professionally, but who we have failed inter- personally. We may have solved the legal or medical problem, but at the price of injuring the spirit of those we helped.

When Christ suffered, He gained knowledge. His knowledge is not limited to the physical cure, but includes the spiritual and mental anguish of our disappointments, losses, failures, illnesses, injuries and limitations. He said very little about what He went through. The longest single explanation given by Him is in D&C 19. There He states:

15 Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.

Now this sounds like the Old Testament God. However, this is a warning based on the established laws by which all things operate. Sooner or later, all of us will come back into the presence of God. When we do we will either have repented and be prepared to be in His presence, or we will not have repented and we will withdraw in shame and agony. This is explained in Mormon 9:3–5:

3...Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws?

4 Behold, I say unto you that ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell.

5 For behold, when ye shall be brought to see your nakedness before God, and also the glory of God, and the holiness of Jesus Christ, it will kindle a flame of unquenchable fire upon you.

Joseph Smith said a man is his own tormentor and accuser. That is, when we see ourselves as we truly are, and can reckon our own

unworthiness from the presence of a “just and holy being,” we will recoil in horror at our filthiness. We will see how vain we have been.

It is this problem Christ is warning us to guard ourselves against. It is a plea from Him to repent, so we may remove from ourselves this burden of guilt. This is the greatest gift of the Atonement. All other benefits of His suffering pale in comparison with this compassionate result of His suffering for our sins.

Section 19’s explanation continues:

¹⁶For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

¹⁷But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

¹⁸Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—

This is describing a specific event and time. The only Gospel which records the event is Luke. Luke 22 tell us:

⁴¹And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,

⁴²Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

⁴³And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

⁴⁴And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

For Him to suffer as we will if we choose not to repent, He was required to assume our sins, feel our anguish and unworthiness in the presence of a “just and holy God,” and then come back into harmony with Him. Hence the need for the “angel” to appear to

Him from heaven. Unless He confronted exactly what we are called on to confront, He could not minister to us. He could not heal us. He could not take upon Him our sins.

And so He became as unworthy as any of us. No matter what malignant thing you have suffered, who you have abused or neglected, or what harm you have caused or endured, Christ has felt the anguish of that while in the presence of a “just and holy being.” He knew His sheep would flee while He suffered. But He also knew the Father would never leave Him:

John 16:32: *Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*

Suffering the guilt of filthiness in the presence of His Father, He overcame and subdued all enemies to righteousness. He felt shame, but returned it to compassion. He felt agony and rejection, but overcame it with charity. By this means He gained the knowledge necessary to heal all our sins, remove all our guilt, and subdue all our anxieties in the presence of holiness.

Isaiah says this:

Isa. 53:11: *... by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.*

By bearing or taking upon Himself the guilt which divides us from the Father, Christ knows perfectly how to conduct you safely back to the Father’s presence. As Christ explains in D&C 19, it requires us to “repent” —because if we fail to repent we must suffer, just as He did. Except our own suffering for our own sins is not curative. It is not redeeming. It is only justice. For us, we seek to claim mercy. Mercy comes from Christ’s Atonement which can and does render those who take part in it altogether clean.

His explanation in Section 19 continues:

¹⁹Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.

He has prepared it for us. But it is our choice to take hold upon it. For that, our personal decision to repent remains at the core.

Christ's capacity to heal us was gained through the Atonement. He possesses compassion in another measure beyond us. For Him the power of His compassion exceeds mere sympathy. It is a power to heal. His compassion removes from us the burdens we feel.

Joseph Smith wrote from Liberty Jail about the injustice of the Saints' suffering from the Missouri mob attacks. As he listed his complaints, and clamored for justice against his enemies, his mind became a blur of emotion and events. With "the avidity of lightening" his mind turned over and over again the injustice of it all. Then, when his mind could take it no more, Joseph fell into a detached state of profound openness to God's voice. Then the voice of inspiration came to him and said:

D&C 121:7-8:

My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.

On the other side of this statement from God, Joseph was still in jail, under the same horrid conditions, with the same captors. But having heard the voice of God declaring, "peace be unto thy soul," the compassion of Christ removed the pain of suffering. Now the conditions of his lamentable imprisonment became tolerable. For Christ's compassion removes, empowers, enables, and enlivens.

It frees us from the torments we suffer. Through Him we can bear all things.

Of all the Lord provided, an escape from our torments crowns His Atoning sacrifice. It empowers Him to liberate us from all our burdens. His compassion is a power, not a sentiment.

MAY 2011

MAY 3, 2011

The Books

The quote and cite checking on the latest manuscript is underway. I'm amused by how many volumes are on the cart, so to speak. There was a library required to write what I've been working on, and the book will relieve people who read it from the necessity of buying and reading shelves of material, if they don't want to.

I am a little concerned about the length of the book because length increases pages, and pages increase cost. A book is not particularly reader-friendly if the font drops below 12, so it is not practical to reduce pages by taking the font to 10 because that makes it hard to read. A word index will be required because the content is such that readers are likely to want to be able to navigate through the material with an index.

The first read-through edit has been done. This identified ambiguities, or things that would benefit from further clarification, or examples. This first edit results in rewrites to clarify. The result is always expanding the volume, because some clarifications add a paragraph to the text and several footnotes. This process is about 80% completed.

The second edit is only to check the citations and quotes for accuracy. Since there are over a thousand citations and quotes, this

is somewhat tedious, but can be done simultaneously with the read-through, clarification process. This citation check is about 30% completed.

The final edit is a word/phrasing/punctuation/grammar edit which checks all the technical writing style. It will be done on a text that is accurate as to meaning and citations, and focus only on writing conformity to good technical standards.

When the editing is completed, the book is then typeset, a process which takes a few weeks. This makes the book look like a finished layout. Only after the typeset, is it printed for the first time. The printed product is called a “galley-proof” and will be marked up for printing errors and mistakes. Printed proofs are used to look for mistakes that are then marked in red. This is the “red-line” process. After the red lines are finished, the print layout is corrected to remove all the errors found. The finished, corrected version is then turned into a print-ready copy and submitted to the printer. The printer takes about three weeks to provide a print proof for review and approval. When it is approved, the book becomes available on Amazon.

The new book is drafted, but still has a great deal of technical work to be done before it will be ready. I thought it might be interesting to let people know this process. Mill Creek has suggested releasing it as a two-volume set to reduce cost for any single volume. But I think that is self-defeating, because then the cumulative cost of the two is greater than a single volume. It is possible, however, that the word index will lengthen it to the point a paperback printing of a perfect-bound book is not possible. Then the only choice would be to make it two volumes, or release it as a hardback-only printing. If it becomes hardback-only, the cost will rise dramatically. I'm not interested in making it costly, so that has no appeal to me.

We are looking into getting another printer to do hardback versions of all the books, because there have been requests for those.

On the bright side, they are shipping me a copy of the finished proof of *Removing the Condemnation* this week. When it arrives, I can approve and release it. So the blog book (titled *Removing the Condemnation*) will then be available in printed form. It will be over 525 pages in length, and would be increased by many more if a word index were provided. Therefore, there will be no word index for that book, but the blog will remain up and can be searched on-line to find something. Also, there will be no Kindle version of that book because the blog will remain up.

MAY 7, 2011

Book Now Available

The book based on this blog is now available for those who are interested. It can be ordered through Amazon and is titled *Removing the Condemnation*.

It is 568 pages and has no word index because I'm leaving this blog up for those who want to search for a word, topic, post or entry. The book is arranged by scriptural divisions. You can use this blog to locate a word or topic, find the scripture cite being discussed, and locate it within the book based on the scripture. It's a little cumbersome, but adding a word index would have moved the book to well over 600 pages, at which point the cost would have gone up too much for my liking.

Let me reiterate that I do not make anything on what I write. That small portion of the book price which finds its way to me is donated to the church. There are, of course, those who publish, print, sell and ship books who do depend on the sale price for their living. I am a practicing attorney, and therefore do not.

I continue working to shepherd the book on restoration history along and hope it will be completed and available by fall, but there is no release date at present. I can only promise it will be out this year.

On a completely unrelated topic, tomorrow is Mother's Day. Don't forget your wives, mothers and sisters who are mothers tomorrow.

MAY 8, 2011

Mother's Day

Today is Mother's Day. Many of you will be getting a phone call from your missionary. My daughter will speak in Sacrament today. It's a different daughter than the one who spoke for the last two years on Mother's Day. Seems we can't have it come without one of our daughters speaking.

My mother died years ago. I always remember her always on this date. She was a remarkable, stern, intelligent, spry, curious and faithful woman. Every morning at breakfast she would read a verse from the Bible to us, even though I did my best to feign disinterest. She persisted. Somehow, despite my own neglect of reading the Bible, when the missionaries taught me, I already knew most of the material they used from the Bible. Although she was not Mormon, her teaching was absolutely necessary for me to become what I am now.

She drug me to the Baptist Church every week, always hoping I'd become a Baptist. But the only church I ever joined was The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That was troubling to a devout Baptist. I've often said that throughout my childhood she was afraid I would go to hell. Then I became a Mormon and removed all doubt.

If your mother is still here, take time for her today. And if she's gone, like mine, then take some time for your wife as mother of your children. I'm planning to go prepare dinner and then clean up afterwards. (Even if I go to KFC and use paper plates.)

MAY 13, 2011

Early Morning Seminary

I've been substituting an early morning seminary class this week. It's a Doctrine & Covenants course, and we've been covering Sections 132, 133 and 135. These include the eternal marriage covenant, plural wives, prophecy of Christ's Second Coming, and martyrdom of both Joseph and Hyrum.

I drew a layout of the Carthage Jail yesterday morning, described the movements of each of the four in the upper room (Joseph, Hyrum, John Taylor and Willard Richards) during and after the attack, then discussed what happened between the killing and the time the bodies made it back to Nauvoo.

Joseph's last words, "Oh Lord my God..." is a shorthand reference to the distress call for the Third Degree, or Master Mason. The entire call is, "Oh Lord my God, is there no help for the widow's son?" Invoking the call, requires all other Masons to rally to help the one in distress. Joseph was aware members of the mob who came to kill him were Masons. By addressing the call to the mob, Joseph was putting the Masons on their sworn duty to provide relief. He was putting them to the test of their oath, which they failed.

It is good to stay in touch with younger Latter-day Saints through teaching opportunities. I teach Priests in my own ward. There are two interesting observations I've made. First, younger minds are more open and willing to be taught. They are interested

in thinking or considering ideas. The more you can inform them, the better able they are to gain perspective about the Gospel. They possess a resource which diminishes with time—teachability (to use the vocabulary of scripture, humility). Second, the youth who have grown up using the current form of institutional teaching materials are woefully less informed than those who grew up forty years ago. They are every bit as interested and curious as past generations, but the material used to inform them has been so diminished in content that they are left with the most superficial of understanding of the Gospel. All you parents need to assume responsibility for fixing that with your own children. The institutional approach narrows the scope each year, leaving less and less substance taught.

I've studied the restored Gospel and church history for over 40 years. I continue to search more carefully into the subject year by year. There are so many things to appreciate. I think the most interesting, gripping and important subject you can study is the restored Gospel. Not through the kind of superficial inspirational drivel now sold by Deseret Book. You can go round and round with that kind of crap—won't make one bit of progress there. You'll be briefly entertained, and then lulled to sleep by such quasi-religious infotainment. You will never awaken to your awful situation by being coddled, inspired and reassured that "All is well in Zion." If you intend to actually come to grips with the Gospel, you need to read the Book of Mormon, other scriptures, everything you can find about Joseph Smith, and original material or works based on original materials taken from then contemporary sources. The bibliography from the new book I'm working on has a number of great sources worth considering.

But the Gospel is not study alone. The purpose of study is to inform our conduct, our thoughts and our words. What truths we

learn need to be put into action and lived. It is in the living that the power of the Gospel is released. As we “do” what we are instructed, we find ourselves in company with angels and Heavenly messengers.

That process which Joseph Smith describes in the *Joseph Smith-History* found in the *Pearl of Great Price*, still works. For any soul who decides to try it.

MAY 26, 2011

Utah Women in the Law

This evening I attended a gathering at the Little America Grand Hotel paying tribute to the first 100 women admitted to practice law in Utah. It wasn't until the 1970's that the total women admitted to practice law in Utah reached the 100 mark.

Utah Supreme Court Chief Justice Christine Durham was one of two keynote speakers, Elder Dallin Oaks was the other. Chief Justice Durham was the 72nd woman admitted to practice in Utah's history. Now she is the state's Chief Justice. She and Elder Oaks served together temporarily on the Utah Supreme Court. She was added to the court in 1982, Elder Oaks departed in 1984 for church service. It was an interesting evening. I am glad I was able to attend, and take my wife, and daughter, Lindsay.

There were excerpts from court opinions in the late 1800's from both Utah and Wisconsin when the first women were applying to practice law in both states. Surprisingly, the attitude from Wisconsin was condescending, critical, and discouraging toward women who wanted to be lawyers. But from Utah, there was praise and encouragement—even the expectation that women would add some degree of dignity and compassion to the profession.

Events like these serve to remind us how greatly things have changed in relatively recent times. Some of the things we take for granted have only recently occurred.

Societies which fail to educate, and allow women to influence every aspect of their lives are diminished by the failing. Advancement to the entire culture is tied to the education and contribution of women. They should be allowed every opportunity possible.

JUNE 2011

JUNE 2, 2011

What an Honor

I attended my daughter, Kylee's, high school graduation ceremony today at Abravanel Hall. What an amazing group of young people. All of the seniors graduated in her class, not one of them falling short. Most have scholarships. All of them will be going on to college. Although the class was relatively small, they will undoubtedly change the world.

This daughter is more than a personality, she is a force of nature. There was an article on KSL about her a few months ago. I put a link to it on this blog. She lost the last of her senior year basketball season because of a broken finger. There was a news item about how that turned out with the assistance of the coach of an opposing team. He took a technical foul in the last game so she could shoot two foul shots, allowing her to score the last two points of her senior season. Even with the cast on her arm, she made them both.

Later she played on the Waterford Lacrosse team, helping her team to win the girl's State Championship. She was not only first team All State, but also the division midfield MVP for the season.

What an honor it has been to be her father, and have her grow up in our home. When she leaves this coming fall for college, out of state, I cannot imagine the vacuum she will leave in her departure. I cannot let her graduation pass without acknowledging her.

JUNE 5, 2011

Utah Sound Money Act

On June 2nd, I attended the ceremony at the Capitol Building acknowledging the signing of the Utah Sound Money Act. The act makes gold and silver coin legal tender in Utah. It is designed to allow a form of currency to be used that will have intrinsic value. Its value will not be tied to monetary policy.

The prediction now is that billions of dollars in capital will migrate into Utah because of the ability to purchase and store (in Utah) gold and silver as currency. By treating it as currency, any inflationary value increases to the gold and silver will not be taxed as a gain. You can't tax money. It is now treated as money under Utah law.

Given all the recent, direful economic news, the idea of stabilizing monetary value by a precious metal form of currency seems prudent. Utah may be the first state to adopt the idea, but there are fourteen other states with similar legislation being considered.

The US Constitution allows a state to adopt gold and silver coin as currency for the state. Utah's move is in keeping with that Constitutional power. It also seems wise, given the announced determination by the central bank to "monetize the debt" — meaning the debt will be paid by printing more dollars. The inevitable result of expanding the money supply, and not simultaneously increasing goods and services will be inflationary. When a nation resorts to

financing national expenditures by printing paper money, sooner or later the paper money becomes valueless. Oftentimes dramatically.

The prudence of migrating some money into a form having more value than that bestowed on it by a printing press, managed by a profligate government, seems wise.

JUNE 6, 2011

D - Day

Early this morning in 1944, my father and Hugh Nibley were storming onto the beach at Normandy. Oddly, both of them were older GI's, and were the same age at the time. My father landed on Omaha Beach, against terrible German emplacements firing down from a cliff above, without any tank support. Hugh Nibley landed on Utah Beach, where he arrived in a Jeep that drove through craters caused by the incoming German artillery fire.

It is hard to comprehend the chaos of that day. As my father was dying fifty years later, it was about that day he chose to speak. He wondered if the many more years he had been given than those he saw die that day had been well lived.

Therefore, when *Saving Private Ryan* came out years later, I concluded the universal result of living, when so many others died, was the same. The added years given the survivors were always viewed as a stewardship, a gift. One they would need to report on to their friends when they at last joined them in death.

That is not a bad way to live a life. Viewing it as a gift. A probation. An opportunity to do something worthwhile with the precious and limited time given to each of us.

JUNE 16, 2011

Catholic Business Network, Utah State Treasurer

I attended a meeting of the Catholic Business Network this week where Utah State Treasurer, Richard Ellis gave a talk. His remarks about the economy of Utah were very insightful, and reaffirmed how well the state government has been managed.

Right now the federal stimulus money is ending, and states are panicked about the loss of those “bail out dollars.” Utah, however, has already budgeted to proceed without the need of any further federal contribution. If the money ends, Utah will be unaffected.

There are over \$8 billion in new construction projects currently underway in Utah. These are just the top 20 projects. Hundreds of other projects are not included in that number.

Utah’s housing bubble lagged behind the national average, did not reach the same levels, and therefore did not result in the same kinds of crippling losses. Although Utah has been affected, and many people are in a great deal of financial stress, it is comparatively less significant than the national economic turmoil.

The growth of Utah’s population has averaged over 9% since the last census, one of the highest in the nation. Sooner or later that growth will require new housing to be built. Housing must recover for the overall economy to return to steady growth. New housing is what drives all durable goods sales.

It was an interesting meeting. I asked a question about the likelihood of a double-dip recession. Mr. Ellis was reluctant to predict it is coming. However, if it comes, Utah will be better equipped to cope than most the rest of the country. Though national economic downturns do affect Utah, they are ameliorated by state government’s careful management, balanced budget, careful

pension management, and rainy-day funding. I think State Treasurer Richard Ellis is a credit to Utah.

JUNE 19, 2011

Guidance from the Spirit

I've been reflecting on a commonly held belief concerning the Holy Ghost. Among Latter-day Saints the assertion is widely believed that the Holy Ghost will always leave a "good feeling" as the evidence of a message coming from God. This is in contrast with Joseph Smith's correct description of the Holy Ghost as delivering "intelligence" or "sudden insight" or, to use scriptural language, "light and truth." The feelings which follow an authentic encounter with the Holy Ghost can be anything from fear and dread to joy and rejoicing. Our emotional reaction to the message can vary depending upon the information we've been given. But "feeling good" about something is separate from the Holy Ghost.

When the message from God calls to repentance, the reaction can be best described as anger, or distress, or fear; but is not likely to be described as leaving a "good feeling." The message of repentance always requires change. It will always confront the error and require you to alter what you are doing.

I have noticed some reactions to what I've written measure what has been written against the standard of a "good feeling" and, as a result, some have concluded I'm not worth reading. I suppose against that standard Abinadi would have been rejected. Samuel the Lamanite, too. John the Baptist, Elijah, Christ, Peter, Paul, Joseph Smith, Noah, Enoch, John the Beloved, as well. Certainly Nephi, Jacob, Alma, Mormon and Moroni. In fact, I can't think of a single authentic message which did not include as its most important

content information which violates the “feeling good” standard. I think care should be taken when a standard gets employed. Use a false standard and you risk reaching a false result.

This is one of the criticisms made by Grant Palmer in his *Insider's* book. He took aim at a false notion (“feeling good” means the Holy Ghost) and then leveled criticism against the false notion. Though a lifelong employee of the Church Education System, he was ignorant of the correct standard and lost his faith in the Holy Ghost’s ability to enlighten because of it. His criticism was justified, but not the standard. He, like many Latter-day Saints, confuses something which inspires with a witness from the Spirit. You can be inspired by music, movies, plays and thrilling speeches coming from unenlightened sources which bring no light and truth. You may be entertained, but you are not given greater light and truth or intelligence from such thrilling encounters.

The one thing I do know, and the truth I can proclaim is this: Truth will come through and confirm itself when measured against the standard of: 1) imparting truth and light, which is intelligence; and 2) whether the message leads to greater belief in, understanding of and testimony of Christ. These standards do not involve “feeling good.” They do, however, involve enlightenment and edification. Even if the result of gaining more light is to see yourself in a new way, requiring repentance, confession of sin, re-baptism, breaking your heart and becoming contrite in spirit. Anyone who can teach a message which will pass this standard, whether they are high or low, rich or poor, great or obscure, has given something of value.

JUNE 26, 2011

Joseph The Prophet

Although Joseph Smith revealed many, previously unknown things, his ministry was devoted primarily to bringing others into fellowship with God. The ordinances, scriptures, revelations, and teachings restored through him were not intended to titillate, but to instruct on how to reconnect with God.

From his emphasis on the promise in James 1:5 (“if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God ...and it shall be given him”) leading to the First Vision, to the promise of Moroni 10:4 (“I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and ... he will manifest the truth of it unto you”), to D&C 93:1 (“It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am”), and in numerous other places throughout his ministry, Joseph reiterated both the possibility and importance of each soul coming directly to God.

This is the role of a true messenger. It is to bring others into harmony with God. Not to titillate them with new information, leaving them without knowledge of God. When someone delivers a new message that does not include knowledge about how the audience may come to God themselves, then the primary intent is always to make others dependent on the messenger. It is vanity. It is prideful. It is to call attention to themselves in an effort to place themselves above their fellow man, and interject themselves between the person and God. It is priestcraft.

The “welfare of Zion” consists of teaching others how to come to God themselves, and receive the heavenly promises directly from

God (See 2 Ne. 26:29) Zion will be composed exclusively of those who can endure the presence of God. Therefore, it is necessary for everyone to come up to the heavenly mount by their own repentance and remembrance of the Lord.

It is foolishness to separate information about the Lord's doings from instruction on how to become redeemed. It is vanity to spread new, and personal revelation about the afterlife, God, man, prophecy, visionary encounters, and spiritual experiences if the primary reason does not focus on instructing how the audience can come to God themselves. It is also dangerous to trust teachings which fail to give you guidance on how you can find God for yourself. If all that is delivered is a message about some great experience, the experience was not intended for you. It isn't important. It is the way to find God that will save you. Not someone else's new, and exciting spiritual manifestation.

I've shared almost nothing of the things I have learned. But I've tried to share everything about how you can "come and see" (John 1:46). Still, however, there are very few who can detect the difference. Still there remain those who are tossed to and fro by the sleight of men (Eph. 4:14).

Here's how things really work: New revelation for the church comes from the top. It is not binding upon anyone unless it comes through the correct channel, and then is sustained as binding upon the church. Whether you like that system or not, that is the system. **HOWEVER**, every church member is obligated to teach one another the doctrines of the kingdom.

Expounding, exhorting, teaching, and instructing is a common obligation imposed upon us all. Therefore, everything I have written, all I have taught, and the things I have testified about are confined to elaborating upon the established doctrines of the church, the

revelations in the Book of Mormon, the other standard works, and Joseph Smith's teachings. I've said almost nothing about my personal revelations because they were intended for me. They will not help you. They equip me to be able to preach, teach, exhort and expound, but just publishing what I know to the world will not aid any other person in their individual journey.

Salvation for you is a journey exactly like the journey undertaken by Joseph Smith. Which is also identical to the journey undertaken by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Which was modeled upon the pattern coming down through Noah. Who was a contemporary with Enoch, both of whom undertook the same journey. Which originated with Adam, who came back into God's presence three years previous to his death, and received "comfort" from the Lord (D&C 107:53–55). The Lord is the promised Comforter who will come to all of us on the same conditions (John 14:23, D&C 130:3). I was asked, and wrote a manual on that process in the first book, *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*. The purpose of the book has nothing to do with my own recognition or importance. Throughout the book my many failings are discussed. The book is about the reader, and how the reader can come to know God.

Still people will go to great trouble, and spare no effort to find someone who will only give a titillating peek behind the veil, but who will do nothing to instruct you on how you can meet God here, be redeemed from the fall of man, and come back into God's presence. This is the purpose of the Gospel, and the definition of redemption (Ether 3:13). Telling about personal experience cannot help another. Testifying to the process, however, is the burden of all true teaching.

I am a fool, and anyone who thinks otherwise is misled. My only relevance is the common obligation imposed upon us all to preach, teach, exhort and expound. I confine all I do to that obligation. The only thing I can offer anyone is to point them to the One who is filled with truth and light, which is intelligence (D&C 93:36). And still there are those who cannot discern between what and how I teach, and how others who are practicing only priestcraft do so. I am saddened, not particularly surprised, but saddened. These are the times we live in (Isa. 29:9–10).

What more could have been done than the Lord has already done? Is it not us, not He, upon whom the blame must be laid?

The Latter-day famine continues unabated still. Not because there isn't something worth consuming, but because we crave only the weakest of gruel, which cannot sustain life. Therefore, let us all feast away and still become famished until at last we perish without hope, having wasted the days of our probation. We didn't care much for Joseph's message in his day, and we fail to even notice it in ours.

JULY 2011

JULY 7, 2011

Adultery

That's a title that ought to get readers.

I've been thinking about adultery since the 4th, when my wife, the bishop's wife and I were talking about the abysmal job we do of teaching anything on the subject. The bishop's wife is a nurse, and she does rape-kit exams at local hospitals. Her view of the condition of young Latter-day Saints' understanding alarms her. Both perpetrators and victims are often Latter-day Saints. The casual

way in which young women put themselves at risk reflects poor teaching, warning and counsel. She tries to educate, but there's a lot of soft-selling going on instead of candid teaching and warning.

I wrote a paper for the stake presidency when I was on the high council. As a result, there was a series of 5th Sunday adult meetings conducted by a member of the stake presidency in our stake. The paper later became the basis of one chapter in *Eighteen Verses*.

Out of wedlock children who are raised by single mothers has become one of the great tragedies of our day. Children raised by a single mother, without fathers present comprise about 70 percent of juvenile murderers, drug abusers, suicides and runaways. While I was on the high council, adultery was the top reason for temple marriages breaking up in our stake.

Parents have the primary responsibility for teaching youth about this subject. It is important enough that you should be candid with your children. They deserve to be taught, to be warned, to understand the cultural atmosphere of casual sex is ultimately destructive of life itself. It imprisons.

If you love your children, teach them. And set a good example before them. The church is not responsible for teaching your children, you are. They aren't going to be doing the job only you can perform.

JULY 12, 2011

Forsake, Come, Call, Obey, Keep, See, and KNOW

I had a discussion about the difficulty of rising above the sins of this world. It was provoked by the recent post on adultery. It has in turn led to these additional thoughts.

It is impossible to become altogether clean in this fallen world. We can do our best, but in the end we're going to find we are lack-

ing. The scriptures admit this. The proposition is so fundamentally understood among most saints that it goes without saying. We're all in need of redemption from an outside power, someone with greater virtue and power than we have, who can lift us from our condition into something higher, cleaner, and more godly. This is the role of Christ. His atoning sacrifice equipped Him to accomplish this.

The atonement, however, is not magic. Through it, Christ accomplished some very specific things, and has the power to lead us all back to the presence of God, the Father. The process was difficult for Him and is necessarily difficult for us.

Christ participated in the ordinance of the atonement to acquire two things. First, knowledge (Isa. 53:11). It is through His knowledge He is able to "justify many." The knowledge was acquired through His suffering the pains of all mankind. That allowed Him to know exactly what weaknesses afflict mankind, and how to overcome them. This allows Him to succor, or relieve, or teach mankind how to overcome every form of guilt, affliction, and weakness (Alma 7:11–12). This knowledge was gained by suffering guilt and remorse for sins He did not commit exactly as if He were the one who committed them. He performed this great burden before His Father, who would never leave Him; even in His hour of temptation, despite the fact that all His followers would abandon Him (John 16:32). When He suffered the guilt of all mankind, it was necessary for His Father to draw near to Him (Luke 22:42–43). This was required because it is impossible for Christ to know how to redeem mankind from the guilt and shame of sin unless He experiences the pains of uncleanness before God the Father, as mankind will do if they are unclean in the day of judgment (Mormon 9:4–5). Unlike all of us, however, Christ knows how to overcome this shame because He has done so.

Second, Christ acquired the keys of death and hell by suffering, reconciling, dying, rising, and reuniting with the Father (Rev. 1:18). Because the keys of death and hell belong to Him, He has the power of forgiveness. He can forgive all men all offenses. But He requires us to forgive others (D&C 64:9–10). If we fail to forgive others, we cannot be forgiven (Matt. 6:15).

We do not move from our state of evil to redemption by Christ's sacrifice alone. It is required for us to follow Him (John 10:27). We follow Him when we allow Him to succor us, to impart knowledge to us, and to forgive others through His knowledge gained from the atonement.

Through the keys of death and hell, Christ's atonement cleanses us from our errors, our failings, and our deliberate wrong choices. He provides cleansing from those failings. But His atonement does not change our character unless we follow Him. The atonement, if properly acted upon, frees us to develop character like His, unencumbered by the guilt of what we've failed to do. He removes our guilt. But developing character like His is our responsibility.

We cannot be passive and obtain what He offers. We are required to actively pursue the redemption we seek through Him. When the sin is removed from us, we are free to pursue virtue without the crippling effects of remorse which He removes from us (Alma 24:10). When freed from the guilt of sin, the past mistakes no longer haunt us. Our sins are no longer remembered by the Lord, and we are free to confess and forsake them (D&C 58:42–43). The reason we can publicly confess them is because they are no longer us. They do not define us. It is no longer our sin, nor our character. We have chosen to follow Him into a new life.

The development of a godly character happens in stages, gradually. We are forgiven in an instant, suddenly (Alma 36:18–20).

When forgiven we necessarily turn to a new life, in which sharing the joy of forgiveness and the joy of redemption through Christ is our abiding desire (Alma 36:24). The mind changes in proportion to the joy found in the new life (Romans 8:5–6). Such new people are no longer the sons of men, but they become the sons of God (Romans 8:14–17). They know the joy of having the voice of the Father declare to them that they have been begotten by the Father and are the sons of God (Psalms 2:7).

Remaining mired in the flesh is evidence a man has not been redeemed, not been succored by Christ, not accepted the saving knowledge which He can impart, and has not risen up to receive salvation. The atonement is not active in such lives. The fullness of the atonement is the fullness of knowledge, which comes by following Him and abiding the conditions. No one can receive what He offers unless they conform to the conditions He has established for redemption (D&C 93:27–28).

This is the Gospel of Christ. This is the news which comes from the Lord—the Messenger of Salvation. Those who know Him will declare these things in unmistakable words to allow others to come and partake of the same fruit of the tree of life. All the other virtues, causes, programs and, “inspirational stories” are distractions which, if indulged in to the neglect of these other things, will damn you.

Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am; And that I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world; And that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one—The Father because he gave me of his fulness, and the Son

because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men. (D&C 93:1-4)

I am not that Light. But I have seen that Light and can testify He lives, and His atoning work continues today among all of those who will receive Him. If you will receive Him, He will not leave you comfortless, but He will come and take up His abode with you (John 14:18). Not only Him, but the Father also (John 14:23). This is literal, and the idea this is only an abode “in your heart” is false; for they will come and make themselves known to you (D&C 130:3). Eternal life is to know Him (John 17:3). This means to come into His presence again (Ether 3:19).

These things are the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Anyone who teaches otherwise is in error and a deceiver.

JULY 20, 2011

Distracted

There are too many distractions. We're like small children whose eyes are captured by every shiny object passing before us. We lose focus.

The Gospel has a core we don't even understand. We think we're getting somewhere when we debate environmental issues in light of Mormonism, or immigration policy, or conservative versus liberal political solutions, or dress, grooming, word of wisdom, and ten thousand other irrelevancies.

Until the core is corrected and our souls are saved, no amount of energy or focus devoted to the periphery will get us anywhere.

How are you saved? How are you born again? What ordinances are required? Are they symbols? If symbols, what do they symbolize? What critical things must a man know to be saved? What does it mean “a man cannot be saved in ignorance?” What does it mean to

have “life eternal” through Christ Jesus? Since Alvin was saved in the Celestial Kingdom before the Gospel was restored, what does Section 137 really mean? What about the rest of the revelation from which Section 137 was drawn? Since it involves salvation of a man who died before the fullness of the Gospel returned, how applicable is that section to the condition we find ourselves in today?

Until we understand the core, there is no topic on the periphery worth giving any attention.

JULY 23, 2011

Prodigal Son

Luke preserved this now familiar parable of the Lord’s:

And he said, A certain man had two sons:

And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found. (Luke 15:11-32)

When all is said and done in the story, the wayward son is given a “ring on his hand,” the “best robe,” “shoes on his feet,” and invited into “the feast.”

What does the “ring” on his hand signify?

What does “the best robe” signify?

What do “shoes” symbolize?

What is “the feast” offered by his father?

The faithful son refuses to enter into the feast, stands in judgment of the wayward, but repentant son, and does not join the feast.

What does the refusal to come into the “feast” signify?

What does his “anger” symbolize?

What does his protest of “neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment” signify?

At the end of the parable, who is “alive?” Is it the repentant son who feasts with his father, or the resentful but ostensibly faithful son, who refuses to join the feast? Which of the two is now “dead?”

What does this parable really tell us about those who think themselves better than repentant sinners?

JULY 28, 2011

Charity in Teaching

It is both unkind and ineffective to teach truths to those who are unprepared to understand them. A person who has learned and accepted a truth has an obligation to be as kind and patient with those she explains it to as the Lord was in bringing her to the understanding she was given.

You never want someone to reject truth. But if you're going to teach something that hasn't been understood before, you have an obligation to make the matter clear. You should prepare the audience by laying a foundation using existing scripture, teachings and knowledge to show how the new concept fits into the existing framework. Just declaring something without a foundation to support it often offends instead of enlightens. It alienates rather than invites.

I'm somewhat concerned about those who try to get an understanding of what I've taught, but who haven't read what I've written. In the material, I walk through existing concepts, accepted doctrines, recognized scripture, and language of Joseph Smith to first lay the foundation. Much of that may be familiar; some of it may be surprising, but I take the time to lay it out. Then, after clearing the path to the next ideas, using the existing body of recognized material, I go forward with something that may be new, or difficult, or challenging.

The book I am working on right now will introduce some important information that most people are unfamiliar with. But it will walk through, in the same patient way, building the foundation from which the conclusions are inevitable, and fit it into the framework of all that is known already. I know there are those who are unkind, impatient, or who don't care about the audience. They will want to blurt out the conclusions, and only move quickly to the startling points. That is inevitable, I suppose. But anyone who does that is neither a good teacher, nor are they kind to their audience. They don't care if someone rejects truth. They just want to be involved in the sensational, the surprising and the titillating.

Anyone who is going to teach has an obligation to bring along, in a kindly way, those they seek to reclaim from error. That's how

Joseph put it. If you think you have some truth and want to remove an error, you have an obligation to proceed in a proper and affectionate manner to reclaim them (*JS-H* 1:28). When a new truth is introduced in a harsh, challenging, unkind way it will be disturbing, upsetting and alienating. Such a person is not a teacher, but instead an enemy to the truth. They make it hard for people to find their way back to God. It is wrong.

True teachers will always adapt to their audience and show kindness and patience to those they teach. When they are called upon by the spirit to rebuke with sharpness, they will afterwards show an increase of love, to make it possible to accept the inspired rebuke (*D&C* 121:43–44). They want to bring people to a position where truth spreads, is accepted, and all can rejoice in the new light and knowledge shared between them.

This is not to say that all truth a person has should be always be shared. Unless the right circumstances arise, with a properly prepared student to instruct, some kinds of knowledge cannot be shared. But to the extent something is appropriate for instruction, the lesson should be adapted to the capacity and preparation of the audience. Some material may be appropriate with one person that would be inappropriate for another. Until an audience has first been taught basic information, they are unprepared to hear something further. We don't discuss some things with investigators, but leave it until later for them to be taught. It takes about four years for a convert to receive the basics of the church. It takes years before some information can be put into context. Rushing to expose people to information is not only hasty, but oftentimes destructive. If you intend to be a teacher, and not an enemy to someone's salvation, you should only proceed in the appropriate way, using kindness,

meekness, gentleness, pure knowledge and love unfeigned (D&C 121:41–42). Not haste, shock, surprise and ambush.

AUGUST 2011

AUGUST 16, 2011

We are the Gentiles

I had an interesting question asked about the “remnant” I thought worth addressing here.

There should be no confusion about the identity of the “remnant” spoken of in the Book of Mormon. It refers to the descendants of Lehi (at times further divided into those descended from Nephi, Jacob and Joseph—all Lehi’s sons). The European stock who migrated to North America and dispossessed the indigenous people are invariably referred to as “gentiles” in the Book of Mormon. Throughout it is the case that the European descendants are “gentiles” and never anything else.

You can start in 1st Nephi and go through the end. The “gentiles” are us—the Latter-day Saints (to the extent we are primarily European-descended and not Native American).

Joseph Smith received the dedicatory prayer for the Kirtland Temple by revelation. In the prayer he refers to the church as being “identified with the gentiles” (D&C 109:60)

It does not matter if we descend from Israel. Nor if we have actual genetic markers which would make us Ephraimites, or Levites, or of the tribe of Judah, or any of the other tribes of Israel. Unless we are Native American, we are not the “remnant” discussed in the Book of Mormon.

There are many references to early church leaders being descended from Israelite bloodlines. Even if that is the case, however, the

Book of Mormon usage refers to us as “gentiles” unless descended from Lehi.

AUGUST 22, 2011

No Man Will Save You

There isn't going to be any man or group of men who save you. There is literally a single way, and a single source. That is Christ (Mosiah 3:17). Whether you are able to receive salvation or not is entirely dependent on how you respond to Him, not to other people (2 Ne. 9:41).

There are no magic ordinances that will reconcile you to Him (2 Ne. 25:23). Ordinances may be mandatory, but they do not save. They are evidence we are willing to submit to Him (2 Ne. 31:5), but they are not the full scope of submission required for salvation (Luke 6:46).

It has never been enough to attend meetings, perform outward ordinances and be part of a group that meets to discuss the scriptures from time to time. Every one must individually accept responsibility for coming to Christ and doing what He asks (Luke 6:45-49).

The relentless message of the Book of Mormon is that we must all repent. We are not secure in our standing before God until we repent, come down in the depths of humility and become accepted by Him. When He ministers to us, we can know our standing before Him. Until then, we cannot know (*JS-H* 1:29).

There is no “boss” who will bring you along to salvation.

There are no comforting words you need to hear that will make you secure in your sins (2 Ne. 28:21).

There is no hopeful message that needs to be shared about how everyone will probably be saved at the last day (2 Ne. 28:22).

You don't need me, nor any other man. You need to reconcile yourself to Christ. Anyone who wants to place themselves between you and the Lord will, if you let them, bring you and them to hell.

CHAPTER 5

Passing the Heavenly Gift

AUGUST 23, 2011

New Book

I will have a new book out soon and want to clarify a few things in advance of its release.

First, this is not a book for everyone. Some people have become aware of problems in church history. They have struggled with what they've learned. As a result there have been crises of faith among some of the brightest and most inquisitive among us. This is a tragic loss. The new book is written to help those who are already aware of problems to come to grips with the issues and see how it all still makes sense. There are those who are perfectly content with the oftentimes fanciful accounts of our history which gloss over problems and ignore contradictions. For such people reading the new book will be startling and perhaps a faith challenging experience. The book will perhaps upset them more than reassure them. I do not want to do that for any Latter-day Saint. I would hope they would decide to pass on reading the book and continue to be content with whatever assumptions please them about our past.

Second, I am very concerned that many of the most important points of the book will be taken completely out of context and shared by overeager readers who want to show off their new understanding. That can be destructive. The book is prepared carefully, with precepts constructed, historic proof gathered, explanations crafted with care and an overall harmony between parts. Taking some of the information out of context and blurting it out as an isolated event, quote or idea will not help anyone. The unkind person doing so may get to show off, but they tear down rather than build up. None but fools will trifle with the souls of men (*TPJS* p. 137).

The book will not read like the traditional accounts of what has happened. The point of departure for the book is the scriptures. No historian's theme is used to substitute a retelling of events. Instead the book relies on the scriptures, primarily the Book of Mormon, as the basis from which to construct the events of our dispensation. So far as I know, this is the only time our history has been told with an eye on what the scriptures say about us instead of our own vanity and pride. Therefore, it is quite different than what you've been reading about us in other accounts.

SEPTEMBER 2011

SEPTEMBER 6, 2011

Passing the Heavenly Gift

The new book, titled *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, is now available on Amazon.com.

I have explained previously that the book may not be for everyone. If you elect to read it, you should read it all. Reading the entire

book is necessary so that you will understand the full meaning of the material. Foundational things are discussed that will be revisited later to show how they fit into a larger picture— then revisited again to complete the construction of the matter from beginning to end. If you do not complete the whole book, you will not be able to evaluate the matter.

I do not expect many will enjoy the book. Although I believe anyone who reads it will be benefited by its contents. The object is to be faith promoting. Not in the sense that it will create false or naive hope, but instead it will inform you of the responsibilities resting upon anyone who seeks to know Christ. The result of the Gospel has always been intended to bring us joy. I think this book offers a greater opportunity for you to come to find joy in this life than the errors which merely use flattery or praise to distract you from the truth.

For any who elect to read it, I would hope if you choose to recommend it to others you will permit them to discover the contents of the book for themselves. Editorial summaries or statements taken out of context in this book will be more misleading than they would be with any other book I've written.

SEPTEMBER 9, 2011

A Fair and Full Hearing

The new book has hardly become available to anyone. However, I did receive some feedback from a friend who has not attended church for many years. He was one of the more conscientious saints. He learned and studied and reflected for several decades as an active member. He served in several bishoprics, high priest group leaderships and as a gospel doctrine teacher. His study led

him to a number of unfavorable conclusions about the church and its history. He read the new book, *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, and called to tell me he had returned to sacrament meeting a week ago, and for the first time in nearly a decade took the Sacrament.

I've already been called "apostate," as well as "on the road to apostasy" from some who have not read the book and have no intention to do so. I suppose there will be a great deal of that. But it is a small thing. The truth is that this book, as all I've written, testifies to the truth as I understand it. It has already done some good in one reader's life. If the only price to be paid for reclaiming another's faith is to endure some evil speaking about myself, it is truly only a small thing.

Another person's ignorance can never define your own faith. Some people do not study our faith, but claim to practice it. If Mormonism truly is of God (as I believe), then it is important enough to warrant the closest of study. When any matter is studied with great care, issues will surface. Quandaries will arise. There will be gaps, problems and failings. Human weaknesses will be exposed. Some things will get quite messy.

The underlying truth, however, deserves a fair and full hearing. Study of Mormonism which goes only far enough to discover the quandaries has not proceeded far enough. It should search into it deeply enough, prayerfully enough, and searchingly enough to find the answers.

When one person has sought deeply and another has not, there is a gap between the understanding of the two which makes a common understanding problematic. The one in possession of less is really not in a position to correctly judge the one in possession of more. Oddly, however, the one who has less is altogether more likely to judge the one with more, while the one with more is equipped

to look more kindly upon the other. After all, the one with more has struggled from the lesser position.

I understand the criticism I've received. I expected it. No one needs to defend me. No one needs to argue the point, get angry or deal unkindly with people who have not yet studied enough to form an appropriate conclusion. Only a fool judges a matter before they hear it. Such souls warrant our kindly efforts to persuade, not our censure or condemnation. We all carry foolishness, learning year by year, struggling to overcome the many things we've neglected in our study, prayers and contemplation. God does not grade on a curve. Therefore, when you begin to think you've outshone your fellow man, you should reflect again on Moses' reaction to seeing the Man of Holiness: "Now for this cause I know man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed" (Moses 1:10). None of us have anything to boast of, even if you know more than your fellow man. We all know less than He who is "more intelligent than them all" (Abr. 3:19).

Whenever I contemplate the gulf between He who is Holiness and myself, and the great charity required from Him to condescend for me, I can hardly bear the thought of feeling triumph because of the ignorance of my fellow saints. How unkind. How foolish. How uncharitable.

More than that, how very unlike the Lord whom we all claim to serve.

I teach the Priests in my Ward. I love the calling and love their openness, their eagerness and desire to learn. The last lesson I taught was about sex, based in the scriptures, and candidly covered the topic in a way which I hoped would both inform and edify. I was genuinely thanked by these 16 to 18 year old young men afterwards. I hope their lives will be better for the lesson.

So, also, I hope any who read *Passing the Heavenly Gift* will find their lives better for having read it. If you find yourself upset by it, I'd hope you would realize at least one person has returned to church after many years of absence because it restored in him a desire to fellowship with the saints, and again partake of the Sacrament. That one soul's renewal was to me, worth any petty or foolish reactions that may now come from others.

SEPTEMBER 11, 2011

A Lesson to the Priests

I was asked by someone who also teaches priests about the lesson to the priests on sex I mentioned on this blog. Here is a brief summary of what was covered:

When Adam was alone it was “not good” in God’s view (Gen. 2:18)

The story of Eve’s creation is allegorical, not actual. The allegory says she was made “from a rib” taken “from Adam’s side” (Gen. 2:21–23) This is not intended as an actual explanation of her creation, but instead as a description of the way she is to be regarded. Part of him. Taken from his side, making her his intimately connected associate in whom he should recognize companionship runs within himself. Her presence is intended to satisfy what was before “not good” about Adam’s condition. She is literally not only a part of him, but also completes him. This completion is the “image of God” because God is both a Father and a Mother (Gen. 1:27). Among mankind, when you see the “image of God” you will always see a couple who are as one (1 Cor. 11:11). [As an aside, I would add this is why there were two angels upon the Mercy Seat. Ex. 25:22. He would not permit them to behold His image without seeing what is also symbolized in Adam and Eve.]

The purpose of the creation of the two was that they may “become one” or unified (Gen. 2:24)

The first commandment given after the two are joined by God was to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:27–28).

When they were expelled from the Garden, Adam “knew his wife” which is a euphemism. The word “know” or “knew” is a reference made throughout the Old and New Testaments to sexual intercourse. As a consequence of this Eve became pregnant (Gen. 4:1)

This is fulfilling the commandment to “be fruitful,” and is the way intended for new human life to be brought into the world. When joined by God (temple marriage) and then used to produce a family, the union of the man and woman is pleasing to God. It is order. It is harmony. It produces life, peace and “fulfills the measure of creation” which “brings joy.” Unfortunately, when it is employed in other ways, it produces pain, misery and sometimes catastrophic results.

Keeping the power of procreation inside the bounds which produce joy was included in the 10 commandments (Ex. 20:14, 17)

David was a man after God’s own heart. As a youth, he had such faith to follow God that although still a lad he was able, with God’s help, to slay Goliath (1 Sam. 17:34–37; 45–46). He was so favored by God, that God made him His son, established his throne, and promised him He would watch over him (2 Sam. 7:14–16)

But David committed adultery (2 Sam. 11:2–5) To conceal the sin, he committed murder.(2

Sam 11:14–15) As a result of these sins, he fell from his exaltation (D&C 132:39) The result was that a man “after the Lord’s own heart” lost everything because the power of procreation was not used in the way to produce joy, but instead used to gratify lust.

When the solution to an unwanted pregnancy is abortion, then the person has elected, like David, to do something akin to murder. This is forbidden (D&C 59:6)

Adultery and lust leading to adultery deprive us of the Spirit (D&C 42:22–24)

The purpose of sexual relations is to have joy. To bring you children. To put those children into a setting where they are loved by both a father and a mother. When it is used in any other way, it produces misery. Almost all crime in the United States is related directly or indirectly to violating this commandment. Even what seems to be unrelated crime often occurs because the person involved was not raised in a home environment where they had a father and mother.

It is a right of every child to come into a family where they have the benefit of the family as established by God. The father and mother are literally symbols of God. They are in His image and likeness. When the image is imprinted upon the child in their early years and innocence, they develop a stability and foundation that is their right as an inheritance from God.

Conforming to God's pattern is intended as a gift from Him to every child.

I then took a few moments to speak about individual fathers of the respective young men, including one whose father has passed away. The deceased father was a great man, whose influence is still felt by his son. I expressed my genuine affection for his father, who, although now no longer among us, left a great influence on others in addition to his son. I challenged all of the young priests to become fathers who will bring their children into an environment where they will look with gratitude and affection upon them as fathers.

SEPTEMBER 14, 2011

“... speak unto us smooth things ...”

There is a false notion that is so invidious it precludes us from emerging from our current widespread spiritual slump. The false notion is that anything from God will invariably be “lovely” or “of good report” as implied by the 13th Article of Faith. This false mantra however, is so wrong it alone empowers the darkness to grow all around us.

If you only need to listen to the voices of praise, and adulation which speak to you that “all is well in Zion” then you can never recognize an authentic call from the Lord to repent. Instead, like Laman and Lemuel, you will erroneously think any message that condemns your misbehavior is “sharp” or “angry” (2 Nephi 1:26). Yet Nephi’s only intention was to seek “the eternal welfare” of Laman and Lemuel (2 Nephi 1:25).

When we will only listen to vanity and praise, we are not much different than those who only wanted “smooth things” anciently (Isa. 30:10).

The cure for some illness requires a knife to be used first before healing can begin. The purpose is not to injure, but only to heal.

SEPTEMBER 17, 2011

Joseph Smith’s Limited Plural Marriage Sealings

Yesterday, while at a college baseball game, I got an inquiry from David C. asking the following: A few people have contacted me and told me of “apparent errors” in your book... primarily that Joseph Smith performed a lot more plural marriages.

This in part of an email I received from a friend:

Under the plural marriage section of Denver's book, I remember that he mentions that only 1 other plural marriage was performed for another man besides Joseph before his death... making his case that not many others lived it. When I came across that a couple nights ago, I was pretty sure there were more... Brigham, Heber, Will Clayton, etc/ I came across 2 different books tonight, one The Refiner's Fire by JL Brooke—said that there were over 20 different men who also participated before Joseph's death. The other: The Persistence of Polygamy by Bringhurst and Craig Foster (Pres of FAIR) states on pg 126, quoting from Brian C Hales' extensive research and soon to come book, that 34 plural marriages were done for Joseph, and 29 for other men before Joseph's death. These they called sealing ceremonies. Many of these brethren that later lived PM in Joseph's time were also performing PM sealings before they lived the law themselves. (p. 128)

The reference this inquiry makes to the “apparent error” in my book (*Passing the Heavenly Gift*) can be found on the bottom of page 163 and top of page 164 and includes footnote 210. What I wrote on those pages is as follows:

Of the 23 marriages sealed by Joseph prior to his death, other than his own, only one involved a plural wife. If eternal wives was necessary for exaltation, as was taught in the second phase, proof of that cannot be established through Joseph's actions.” This is accompanied by a footnote which gives all the names and cites to Lisle G. Brown's work *The Holy Order in Nauvoo*, appendix 1. You can find *The Holy Order in Nauvoo* online, if you look for it. There you can read the names, or you can look at footnote 210 in my book where they are also set out.

The question raised in the email is confusing two issues. The specific topic being discussed in my book involves the narrow issue of the connection between exaltation and plural wives. I explain that eternal marriage is necessary, but plural wives is not. I distinguish between Section 132 (and other statements) during Joseph's lifetime and what became an absolute requirement for exaltation during the phase of Mormonism immediately following his death.

Another recent book contains the same list as the Lisle G. Brown article cited above. It is Devery S Anderson and Gary James Bergera's book *Joseph Smith's Quorum of the Anointed, 1842-1845*. The list can be found in that book on pp. xxxiv-xxxv.

To put the two different issues into contrast, you need to focus on the topic I am discussing, namely the relationship between requirements for exaltation and plural wives. Joseph's ultimate indication of what was required for exaltation is not found in civil unions, or even church marriages he performed. It is found in the final ordinances, including the second anointing, in which exaltation was assured and a person was sealed up to eternal life. That final step is found in Joseph's organized Quorum of the Anointed, as it was then called.

Joseph Smith performed civil marriages. Joseph performed religious marriages. But the link between exaltation, eternal life, sealing up to a kingdom as an eternal inheritance, is to be found unconditionally in the final order he organized known as the Quorum of the Anointed. My book is focused only on that step.

Joseph was able and did perform civil marriages. Joseph also performed other forms of religious marriages. However, on the subject of sealing an eternal union, with the promise of eternal life, that kind of union represents something different. In that form of

union we find what Joseph understood would be a marital union that would include exaltation.

In the context of that form of union which is associated by Joseph with exaltation itself, there was, apart from his own, only one other plural marriage. Therefore, if plural wives was REQUIRED for exaltation, as taught subsequently by Brigham Young, the proof for that cannot be based upon Joseph Smith's actions.

In the second book cited above (*Joseph Smith's Quorum of the Anointed, 1842–1845*), they observe this about the final Quorum of Anointed which represent heirs of exaltation in Joseph's practices,

Still, many polygamists were not admitted into the quorum during Joseph's lifetime. Of the twenty-eight men who are presumed to have entered plural marriage during Joseph's lifetime, sixteen (57 percent) joined the quorum prior to Joseph's death; twelve (43 percent) did not. Acceptance of plural marriage did not automatically assure admission into the quorum. (See Table 2) (*Id.* p. xxiii; the referenced Table is the same list as I was referring to in footnote 210 on page 163 of *Passing the Heavenly Gift*)

Joseph Smith's Quorum of the Anointed, 1842–1845 also, referring to those who were polygamists and included in the Quorum before Joseph's death, observes: "No plural wife received the ordinance prior to Joseph's death. '[D]uring the lifetime of Joseph Smith,' Quinn concluded, 'polygamy was only an appendage 'to the highest order of the priesthood' [the second anointing] established on 28 September 1843'" (*Id.* pp. xxxv–xxxvi, citing to Quinn, *Latter-day Saint Prayer Circles*, p. 88).

When I write, I try to be very specific. When speaking about a limited topic (i.e., the requirements for exaltation established

by the actions taken by Joseph Smith), I am not referring to other topics. Nor did I take the added step of suggesting that the unsealed plural wives might be evidence of concubinage, or marital relationships which were not intended to continue after this life. That subject isn't even raised in my book. So the better approach would be that the topic I am discussing be read narrowly, and the context I am addressing be carefully considered, before assuming there are "apparent errors."

People assume deep topics and carefully composed language can be read with the same superficiality as reading a text message. I do not write that way. In fact, someone who has hastened through the book probably won't even understand it.

The careful reader will find a good deal more in everything I've written than will the casual reader. It took careful, solemn, ponderous thoughts to learn what I've learned. Reading it in casual haste will never yield to such a reader what can be found.

As I also mention in the latest book, everything I've written is focused only on one topic. There has only been one theme to it all. Therefore if someone is interested in being redeemed from the fall, they will find there is a description of the path back in these commonly-themed books. Whether it involves discussion of The Book of Mormon, my testimony of Christ, or church history, it is all centered in redemption of the reader from the fall.

SEPTEMBER 22, 2011

Surfing for Gossip

I don't read other blogs or follow what's happening in the blogosphere. But my wife, who maintains this site for me, does. She has the ability to track stuff all around the 'net, and also has traffic

information given her through the site itself. And from time to time she updates me on what she thinks I would be interested in learning about the various gossip mongers who feel free to discuss me.

I do not think I'm worth a minute of anyone's time as a topic to discuss. I really do not matter one bit. Some of the things I've written are quite important. Those ideas are worth time, even a good deal of time, spent in careful contemplation. Some things I've been privileged to write are important enough that a careful soul will make it a matter of prayer, as well. But me? That's just a waste of time. There's nothing about a man worth anyone's time as a topic of gossip, speculation or discussion.

Apparently some number of folks have come to this blog for a week or so to find what I've said about President Boyd K. Packer. He's someone I've quoted more frequently than perhaps any other living church leader. I have a great deal of regard, respect, even admiration for him. Some of the talks he has given have been quite profound and worth reading by everyone. I've also lamented the conflict that developed between him and Paul Toscano. I wish that whole episode had not happened. But, as I've said before, I put the blame on Paul, not on President Packer, for provoking the conflict. I wish Paul were still a member of the church. We are the poorer for his absence.

I'm not sure why anyone would be interested in comments I've made on President Packer, but mentioning him again here will at least give this in answer to a search.

I've been hoping to drive the Alpine Loop when the colors change. They're changing now. Hope I can find time to do that.

General Conference is coming soon. I always go to the Marriott Center at BYU for Priesthood. It's a tradition. I'm looking forward to doing so again in a week or so. I think General Conference

Priesthood should be done in a large group. Apart from the Conference Center itself, I think the BYU Marriott Center may be the largest assembly in the world. At least I think they've mentioned that before. Perhaps now the MTC has more.

For Sunday's sessions I like to take a drive with my family and listen in the car. Seems more like an "event" when we do that. And I think the kids like doing that. Oftentimes we'll drive by the Conference Center to see the anti-Mormon stuff. It's always entertaining to see folks spending their time blasting our religion under the pretext of establishing theirs. Not sure how that's supposed to work. But nevertheless someone thinks that is worth their effort. Maybe go the Alpine Loop on Sunday.

My wife tells me some people are offended by others using the word "crap" — when she said so I inquired if "bovine feces" would be a better substitute. She didn't know.

Saw Stewie and Brian step in and try to rescue Christmas last night. It turned into a home invasion. I laughed so hard I nearly hurt myself. I laugh at the idiocy on the TV. My wife laughs at me. So we both get entertained.

I'm reading a book by a Catholic Theologian who teaches at a Protestant Theological Seminary in New York. Interesting book. When I finish I think I'll put some of his stuff on the blog. His focus is the post-Apostolic era from about 70 a.d. to 125 A.D. It's an interesting moment of rapid change. I disagree with some of his retelling, and I reject his Catholic lens, but nevertheless he has some important things to say.

Well, to return to what started this ramble, watch your gossip. My wife may be watching you.

SEPTEMBER 25, 2011

Response to Question

When you write something, a reader can put into what you've written something that is not there. Some of the questions I get asked result from misreading the information, rather than confining the things I've written to the writing itself. I got one this morning which I thought was worthwhile enough to put on the blog.

The question related to the role of the Holy Ghost. In effect, the person I spoke with thought I "denigrated the role of the Holy Ghost" by focusing upon Christ. I responded I did not believe that was the case.

First, I explained in everything I've written, beginning with *The Second Comforter*, that it is the role of the Holy Ghost to prepare and bring us to Christ. Without the Holy Ghost we cannot come to Christ. Further, in that same book I acknowledged the Holy Ghost's foundational role by telling the reader that they must receive a witness from the Holy Ghost as they read the book or they do not have the required two witnesses. Without the Holy Ghost's ratifying confirmation, I tell the reader to discard what I've written. Far from denigrating the Holy Ghost's role, I have made it a central part of the process, without it no person can come unto Christ.

It is not overemphasis on Christ at the expense of the Holy Ghost, but rather it is showing how the members of the Godhead work together. Just as Christ taught, the Comforter (Holy Ghost) will abide with us and bring us to Him. The Holy Ghost's vital role is unchanged. But to ignore the continuation of the ministry of the members of the Godhead, particularly the role of Christ as a continuing minister of salvation, is to cast aside His promise as *The Second Comforter*.

He also asked about his conclusion that our “priesthood line of authority” was meaningless. I explained that was not anything I’d written or thought. Rather quite to the contrary, the church extends an authoritative invitation in ordination to the priesthood which is a vital prerequisite to acting on the invitation and receiving the “power of heaven.” Without an authoritative invitation, I do not see how a person can obtain the “power of heaven.” In fact, there are recent talks in General Conference which lament the absence of “power in the priesthood” within the church. I’ve cited to those before. The church itself has recognized and taught the need for going beyond mere ordination into receiving power in the priesthood. Therefore, what I’ve written is consistent with, and respects, the church’s rights, as well as the necessity of ordination through the church system.

When we finished talking, he said I’d removed his concerns. Said he would go back and read it again with less emotion.

I spent the day defending the latest book yesterday. I received much welcomed criticism, which allowed me to answer questions. I enjoyed the opportunity very much. Criticism does not bother me. It allows me to understand what the reader has misapprehended, or leaped to conclude, which in turn better informs me about how others can err in attributing motives or positions. I also got some needed corrections (editing never ends), and spelling corrections which are needed. To me it is all worthwhile and quite interesting.

Today I’m going to teach the Priests about testimony. I hope to discuss my own conversion story with them. Some of them are going to be missionaries soon and I want them to know how the potential convert thinks as they approach a monumental change to their life by joining the church.

I do not think I'll mention this to them: Within the first year of joining I'd received visits from angels, and been attacked by the adversary and a hoard of his minions. My life was threatened by those who are darkness itself, and was delivered by beings of light. As a new convert, who had recently joined after studying Joseph Smith's experience, I thought this was normal for Mormons. I thought this kind of stuff happened to everyone. I learned, however, that it was not and I should not talk about such things because some became easily offended. So the things I say are heavily redacted that no one may know anything other than I am a believer in Mormonism, with a witness of our Lord. I do in fact have a witness and testimony of Christ. I also have a testimony of Joseph Smith. I have empathy for those who have once believed and find they can no longer. To them I write what I hope will persuade them to believe in Christ that they will return and join in fellowship with the saints.

As to others who misunderstand what I've written, it is a small thing to be evil spoken of when the criticism is not warranted. If even one person is brought to see the truth in Christ, any price required to be paid is modest.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2011

Controlled Revelation

Joseph Smith did not attempt to control or limit people's revelations except in only one regard. When it came to revelation involving governing the church, that was limited to him alone, as President (See, e.g. D&C 43:2-5; 21:4-5; 28:2). Reading *The Joseph Smith Papers*, however, it is clear that for Joseph, it came as a matter of some considerable satisfaction to him that others received revelation as well.

The declarations of Joseph's revelations raise two interesting questions: First, if Joseph's status as the prophet, seer and revelator are foundational, then can any subsequent person change anything restored through Joseph? Even if there is another person elected through common consent to be the president of the church, is such an office holder free from the obligation to receive Joseph's words as God's words? Are we all, including subsequent office holders, required to "give heed unto all his [Joseph's] words and commandments, which he [Joseph] shall give unto you as he receiveth them"? Or instead, does Joseph get relegated to obsolescence once he has been replaced by President Brigham Young, and so on?

Secondly, the question arises whether possession of the office Joseph held (church president) automatically entitles such an office holder to be in every whit exactly like Joseph. That is, do subsequent office holders also get the automatic right to claim everyone in the church must give heed to their words, too?

In Joseph's case, the only way to replace him in his position was for Joseph himself to designate his successor/replacement. This is set out in the revelation to Joseph as follows: "[N]one else shall be appointed unto this gift except it be through him [Joseph]; for if it is taken from him [Joseph] he shall not have power except to appoint another in his stead (D&C 43:4). Implicit in the revelation, if you read it carefully, is that Joseph's choice of the one who would succeed him would necessarily come by revelation to Joseph.

And this shall be a law unto you, that ye receive not the teachings of any that shall come before you as revelations or commandments; And this I give unto you that you may not be deceived, that you may know they are not of me.

For verily I say unto you, that he that is ordained of me shall come in at the gate and be ordained as I have told you before, to

teach those revelations, which you have received and shall receive through him [Joseph] whom I have appointed. (D&C 43:5–7)

In Joseph's case, he did receive a revelation which identified who would replace him, just as the revelation provided. “

[T]hat my servant Hyrum may take the office of Priesthood and Patriarch, which was appointed unto him by his father, by blessing and also by right; That from henceforth he shall hold the keys of the Patriarchal blessings upon the heads of all my people, That whoever he blesses shall be blessed, and whoever he curses shall be cursed; that whatsoever he shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever he shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. And from this time forth I appoint unto him that he may be a prophet, and a seer, and a revelator unto my church, as well as my servant Joseph.. (D&C 124:91–94)

Hyrum, however, died in Carthage Jail before Joseph. The issue of “succession” was decided by common consent in the votes taken in Nauvoo following Joseph's death. Then there is all that stuff about Joseph giving “the keys of the kingdom” to “the council.” But “the kingdom” was the Council of Fifty, not the church. The “council” to whom Joseph made the remark was the Fifty, not the Twelve. But we sorted that out in Nauvoo by common consent, choosing to follow the Twelve.

Revelation is foundational to the church. No one comes into the church without revelation. Missionaries ask investigators to ask God, based on Moroni 10:4, and get their own answer to prayer. A convert is expected to have received a personal revelation before becoming a Mormon.

This gives rise to some other interesting issues: Moroni 10:4 has as its scope the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. But Moroni

10:5 expands the scope so that a sincere inquirer “may know the truth of all things.” Therefore, there is no limit on what a person might inquire about and receive a revelation concerning.

Now a convert who has discovered that they have already obtained an answer to prayer is likely (as I was) to continue to inquire. Converts who have had such an experience become rather like Joseph Smith following his first vision. That is, they “had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation, as [they] previously had one” (*JS-H 1:29*). So people who have succeeded in obtaining an answer to prayer go on to make further inquiries and get further answers. The scope of such inquiries can be, as Moroni 10:5 informs us, into literally ANYTHING. They can get to know “the truth of all things” by making such inquiries.

The interesting issue arises when the church then informs the convert that they can't have revelations involving things which the church wants to control. They can't ask and get an answer about anything that contradicts or opposes what the church says. If they do so, they are told they have a false revelation, or they are being inspired by the devil.

A great problem arises when someone who has received authentic revelation, and has been inspired as a consequence of that revelation to join the church, is then told by the church that their subsequent revelation is false, or of the devil. The convert must then choose. Revelation led them into the church in the first instance. If the church then tells them their continuing revelation is false or of the devil, they must grapple with whether the original revelation which led them to convert was also false and of the devil? Of course, if they reach that conclusion they leave the church. The other choice is that the revelation, both the original and the following revelations, are from God. If that is the conclusion they

reach, then they know the church is overreaching. This gives rise to a continual anxiety about the church's motives, and reliability about things which matter most.

Joseph's delight in the revelations others received is akin to Moses' delight in the same thing: *"Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!"* (Num. 11:29). The church's jealousy on the same topic makes an interesting contrast, where those who have revelation oftentimes know God has spoken to them, but also know the church will not tolerate revelation which goes any further than knowing the Book of Mormon is true. Therefore, you have an obligation to join the institution which publishes and proclaims that book.

These are big topics. They are worth a lot of careful thought. One conclusion which leaps to mind, however, is that the loose grip Joseph and Moses took on the reigns of control extended to management decisions at the highest level. At lower levels people were free to develop their gifts, including revelation, without any molesting by the top. Our own scriptures say as much. To the church is given a variety of gifts, disbursed throughout the body:

To some is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby. To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world. To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful. And again, to some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know the differences of administration, as it will be pleasing unto the same Lord, according as the Lord will, suiting his mercies according to the conditions of the children of men. And again, it is given by the Holy Ghost

to some to know the diversities of operations, whether they be of God, that the manifestations of the Spirit may be given to every man to profit withal. And again, verily I say unto you, to some is given, by the Spirit of God, the word of wisdom. To another is given the word of knowledge, that all may be taught to be wise and to have knowledge. And again, to some it is given to have faith to be healed; And to others it is given to have faith to heal. And again, to some is given the working of miracles; And to others it is given to prophesy; And to others the discerning of spirits. And again, it is given to some to speak with tongues; And to another is given the interpretation of tongues. And all these gifts come from God, for the benefit of the children of God. (D&C 46:12–26)

Well, if they all come from God, and are spread to people throughout the church, it would seem incredibly wrong-headed to condemn such things or to attempt to limit them. It is an interesting thing to try and limit the Spirit. As Christ put it, “*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit* (John 3:8). Such things are free indeed. To hedge them in, correlate them, and attempt to subjugate them, oftentimes does not convince or persuade those being controlled.

Fortunately, history generally sorts it out correctly. And today’s heroes become tomorrow’s villains—just as today’s fools become tomorrow’s venerated examples. How we sort it out in our brief moment here is not necessarily how either the Lord or those in the future will do so.

Well, enough of that. I do so look forward to General Conference this coming weekend. I’m hoping to get some input on the things which really do matter most. There are so many important

questions facing us today. It will be nice to hear what counsel we are given on these many perplexities.

OCTOBER 2011

OCTOBER 4, 2011

Sacred Geometry

I was asked to put up this announcement.

What do you Know About Sacred Geometry?

October 14 & 15, 2011, at the Springville Museum of Art, Springville, UT.

A multitude of questions regarding sacred geometry are about to be answered.

An in-depth conference will be held to address the age-old quandary over the purpose of symbols and shapes.

The Springville Museum of Art is pleased to host the very first event of this kind ever to take place anywhere in the world. Leaders in the fields of art, photography, astronomy, mathematics and science join together to share their knowledge with the general public regarding their research and findings in the worldwide curiosity over geometry and symbolism.

Beginning Oct 14 at 3-5 P.M., a free hands-on workshop will provide tutoring in the use of the compass and right angle to those who desire to learn how to create the divine proportion. Those wishing to participate will need to bring a professional compass, right angle, and graph paper.

After a short dinner break, a panel discussion will be open to the general public from 6–9 P.M. Questions from the audience will be addressed.

Following promptly at 8:30 A.M., Saturday, October 15, the conference will continue with lectures from Wulf Barsch, who will discuss Abraham and Facsimile #2. At 10:30 A.M. Dr. C. Lance Harding will share his wealth of knowledge on the divine proportion and the human body. A box lunch lecture will commence at 12:30 P.M., featuring Garth Norman, who will discuss archeo-astronomy. The final lecture will begin at 2 P.M. featuring a joint presentation from Val Brinkerhoff and Yvonne Bent. They will talk about sacred architecture, both in temples and the human body.

Tickets are \$45, which includes a box lunch. Tickets are available only on line at AboutSacredGeometry.com. For further information, visit the website or write to yvonne@thehomeuniversity.com. Seating is limited and will be available on a first come, first serve basis. Books and transcripts will also be available at the event.

This event is not affiliated or endorsed by Brigham Young University or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

OCTOBER 7, 2011

Some Random Updates

There are two events on October 14th of note. The Sacred Geometry matter announced below will begin. Yvonne Bent has organized the event and several interesting speakers are coming. For those interested in the subject it should be delightful.

The same evening Benchmark Books will be hosting an event in which Terryl Givens and Matthew Grow will be speaking about

their new book on Parley Pratt. This will be held at the Benchmark store location at 3269 South Main, Suite 250.

Both of these events look to be quite worthwhile.

I was saddened by the passing of Matthew Brown, who was only 48 years old. His widow and children are not protected by any life insurance and a fund has been set up to donate for anyone interested. I would encourage anyone who can to do so.

My wife brought a matter to my attention which I thought I'd comment about again. I put up some cautions about how the new book was going to have those who wanted to take sensational statements out of context and put them on the Internet in isolation, separated from the many sources carefully assembled to lay a foundation to understand the statements. That has begun. I'd only remind those who are interested that anything can be made to look sensational if it is divorced from context. I could make the most benign of Joseph Smith's statements look fanatical and rob them of all meaning if I wanted to do so. But to understand the Prophet, it takes careful, even prayerful, study.

I have no agenda apart from explaining the truth as I understand it. But when I explain it, I give (particularly in the case of the latest book) enough historic and scriptural support that any conclusions are only an extension of what the Prophet, or the Book of Mormon, or the history itself compels us to conclude. The conclusions are rather anticlimactic. They are only the result of the accumulated and disclosed body of information preceding them. When, therefore, someone takes merely the conclusion and represents it as an accurate statement of what I've written, it is so gross a distortion that it is essentially untrue. Time, care, patience and great effort was taken to show the history for the benefit of

the reader. Divorcing all that from a single sentence and parading it as what I think is, at best, a disservice.

But people crave the ‘sound-bite’ solution to everything. Therefore the cunning and fearful want to rush to expose and distort, in hopes to mislead and inoculate people from learning some things which help them find their way to the Lord. As I say in the book, I’ve been ministered to by the Lord. I’d caution those who want to distort what I’ve written to be careful, therefore, and prayerful (as I have been) in how they elect to proceed.

The souls of men are something no one should trifle with. I’ve never done so. I’d encourage others to avoid doing so unless they are certain they are on the Lord’s errand.

OCTOBER 10, 2011

Repentance

The first step for repentance is always to recognize something is wrong and needs changing. Oddly, that is a more difficult challenge than it ought to be. We all like to think of ourselves as being in the right way. It makes people mad to suggest otherwise.

Membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was never intended to be temporary, with people cycling in and then out of the church. Once they come aboard they should stay aboard. The Gospel, as restored through Joseph Smith, has a delightful and expanding source of almost endless truth available to all of us. We were not meant to be bored, flattered and comfortable. Instead we were meant to be challenged, provoked, delighted and engaged in the relentless search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God. When we take it and instead make it flat, curtailed and predictable, we often attract only temporary members. People who come for

the doctrine at first, and then leave because the new faith offering answers at last to their questions, ends in a repetition of brief and superficial answers to probing questions after a brief cycle of a few years. I wish all men were motivated to study deeply for themselves, but they are not. For such people, they rely upon others to bring them along further and further in the right Path. When they falter because we aren't teaching them invigorating, challenging material each week, they presume we have nothing to offer. The truth is we have a lifetime of rewarding information available for their endless edification and growth. But, when they will not search into it for themselves, they do not find it.

We make a mistake when we discourage the search or claim they **MUST** confine what they investigate to our limited approved church curriculum. They get the mistaken impression that is because our official manuals are all the Gospel offers. They presume we are no better informed than are the other mainstream churches, whose memberships are static or dropping.

In our Region of the church (we're about to have a Regional Conference in two weeks), one of the greatest problems we face is adult apostasy stemming from reading critical things about the church's history on the Internet. A great number of adults are dismayed when they learn of things from hostile, even bitterly opposed sources working to remove faith in the restored Gospel. There are some people assigned by the church to investigate this problem, and who are discussing how to address it. I suggested to my stake president that my book, *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, might be of use. I know of twelve men now who have returned to activity in the church after reading the book. These are bright men, well read and engaged in searching into things which matter to them. They had all reached the conclusion the church was not

being honest about its history and therefore ended their activity with the church. After reading the book, however, they decided it was not as they presumed, and the Lord does indeed have a destiny for the Latter-day Saints, foretold by the Prophets in the Book of Mormon and revealed to Joseph Smith.

I have found nothing quite as engaging, challenging and hopeful as the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To me it is exactly as Nephi put it: “delicious.” It takes a great deal of effort to make the excitement of eternal truth into something stale and boring. That effort ought to be spent letting the Gospel understanding expand, under the tutelage of a benign church, tolerant of inquiry and discussion that is open ended and tolerant. The discussions are going to happen. Any efforts to stop them will only drive them into places where the truth may not receive an invitation to even contribute.

There is nothing so wonderful as the truths we were handed by Joseph Smith. All those who awaken to his great ministry still “seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under [his] hand” (D&C 122:2). The truth never had a better friend than Joseph Smith. Even when it put him into conflict with all the world, he nevertheless declared the truth.

That is because truth compels the recipient to declare:

I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth. I have actually seen a vision; and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny

what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation. (*JS-H 1:25*)

Praise to the man, indeed!

I could not have repented (at least not in an effective way) if I had not listened to what Joseph taught. In that sense, he brought me to Christ. Therefore, although Christ is the Redeemer and Savior, it was Joseph Smith who taught me how to return to the Lord. No man can save another. Yet there are those we owe some gratitude for the light they brought. Not because they are more than men (for all men are weak and prone to err), but because the Lord worked with them despite their weakness.

OCTOBER 12, 2011

Friday October 14th

I've previously posted notice here about the events on Friday of this week. There is the Sacred Geometry event (see below) and the Benchmark Books event where Terryl Givens will speak. But I have not mentioned that I will be speaking at Confetti Books in Spanish Fork.

I do not like to speak at events, and generally decline to do so. However, I owe a debt of gratitude to Confetti Books because they have carried all of my books for years. They have asked me to come and I have finally agreed to do so.

Confetti Books is located on Main Street in Spanish Fork, Utah. They have a remarkable bookstore, and carry many titles which are difficult to locate. If you have not visited their store, you should take a look at their diverse collection of LDS books.

I am speaking from 6:30 to 8:30 P.M. on Friday evening. I'd like to see some of you take the time to shop at Confetti beforehand (they are open until 6:00) and then join us at the evening talk. It is likely the talk will be recorded, and if so then copies will be made available at some point.

Finally, let me add, I am not being paid for this event, nor would I accept any payment for doing it. If it is recorded, and copies are sold by those who take the trouble to accomplish it, any payment which would go to me will be donated to the missionary program of the LDS Church. I have always refused to accept payment for such things.

I want to extend a particular invitation to those who believe I am “an apostate” to come and listen. It will improve your capacity to judge me if you take the time to listen to something I have to say. I do not intend to change your mind, but rather I want to equip you to make a more sound judgment.

OCTOBER 12, 2011

Tickets for Friday

I forgot to mention, Confetti Books is handling the event. All I do is show up and speak. You need to contact Confetti about tickets (which they are requiring). That allows them to keep it organized somewhat.

OCTOBER 13, 2011

Ticketing

I got an email this morning telling me the following:

You need to contact Confetti about tickets (which they are requiring). That allows them to keep it organized somewhat.

That allows them to make a lot of money. According to their Facebook page “To get tickets you must call us at 801-798-0137 and Order Denver’s latest book *Passing the Heavenly Gift* (\$28.95) via phone,” which gets one 2 tickets. It might help your blog readers if you post Confetti’s phone number and mention the purchase requirement.

Although I do not make a living selling or writing books, there are those who do. All throughout the book industry there are those who spend their lives making it possible for things to be put into print. They invest time, resources and effort, which in turn makes it possible for them to support their families. I do not begrudge the fact that, for example, Mill Creek Press makes money on what I write, CreatSpace makes money printing the books, Amazon makes money by marketing the books, the Bench family makes money selling them through Benchmark Books, and Confetti makes money by purchasing them, stocking them, and selling them. I do not have copies except on rare occasions. When I get them I do so with the intent to give them away. But it is an expensive proposition to give them away, and therefore the numbers have been reduced from the first book (I gave away 200 copies) to the last book (I gave away 35 copies).

I wish it were possible to show gratitude without raising ire. But here, in this world, those who want to be offended will always be offended; while those who are grateful for the service of others are grateful to help them and show gratitude by their acts as well.

I do not rely upon book revenues to support my family, but the people at Confetti do. Therefore they have determined to charge for admission; though my appearance there is donated and without any fee paid to me. I believe they have rented a space for that evening,

and are using what they make from the book sale commission to pay the rent on the space for the evening. But those are details I am unacquainted with and really do not intend to concern myself with. I will be there from 6:30 to 8:30 to talk.

There are two other interesting things happening at the same time. The Sacred Geometry conference was announced on this blog, and I believe has an admission charge. But Benchmark's event with Terry Givens is free, I believe. I think either of those would be worthwhile and you would be edified by attending either of them. I believe there is going to be a recording of the things I have to say, and I'm anticipating it will be made available. If I can figure out how to accomplish it, I'm hoping to make it a digital recording which gets put on this blog for anyone who cares to listen to it. I cannot guarantee that will happen, however, because I've never attempted to do such a thing and am therefore not confident I can figure out how to accomplish it. Nevertheless I intend to try.

OCTOBER 13, 2011

Talk Write Up

There's some silliness going on about the talk I will give at Confetti Books tomorrow. I promise I will write up the talk and put it on this blog. When I do, there will be citations, and probably more information than will be covered in a spontaneous discussion tomorrow. It'll be no doubt better organized than will the talk. I never write a talk in advance, I just give it. But I've also written up talks after they were given, and have made them available to anyone interested.

I want to make clear a couple of things: First, I assure you I'm absolutely unimportant and not worth your notice. There are ideas,

doctrine and history which are important, but for the most part you can find them in the scriptures and in Joseph Smith's writings. You don't need me for that. So if you're really interested in the truth, you would probably be better off spending the time with your scriptures and Joseph's writings than listening to me. They are original, I am merely derivative. Second, the ideas are the only things which are important, and you don't need me for them. They come to anyone through the Spirit. So if you'll do as Moroni tells you and ask God, you can "know the truth of all things" from Him, directly (Moroni 10:4-5). I am utterly unimportant, irrelevant, and without any merit whatsoever. The doctrine is what matters. You can get that from God.

As the last book also made clear, the only ones who have any right to manage the church are those who are sustained by common consent and therefore hold office in the church. You should listen to those you've sustained and give heed to their counsel because that's the system established by revelation and which is still in operation today. I am absolutely not someone who has any authority over anyone, but am, like you, subject to their rule in the church. Therefore, although I can offer some views from the scriptures, they are my views and set out my understanding and you are free to accept or reject them. But if you decide to accept them I would remind you that you need to have the Spirit or revelation confirm something before you decide I've said anything worth even considering.

No one needs to travel, interrupt their evening, or go to any inconvenience to be there tomorrow. Everything will be put up here in writing, and I'll personally make a digital recording and make it available. For that I haven't figured out if I can do it through this blog, or if my wife is going to have to send email attachments to

anyone interested. But I promise I'll make it available. Along with a written version. And the written version will be better. So you don't need to be there.

Finally, I don't want any videos taken. I'm not worth notice and don't want to be noticed. Photographs and videos tend to distract from what is important (doctrine) and refocus attention to someone who does not matter. You have church authorities who are known, whose images are available for you to notice and recognize, and I'm not one of them. I don't want your attention. If an idea helps you, that's a good thing. But as for me, I'm irrelevant.

OCTOBER 16, 2011

Posted Audio of Elijah Talk

([link](#): Elijah Talk)

OCTOBER 18, 2011

Technical Transcription Challenge

I do intend to post a transcription of the talk eventually. The voice recognition software which was to do the greatest part of the process has difficulty recognizing words correctly because of the large area in which it was recorded, with an echo, and background noises. So I'm going to have to get it physically transcribed by a person doing the work.

Once that is done, I'll edit it. I noticed some problems as I listened to it, for example when reading about Enoch from the Book of Moses I once referred to "Enoch" as "Moses." That sort of thing will be cleaned up as I edit it. I also omitted citing the scriptures being read, and I'll add those as I edit it.

There were also thoughts which, because of time, were not complete. I did not explain, for example, the reason it was John the

Baptist and Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration was because these two were the opener and the closer of the preceding Dispensation. Moses, who opened, and John the Baptist, who closed, the preceding Dispensation were there to “hand off” (so to speak) to Christ. These two witnesses, along with the three living mortal disciples, answered all the requirements to end one and begin another Dispensation. The Mount was also where these disciples received their instructions on the heavenly ascent, or endowment. But those are details I didn’t touch upon. I may do so in the edit when it is transcribed.

In any event, I will put it up here. But I make no promises about how long it will be before it is finished.

OCTOBER 20, 2011

Reply to Questions

I was asked in an email to clarify some topics. I am posting this in response:

The appearance in 1836 in the Kirtland Temple does not appear to have fulfilled the return of Elijah. This is a topic the church is grappling with at the moment. Not at the bottom, where I live and write, but at the top. Though there are continuing statements made in public, behind the scenes there is a debate going on over the meaning of Elijah’s appearance, when Joseph Smith received the sealing power, how he received it and whether the history should be revisited and clarified. I am setting out what I believe. It is for others to decide for themselves what they believe. But this is not as settled a subject as some public statements made for generations by the church make it appear.

Why does Joseph Smith omit mention of Elijah in his letter to the saints in September, 1842 (Section 128) if Elijah's return was completed in Kirtland in 1836?

Why does Oliver Cowdery never mention Elijah in his testimony about the restoration, though he does mention Moroni, the voice of God, John the Baptist and Peter, James and John?

Why does Joseph Smith speak of the return of Elijah as a future event in both January and March of 1844 if the Kirtland appearance satisfied the promise made in Malachi?

These are serious questions. There are people trying to answer them right now. I've provided my answer. Anyone is free to disagree with it. Anyone is free to decide it for themselves.

I don't think I am Elijah, and that's so stupid a proposition that I have a hard time even dignifying it with an answer. I want to say: "Are you serious???!!" But I'll leave it with, "no."

The sealing keys came to Joseph, like they came and were conferred upon Melchizedek and Nephi the same way. I explained it in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. I'm not going to repeat it again here. It comes in only one way, that is by the Voice of God.

I've never said any church leader was "evil" or "of the devil." On the contrary, I've continually said they are the only ones entitled to lead the church, and no one has a right to interfere with their leading. No one has the right to call someone to any office in the church, collect tithing, or lead people away from the church. But EVERYONE has a duty to testify of the truth and to teach one another the doctrines of the kingdom. Therefore we are all under some obligation to declare what we believe, explain why, and defend it using the scriptures and declarations of the prophets. As to the analogy of church presidents to "Popes" that is J. Reuben Clark's terminology, as you can see in the book, and is not mine.

I defer to him for that characterization. It is relevant to see how a member of the First Presidency viewed the role of the President and for that reason was included. I do not say whether I agree or disagree with his characterization, I only provide it. In fact, I do very little evaluating or concluding in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. I merely set out what was said, done or written with the exception of one chapter which presumes, for purposes of that chapter, that the things promised in Section 124 were not delivered. Then, in light of that presumption, I explain what would then be the case. The book is an alternative view of history, which people are free to consider and reject. It is proposed as a way to grapple with inconsistencies and glaring problems which are not adequately reconcilable with the current stories we tell one another. I believe it is faith promoting. Particularly for those who are aware of the problems with our history. But, it is only faith promoting if you read the entire book. Reading only the first part will not be faith promoting, because it acknowledges the many problems and acquaints readers with the reasons why there is a crisis of faith among some of the most serious students of our history. I do not try to hide anything. It is or should be clear I'm not trying to shirk from difficulties. After setting it out, I then explain why I believe God's hand still lingers over the church and the saints. What is amusing to me is that one apostate reader thought it was too much an apologetic work (i.e. a defense of the church) for him to finish reading it. In other words, he thought it too faith promoting.

I do think the words of a dispensation head, in any dispensation, are binding upon all who follow. I do not think any prophet subsequent to Moses had the right to change Moses' teachings, for they were binding upon them. Until the Lord makes a change and opens a New Dispensation (which I expect Him to do personally),

what Joseph Smith brought us is binding upon everyone, including all following prophets. We are told to be obedient to what we have received from him (D&C 28:2–3). I believe that is still true. Meaning that no one, regardless of position or rank, can ignore what came through Joseph Smith except to their peril. Until a New Dispensation arrives, what Joseph Smith launched is supposed to remain intact.

“Elias” for our day is, I believe, Joseph Smith.

I expect Elijah to return the same way he departed. That’s one of the great assignments to him. He must return because he will reopen the way through which others will follow. It will be, I believe, the same person as departed and not someone who self-proclaims or self-identifies as being “Elijah.” It will be him. Not another. Anyone making that claim would (to me at least) be someone who does not understand the scriptures and is not to be taken seriously.

I think that covers it. But I have to say the mischief comes from speculating, interpreting or emotionally reacting to the words I’ve written or spoken. Not in the words themselves. I try to be clear. The words are not attempting to “suggest” anything. Only to explain what I believe and why I believe as I do. They are the result of a great deal of work, which is set out in the text or footnotes, or bibliography.

OCTOBER 21, 2011

An Email Response

I got another email inquiry which I responded to yesterday I thought I ought to put up here: This inquiry related to *Passing the Heavenly Gift*:

[The email linked to several conversations of some length.] Well, that’s a lot to read. I did scan some of it, but not all. I do not mind

being criticized, nor people disagreeing with me. They're free to do so. And I mean both criticize me and disagree. The problem is that criticizing me is sort of a misadventure, because doing that detracts from the underlying real questions. Who cares a fig about me? I hope no-one. But the stuff I write about—meaning an attempt to discuss the Gospel—that is important and certainly worth spending some time thinking about and discussing.

Without the benefit of reading all those posts (I stopped reading when it got noxious), I'll respond as follows:

First, I've explained in what I've written (some approximate one million words now) what I think and why. There's no reason to re-write it again to answer questions. If they'd read what I wrote they'd know the answers. They'd even know the reasons for the answers. It's lazy to try to shortcut things and just interpose questions based on false assumptions and interpretations that are, in many cases, so off kilter that even answering is distorting. I think every one of these questions are answered in what I've written far better than in the responses below.

Despite this, and really even anticipating that these answers don't contribute anything to the discussion, here's a brief reply:

“Does he actually claim in the first quote that all the keys of the priesthood are not held by Thomas S. Monson?”

No. I don't take a position on that. In one chapter I entertain the possibility of that and discuss how important the church remains anyway. As to whether he has them all, that is a matter between him and the Lord. When he became President, I prayed and was told to sustain him and I do. That's enough for me. The Book of Mormon clearly identifies us (the Latter-day Saints) as gentiles. Joseph Smith said we were “identified with

the gentiles” in the dedicatory prayer for the Kirtland Temple (D&C 109:60). Book of Mormon prophecies clearly indicate there will be an apostasy or sorts by the gentile church (us). We either have (in the past) or will (in the future) reject the fullness. I show how a reasonable interpretation of our history could reach the conclusion it was in the past. If it isn’t then it is in our future. But if the Book of Mormon can be trusted on the point, and I think it can, then we’ll reject the fullness of the Gospel at some point. But that’s a quick and altogether distorted treatment of a topic worthy of so much attention and so much care that I’ve written a 170,000 word book on the subject which will do a better job than a snapshot.

“Does Bro. Snuffer actually believe that the sealing power is not with the Church and was lost?”

No. Don’t take a position on that, either. The sealing power is conferred in one way and that way is described in the scriptures. I take some lengths to explain, using scripture, the matter. Beyond laying out the process I never say anything about what the church has. I do explain the church’s claims. And I also use the church’s explanations to show where the church’s authority comes from.

“That the GAs over the Church’s curriculum are not teaching what God has instructed them to include in our Church manuals?”

I’m not sure I understand this question. Where has God instructed someone to do something about curriculum? There are committees that do this stuff. In the fourth phase everything is attributed to the president, and that process is laid out in the book. This question is a product of that process. But I

really don't understand the question. So far as I've seen, there is nowhere a claim made that God was involved in writing or developing the church's curriculum.

“We have a ‘devalued gospel’ in the LDS Church?”

There are a list of 72 approved subjects allowed to be taught, as a result of the Correlation process. The Gospel allows everyone to learn all the mysteries of God. It is, you know, given unto many to know the mysteries of God. And those who will give more heed to the matter learn more, those who give less heed learn less (Alma 12:9–11). By the Spirit we can know the truth of all things (Moroni 10:5). Limiting the scope of discussion to the list of approved topics is removing some of the great, even important topics from our permitted discussions.

Therefore the most important subjects have now gravitated away from Sacrament, Sunday School and Priesthood/Relief Society and into the Internet. I have seen unapproved subjects on your blog's index.

I have also shown that David O. McKay was not the champion of Correlation, but was instead concerned it would lead to the church's apostasy. Now Correlation claims he was the one who was inspired to bring it forward, even that it was revealed to him by God and is proof of revelation to the church's President on the matter. These claims are opposite to President McKay's concern that it was both wrong and would endanger the church of apostasy by consolidating power in the hands of the top, when people were always intended to be free to learn, discuss, believe and act consistent with what they understood. That's all laid out in the book as well. And giving a cryptic response is really more misleading than helpful. Read the book

and you'll have the answer. And answers to many other things about which we should be open and free to discuss among friendly, believing Saints.

That is the end of the email response. I should note also that in the first 7 books I wrote I presumed the church's traditional narrative is true and accurate. I wrote them in contemplation of the church's traditional claims about history, and therefore anyone who reads those will not have their understanding challenged on the matter.

OCTOBER 24, 2011

History of Elijah Doctrine

The talk on Elijah given in Spanish Fork and posted on this blog last week is a continuation of the development of information found in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. The foundation for why the Elijah issue required further discussion is found in the book. Some people have listened to the talk without first reading the book. Therefore they are unacquainted with the background information which shows the importance of re-examining the Elijah tradition inside the church. I will give a brief explanation here, although you won't really understand the reason for the talk unless you read the book.

Briefly, and without repeating all the historic records, journals and sources from which the history is explained in the book, this is what happened: Elijah came to visit the Kirtland Temple in 1836 according to the third person account written by Warren Cowdery in the back of the 3rd volume of revelations in Kirtland. It is the last entry made, and the source of all the later claims made about Elijah, his purpose and appearance. The account is third-person,

(i.e., The Lord appeared to them... said to them..., etc.) but when it was later discovered it was reworded to the first person (i.e., The Lord appeared to us... said to us..., etc.). You can read the original document, actually see a photostatic reproduction of the original, in the *Joseph Smith Papers*. I give the cite in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*.

The record Joseph Smith left makes no mention of Elijah's appearance. The record Oliver Cowdery left makes no mention of Elijah's appearance. Joseph died without every explaining anything about the event, or making any mention of it. Oliver also. Both of them testified about visitations they received, and wrote about who had come to empower them, but neither of them ever mention Elijah.

In talks in Nauvoo, Joseph refers on every occasion he mentions Elijah as a future event. Not as a past event. He explains Elijah "will return," not that he has returned.

Joseph Smith received the sealing power in a revelation given sometime in the early 1830's, which was recorded in 1843. I take some effort to lay out the chronology in the book, and the information can be reviewed there.

When Joseph Smith died, there is no contemporaneous source to verify the appearance of Elijah in 1836, and the appearance was not known at that time.

There is no mention of the Elijah appearance in 1836, nor 1837, nor 1838 nor '39, '40, '41, '42, '43 nor in 1844, though Joseph does say there will be a future return. After Joseph Smith's death, there was nothing said or known in 1844, '45, '46, '47, '48, '49, '50 nor for years thereafter. When the Kirtland Revelation Book was reviewed in the 1850's the first notice resulted in the revelation being published for the first time in November of the year it was found. Along with the publication was an explanation given by Orson

Pratt explaining it was quite significant. He garbles the chronology in that article, and the chronology ever since was taken from his first editorial. Since then the chronology has remained the same as Orson declared, even though he erred in attributing the revelation recorded on July 12, 1843 to having been given on that date. The revelation was received much earlier, the first part in 1829. I also walk through that in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*.

Since the 1850's when the revelation was found (which is now Section 110) about the Kirtland Temple appearance of Elijah, and then published for the first time in the Deseret News, there have been hundreds of statements which rely upon Orson Pratt's original analysis accompanying the announcement of finding the record.

By the time the words were discovered, Warren Cowdery who wrote it down was dead. He could not explain where it came from because we couldn't ask him. Oliver died shortly before Warren, and he also could not be asked. And, of course, Joseph died before either of them, and so he could not be asked either. Therefore the two witnesses left nothing about it, could not be asked, and the scribe who recorded it could not be asked either.

I walk through all these events using the historical records, scriptures and lengthy explanations. It is a topic which takes a lot of material to set out in full, but has been done in the book.

The talk on Elijah's mission posted on this blog was taking the topic and discussing what the still future mission of Elijah would necessarily involve. Since Joseph expected it to happen in the future when he spoke about it in January and March, 1844, there must be a future mission for him. Because if Joseph, who was present in the Kirtland Temple in 1836 when the Warren Cowdery recorded event took place thought there was still a future mission for Elijah,

then it would be important to notice that and give some thought to what it could involve. I've done that. Hence the contents of the talk.

Now, if you disagree with history and you are perfectly content with what Orson Pratt bequeathed us as the accompanying commentary when the account was discovered, then you needn't give this one further thought. There have been generations come and go with that explanation regarded as the absolute truth and the basis for our Temple work. So you'll be in good company. But there are those serious minded individuals who are trying to sort this out right now at high levels of the Church who know these are important issues which are NOT as settled as the past pronouncements make it appear. In fact, I doubt the current explanations will last much longer because the record simply does not support the conclusions we have urged. The place to start is not after the 1850's discovery, when there were conclusions leaped to by Orson Pratt which then became the operative explanation thereafter. The place to start is instead from 1836 to 1844 in the records of that time. What was Joseph saying? What was Oliver saying? Why did both of them leave out mention of Elijah in their testimonies of who had come to visit with them? Where did Section 110 come from? That is, who did Warren Cowdery consult with to learn the material he wrote into the book? I work on that in both the book and the talk.

I think Elijah has a ministry still future. I think it is connected to the very things Joseph Smith was speaking about in January and March, 1844. And I explain what that is in the talk linked on this blog.

OCTOBER 27, 2011

The Power of God's Word

I've been reflecting on the power of God's word. It is so remarkable a source of power that Christ was called the Word of God, because He embodies the Father's will so completely (John 1:1).

God's word alone is what ordains to Melchizedek Priesthood. (See JST Genesis 14:27–29). “It was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice...”

God's word alone conferred sealing authority upon Nephi. (Helaman 10:3; Helaman 10:5–10). God's word alone conferred the sealing authority upon Joseph Smith (D&C 132:46).

God's word is the only constant, which will never fail, whether He speaks it or He authorizes someone else to speak it, it is the same (D&C 1:38).

In a very real sense, the power of the priesthood consists in obtaining God's word. For when He will answer you it is possible to have His word on all things (D&C 132:45 (for Joseph); D&C 124:95 (for Hyrum); Helaman 10:5 (for Nephi)).

Those who have God's word know how to proceed in all things. Those who do not are always uncertain what they should do and what their standing is before Him.

OCTOBER 29, 2011

Borrowed Doctrine

I've just finished a conversation with a daughter who is in college in another state. Some doctrinal issues were on the agenda stemming from interpretations of the Book of Revelation. She had an encounter with a Relief Society teacher who introduced her to some ideas which are largely borrowed from Evangelical sources,

adopted by Mormon writers, and now being repeated as if they were true. That conversation provokes this post.

We should be careful about importing doctrine and interpretations from other traditional Christian sources. The reason “the professors [of traditional Christianity] are all corrupt” is not because they are bad people (*JS-H* 1:19). It is because their doctrine is wrong. They do not have the truth. They entertain ideas which are not informed by heaven, and rely upon men to speculate about meaning, without knowing a thing about heaven.

Joseph remarked that “A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world” (*TPJS* p. 217). The meaning of “knowledge” is, of course, the key to that statement. For the only “knowledge” which can save it to “know God” for yourself (See, John 17:3; D&C 132:24). The means of knowing this God is, of course, revelation and His personal ministry. His personal ministry will bring the faithful to the Father, as well. Both the Son and the Father will take their abode with you (John 14:18, 23). This is the knowledge that saves.

The Christian world cannot save, their doctrines are corrupt, because they do not have the required knowledge to be able to teach. Therefore, they are “all corrupt” because their minds are corrupt. They cannot save themselves, much less inform us of anything which will aid us in knowing God.

Even reading Joseph’s teachings will not save us. His knowledge and his covenant is not ours. We must find the required knowledge for ourselves. “Reading the experience of others, or the revelations given to them, can never give us a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God” (*TPJS* p. 324). Even Joseph’s revelations, and Joseph’s scriptures are inadequate. They must be

obtained by each individual or they will be left without saving knowledge.

How do we get good doctrine, good information and a valid covenant with God for ourselves? It is through knowledge from Him. “could you gaze into heaven five minutes you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject” (*TPJS* p. 324). This is true because we then gain knowledge that saves us. We know God.

I don't give a fig for lengthy quotes of man's speculation about the “truth” as they understand it. I care only for the revelations from heaven. Men who have never gazed into heaven simply do not know the truth. Good men, honest men, and men of the highest intent who know nothing about the heavens cannot help anyone to find their way to God.

There are, of course, disappointments along the way when you gain knowledge. You find that you learn things you do not want to know. You become disconnected with this world as you attach to the higher world. I read the *Doctrines of Salvation* from Joseph Fielding Smith as a convert to the church, believing it to be filled with truth. I accepted the notion he advances that

Christ has himself declared that the manifestations we might have of the Spirit of Christ, or from a visitation from an angel, a tangible resurrected being, would not leave the impression and would not convince us and place within us that something which we cannot get away from which we receive through a manifestation of the Holy Ghost. Personal visitations might become dim as time goes on, but this guidance of the Holy Ghost is renewed and continued, day after day, year after year, if we live to be worthy of it. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol I, p. 44)

I believed that at one point. I thought it good doctrine. I was troubled and disappointed to learn this was wrong. I did not want to know Joseph Fielding Smith was in error. But I learned it. Visitations are more, not less, powerful than the Holy Ghost. The scriptures prove it. For an angel will not come to visit you without being fully armed by the power of the Holy Ghost. Indeed, they speak by the power of the Holy Ghost when they visit (2 Nephi 32:2–3). I wish I did not know Joseph Fielding Smith was wrong. I wish I did not realize he had never been visited by an angel, for only by lacking such an experience could he make this error. But we seek “knowledge” to be saved, and therefore we should find ourselves informed by heaven alone, and not men, even very good men, trying to tell us about things they can only guess to be true.

There is a great deal of difference between saving knowledge, which comes from heaven, and error, speculation and man’s own doctrine, which cannot help us. We should never find ourselves among those who “teach for doctrine the commandments of men” (*JS-H 1:19*). Get connected to heaven and you needn’t be dependent upon any MAN for your salvation. Not even Joseph Smith wanted you to do that by depending on him. Such things make you darkened in your mind, because you neglect the duty which God has imposed upon you (*TPJS* p. 238).

I do not point to me, or to another man, or to any group of men, no matter how well intentioned. I point to Christ, who alone can save you. You will not be rescued by another. No office can do it. No ordinance can do it. Only Christ has the power to save (*Mosiah 3:17; Mosiah 5:8*).

The most dogmatic and well studied Mormons are often the furthest away from heaven. Proud, confident, insistent they possess great knowledge, all the while little more than a child of hell, bound

in darkness, and unable to recognize the truth. They will, as Joseph put it, “be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world,” (*TPJS* p. 217). because they are already captive by a spirit of contention, which Christ told us all is of the devil (3 Nephi 11:29).

We should declare the truth, point to Christ, and say what we know to be true from our knowledge. It is up to others to accept or reject what is true. We cannot be saved; NONE of us can be saved unless we have saving knowledge which comes from Christ. You would know this if the heavens were opened to you and angels ministered to you. This is why the Book of Mormon authors so often confirmed their message did not originate from them, but came as a result of the Lord or His angels requiring the message to be delivered.

I do not care if anyone believes a thing I have ever said or written. But I do care if someone decides they will close the gate of heaven by the false things they preach, all the while declaring they are Christ’s. How can they know the Master when they oppose knowledge of Him? It is more than an enigma. It is a tragedy.

NOVEMBER 2011

NOVEMBER 3, 2011

Our Many Cares

Our many cares often focus on things which do not matter. Christ told us what matters. It is not what we can get from God, but what we do for Him, what we give up for His sake, that has value. If we lose our fathers and mothers—are rejected by those we are closest to in this life—for His sake, we are in the right way (Matt. 10:35–39). When we are entrusted with something by Him, it is not for our

benefit, but for the benefit of others while in His service (Matt. 25: 14–30). In the parable about the talents, the talents were given for the Lord's sake, not the servants. The servant was accountable for what he did for the Lord with what was given. It was not about the servant, nor the pride of being entrusted, nor the praise of men. It was only about doing the will of the Lord and glorifying Him.

When we claim we've done great things in the Lord's name, we miss the point (Matt. 7:21–23). The kingdom, and the power and the glory is the Father's, not ours (Matt. 6:13).

What little we have must all be given to Him if we hope to please our Lord (Luke 21:1–4). Until we give all we have to Him, we have nothing.

This is more than enough to occupy all our days. How is it then we have time to fret about so much else? How do we have time for endless debate and group discussions which circle about but fail to reach the truth; without ever noticing how little we have given to Him? Why do we ever contemplate with pride what we've received, what we own, what office or station we occupy, or how great we have become down in this dark well? What use is it to succeed here? What great thing is it you have here that will endure for even a thousand years?

And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:34–37)

NOVEMBER 8, 2011

Jesus' Doctrine

Jesus complained to the Nephites about their religious arguments. He called such disagreements over religion “contention” and said it was His doctrine that “such things should be done away” (3 Ne. 11:30). Seems we want to believe in Christ, but reject His doctrine. He was quite unrelenting on the point:

Verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. (3 Ne. 11:29)

It is interesting how He did it. Because He disagreed with the presiding authorities of His day on almost every particular of their then-current religious observances. But He managed to declare what He believed, to teach what He thought comprised the higher, underlying purpose of the law, without contending. He answered their oftentimes hostile questions forthrightly, and unequivocally but not through contention.

He goes on to declare His doctrine, which is the doctrine given to Him by the Father:

I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me. And whosoever believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father

also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost. And thus will the Father bear record of me, and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me; for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one. (3 Ne. 11:32–36)

His doctrine is to “bear record of the Father.” And His doctrine is the “Father will bear record of Him.” And the “Holy Ghost will bear record of both Him and the Father.” For they are all one.

It is nice, I suppose, when someone bears their testimony. I do it. I hear others do it. I see some folks swooning when they hear someone they think holds an important office in the church bearing a testimony. But we are supposed to get our testimony from Christ and from the Father and from the Holy Ghost.

We are all told by Christ that “all men everywhere” are commanded to repent. That is all inclusive. There isn’t some special, elect few who are so nigh to heaven they are not required to repent. Everyone. Relentlessly. We are all in desperate need of repentance. We don’t need a healthy self-image. We don’t need reassurance that we are loved, even doted upon by God. We don’t need to be indulged in our sins, told we are just born with problems we should accept, or given any excuse to turn away from facing our weaknesses. They are, after all, gifts from Him to humble us (Ether 12:27). They were given to humble us, to drive us onto our knees, and to commend us to Christ. We are commanded to repent from them, and they are a gift to remind us of our dependence upon Him.

When someone cries out that we are in desperate need of repentance today, however, they are called “negative” and “unkind” and “not at all like Christ.” They imagine Christ as a limp-wristed, happy-go-lucky chap who is indulgent and promiscuously forgiving.

I do not imagine such a being; but instead a Counselor of Righteousness, whose every word is designed to make me become more like Him. Whose every sacrifice was designed to bring greater light into my mind and heart. Who stretches and pulls me relentlessly forward and upward, bringing me to my knees as I view in horror my many failings. I see a Man of Holiness who cannot tolerate any degree of unrighteousness; but who is ever ready to heal and instruct. A God indeed. Who works to bring others to become like Him.

“Wait!” shouts someone, “I have a testimony of ‘the church!’” Well, that’s nice, I suppose. I find the church important, too. I fellowship there every Sunday. I enjoy immensely my ward. But that isn’t Christ’s doctrine. My testimony should come from Christ bearing record to me of the Father, and the Father then bearing testimony or record to me of the Son, and the Holy Ghost bearing testimony to me of the Father and the Son. That is His doctrine. And Christ is quite emphatic on that point, as well:

And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them. (3 Ne. 11:40)

I’ve been bearing testimony of Christ in books I have written for some time now. But the testimony I bear is that He lives and is altogether willing to bear testimony to you. And the Father, also, is willing to do so. And also the Holy Ghost.

I do not believe God was meant to be experienced second and third-hand. I do not believe we are supposed to “know about God” but were instead, according to Christ’s doctrine, to “know God.” He will make Himself known to you. Not vicariously through a

Pope, or a Bishop, or an Archbishop, or a Cardinal, or a Stake President, or some other preacher. He, Christ, and He, the Father and the Holy Ghost are the ones who are to declare themselves to you. Then you aren't building on the sandy, unstable foundation comprised of the many varieties of the hireling intermediary who gets acclaim here, praise and adoration here, as an inappropriate surrogate for He alone who can save. When men get put between the individual and God almost every individual immediately begins to exercise control, and dominion and compulsion over others. It is a wise God who restricts His delegation of "power" to such a degree that it cannot be exercised unrighteously (D&C 121:41).

God is knowable. He comforts.

NOVEMBER 13, 2011

Draper Temple Visit

Last week we took our Priests to the Draper Temple to do baptisms. It was a busy evening. I talked the Bishop into doing baptisms, and I was able to do confirmations. This left me dry.

Then I rushed home to pick up my wife and we returned to attend the last endowment session of the evening with her brother. He was taking out his own endowment for the first time in a "live session."

A neighbor of mine was in the Celestial Room as a worker and he told me the temples were all overbooked for weddings last Friday. The 11-11-11 date was in high demand for weddings. He had a sheet with numbers on it. I forget the totals, but it was to be the largest single day of weddings in the Draper Temple history. Apparently there was a lottery for the 11:00 time frame.

The Draper Temple is quite lovely. I liked the Jordan River Temple (which was our district before the Draper Temple was

built). It was very efficient. With six session rooms you can get a session every 20 minutes. I liked the convenience of that. When we lost that district assignment, the Draper Temple was so busy that I started going to the Oquirrh Temple. That is an amazingly beautiful facility. It was the temple I attended temporarily. It had a wonderful spirit about it. Then the police shot and killed that fellow on the temple grounds and I haven't been back. It's a personal thing, I suppose.

We helped with the Draper Temple Open House as a stake and as a family when it was first open. We enjoyed that experience.

The Temple I like most is the Manti Temple. Like Salt Lake, it is live with real people instead of a film. It is not crowded. The pioneer workmanship is interesting and beautiful. I also think the outside architecture is among the most beautiful of any of the Temples.

The Priests were taught today about how to find ancestors for whom work can be done through the "Ancestry.com" website. The hope is that between the visit this week and the information provided in today's lesson, these young men will find themselves interested in finding their ancestors. That would be good. Our lives are not ours alone. Our ancestors have an interest in how we live and what we do with the time we have allotted to us in mortality. As Joseph put it: "The spirits of the just are enveloped in flaming fire, ...are not far from us, and know and understand our thoughts, feelings, and emotions... and are often pained therewith" (Joseph Smith, Teachings, p. 326).

Temples can remind us we are not living for our own interests, but also owe an obligation to those who went before in our family lines.

NOVEMBER 14, 2011

Reactions to *Passing the Heavenly Gift*

I had a conversation this morning with a friend whose years-long alienation from the church has been healed through reading *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. I have also had a discussion yesterday about how another man was deeply offended by the content and thought it was nearly apostate to have written it. One man who withdrew from membership in the church told me he could not finish reading it because it was too “faith promoting” and “apologetic” and could not be regarded as true history because of its pro-church bias. Another man told me that it finally told the truth and liberated him to continue in church activity while feeling at home again among the Saints. I also heard a woman bear her testimony for the first time in years, in part because of the book’s effect upon her heart.

The book has been praised as inspired, by a reader who told me they felt close to the Holy Ghost as they read every page; and it has been denounced as the product of an evil and aspiring man.

Well, I’m not going to react to the reactions. But I want it clear that first, the only motive I have is to deal honestly with what I know is a current problem friends I know are struggling to solve. People who want to believe in the Restoration, but who cannot find any peace in the details of the history. I have looked at the problems and the book is an honest explanation of how I cope with the issues.

No one needs to read the book. Anyone who does read it is put to the inconvenience of buying or borrowing a copy. I do not advocate it, but only offer it. If you are untroubled by church history issues, then go your way and give it no thought. If you struggle with problems from the church’s past, then I offer it to help.

I do not advocate any position. I offer my understanding for whatever value someone may take from it. I never speak up in church and argue my views. I sit silent for the most part and leave people to enjoy their own understanding. On occasion I'm asked to teach or talk in Sacrament. When asked, I teach the assigned topic in the way I think brings the greatest understanding to the topic. As far as I know, there are only a very few people in my home Ward who are even aware I have written a single book. And of those who may know, I believe most have not read anything I've written.

I have no following, as far as I am aware. If there is anyone who claims to be following me, the only advice I would give them is to quit. I do not want a follower. Like any other Latter-day Saint, I offer my testimony and I give what I hope will help others understand difficult issues. If there is anyone worth following it is the Lord alone. I know of no man who can help anyone be saved. It does no good to claim you are "of Paul" or are "of Cephas" or you are "of Moses" or "Apollos" or some other man. That merits a Telestial condemnation comparable to what is merited by the liars, and whoremongers and adulterers (D&C 76:98–105). Therefore I do not commend any man as someone to claim you follow.

NOVEMBER 16, 2011

Harold Bloom Article

Harold Bloom has written an interesting article in the *New York Times* titled "Will This Election Be the Mormon Breakthrough"—it includes Professor Bloom's observations about how dramatically Mormonism has changed from its origins.

NOVEMBER 16, 2011

Bloom's Article

Harold Bloom is a serious student of religion. He one time admired Mormonism. The article I linked to earlier today is a reflection of his disillusionment because of the changes which the faith has undergone since the 1990's. What he once thought would be a revolutionary religion, with vitality that would revolutionize the world, is now gone.

Mormonism was designed to change the world, not to be changed by it.

Mormonism was intended to alter how people understood and relate to God; not to become an Americanized version of Roman Catholicism with a magisterial hierarchy viewed as God's "Vicars" holding keys to heaven through which sycophants could obtain Divine favor.

Bloom laments the transition and, because of it, has let the tarnishing recent changes to Mormonism alter his earlier, much more positive assessment of Joseph and the faith founded through him.

Bloom's conclusion that Mormonism is now just another Protestant religion is a conclusion he was disappointed to reach. But, having reached it, he does not hold back on his disappointment.

When it began, Mormonism denounced the idea of following men. It captured in rapid prose the idea that following men, even inspired men who were authentic prophets who spoke with God, merited damnation to hell alongside the wicked:

For these are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas. These are they who say they are some of one and some of another— some of Christ and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isa-

iah, and some of Enoch; But received not the gospel... will not be gathered with the saints, to be caught up unto the church of the Firstborn, and received into the cloud. These are they who are liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie. These are they who suffer the wrath of God on earth. These are they who suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. (D&C 76:99–105)

Joseph Smith elaborated on this idea in a sermon to the Relief Society in Nauvoo, telling them: “the people should each one stand for himself, and depend on no man or men in that state of corruption of the Jewish church—that righteous persons could only deliver their own souls—applied it to the present state [1842] of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—said if the people departed from the Lord, they must fall—that they were depending on the Prophet, hence were darkened in their minds, in consequence of neglecting the duties devolving upon themselves... (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* p. 238). Today we have inverted that idea. Now if you do not “depend on the Prophet” you are considered to have a darkened mind.

It is a fundamental principle of fourth phase Mormonism that all anyone needs to do is “Follow the Prophet” (meaning the President of the church) and everything else will take care of itself. There is little else required. Tithing and some dietary restrictions, and a few meetings are needed.

Today if there is the slightest hint by someone that “Following the Prophet” as your primary faith will merit only “the wrath of God on earth” and “the vengeance of eternal fire” because we must not say we follow any man—well that is taken as weakness of faith, or worse. It can be regarded as a substantial error in doctrine or

understanding. Or, worse still, as evidence that you don't believe God at all. You are, therefore, damned.

Well, Bloom's criticism is biting, to be sure. But it is borne from his disappointment in what we've become in only a few short years of transition. The pace of the changes are accelerating, too. In another two decades it will be even more difficult to recognize Mormonism as the faith restored through Joseph. The caretakers now point to change as evidence of inspiration; instead of worrying change may be provoking ire (See, e.g., Isa. 24:5; also Malachi 3:7). Fortunately, for us, there is no need to really consider the ideas which arise from anywhere other than the recognized authorities. We can always trust that God will protect us with a mighty hand. Our freedom to err has literally been circumscribed by His power and commitment to save us. We are not free to apostatize from His ways, but are instead guaranteed we cannot fall away as was the case with every earlier dispensation of God's Gospel. Any idea we can do the same thing as every earlier era of man's interaction with God belittles God's power. It challenges His overriding hand which has restored the truth for the last time to the earth, and nothing can ever change His determination to keep it here. Even our neglect, rebellion, sins and stupidity is nothing compared to God's commitment to letting us keep the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We got it. We've got keys that cannot tarnish.

And, all of this is to the envy of every other Christian denomination; because there's just nothing anyone can do to change that. Not even us. Right?

NOVEMBER 17, 2011

Gospel Study

There are issues some Saints believe are fully resolved which, upon closer study, turn out to be much less clear. I'm quite comfortable with investigating claims, history and doctrine even when it creates long periods of uncertainty while I research the topic. I've spent years following the trail on some issues before reaching a conclusion.

I'm converted to the restored Gospel. I have absolute confidence in Joseph Smith's calling as a latter-day Prophet. His life is worth careful study. Even minute details are sometimes quite important. The available material for studying his life has greatly expanded in recent years, and is in the process of expanding further as *The Joseph Smith Papers* project continues.

Some Saints are anxiety ridden when something new is raised about the Prophet, the church's history or doctrine which they thought was "settled." But that is largely because they are insecure about the search into truth. I understand that and even sympathize with it. But I came into the faith as a convert, and therefore it required a search by me in the first place.

When I write about the conclusions I have reached the "audience" is not necessarily intended to include life-long members of the church who have a sedentary approach to their religion and who hope the church's formal programs represent everything God wants them to know. I am pleased to leave them alone. They aren't interested in the search, don't care to learn anything new, and have little in common with the religion I believe. I do not write for them. To the extent my writing causes alarm for them, I understand. But I'm really not trying to tell them anything.

Those who believe the faith, want to explore its depths, and enjoy reading the thoughts of similarly motivated Saints are the only people who should have any interest in what I write.

Mormonism was (originally) intended to include “all truth.” But the available information in 1844 has now transformed. It is transforming now almost daily. But not by sampling opinions—that is completely worthless to the search for truth. It is instead through uncovering history, studying the past and opening the heavens.

The church was intended to be a repository of truth. That does not require wealth, political influence, property or numbers. Truth is alien here and will not be rewarded in this world. When the world welcomes “Mormonism” then you can know compromises have been made to enable it to become popular. The Book of Mormon sounds an alarm on that topic. It is one of the great sources of truth. And it exposes the modern world, and ourselves, to relentless criticism and warning. However comfortable others may become with their faith, I find it serves best as an alarm, warning me of the perils of life in this fallen sphere.

NOVEMBER 20, 2011

Christ The Opener

Christ is the one who opens the heavens (Ether 4:9). It is at His command the heavens open and close.

Those to whom the heavens remain closed and to whom angels no longer minister are practicing a faith which is vain (Moroni 7:37).

Nephi warned us against a faith which claims Christ had finished His work and given His power to men (2 Ne. 28:5).

Neither God nor His Gospel change (Moroni 8:18).

I care nothing for men or their precepts. Man’s precepts will only condemn us at the last day (2 Ne. 28:26–27). I care only about

Him at whose command the heavens are opened; and for those whom He sends through the opening He causes to occur. All else is vanity—because it cannot save.

NOVEMBER 23, 2011

Thanksgiving

I'd been thinking of putting something up about Thanksgiving and using some New Testament things I've been reflecting on, but it changed today when I got my mail. Now I thought I'd just put up a short comment on another matter.

The practice of law is largely just work and the means for providing for my family. I like to be able to assist in solving problems between people, but oftentimes the work involves disputes which are intractable among people who want to vent against an opposing party. It is a real privilege to work for someone whose cause is just and who has been put upon in an improper way. That, however, is not always the client.

I have a client who has spent several years in prison on a conviction of a felony which he did not commit. The system failed. I did not represent him in his trial, nor in the appeal which followed. But I was asked to assist him once the Appellate court had denied his appeal. After four years in prison there are limited options to try and get him freed from prison. He has a great deal to be angry over, and little reason to be giving thanks for how his life has been afflicted from a system which has, in his case, failed.

Nevertheless, today I got a hand-made card in the mail from him, thanking me for the work we are doing on his behalf to seek his freedom again. Tomorrow I am going to have my children read his card, sent from prison, and use it to celebrate our own many, many blessings.

We all have much to be grateful for. A man I met after he read some of my books died of brain cancer last week. I was able to talk with him before his death. I tried to cheer him, but found it was instead him who was cheering me.

Life is difficult for everyone. But every life is also filled with blessings. Whether we notice the blessings seems to be entirely optional. But what seems almost mandatory is that we notice the problems, the slights, the disappointments and the failings we each endure here. Tomorrow, however, I intend to be not only superficially grateful, but genuinely so; and to reflect on recent events and the home-made card I received from prison to remind me once again how God blesses me almost beyond measure.

NOVEMBER 25, 2011

Recent Conversations

I have a few requests for the talk mentioned on this blog. I will send those out later today to the ones who have requested them.

This morning I finished reading the Book of Mormon again. I've lost count of how many times I've read it through now. Dozens, if not hundreds. It still contains new information and powerful doctrine that I haven't noticed before. It is apparent they had the Temple rites. They were in possession of greater knowledge than we have among ourselves.

A few days ago I had a conversation with a former Mormon who became Catholic when he left the church. He finished reading *Passing the Heavenly Gift* and wanted to talk to me about it. It was a wonderful conversation. He talked openly about his experience as a Latter-day Saint and how much the church changed during the four decades he was a member. He talked about how much he liked being a member at first, and how he thought it was the church

that changed and not him. He thought it had become increasingly dictatorial and harsh over the years he belonged, and he was at last completely alienated from it.

I mentioned the historic excesses of the Catholic Church, the terrors exercised by their priestly authorities during the Dark Ages and the atrocities of the Inquisition. He admitted their historic shortcomings, but thought these errors were now all behind the Catholics. They had learned from their mistakes, and were now keenly aware that they cannot dictate to people in a modern, pluralistic and secular society. They were now more broad-minded, tolerant and accepting of freedom to think and behave than perhaps almost any other Christian faith. There are things such as abortion and homosexuality, which the Catholic Church condemns, but despite this, whenever personal failure occurs the church's role is to forgive and to support. There is almost no thought given to church discipline, even in the case of transgressing priests who engage in pedophilia, and homosexual abuses. They accept and rehabilitate, condemn sin, but do not cast away the sinners.

As we talked, he said he expected that Mormonism, which is still in its infancy, will make the historic errors of the Catholic Church rather than to learn from history. He believed Catholicism's great mistakes were in the past, but he thought Mormonism's great mistakes are still in its future. He thought it was unlikely my LDS faith would learn from what I'd written in my book and turn away from its current direction. He thought my book offered an opportunity for Mormonism to reassess itself and turn into a more open, hopeful, helpful and tolerant faith because it would be necessarily more humble if it faced down its history.

Well, there were things we could agree on and things we will respectfully disagree. But I respect his faith because it is sincerely

held. And he respects mine because he knows of my devotion to it. I enjoyed the open discussion. Neither of us felt threatened by the conversation and neither of us was trying to convert the other. We respected the choices each made in their faith.

As my wife and I walked and talked later that night, we discussed the problem of fear that is often an undercurrent when discussing religion with other people. Whether consciously or unconsciously fear is a great problem when the topic is religion. We puzzled over why that is the case.

With Latter-day Saints, the idea of a “testimony” can be an impediment to increased learning. That should not be the case. A person should be able to have a testimony and learn something new, even if it has the effect of changing their testimony. In fact, it is impossible for a testimony to grow if the new things must always conform to what is presently known. If a person’s understanding is limited, incomplete, or even mistaken, then when a new idea that conflicts with these incomplete, limited or mistaken ideas is encountered, the temptation is always to resort to measuring the new ideas by the old, mistaken ones.

The Nephites followed the Law of Moses. But when Christ taught them He informed them the Law was fulfilled in Him (3 Ne. 15:2–4). Can you imagine what the result would have been if the Nephites chose to measure Christ’s message against their “testimony of the Law of Moses.” They would have rejected our Savior, knowing that He was false and trying to deceive them because He was teaching something that conflicted with their prior testimony.

Fear is a tool used to limit inquiry. Fear is a tool used to keep people from repenting and facing God. The path to God can only be found when you refuse to share in the confederacy of fear held by your fellow man (Isa. 8:11–13; see also 2 Ne. 18:11–13). For those

controlled by their fears, they will view Christ's way as a stumbling block and an offense (Isa. 8:14-15; also 2 Ne. 18:14-15).

What if your testimony is incomplete? What if your understanding is wrong? How can God ever work to your satisfaction if you refuse to acknowledge His gifts among His people? (Moro. 10:24-25).

As our conversation continued, my wife was of the view that fear is one of the most effective ways to prevent learning. It shuts more minds and curtails God's gifts more than any other tool in Satan's arsenal. It takes faith to allow your beliefs to be corrected by the Lord's continuing revelations. He always imparts things that are unexpected, and which require you to adjust what you are thinking to a new, and greater light.

NOVEMBER 25, 2011

Elijah Talk Not Transcribed Yet

The talk referred to earlier today is still the "First Three Words" or the King Follett discussion. There are people who still request it. The talk on Elijah given at Confetti Books has not been transcribed yet.

Sorry for the confusion.

NOVEMBER 29, 2011

Two Suggestions

There are two suggestions I'd offer to you. First, when you read the scriptural accounts of answers to prayer, ask yourself if there is additional information given by God beyond the topic raised by the prayer or petition to God, in the answer received. The prayer or petition is what the prophet wanted to know. The answer, when it goes beyond that, is what God wanted to be known.

In the First Vision, Joseph wanted to know what church to join. He learned not to join any of them. But it was the rest of the information which was the Lord's agenda, not Joseph's.

When the Brother of Jared asked about lighting, that was his concern. The answer solved the problem, but went well beyond that. The answer included a revelation about the entire earth's history and destiny.

Section 76 resulted from an inquiry about "heaven" but included a great deal more.

Section 107 satisfied the inquiry about how to organize the church, but it went well beyond that.

It is the additional information which tells you what the Lord wants us to know. Where He would like our attention directed. Follow that suggestion and you'll find a great deal of what we often overlook.

Second, I'd suggest you read *Passing the Heavenly Gift* as a doctrinal exposition, rather than a history. The history can be disorienting and upsetting, even though it was intended for an audience which was already aware of issues and needed to be reoriented and comforted. If you are content with the traditional story, the book wasn't written for you. But if you elect to read it anyway, then read it as an exposition of what the original doctrine was at the beginning with Joseph Smith.

DECEMBER 2011

DECEMBER 2, 2011

Editing and Expanding

I've been working with the transcript of the Elijah Talk for the last week. It is expanding from what was done in the oral presentation.

I had a two-hour time frame to speak in that evening. Therefore the material was adapted to be presented in that time. For the transcript, however, I don't feel the same constraint. Therefore I have been expanding the information to reflect other related ideas which would not fit into the time allowed.

I've also been adding footnotes and showing the sources from which the ideas were taken. There are over 190 footnotes in the first 28 pages. Right now the paper appears to be some 37 pages long, but it has a tendency to continue to expand as I edit further into the document. When finished I expect it may grow to 43 or so pages. But then it will be edited to reduce redundancy, etc. and shrink again.

At the moment, I'm hoping to have it done by next weekend, but make no promises. It will be made available for anyone interested. Given the length, however, it cannot be put up here as a post. Instead it will either be sent as a PDF copy by email, or posted as a PDF you can either download or read on-line.

I've been struck by the quantity of scriptures which were relied on in the talk. It isn't clear that the ideas come from scripture until you go back through and cite to the sources. Then the entire talk becomes a foray into the Standard Works.

This effort reminds me once again just how delightful the faith restored through Joseph Smith was intended to be for those who follow it. It is a feast that includes "all truth." Mormons should be the most open, inquisitive, searching minds in the universe. The faith spreads from antiquity to all eternity. We are the only folks claiming to be Christian whose scriptures include Egyptian hieroglyphs, some of which are left unexplained and for the reader to search out. In other words, our scriptures raise questions which they deliberately do not answer. We are forewarned, therefore, by our

own Standard Works, that we have a job to undertake for ourselves if we want to learn the truth. What a delight it is to be Mormon.

I hope those who want to cut off discussion, curtail thought, stop the search for truth, and censor differing views realize they advocate apostasy from the original vital, living, delightful religion of Christ. If they succeed, they reduce our restored faith to just another dead faith, without living root or branch, separated from the living vine, who is Christ. So long, however, as there remains even one soul willing to search for the truth in Christ, the Restoration remains alive.

DECEMBER 5, 2011

Answer to Inquiry

I received criticism about using John D. Lee as a source in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. My response was this: Though he was excommunicated from the church, convicted of the crime and executed for his role in Mountain Meadows, the church reinstated John D. Lee to full fellowship in 1962. His temple ordinances were restored, and so far as the church is concerned all his blessings returned.

There are things in the church's archives that have never been made public. Therefore, the church knows things about John D. Lee's role in the incident that have not been made available for me to review. In the recent book, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, one of the LDS Church Historians (Richard Turley) makes a number of acknowledgements about the event. I presume he was acquainted with material in the archives when he did so.

The primary sources for my views are the work of Juanita Brooks and the recent Richard Turley books, **not** John D. Lee's work. However, I think it is now a mistake to ignore what was said

in Lee's book. If the church believed he deserved reinstatement of all blessings, including his temple rites after what he wrote about the event, then I think it is a mistake to just ignore it.

I read Lee's book with his attitude at the time it was written fully in mind. There were competing motivations. On the one hand, he was decidedly disaffected and felt betrayed by Brigham Young and the church. On the other hand, he was about to die and wanted to part this world telling the truth. Each reader will have to decide for himself which motivation prevailed. I found parts of the book were not credible to my mind because the incident was too remote and his retelling seemed to have too much detail for me to believe it wasn't being embellished. But there were other parts which were very believable. His acknowledgements of wrongdoing and acceptance of his faults, particularly in his own family and among his plural wives, seemed to me to be an authentic effort of a man about to die to set matters straight.

In the end, I think his work is something that needs to be read and considered. I wanted corroboration to important details, but since the church has more information than has been given to the public, and decided in the light of that information to fully reinstate John D. Lee, it is no longer appropriate to dismiss him out of hand.

I also considered the criticism that his lawyer could have altered the text to make it more salacious before publication. I reached my own conclusion about that and do not think there was enough of that to warrant the conclusion that the text represents the story of the lawyer, and not John D. Lee's. Anyone reading it should consider the historical criticisms made about the book.

On another subject altogether, if you're in Beaver, Utah, check out Hammy's. It is a new fast-food restaurant now occupying the old Arby's building just off I-15. The Arby's signs were still up when

we stopped there on our way home, and at first we thought we were going to Arby's. After trying the place, I have to say I prefer it to Arby's. It's our new favorite place to stop when we're in Beaver.

We drove to Las Vegas in a snow storm on Friday. My daughter's last softball games were down there. The drive down was exciting. We lost count of the wrecks we passed, or, in one occasion, drove through. Stayed in Circus Circus. I learned that Las Vegas still considers men who wear their uncontrolled lusts on their countenances, who are willing to pay money to titillate themselves in their desperate hormonal slavery, "Gentlemen." They organize "clubs" for them. Somehow there are enough of them to apparently make a profit from catering to their weaknesses.

DECEMBER 8, 2011

Elijah

Here is the Elijah talk given at Confetti Books in October.

Link: *Elijah Talk*

DECEMBER 8, 2011

The First Three Words

In addition to the Elijah talk recently posted, we have decided to also upload the "First Three Words." A great number of blog readers have requested this and had it emailed to them, and we are still occasionally receiving requests. Thanks to technology and the internet and all that good stuff we are providing that one as a PDF for the book.

We hope you all enjoy and everyone have a joyous Christmas season focusing on Christ.

CM - the moderator

Link: *The First Three Words*

CHAPTER 6

Turns and Returns

DECEMBER 11, 2011

Cycles of Truth

The ordinances have been the same since Adam, according to Joseph Smith. He explained that “[Jesus] set the ordinances to be the same forever and ever” (*TPJS* p. 168). Also, “Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundations of the world, in the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed” (*Id.*, p. 308). This is why Joseph “restored” the Gospel, but did not bring anything new. It was a return to the earlier, forgotten truths.

Christ was careful to explain what was “fulfilled” in Him and what remained still intact from His earlier dealings with mankind. He “fulfilled” and brought to an end the Law of Moses. It ended. It was fulfilled. But everything else remained and was still in effect. Part of His explanation was as follows:

³And he said unto them: Marvel not that I said unto you that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new.

⁴Behold, I say unto you that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses.

⁵ Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel; therefore, the law in me is fulfilled, for I have come to fulfil the law; therefore it hath an end.

⁶ Behold, I do not destroy the prophets, for as many as have not been fulfilled in me, verily I say unto you, shall all be fulfilled.

⁷ And because I said unto you that old things have passed away, I do not destroy that which hath been spoken concerning things which are to come.

⁸ For behold, the covenant which I have made with my people is not all fulfilled; but the law which was given unto Moses hath an end in me. (3 Nephi, 15)

Was Abraham a prophet? Did he live before Moses? Was the covenant with him fulfilled in Christ's fulfillment of the Law of Moses? If Abraham preceded Moses by more than three centuries, how is the later Law of Moses related to the earlier covenant?

Here is part of the covenant between Abraham and God, to endure throughout all generations of those who claim part of Abraham's covenant:

⁷ And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

⁸ And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

⁹ And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

¹⁰ This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

¹¹And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

¹²And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.

¹³He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

Since the covenants between God and man were established in the heavens before the foundations of the world, as Joseph explained, I suspect the covenant of circumcision did not originate with Abraham. I suspect it was restored through him, but came down from the beginning. I believe if we had a full record we would find that originally the covenant was established through Adam. That it was originally intended to be performed by the male in contemplation of marriage. That the covenant of marriage, like all covenants, required the shedding of blood to be in effect. For the man, circumcision sealed with the shedding of blood his covenant to marry. For the wife, the virgin sacrificed blood at the marriage. But those things are now long forgotten, lost to time, and could only be known today by revelation.

If Joseph's statement is correct, and Adam had the fullness of the Gospel, then every prophet from the beginning has only "restored" lost truth. It has been a search to return to the original truth. After all, Christ came to Adam three years previous to his death and comforted him (D&C 107:53–57). Such an event strongly indicates Adam had the fullness. The Gospel is, therefore, in all likelihood a search into the ancient order of things, not a leap forward into something new. In order to go forward, we will need to go back.

It is an interesting question to contemplate whether the Lord was serious about the token becoming a memorial of His “covenant [which] shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.” Also, although the New Testament debates over “those of the circumcision” determined not to require circumcision of adult converts, they did not have 3 Nephi, Chapter 15 to inform their debate (For New Testament references, see, e.g., Romans chapters 2 & 4, Galatians chapter 5, among many other places).

I would doubt there will be any uncircumcised males included in the latter-day Zion. It is, at least for me, an interesting question to contemplate.

DECEMBER 12, 2011

Sacrifice

This world is the place of sacrifice. We all came here to make sacrifices. We wanted to come here, we knew it would require sacrifice to produce the faith necessary for salvation, and we gladly came.

Christ is the great Prototype of the “saved man” according to *The Lectures on Faith*. He came and gave Himself as a sacrifice, and we are to “follow Him” if we are to be saved.

We came here to lay on the altar everything, our desires, appetites, passions, and everything with which the Lord has blessed us. Abraham put his beloved son on the altar, intending to kill him and then burn his remains, because God asked it of him. He did not refuse. However bitter, terrible and painful the request, the Lord asked it of Abraham and he proceeded to offer it.

No one obtains the faith necessary for salvation unless they are prepared to sacrifice all things to God. Faith for salvation cannot otherwise be obtained. Read *The Lectures on Faith* again.

You’ll see it is all set out there.

DECEMBER 13, 2011

Flattery and Repentance

It is the mark of a false message that it relies on flattery (See Alma 46:5; 61:4; Jacob 7:4; Mosiah 27:8; 2 Ne. 28:22).

It is the mark of a true message that it calls for repentance (D&C 6:9; 11:9; Mosiah 18:20; 25:22).

Christ's message is always to "repent" and then to "come to Him" (Moroni 7:34).

There has never been a bona fide, reliable, infallible source of truth which cannot be compromised in this world. But there has always been a bona fide, reliable, infallible message of truth which does not compromise. It is the message of repentance.

DECEMBER 14, 2011

Answer to Moroni 8:8

I got asked about Moroni 8:8 and the issue of "circumcision" posted earlier. Moroni 8 is a letter from Mormon to his son, Moroni. In the 8th verse he (Mormon) quotes the Savior as having said, in relation to infant baptism, the following: "I came into the world not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; the whole need no physician, but they that are sick; wherefore, little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them; and the law of circumcision is done away in me." My response is this:

First, the comment is about "little children" who do not need ordinances. They do not need baptism, and they do not need circumcision. Little children are exempt and the requirements are fulfilled in every respect by Christ's atonement. Therefore, they

needn't be baptized, needn't be confirmed, needn't have circumcision; and they needn't comply with any of the requirements for salvation because Christ atoned for all sin arising from the Fall of Adam. They, "little children" that is, are not sick and therefore do not need a physician.

The teaching leaves open, however, the question about adults. Originally circumcision was an adult ordinance. When restored through Abraham, it was made an infant ceremony. The Law of Moses kept it something for infants. Christ removed all accountability for any law in the atonement for all infants, through the age of 8, who are not accountable before Him.

The issue, however, is whether this is satisfied for adults as well. Moroni 8:8 does not address that question. The earlier post does attempt to address it.

DECEMBER 16, 2011

Out of Season Fruit

I've been asked several times about the comment that Adam and Eve partook of the fruit "out of season" in the Elijah Talk. Since it's come up more than once, here's an answer I gave to one of those who inquired:

They would have eventually received the command to partake. If they had waited for that command, the "fall" would have introduced the kind of opposition experienced during the Millennium rather than the kind we now have. Opposites only required: 1) change and 2) death. Both will be present during the Millennium.

The Garden of Eden is an allegory, and we all pass through a "Fall from Eden" to come here. But there are many other worlds, see D&C 76:24. Among these countless others, ours fell the greatest. See Moses 7:36-37. We are singular in our fallen state, and qualify

as the “most wicked” of any of God’s creations. Here we suffer, but with the opportunity to grow by making sacrifice. We all came here to offer sacrifice. Just being here is a form of sacrifice, and we will all submit to death to leave here.

DECEMBER 18, 2011

Destination

I was asked at what point a car ceases to be a car. If it runs out of gas and cannot move is it still a car?

What if the engine is broken, and therefore it would not matter if there was gas, once it is broken is it still a car?

What if both the engine and transmission are beyond repair?

What if you cannot even push it because the tires and wheels are gone and it is sitting on blocks beside the road. Is it still a car?

If it bears some superficial resemblance to a car, is it still a car no matter what condition it is in or whether it works or not?

After thinking for a few minutes I responded: It was never meant to be a car. It was always about the destination. When the car stops for whatever reason, you get out and walk toward the destination and have gratitude for how far the car was able to take you before it stopped. It was never about the car in the first place. *You* must keep moving.

He was grateful.

DECEMBER 20, 2011

Wickedness and Destruction

The cycle of wickedness and destruction often includes a complete inability of the wicked to detect their grave errors. They have their religion, and are comfortable with it. They think their pretenses are enough.

Ezekiel saw a vision of the destruction of the “chosen people” beginning at their Temple. The destroyers were told to wait before the slaughter began. First an angel would mark the foreheads of those who “sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (Eze. 9:4). Meaning there were a few among the chosen, who knew their religious practices were used to justify abominable behavior. These few did not just condemn the wicked, they “sighed” and “cried” for their fellow saints. They prayed, made intercession, hoped for more time, and urged repentance.

The larger group, however, were content with their abominations and thought themselves righteous. They were not marked, nor spared. The command was given to slay them all, utterly, and spare none “both maids and little children, and women” (Eze. 9:6).

In the vision Ezekiel saw the destruction begin at the Temple (Eze. 9:6). It began there because it was the Temple which these corrupt people believed to be proof of their great righteousness and also their favor with God. Therefore the destruction needed to begin there.

The angel faithfully marked only those who were aware of the abominations and who would not join in with it (Eze. 9:11). When the destruction began, the Lord was committed to His judgment, and declared “mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head” (Eze. 9:10).

This is a useful chapter to consider (Ezekiel Chapter 9). It reinforces the importance of repentance, when it is offered. When the offering ends, it is followed by judgment and destruction.

How odd it is that the self-proclaimed “righteous” are almost without exception those who are most wicked, fallen, abominable and proud. You rarely encounter a corrupt group in the Book of Mormon who are not also quite involved in a false religion. The

false religions in the Book of Mormon frequently teach that the followers are righteous and highly favored of God (See, e.g., Alma 31:14–18).

Wouldn't it be amazing if this kind of mistake could be made again by people who think themselves holy, better than others who do not enjoy the fullness of God's favor/Gospel, and destined for salvation while all others were doomed to an inferior kingdom? It's almost too ridiculous to even consider. Those things are behind us now, aren't they? Because we are promised salvation, and for us to fail would be for God to fail, and we know He's not going to do that.

DECEMBER 22, 2011

History is the Stuff

Almost always when an institution or group claims to have authority from God, the primary enforcement tool used to establish control over others is fear. Authority from God relieves the claimant to the authority of any need to display merit apart from the claim of authority itself. The Catholics were able to engage in excesses, abuses, even outright institutional evil, but these great wrongs were regarded as unimportant because of the claim to have authority from God.

God's holiness was embodied in "keys" given from Peter. They were thought to allow holders of the authority to seal in heaven. This silenced the critics. The fear of being kept from heaven or consigned to hell was enough to rule over the souls of men. They could claim they acted from a higher plane, with God's ways remaining mysterious, even incomprehensible to the common man. The power of God can judge others, but no man can judge God under this system.

If mental coercion did not work, then credulous and cruel believers could be employed to intimidate and get control. If more was needed, the Catholic hierarchy felt no inhibition at using violence to be able to rule and reign over the souls of men.

The Pope did not need to display virtue, only power. He did not need to produce revelation or expound on how men could entertain angels, only to appear in the seat of power, displaying the incidents of authority, wealth, privilege, standing above the common man in a place filled with art, treasure, statuary surrounded by supporters. These trappings were a substitute for revelation and authentic fruits from heaven.

This formula worked to keep all of Christendom subordinate to the rule of oftentimes wicked, even cruel, men. For nearly a thousand years it monopolized power over men. Because these pontiffs claimed to hold God's authority, people feared them and were loathe to challenge them. When the bedrock of an institution's claims rests on authority, these failings are almost always eventually unavoidable. God's power is so resilient, so powerful, so vital for salvation that almost all men will surrender to it or be forced to submit when a group trusts that it exists.

These are powerful forces. When released upon the stage of history, they are meant to be held by only the meek, the humble, and the servants of all. Never by the proud, the vain, and the ambitious. But it is always the proud, the vain and the ambitious who are drawn to seek to hold such authority. Hence the many sycophants who always congregate at Rome.

We see some of this very excess on display within radical Islam today. Brutality is justified by God's power; God's right to kill. No one questions God's right in such matters. But what man is there who can be certain of God's will until he has stood in His presence

and learned how great a gulf exists between the foolishness of man and the holiness of God? But those are rare indeed. It is far easier to claim to speak FOR God than to actually speak WITH God. Whole cable networks are filled with clamoring clergy claiming to speak for Him. They'll be the first to burn, because the command to not take the Lord's name in vain is, after all, one of the Ten Commandments.

History is the stuff from which most clearly the warnings of scripture take form in flesh and blood. All the warnings are there, but we frequently believe them only applicable to those we know to have fallen. But the lessons were always meant for us. ...

DECEMBER 23, 2011

A Visit to Temple Square

We took all the kids who are home, our foreign exchange student from Slovakia, and a friend of my daughter's to visit Temple Square last evening. The place was crowded. That's an understatement; It was packed. At times the sidewalks were "sidestands," because no one seemed to know you could walk on them.

The impatient crowding and the cold made the overall experience less than I'd hoped. After crowding about in the Square itself, we maneuvered to the east, exiting the Square onto former Main Street by the large reflecting pool. There wasn't any relief there from the congestion and stern faces. People seemed quite determined, though it was hard to see of what.

We found some open space between the two sides of City Creek on the frozen grass and took a few group pictures with the eastern face of the Temple in the background. Then visited the Nativity scenes from other countries in the court area between the Administration Building and the Church Office Building. My daughter's

friend needed to visit the restroom, so we set out for the North Visitor's Center, using the sidewalk on North Temple to avoid the congestion. As we entered North Temple there was a beggar on the ground. Now that the church owns the property, beggars are not allowed into Temple Square, Main Street, or in the campus area to the east. I gave some money to my daughter who is home from the University of Wyoming, and she gave to the beggar. That helped improve the spirit of the evening. Reminded us of the condition we occupy in relation to God (See Mosiah 4:19).

At last, arriving in the Visitor's Center it was even more crowded than outside. There was a small rivulet of movement against the north wall before the desk, and at the moment we arrived the rivulet was occupied by outward bound Sister Missionaries headed back out to the frigid throngs. I noticed a wool cap on the floor, picked it up and held it high above my head for the owner to notice and come to reclaim. No one did. After a few minutes of holding it up, I asked a Sister Missionary with a Swiss Flag beside her nametag if there was a "lost and found." She said it was at the desk beside the north wall. So I entered the rivulet and headed inward. Those who were not visiting the restroom followed me. We settled beside the lost and found north desk to await the return of our missing company.

In the North Visitor's Center there was a youth choir in the southeast corner of the main floor singing some forgettable Christmas tune. I was taken by the expressions on the faces of those in the crowd as they either pressed into one another trying to move, or stood about in exasperation. The event was not what they had hoped for either. I lapsed into a quiet thoughtfulness of the circumstances, and wondered at how little joy seemed to be all about me in this crowded place.

Then it happened. It only took six notes to recognize the coming hymn. A cascade of memories of that song came back to me. The first time I remember recognizing it was in high school, when two of my classmates sang a duet. Debbie Penn was one of them, and I forget who accompanied her. When I first heard it I was stirred to reflection. For years it has been my favorite Christmas Hymn, even though it is terribly difficult to sing it well. On occasion, as I try to sing along, I will mutilate it. I cannot do the hymn justice, and I hope the Lord recognizes in my sincerity a slain sacrifice offered in honest devotion.

Then the female voices joined in the melody:

O Holy Night, the stars are brightly shining,

It is the night of the dear Saviour's birth.

They were perfect. Here was the greatest of Christmas Hymns being presented by the loveliest of chorus voices. I was transfixed. The crowds began to disappear and I was in deep reflection.

It *was* a holy night. That night represented more than just His birth. It represented also the beginning of an infinite sacrifice. It is difficult to adequately state how great the condescension of God in coming here. His great condescension began by coming into the flesh (1 Nephi 11:16–20).

He explained to the Nephites His great status before His birth. He was the one who gave the Law to Moses on the Mount (3 Ne. 15:4–5). The glory He displayed on the Mount was inexpressible. Moses attempted to convey some idea using precious stone and referring to the bright glory of heaven itself (See Ex. 24:10, but the translation is not a fair expression of the idea in Hebrew in which “the clear, bright glory of heaven” should probably replace “the body of heaven in his clearness.”)

A great, glorious Law Giver, whose glory was like the brightness of Heaven itself, condescended to become confined to a body of dust. Condescension indeed! Even before offering Himself as a sacrifice, He descended from glory to dwell here in the dust among our fallen race. The enormity of that step can hardly be put into words.

A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,

For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn. ...

Here, in the newly born body of our Lord, was Hope come down to this fallen world. What humility exists in the God of Glory who would choose to come here. We are all important because God came from His lofty position down to be among us, to rescue us all. What greater proof of man's worth can there be than this great condescension by a Holy Being?

Fall on your knees! Oh hear the angel voices! ...

The angels came to announce His birth. In their joy they could not contain their feelings, and words alone would not do. They broke out in hymns of praise. Only the combined voices of a glorious chorus could give vent to the feelings within the message of His coming! (Luke 2:13-14). Enoch saw this coming, and also rejoiced at the Lamb destined to be slain, at last coming into the flesh! (Moses 7:47).

The crowd before me in the Visitor's Center transformed. They were not longer a busy, distracted, stern body pressing against one another. Each of them showed the merit of a God who came to dwell with them. They are all holy. They are all His handiwork.

Truly He taught us to love one another,

His law is love and His gospel is peace.

Chains He shall break, for the slave is our brother. ...

We are our brother's keeper after all. If we love one another, we are only loving Him (John 13:34).

As the chorus completed the great hymn of praise I was grateful for the reminder of that Holy Night when Christ was born. We all still kneel before His great presence, for nothing else will adequately show our adoration of Him (3 Ne. 11:17). We dare not stand in His presence until His command to “arise” (3 Ne. 11:20). At the command, a momentary conflict takes place inside you between the inappropriate pride to stand in His presence and the compelling respect for His command. All doubts presently flee. His word is sovereign. It is obedience to His will that lets you stand before Him.

As my group reassembled and left the North Visitor’s Center, I was glad we had come. And glad for the great anthem I’d heard from the teenage choir. It was just what I’d hoped to find when we first departed for Temple Square.

DECEMBER 28, 2011

The Whole Not the Parts

There are a few important ideas that define my understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as restored by the Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith. These are the ideas that make the Gospel whole, and not just a group of disconnected thoughts. Until these were part of the core of my understanding, I was left with disconnected dots and no overall harmony from which to orient myself.

First and foremost is that we are not to follow any man or men. No man is worthy of discipleship. Not me, not another. There is only one who is worth following. He is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:16). Beside Him there is no other person who can save you (Mosiah 3:17).

This first principle is what has motivated all I have written. It is a mistake to think there is a departure in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*

from the topic begun in *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*. They are both necessary. They do not reflect a change in my testimony or commitment to the truth, only an elaboration on the essential core principle that we are not going to be saved by following men. Rather, you will become “darkened in your mind” if you do so (*TPJS* p. 237).

Second and equally important, it is not the depth of your study that matters, but the quality of your connection with heaven that matters. Expounding doctrine is not only insufficient, it is oftentimes a distraction from what matters. We go from unbelief to belief when we learn truth. Not every source, including institutional sources, can be trusted to tell you the truth. Only the light of Christ, followed by the Holy Ghost is a reliable guide to distinguish between unbelief and belief. We go from belief to faith as we take action consistent with belief in truth. Faith is a principle of power. It will lead you to receive angels who still minister to those of a sound mind, not given to flights of fantasy or unstable behavior (Moroni 7:30). We are brought from faith to knowledge as angels prepare us through their ministry (Moroni 7:31; Moroni 7:25; Alma 32:23). Knowledge comes from contact with Jesus Christ (Ether 3:19). This is the knowledge that saves, and nothing else (John 17:3). The idea that knowledge of Christ through His personal appearance to you is now unavailable is an old sectarian notion and is false (John 14:23; D&C 130:3).

Third, there is no written record, including the scriptures, which are able to tell you all you must know. You can only know the truth by having it revealed to you from heaven itself (D&C 76:114–118). This is the reason Joseph said if you could gaze into heaven for five minutes you would know more than you would by reading everything that has ever been written on the subject (*TPJS* p. 324).

Either you do as James says, and ask of God, or you will forever remain ignorant of the only knowledge which can save a man (*JS-H* 1:13, referring to James 1:5).

Fourth, the truth is intended to save us. We should welcome corrections. Too often, however, we are offended and think the truth is a hard thing to endure (1 Ne. 16:1–3). That is a product of pride and arrogance. It is impossible to learn what must be learned unless we are willing to be corrected (Mosiah 3:19). Therefore, only the qualified will arrive at the gates, because the rest are unwilling to take the trip required of them.

Fifth, this is a personal journey which each must take for themselves. It cannot be shared. You must approach the Throne yourself. Joseph was alone when he met the Father and Son. Moses was alone when he ascended the Mount to meet the Lord. Enoch was alone when he was caught up to heaven. Elijah was alone on the mountain when the whirlwind, lightning and earthquake preceded the Lord's own voice. Daniel alone saw the vision of the Lord. Paul alone saw the light. Nephi alone saw his father's vision. Enos was alone in the wilderness in his encounter with God. Abraham was alone when the Lord spoke to him. Jacob slept alone when the ladder to heaven descended for him. You will also be alone should the Lord come to visit you. This cannot be borrowed from another.

These are the core. This core is what faith, repentance, baptism and the Gift of the Holy Ghost are meant to bring about. The religion of heaven always involves heaven. It does not involve men and administration and popularity. It is solitary, between you and God. The proud, however, are content to proclaim their righteousness and sit in judgment of others. They live without God in the world (Mormon 5:16), and their end will be destruction. They think their

own imagination is revelation, and they foolishly value only their conceit (Proverbs 26:11–12).

I will never flatter you. But I will never lie to you, either. My faith in the Gospel is stronger now than the day I was baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. My fidelity to the church is greater now than it has ever been. It offered me baptism and I gladly accepted. It offered me scriptures, and I gladly accepted. It offered me ordination, laying on hands, washings, anointings, covenants and sacraments, and I gladly accepted them all. It gives me fellowship, and I value it. But my faith is in Christ alone.

DECEMBER 30, 2011

Questions:

When a new day dawns, should not a man awaken? What does it profit a man to awaken if he does not arise?

Does a man awaken only then to boast in his own conceit that he no longer slumbers, while all around him remain asleep; yet the man arise not from his bed? Where is the benefit in that?

The coming day will burn with heat, and those who remain in their beds, either asleep or awake, will be burned. If shade is offered but not taken, there is no benefit to awakening.

If His servant comes alone, he is rejected for the lack of witnesses. If with a company, he is rejected for having followers. Clothed with the spirit and filled with light, he is rejected as innovating. If he mourns, he is too sorrowful; and if rejoicing, he is too merry. You need only ask, and the Lord will tell you what you need to know.

CHAPTER 7

Priesthood

JANUARY 2012

JANUARY 2, 2012

Fullness of Priesthood

I received the following in an email:

As I'm re-reading *The Second Comforter* I'm trying to clarify in my mind the issue of power in the priesthood and ordination under God's hand. Our first trip to the veil is when we have our Calling & Election made sure. Nephi's example (son of Helaman) indicates that at that time we are given power in the priesthood—sealing power. This is included in the fullness of the priesthood. But you have also made the clear arguments that (1) we do not see the Lord at this time—that is part of receiving *The Second Comforter*; (2) the fullness of the priesthood and its inherent powers are only received of God, under His hand. I'm sure it's possible to be ordained under the hand of the Lord without seeing Him, but nowhere do I find an indication that this is what happens at one's C&E—only that you hear a voice from heaven covenanting and promising. Are

you able to share anything that could clarify this for me? I'm happy to read it on your blog if you wish."

This is a topic I've never attempted to straighten out. It is marred by many errors in traditional understanding, and almost impossible to recover because of the vocabulary we use now. We have become accustomed to speaking about priesthood using terms we think we understand. Therefore, when the topic arises the first problem is that we speak about something not well developed, using terms we think we understand, but employing incorrect meanings.

The result is that I've used the term but haven't bothered defining it. The closest I've come to providing anything is the Tenth Parable in *Ten Parables*. I've also used the concluding chapters of: *Beloved Enos* to give an overview, without changing the terms we are all accustomed to using.

In the "big picture" there are three levels of priesthood discussed by Joseph Smith. He uses the terms "Aaronic" (which includes Levitical) for one, Melchizedek for another, and Patriarchal for the third. In the D&C there is a revelation stating the church has two priesthoods (D&C 107:1). Since the church claims to possess these two because of Section 107, and since Joseph used the term "Patriarchal Priesthood" to identify a third, I have used this category to explain what is set out in *Beloved Enos*; then used it further to develop the topics in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*.

Forget the nomenclature for a moment (because it is not as important as the underlying reality), and no matter what term you use, recognize there are three levels of priesthood. There are three members of the Godhead. There is a different member of the Godhead associated with three levels of salvation, three levels of Divine ministration, and correspondingly three levels of priesthood.

There is a priesthood that belongs to the Telestial order, or the world where we presently live. There is a priesthood that belongs to the Terrestrial order, or this world in its Paradisiacal state during the Millennium. There is a priesthood that belongs to the Celestial order, or the final redeemed state which men hope to inherit in the Father's Kingdom. Read Section 76 and you will see these set out as conditions of glory. Then take the conditions and associate a priesthood with each. If you do that, you have a better grasp of the idea of "fullness of the priesthood."

There are many problems with how we discuss this topic. I have made no attempt to challenge our current vocabulary, or the definitions we use with it. I've just accepted it and tried to set out the things I know to be true using the limited and accepted definitions we currently employ.

The Patriarchal Priesthood is not defined in scripture. We think the office of Patriarch in the church is what is meant by that. Or, alternatively, we teach that when you are sealed in the temple you acquire the Patriarchal Priesthood because you become a father within your family and that is kind of the meaning. Joseph made a remark which referred to finishing the Nauvoo Temple, and then going into the Temple and receiving the Patriarchal Priesthood. I've found it useful to refer to this most poorly understood form of priesthood to name and define it the third level of priesthood. I can make a persuasive argument to do so. I think it offers a rather elegant solution to our current vocabulary problems. But I won't do that in this post.

The most important point is that there is priesthood which exists, but is not contained within or conferred by the church. It comes from one source—the Father. To receive that, read the Tenth Parable and you will have a description of how it unfolds. The Son

is necessarily involved. He is the gatekeeper, who alone decides if the person is going to qualify. Then the Son takes it as His work, or His ministry, to bring a person before the Father. However, the ministry of the Son can take many years, and is designed to cure what is wrong, fix all that is broken, remove all that is impure, in the candidate. Only when the Son can vouch for the individual is he brought before the Father. It is the Father who confers and ordains a man to the highest priesthood.

I've left these topics alone because there is something much more important than having me write about them. The first step along the path is to make it through the veil. Not the veil in a Temple, or in a rite offered by men to one another. We must be brought through the veil back into the Lord's presence. That is the step which stops most of our progress. By and large we don't believe it possible. We make no attempt because we think it is not available, or we should not be trying to become more than our leaders, or we are not qualified, or some other false teaching which hedges up our progress. I've focused on that topic alone. If I can bring a person to have faith to approach the Lord, the Lord will tell them all things they need to do thereafter. He will work with them to bring them into possession of all they need for Eternal Lives. That is His ministry. Mine is but to point to Him.

I can testify the Lord continues to have a ministry. I can also testify it includes bringing you to a point of understanding that enables you to repent of your generation's sins and come before the Father. It is happening today, just as anciently.

Joseph Smith's ministry offered mankind an opportunity to have the ancient order restored. Not just a New Testament church. In the beginning there was one, unified priesthood. There were not three. There was one. It was called the Holy Order. Later it

got several additive descriptors, including the Holy Order after the Son of God; or Holy Order after the Order of Enoch; or Holy Order after the Order of Melchizedek. We think we have that in the church today. We think that is what we give to Elders when we first ordain them. But Joseph Smith could not confer that on another person. It requires God. Through Joseph we were offered an opportunity to receive it, but we were more interested in having a church than the original Holy Order.

It was always necessary to restore the Holy Order—the original fullness. That must be here before the Second Coming. As soon, however, as the matter is fully set out, men will immediately begin to imitate and pretend to things because of pride, ignorance or vanity. In fact, the more readily it is explained in detail, the more often there will be those who falsely claim to have power they were never given by God. So I have confined what I've written to the first leg of the journey, and testified to the possible return to the presence of the Son. That is a precaution, and is designed to keep the message focused on saving souls. For the rest, I leave it to the Lord's ministry to inform the disciple of what then must occur.

I believe at some point there will be a more public declaration of the fullness of the priesthood. But at the present, I think the greatest problem lies in connecting men back to angels, then to the Lord. When they have reached that point, the Lord will take them further.

Sealing power is part of higher priesthood, but men suppose God's word alone is enough. No power comes from heaven without faith. There is always an apprenticeship. There is always further sacrifice required of the student. No one comes to the point in an instant, but increases by degrees in their trust with our God. You will find that in every prophet's life.

Show me a man who has entered into the Father's presence and I will testify that he has a fullness. But show me any man, no matter what position or keys he claims to possess, who has not entered into the Father's presence, and I will testify he has not yet received a fullness. No matter what keys he has, he cannot possess the fullness. For that, the Father has a role He is required to fulfill. Hence the saying by Joseph that no man has seen the Father but He has born record of the Son. The question to ponder is what it means for the Father to bear record of the Son. Therein lies a great key.

JANUARY 3, 2012

Follow-up Question

I got another follow-up from the same person asking:

In your latest post there is some discussion on these two topics which imply that they are different. My wife and I discussed this and what we came up with is that the first step is to have an audience with Christ (Second Comforter), from which point He will undertake to perfect you after which the Father will promise you eternal life (Calling and Election Made Sure). Is that correct? If not could you shed some more light on this?

These are two different topics. They are related, but are different. I've talked about The Second Comforter extensively. I've not said much about Calling and Election. I think focusing on that topic is a mistake. It will take care of itself if you can get The Second Comforter. Therefore I've remained largely silent on that topic.

There is a tremendous tendency to see things in a linear way and to impose an order into something which does not always follow the time-line pattern we live within. God has before Him information which, for us, remains yet future and hidden. Therefore we tend

to want Him to conform to our time-sensitive perceptions, when in fact He does not. All the elements of the pattern will happen. But the order, time-line or sequence can be completely scrambled from our limited perspective inside of time.

If you look at the experience of Enoch, the Lord spoke to him about gifts and power his faith was to produce some time in Enoch's future (Moses 6:34) as an existing fact. The events which would display these powers were, however, hundreds of years in Enoch's future (Moses 7:13-17). Likewise Joseph Smith beheld the Father and Son in a vision while yet in his youth (*JS-H* 1:17-20). He saw the Father. Therefore Joseph had at that very moment, while still a youth, possession of the highest order of priesthood (D&C 84:21-22). Despite this, Joseph would be later ordained by John the Baptist to Aaronic Priesthood (*JS-H* 1:68-70). The Aaronic Priesthood has the keys of ministering angels (D&C 84:26). Yet before receiving this form of priesthood, Joseph had an angel minister to him (*JS-H* 1:30-41). So before Joseph received "keys" from John the Baptist he was exercising the keys belonging to the priesthood he would receive. I could go on but these illustrate the point. Events involving God do not necessarily follow the same time-line as we would expect them to follow. When, however, Joseph received angels, you can know for certain he held priesthood. When he was visited by the Son, you can know he held priesthood and keys for that. When he was visited by the Father, Joseph Smith had priesthood. It was necessarily present and was in him. Don't ever doubt that. Even if you don't quite understand it at present, it is nevertheless true. So also you can receive things from God which are apparently out of sequence with the time-line we live in here.

God is not limited as we are. He lives in a place where all things, past, present and future, are before Him (D&C 130:7). Time is not only irrelevant, it is non-existent with God.

So if you're trying to prepare a list, the list can include all the ingredients, but it cannot be linear and progressive in a time-confined progression. God doesn't conform to that kind of list. He will touch all the points, but in His own way. Our difficulties in understanding this kind of matter is further complicated by limitations on language and lack of faith. Therefore Joseph wisely confined his comments to what the Lord required him to say, and left the rest for each person to discover for themselves. To a great degree these things are not explainable in our language. We are two-dimensional, attempting to explain four-dimensional material. There is always a gap.

As a Gospel Dispensation is unfolded, the Lord will always violate rules we think exist involving timing and sequence. He will confer things which apparently belong long into the process, and will do it apparently independent of the established requirements. But His strange act is not ours. He will do as He wills. For us, once an order is established by Him, the order is followed. Joseph may have received the highest priesthood as a youth, but that still required the ministering of angels and conferral of progressive keys in the process of establishing the dispensation. It also required him to conform to ordinances, including baptism, as the order was re-established on the earth. [Jesus was tutored by angels before His baptism, as well. But He was still required to be baptized.] Through Joseph the Lord set a system in place which would teach and perpetuate the process, which then became linear and time-sensitive. Once established it respected the order of things in this dimension. But as soon as you begin to project our dimension onto God's, you

begin to make mistakes about God. He is not bound, as we are, by time or by timing. [This is a very great — meaning vast — topic. It can only be mentioned here, and not fully developed. But it is nevertheless a very real difference between “gazing into heaven for five minutes” on the one hand, and reading all that has ever been written on the subject on the other. It is only referenced in passing in the scriptures. Therefore don’t expect this to become a well developed subject by what some man writes. Look to God for understanding on this topic.] I’ve dealt with some of this in *Beloved Enos*. You might want to revisit that book with the question in mind because there’s information in there that helps. But it only “helps” and cannot say all on the topic.

Joseph Smith made a comment about a relationship between The Second Comforter and Calling and Election. I quote it early in *The Second Comforter*, and I think you can read it on the bottom of page 3 (It is a quote taken from *TPJS* p. 150). Joseph’s description is linear. He talks about proving you’re determined to follow God at any cost, and then you have your Calling and Election made sure, and then The Second Comforter comes to you. It is a nice quote. It covers the topic. But any implication in Joseph’s statement about a linear progression is belied by Joseph’s own experience. For him the events did not take place in a linear way. He started at the top and worked backwards. But his quote suggests an order based upon this estate and our need for orientation here. So it’s a good quote and altogether accurate (from our perspective here).

Right now we are all in need of a new dispensation of the Gospel. Some lost (or never completed) components of the work need to be dispensed to us either anew or for the first time. Joseph promised more, and the scriptures predict more, will be given before the Lord’s return in glory. An obvious example is the establishment

of the New Jerusalem and Zion. It hasn't happened yet. Joseph wanted to see the Lord bring it again, but it didn't happen in his day. When he crossed the river on June 23, 1844 he was headed west to the Rocky Mountains to try and find the remnant and the site of the New Jerusalem. Instead because of criticism about abandoning the flock when it was threatened (accusing him of being a "false shepherd") he returned and surrendered and was killed. Now we all think the New Jerusalem is to be located in Jackson County Missouri. I suppose that's a good thing we all think that. But it may not necessarily be true. There's still some missing information on that topic, I believe.

Well, you proceed just as Joseph did. Inquire of God, who gives to all men liberally and does not upbraid. And if you ask in faith, nothing wavering, He will make the truth known to you. That is what this generation needs to hear. That is where it begins. Once it begins, all things get added thereto. God is patient and understanding of His children's needs. He will never abandon the earnest seeker. So become one of those. Follow what He directs and you will find yourself in possession of life and light and hope and covenants. Not between you and another man, but between you and God. The full answer to your question should be given to you by angels, or the Lord or the Father, and not a man. When men interject themselves into that process they generally create distance between you and your God. They hinder, rather than help.

Having said that, here are the events: Angels minister to you and confer power, light and truth. They prepare you to receive the Lord. He ministers to you and confers promises, administers covenants, takes away your awful shame, and gives you promises. He prepares you to be introduced to the Father. The Father makes you a son by accepting you through His Only Begotten Son. Along

the way you will know for yourself the things which occur on the other side of the veil, where God and Christ dwell in glory.

JANUARY 4, 2012

Creation and Death

Of all the powers given to mankind by God, the one most like God Himself is the power to create offspring. The sexual union of the man and woman resulting in children is a power so great it is called God's reward (See Psalms 127:3). God's covenant with Abraham was based upon a numerous posterity (Gen. 22:17).

Sex involves not only "knowing" (i.e., intercourse) between a man and woman (Gen. 4:1), but also the woman "conceiving" a child (*Id*). Sex also includes the woman bringing forth the child, and the father then naming the child (Matt. 1:25). It includes teaching the child the ways of God (Deu. 6:6–7). It extends to a parent's duty to provide care, food, clothing and shelter for the child as well (1 Tim. 5:8).

When the child is raised, the child then is obligated to honor and care for the parent (Deu. 5:16). The cycle binds together generations in care, nurture and honor, altogether a godlike process (Enos 1:1).

In a word, sex is life. It is the entirety of life. It produces and provides for generation after generation in a godly connection between man, woman and God.

If sex is separated from the entire scope of the Divine order, and redefined to be nothing more than orgasm, then it ceases to be life and becomes chaos and death. For example, if the ability of a homosexual union to produce physical gratification for the participants is regarded as the same thing, it not only fails to comply

with the Divinely ordained order, it results in death. Homosexual unions produce no offspring and the participants go down to the grave childless. Their sexual powers have failed to result in creation, order, or fulfilling the pattern for life to continue.

If sex is separated from the entire scope, then children are born unwanted and are not raised with the care, love and sacrifice of the parents. They are not taught in the ways of God. They become less than what they were intended to be because they have inherited less than God intended for them to inherit.

Our society has largely confined its understanding of sex to nothing more than physical gratification. It is an orgasm and nothing more. Once we lose that single component from the Divine order, we have changed godlike creation into disorder and chaos. Ultimately it is the difference between life and death.

JANUARY 8, 2012

Learning

I do not believe we are under any obligation to be bored in church. I do not believe there is any virtue in sitting in a class without being either edified or taught. Of all the terrible offenses under the claim it is done in Christ's name, taking high school students and asking them to color pictures in a Sunday School class or seminary course seems to me to be a solemn offense to them and the Lord. When we have an audience of young people who are curious and eager to learn, we ought to capture their minds and hearts with the wonder and glory of Christ's Gospel. We owe it to them and to God. It should delight them. I've told my kids it is their duty to leave and study their scriptures rather than waste time coloring, or engaging in any other activity that is a waste of their time. And I trust them to know the difference.

JANUARY 10, 2012

Politics

I'm not very political. Unlike the rabid who believe political salvation is possible for the United States, I believe if the "Elders of Israel" are going to have any effect on the Constitution, it will not be through litigation, legislation or elected office. It will be through preaching the Gospel and converting Americans to the truth. When people agree on fundamental principles, they will elect to office those who reflect those fundamental principles. But you don't elect someone whose values are alien to a corrupt population and thereby "save" the population. If you want to have a lasting effect on the government, preach the truth and convert people. If you want to occupy your time in a temporary effort, then push a single candidate in an election.

I believe it is good for Mormonism to have two LDS candidates running for the Presidency who disagree with and criticize one another. It is good to have the leader of the US Senate be a Democrat. It is good to have radio personality Glen Beck criticize and disagree with Mitt Romney. One of the fears inspired in others by Mormonism is the apparent monolithic appearance of the faith. These public splits among the Saints shows there is intellectual flexibility on political matters, which gives hope to non-Mormons that an LDS leader can be persuaded by something other than their religious affiliation. I believe that is a good thing.

I also believe the church is subject to the government, and not the government subject to the church. Our scriptures declare:

"We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man[.]" (D&C 134:1). In the same section,

We believe that all men are bound to sustain and uphold the respective governments in which they reside, while protected in their inherent and inalienable rights by the laws of such governments; and that sedition and rebellion are unbecoming every citizen thus protected, and should be punished accordingly; and that all governments have a right to enact such laws as in their own judgments are best calculated to secure the public interest. (*Id.* v. 5)

Perhaps more importantly, we declare as a matter of scripture that government should not have religious influence mingled with political power, nor to benefit one religion over another:

We do not believe it just to mingle religious influence with civil government, whereby one religious society is fostered and another proscribed in its spiritual privileges, and the individual rights of its members, as citizens, denied. (*Id.* v. 9)

Also, as an Article of Faith, the church has adopted the following statement: “We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law” (12th Article of Faith). This is so absolute a proposition that the church surrendered what it claimed to be a duty imposed by God once the law of the land required it.

Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages, which laws have been pronounced constitutional by the court of last resort, I hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws, and to use my influence with the members of the Church over which I preside to have them do likewise. (OD 1:Paragraph 4)

In other words, the rule of law required submission, even in the face of doctrine declaring otherwise. There is no question the US Government commands the LDS Church's submission.

I believe the submission to government to be so doctrinally established, that if a Mormon were elected President of the United States, he would "preside" over the church's President. This is not just a New Testament principle (Titus 3:1), but also a matter of Latter-day revelation, as well (D&C 58:21-22). This is so compelling a point that, if there were a General Conference at which a sitting LDS US President attended, correct doctrine would require the announcement that the US President was "presiding" at that Conference, rather than the church's President. The church's President is "sustained" by the members of the church alone; while the US President is "sustained" by the entire nation to which the church is subject.

JANUARY 11, 2012

Why Here?

I got an inquiry asking:

I am interested in any thought you would be willing to share about why we were willing to sacrifice to come to this earth. I don't think that this earth is the only place in all of creation where one can learn to return to the presence of the Lord, so what is the purpose of the righteous in the preexistence coming here? Why not take an 'easier' route and go to a different terrestrial mortal state?

Because we saw great benefit in coming. In fact, the opportunity was greeted with shouts of joy (Job 38:4-7). Perspective from here is not the same as perspective from above. There is a required

opposition in “all things” (2 Ne. 2:11). To ascend you must first descend. The path to the highest state runs through the lowest (See, e.g., Moses 1:18–20; see also *JS-H* 1:15–17). You will not see the Father and Son (D&C 76:20–21) without also seeing the fallen angel cast out for rebellion (D&C 76:25–26). Nor will you behold the Celestial Kingdom (D&C 76:50–58) without also seeing the horror of outer darkness (D&C 76:44–48).

To comprehend you must become acquainted with both glory and darkness. You cannot receive the one without also the other. Joseph put it this way:

Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity—thou must commune with God. (*TPJS*, p. 137)

You do not get to behold glory without also beholding the darkest abyss.

There is a parallel to comprehension, a symmetry to understanding.

You came here to increase your understanding of truth, and to broaden your capacity to appreciate what is good. For that, you wanted and now are receiving, exposure to the brackets which allow your comprehension to expand.

You will eventually leave here. But you will depart with an expanded capacity which could come in no other way.

Read the perils through which Abraham passed, and know this was necessary for him to become the Father of the Righteous. There is no path back to heaven apart from walking through the valley of the shadow of death. Your understanding of eternal life will come

from suffering death. Your appreciation of eternal glory will come from having been first composed of the decaying dust of this earth.

You wanted this. You shouted for joy when it was offered.

JANUARY 12, 2012

Marlin Jensen's Release

The church has released Marlin K. Jensen as the Church Historian. I knew him when he practiced law in Ogden, many years ago before he became a General Authority. He was an honorable man then, and has provided a long and honorable service to the church as the Church Historian. The policy of releasing General Authorities and making them emeritus is costing us a valuable resource. I hate to see him go.

Brother Steven Snow, an attorney from St. George and current member of the Seven Presidents of the Seventy will replace him. I wish him well in his new assignment. The Church Historian's job is challenging, to say the least. It would be wonderful if there is a continuation of the *Joseph Smith Papers* project, a second volume of the Mountain Meadows Massacre work (which was promised when the first came out), and a more open-door policy about our history.

I do not think we have anything to fear by letting more information flow into the public arena from our history. The more the better, in my view. What may be viewed as an embarrassing revelation from one vantage point, may be a hopeful declaration that God's work can be done despite human weaknesses by another. Some of our grandiose claims will necessarily become more modest, but that will only help, not hurt, people of faith.

Some of the greatest figures in the Bible are flawed, craven people. David's triumphs and failures are exposed to full view and

we are not the worse for it. Quite the opposite, we are the better for it. Solomon's legendary wisdom sank into a mire of foolishness in old age, and we are blessed to read about it all.

Perhaps if we let our own heroic figures reveal themselves in more a complete and complex light, it would help us de-mythologize the way we treat our living leaders. They might be able to get more done if we let them make mistakes from time to time. When they are forced to defend every action as "truly inspired" we have a much harder time fixing our many problems.

Our history is great, even glorious. It doesn't need to be fiction to be edifying. Scriptural characters like Sampson, Job and Jonah are as valuable to us as Elijah, Nephi and Christ. Who among us would want to hide Aaron's golden-calf building? Who would eliminate Lot's residency in Sodom? When we edit our history to remove the shadows, we lose more than contrast. Sometimes we lose context as well.

I'd like to see the church's history become the thing of wonder it was meant to be, rather than the sometimes plastic imitation we've allowed it to become. It will still be more than enough, even if it is merely the truth.

JANUARY 13, 2012

2 Nephi 2:21–22

I was asked about the application of 2 Ne. 2:21–22 to the fall and man's condition here, in contrast to what would have happened if Adam and Eve had awaited the command to partake of the fruit. These verses state:

And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh;

wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened, according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men. For he gave commandment that all men must repent; for he showed unto all men that they were lost, because of the transgression of their parents. And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end.”

This explanation by Lehi to his son Jacob focuses on what happened. Adam did transgress. As a consequence he, and his posterity fell. Therefore we find ourselves in the present conditions.

Lehi is not focused on what would have happened if Adam had not transgressed, only what did happen because Adam did transgress. The reference to “all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created,” is speaking about the condition prior to the transgression. The explanation does not focus on what would have happened if, instead of a transgression, Adam partook under a commandment to do so.

Adam needed to partake. Man needed to transition from the Garden. It was never intended for mankind to “remain in the same state in which they were after they were created...forever.” This world was designed to be a place where mankind would come, experience mortality, and die. This is something done on other worlds, as well. It did not need to be done in transgression, for it is more often done by mankind on other worlds in obedience to a commandment to partake. During the Millennium there will be

millions who live in such a world. But Adam was tempted, as was Eve, and together they partook in transgression of a commandment to not partake.

The resulting fall distinguishes this world, as I showed earlier and will not repeat again. We are in the worst place of all the Father's creations (Moses 7:36). Here alone, in the worst place, among the worst people of that place, the Son of God came to die. This is the only people who would kill Him (2 Ne. 10:3). The sacrifice of the Son was ordained before the foundation of the world. That is one of His names, "the Lamb Slain from the Foundation of the World" (Rev. 13:8).

God was not surprised by Adam's transgression. He always anticipated it. The conditions necessary for Christ's sacrifice could only come about in that way. But foreknowledge does not remove other possibilities. There is ALWAYS choice, and the choice is real. It could be taken. If it could not be taken, then by definition there is no choice. Had the transgression not happened, there would have been a commandment, as in other worlds, to partake. Mortality would have happened, as it does on other worlds (D&C 76:24).

Understanding what might have been is far less important than understanding what is. We are faced with a fallen world, into which the Lamb Slain from the Foundation of the World came to rescue us. Adam did transgress. The repair for that will come through and from the Lamb.

JANUARY 13, 2012

Parables

I just got asked for help with the Parables. It was a nice request, so I'm responding here. I'm worried about giving a complete answer. The joy of a parable is the discovery by the reader for herself

(himself) of the hidden meanings. I rob you when I take away the discovery from you. Someone asked for some help, and I'm willing to give a few things. You really need to discover for yourself because the exercise is important. It unlocks the scriptures, also. This is the language of the Lord. He gives us parables far more often than we're willing to consider.

For "*A Busy Young Man*" ask yourself:

Why "busy?" What does it imply? How are "the cares of this world" and "business" connected? What does it mean to be laden with business here? Don't we respect this kind of thing? Aren't we looking to elect someone who understands business to be our next US President, because the current one doesn't do enough to keep us busy in a profitable way?

Why "young man" rather than an elderly one? What is it about relative youth that makes a person more open to consider something new? Can anyone be a "young man" even if they are a child? Elderly? What was Christ at 12 when visiting the Temple? Was He a child or a "young man" at the time? Do the words convey something apart from age itself?

What does it mean to be "on his way?" What do we mean when we say someone is "on their way" to the top? If a person is "really on their way" is that economic? Political? Is there a worldliness about the phrase? Why?

When someone is "sitting" what is implied? Why would the person sitting be "beside the road" rather than on it? The road is for movement, and getting somewhere. But here is someone beside the road, almost as if they were rejecting it. Why? Does sitting make them at rest? But here is someone both sitting and busy in their own small way. Why?

What does a tree symbolize? Why would the one sitting be under the tree? How do the images of sitting and being under the tree combine to present an identity for the one there? When we think of a person meditating, where would we expect to find them in relation to nature? In relation to a tree?

Why were there three days in the initial transition? Then why years? Then cycles of seven years? Then enlightenment? Why did the identity, once it was discovered, no longer result in any requests, demands or inquiries? Why was there only contentment?

The tediousness of the activity, and the narrow confinement to the hands of the one who left the road to help the man under the tree suggests something deeply personal and within the grasp of any person. Why is that? Why would the activity be so little, so narrow, possible for anyone with hands to accomplish?

Think about the descriptions of the hands of both the Busy Young Man and the Master. Words convey messages about the person, and the hands are where these individual's souls are on display.

Think of the braiding, and how that conveys an image. How are lives "braided" as they are lived? To whom are you "braided" as you go through your own life? Why? What little things are repeated day-by-day to braid you together with your immediate peers?

Well, this could go on for many pages. But already I'm cheating you. You don't need me, you have the parables.

I like parables. You can accomplish so much with so few words, and you can put so much on display for someone with the eyes to see it.

I'd say the parables are the best writing form to be used if there could only be a single form. Interestingly, they seem to have attracted little attention, except for a handful of quite exceptional people I've encountered. Most people are far more interested in

volume and scope, rather than the still, quite intensity possible by meditating on a parable. Too busy. They think they can get further on their way by amassing a great volume of material, rather than pausing to think deeply, sitting beside the way, on short tales containing hidden wisdom. They're probably right. Most people will get a lot more of life's business done if they stay on the road they've already chosen.

CHAPTER 8

Let's Just Vote On It

JANUARY 14, 2012

Whose Church is It?

To whom does The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints belong? To us, or to the Lord?

That seems like an easy question, but it isn't. Because to answer it requires a great deal of understanding of both history and doctrine. The Lord told the Nephites a church had to bear His name or it wasn't His (3 Ne. 27:8). At the beginning our church was originally called "The Church of Christ." By a vote of a conference on May 3, 1834 the name was changed to "The Church of the Latter-day Saints" (*DHC* 2:62–63). By 1838 the Lord put His name back into the title by revelation, but approved adding our names when the name changed to "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (*D&C* 115:4). So our name is in the title. The Lord told the Nephites that if named after someone, then it is their church. His name is in our title, but so is ours.

If the church belongs to us, then we can do as we like. Our sustaining votes are all that are required to implement any changes we choose to make.

If, on the other hand, the church belongs to the Lord, then we have no right to make any change to it. We conform to what He tells us. We cannot make a change, and must keep what He chooses to give us intact, awaiting His instruction before altering anything.

One of the most remarkable differences between Joseph's era, or the first phase of Mormonism, is the direction we received from the Lord. The outpouring of revelation established not only three new volumes of scripture, but control was in the Lord's hand, not Joseph's nor the church's. Direction came, and we conformed.

The absence of that Divine control since Joseph's passing has been covered over by insistence that keys were given from Joseph to successors, and with those keys the right to direct everything remains intact. So much so that we can vote new "prophets, seers and revelators" and their decisions are God's. God's will is obtained by proxy, decided by councils, and accepted as if it were His.

If this is our church, proxies work fine. We are supposed to carry things on in the absence of Divine direction. Sentiments and feelings that we are going in the right direction is all we need. When good men acting in good faith make a unanimous decision prayerfully, we *should* feel good about it. Is that enough? If it is our church, I think it is.

What if the church is the Lord's, though? I mean what if it is *only* His, and we have no right to implement any alteration? What if it is our obligation to listen, then conform, and only to obey? Do our good faith, honest desires, prayerful discussions, hopeful changes, and best feelings then matter? Do we get the right to change anything if the Lord alone owns the exclusive right?

If someone is His, what does that mean? What does it mean to be "His people?" Can "His people" act independently of Him? Does independent action constitute rebellion or rejection of Him?

After all, didn't He tell us it wasn't necessary to command us in all things? (D&C 58:26). How far does that commandment extend? Because He also warned us to give heed to everything revealed to Joseph Smith (D&C 21:4; 50:35).

What if a church president spends many long hours in the upper room of the temple praying for an answer, and can't get one? The Lord won't even give a "yes" or a "no" despite repeated prayers, for months, even years; what then? Can a decision be made because frustrated church leaders all feel good about going forward? Is "feeling good" about going forward a "revelation" from God?

What does it mean to "take the Lord's name in vain?" Clearly we sustain leaders, follow them, trust them to do what is right, and all have testimonies this is the Lord's great work. How much latitude do we possess?

Who then owns the church? Him or us?

JANUARY 17, 2012

Knowledge and Indifference

Should the study of church history be limited to the superficial, faith-promoting summaries given through the "official" church publications? Doesn't that risk accurate histories being tools used by the critics against the church? Should the church accept members who choose to believe in the restoration of the Gospel through Joseph Smith? Who believe in the Book of Mormon, and other scriptures that came through Joseph? Who believe in God's purposes in starting a new dispensation of the Gospel? Who also recognize the course the saints pursued in the past and are pursuing at present with the restoration has been neglectful, even harmful?

One of our great non-Mormon friends is Harold Bloom. He has written about Joseph Smith and his authentic revelations. He

has heaped praise on Joseph's ability to restore lost ancient, First-Temple era teachings. Yet as an astute observer of Mormonism he has recently written about his complete disappointment with Mormonism, and how badly it has changed in a few short years. He is not being unkind. He has honestly assessed the many radical changes underway with the restored church in the last few years. Since he does not feel any emotional need to defend the church, and is therefore free to give his candid views, his assessment represents an honest way to view the radical alterations currently happening with Mormonism.

If Mormonism is limited to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (and for the most part it is), then the recent changes and radical innovations are so dramatic that our largest denomination now runs the risk of following in the steps of the second-largest "Mormon" denomination. The Community of Christ (formerly the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) is now just another quasi-Protestant faith bearing almost no resemblance to the movement begun through Joseph.

How much study should be given to the history of the restoration? How carefully should Joseph's teachings be preserved, studied and followed? When the Lord commanded us to "give heed to all his [meaning Joseph Smith] words and commandments" to what extent are we justified in forgetting his words and teachings? (See D&C 21:1–6). In the commandment, Joseph is identified in these words: "*thou* shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ[.]" (*Id.* v. 1, emphasis added). We know Joseph was called "through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ" because we have the records before us. For example, Joseph witnessed the

Father and Son appearing to him in the Spring of 1820 (*JS-H* 1:17). Again on the 16th of February 1832 Joseph saw the Father and Son (D&C 76:20–24). The description and explanation of why we should “give heed” to Joseph’s words are set out in both scripture and history. Therefore it makes perfect sense we should pay careful attention to them. Subsequent office holders had no similar experiences. (I’ve covered President Brigham Young’s statements about never seeing angels or Christ or the Father in my last book. President Grant thought it was dangerous to encounter such spiritual experiences because they might lead to apostasy. Therefore, he never asked for them, and never experienced them).

On the other hand, current Mormonism as practiced by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has shied away from its history, abandoned many of Joseph Smith’s key teachings, altered some of the most important ordinances restored through him, and so heavily edited the latest study guide on his teachings that the results sometimes contradict what he originally said. I have a friend who has compiled a list of abandoned teachings of Joseph Smith. The list is now nearly two-hundred separate items long. This friend retains his believe in Joseph, the Book of Mormon, other restored scriptures, and in Jesus Christ. But he is alarmed by and alienated from the church. I think his approach in voluntarily withdrawing from fellowship is wrong. I think he has a duty to remain in fellowship with the saints. But what happens as shifting demographics lead to changes such as open acceptance of homosexual marriages? The leadership model implemented during Gordon B. Hinckley’s long tenure in leadership (which began long before he was president) uses opinion polling to guide decision-making. Using the current format, the church is helpless to resist changing public opinion trends.

The church draws leadership from successful internal leader-pools. Young bishops become high councilors and stake presidents. Those with wealth and business acumen become mission presidents. Before long a resume of church service attracts higher office and such men are called as a general authorities. These men are drawn from business, law, banking, education and government. Oftentimes their business acumen is the overwhelming forte' and their knowledge of the church's history and doctrine are lacking. In fact, knowledge of doctrine and history is not required for higher church office. (If you study the history and journals, you will find there are those who didn't even believe in the Gospel who were called to be members of the Twelve. They were great businessmen, and the church's many assets and interests required that talent.)

Oftentimes the reality is that leaders know far less about the religion than members who have devoted themselves to studying the Gospel and the church's history. The results are sometimes interesting, because doctrinal or historic errors are made by those we sustain as our leaders. How big an issue this becomes for some very devoted believers is up to each individual. I choose to cover their shortcomings with charity, and to remember how difficult a challenge it is to manage a 14 million-member all-volunteer organization spanning cultures and languages across most of the world. But that does not mean their mistakes go unnoticed, just that I accept human-limitations as inevitable. There is a difference between not knowing something and being indifferent to it. I try to keep that in mind.

JANUARY 17, 2012

Abraham's Gospel

Abraham was in possession of the records going back to Adam. All the records of “the fathers” from the beginning came down to him (Abr. 1:31). This would have gone back to the time of Adam (Moses 6:5). It would also have included the record kept by Enoch which contained a prophecy of all things from the beginning to the end of the world (D&C 107:53–57). These are the records he studied to increase his own desire to be a man of greater understanding and to follow greater righteousness and also to possess the singular form of High Priesthood known to the Patriarchs (Abr. 1:2).

It is a mistake to assume Abraham had less of the Gospel than do we. He had more. We have not yet risen to his level of understanding or priesthood. I reject the idea that Abraham's “Gospel” and priesthood was inferior to ours. He was a peer of Adam, Enoch and Noah in his priesthood and the understanding given to him.

Further, the Lord personally ministered to Abraham and conferred priesthood, sonship, and an everlasting inheritance upon him (Abr. 1:17–19).

I think it is a mistake to believe we have more, or even as much, as Abraham did. Reading his record (which is his endowment) it becomes apparent there is an understanding of the heavens, including a detailed account of the path back to God's presence through the stars, which has yet to be restored to us.

JANUARY 18, 2012

Joseph Smith Quote

I was asked about a quote from Joseph Smith. Thought I'd put it up here, also. It is taken from the journal of Mosiah Hancock, and is Bro. Hancock's recollection of a statement made by Joseph Smith:

...you will travel west until you come to the valley of the Great Salt Lake. ...you will live to see men rise in power in the church who will seek to put down your friends and the friends of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Many will be hoisted because of their money and the worldly learning which they seem to be in possession of; and many who are the true followers of our Lord and Savior will be cast down because of their poverty. (Mosiah Hancock Journal, p.19)

JANUARY 18, 2012

The Book of Mormon

There is a presumption that "the Book of Mormon" means the book "Book of Mormon" we have now. That is, the one you can get off the shelf at Deseret Book. That is not the only possible meaning of the words.

Nephi records he made two sets of plates. On one he recorded the "full record" of his people. We do not have that record. On the other he included little history and a summary of his religious teachings and prophecies (1 Ne. 9:2) The small plates we have are devoted primarily to his "ministry" (1 Ne. 9:4). When Nephi prepared the first, larger plates, he was unaware he would later receive a commandment to make the second, shorter record devoted to only his ministry (1 Ne. 19:1-3).

The commandment to make the second set of plates was not given until after Lehi died in the promised land, and Nephi and those who followed him separated from his older brothers Laman and Lemuel (2 Ne. 5:30). This would have been several decades after the events in and around Jerusalem.

Mormon did not use Nephi's "small plates" to abridge in his original book. He used Nephi's large plates, containing "more history part" of the people. But, after finishing his abridgement, he attached the small plates to his abridged record, noting that the small plates he attached contained "this small account" of the prophets from Jacob down to King Benjamin (Words of Mormon 1:3). Within the small plates Mormon explained there were "many of the words of Nephi" (*Id.*). For all of Nephi's words, we would need access to the large plates.

The "Book of Mormon" included: 1) Mormon's summary of the Nephite records, which was based on the larger plates and not the smaller ones, 2) The small plates of Nephi, 3) Moroni's translation of part of the Jaredite records, 4) Some correspondence between Mormon and Moroni, along with Moroni's final warnings, and 5) An extensive, sealed and untranslated record containing information not yet revealed to us (2 Ne. 27:6-8). We no longer have a portion of part 1, it having been lost through Martin Harris' neglect. It was not re-translated after the first version was lost (See D&C 10:30). Part 5, or the sealed portion of the record, contains a revelation from God of everything from the beginning to the end (2 Ne. 27:7).

When "the Book of Mormon" is said to contain the "fullness of the Gospel" (D&C 42:12) is that referring to what we have now (parts 2, 3, 4)? Does it or did it also include what was originally included by Mormon, but has been lost to us as a result of Martin Harris (part 1)? Does it include the sealed portion of the record we

have never been given (part 5)? Although the traditional discussion presumes what we now have (parts 2, 3, 4) are what is meant by “the Book of Mormon” there are other possible meanings.

JANUARY 19, 2012

False Spirits

Whenever there is an increase in spiritual manifestations, there is always an increase in both true and false spiritual phenomena. You do not get one without the other.

In Kirtland, new converts who were overzealous to participate in the new heavenly manifestations coming as a result of Joseph Smith’s claims, opened themselves up to receiving influences they could not understand, and did not test for truthfulness. They were so delighted to have any kind of experience, they trusted anything “spiritual” was from God. As a result, there were many undignified things, degrading conduct, foolish behavior and evil influences which crept in among the saints. Joseph received a revelation in May 1831 concerning this troubling development. In it the Lord cautioned there were “many false spirits deceiving the world” (D&C 50:2). That Satan wanted to overthrow what the Lord was doing (D&C 50:3). The presence of hypocrites and of people harboring secret sins and abominations caused false claims to be accepted (D&C 50:4, 6–7). It is required for all people to proceed in truth and in righteousness (D&C 50:9) if they are going to avoid deception. Meaning that unrepentant and unforgiven men will not be able to distinguish between a true and a false spirit.

All spiritual gifts, including distinguishing between true and false spirits, requires the Holy Ghost, given through obedience to the truth, which allows a person to distinguish between truth and

error (D&C 50:17–23). The truth is like light, and when you follow the light of truth it grows inside you until you have a “perfect day” in which there is no more darkness, but everything is illuminated by the light of the spirit within you (D&C 50:24).

The revelation clarifies that a preacher of truth will become only a servant. He will not claim greatness, but will seek only to give truth; as a result of which false spirits will be subject to him (D&C 50:26–27). But this only comes as a result of repenting of all sin, because the light of a perfect day cannot arise when men harbor evil desires and inappropriate ambitions within their hearts (D&C 50:28–29). Truth will not leave you confused, but will enlighten your understanding (D&C 50:31).

From this you can see how necessary it is for each of us to continually repent, conduct our lives in conformity with such truth as you presently understand, and avoid deliberate wrongdoing in order to be able to distinguish between a true and a false spirit. You must attract light. It is attracted by obedience to such light as you already have. When you proceed forward using the light you already possess to attract more light it will grow in one, consistent and truthful manner from a lesser to a greater light. All of it conforming to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Ambition in spiritual gifts leads to acceptance of evil influences. As part of the same problem in Kirtland, in September of the previous year, Hiram Page wanted to be like Joseph, and was able to attract a deceiving spirit to communicate with him through a seer stone. But the commandments he received were designed to lead him into error (D&C 28:11).

Truth will always testify of Christ and lead to repentance. It will lead you to do good, not evil. To serve God and not follow

men. To repent and forsake darkness which appeals to the carnal mind (See Moroni 7:12–19).

Just because you have a “spiritual experience” you cannot trust it will invariably be from God. True spirits will:

- Testify of Christ.
- Lead to repentance.
- Be consistent with existing scripture.
- Lead you to be submissive to authority in the church.
- Edify and enlighten your mind.
- Be understandable and not cause confusion.
- Cause light to grow within you.
- Turn you toward Christ, not men.
- Never cause pride.
- Make you a better servant.
- Increase your love of your fellow man.
- Clothe you with charity for the failings of others.
- Conform to the true whisperings of the Holy Ghost you previously have received.
- Leave you humble and grateful for God’s condescension.
- Make you want to bring others to the light.
- Be grounded in love toward God and all mankind.
- Lead you to rejoice.

False spirits will:

- Deny Christ.
- Cause pride.
- Make you believe you are better because of the experience.
- Contradict the scriptures.
- Appeal to carnality and self-indulgence.
- Lead to rebellion against the church’s right to administer ordinances.

- Cause confusion.
- Lead to ambition to control others.
- Make you intolerant of others' failings.
- Seek self fulfillment rather than service.
- Appeal to your vanity and assure you that you are a great person.
- Bring darkness.
- Repulse the Holy Ghost.
- Prevent you from repenting and forsaking sins.
- Interfere with serving others.
- Focus on yourself rather than the needs of others.

Do not think all spiritual experiences can be trusted. There is no difference between the activities of deceiving spirits today and those in Kirtland, as well as those in the New Testament times. If you follow the Lord you must still test the spirits and only follow those which point to Christ (1 John 4:1). Even Joseph Smith had to ask God about some of the phenomena going on in Kirtland before he knew which were of God and which were deceiving.

JANUARY 20, 2012

Submission to Church

I was asked about “submission to the church” and “criticism as rebellion.” Here is my response:

The church is formed by a mutual agreement between the members and the leaders. The leaders occupy their positions because they are sustained to the offices they hold. When sustained, they are the office holders. No one has the right to preside or conduct church activities other than the regularly constituted church authorities. It is their right.

But if you love the church and want her best interests, it is a mistake to leave her uncriticized for mistakes and blunders. Those

who care for her the most will be the most eager to help. Criticism designed to improve, to overcome mistakes or solve dilemmas the church faces is what a person who cares would always do. Only a fool would mistake comments motivated by concern and care as a sign of rejection or rebellion.

The church is struggling. Only about 10% of the converts remain with the church today. Half of the returned missionaries drift into inactivity within two years of returning home. Temple marriages in the U.S. are ending at a rate nearly comparable to national averages, and the fertility rate of Mormons in the U.S. has dropped to nearly the national average. Tithing contributions have dropped. There is a crisis underway at present. If a member cares, they owe it to the church to offer views for discussion.

I think using professional business consultants to help solve the crisis is what has led to the crisis. They do not, indeed cannot, understand the things of the spirit. It is impossible to treat the Gospel as another commodity and market it like you would soft drinks, cars or office supplies. Businessmen cannot remedy a spiritual illness. The church does not need good marketing. Indeed it grew the most as an overall percentage of growth, when it boldly proclaimed a new doctrine, a new revelation from heaven, and suffered the indignity and criticism of the entire world. While editorial pages were railing against the church, and cartoonists were mocking Joseph Smith, the church went from nothing to tens-of-thousands. That was how the truth should always be spread. Not by aligning with the world and employing its methods, but by proclaiming the truth and rejecting the world.

We've been using more and more of the same failed business marketing approach to try and smooth out the message and deliver it more agreeably to the world. That will NOT attract those seeking

the truth. We must not blend in, but must stick out. Doing more of this marketing and social-science driven management will lead to less: Less activity. Less retention. Less tithing. Less membership. Less success. It needs to reverse.

Sooner or later someone who is open to that message will decide the failure has continued long enough and will decide to return to what established the church in the first place against all opposition.

JANUARY 20, 2012

Elective Adultery and Election Ambition

Though I am not political, some moments in the political world spill over into things I do care about. One of them is unfolding at the moment. The disclosure of Newt Gingrich's marital infidelity, and on-going extramarital misconduct resulting in his second divorce and third marriage, is one of those rare moments when the United States has an opportunity to make a significant moral error. It is true we have had past presidents who have engaged in sexual misconduct while in office. Some were discovered only after they left office. President Clinton, of course, was known to have done so while still serving. But the United States has never elected a man whose extramarital affairs were publicly known *before* the election. Such conduct has always been disqualifying. This is because the United States has always cared about morality as much as about policy.

Apparently many political commentators cannot see the difference between offering an adulterous man whose sins are publicly known before the election as a candidate to the nation's highest office, in contrast to later discovering we've inadvertently elected an adulterous man. [Grover Cleveland was a bachelor and young

when he may have fathered a child, not a married adulterer. He paid child support and was never conclusively shown to be the father.] When given the choice beforehand, adultery should always be disqualifying. Yet such “conservative” commentators as Rush Limbaugh and Laura Ingraham have championed Newt Gingrich after the disclosure; even Sarah Palin has defended Mr. Gingrich after it became an issue. Gov. Rick Perry has also endorsed Mr. Gingrich after this moral failing has become public.

Mr. Gingrich is ego-maniacal. He was dishonest and thrown out of Congress for his ethical lapses. His infidelity to his wife is mirrored in his infidelity to high office while serving in Congress. If he betrayed his wife before, and betrayed his public office before, he is unworthy to be trusted again. His very public penitence I view more as public theatre than humble submission to God. He proclaims his God-given forgiveness as a shield against criticism, rather than a matter of private devotion. Such conduct always raises a question about sincerity. He is ambitious, self-centered, now using religion to justify himself, and unworthy of renewed public trust. When someone has been involved in such a troublesome history I would expect they would voluntarily disqualify themselves by never running. I understand and sympathize with failed marriages and moral lapses. They happen. But contrition and ambition are incompatible. Some personal failings are so great they disqualify. At least from the right to hold an office of public trust which was designed to be viewed as much as a “pulpit” of righteousness as a seat of power.

He was careful yesterday to deny wanting an “open marriage” because the definition of the word used in the question does not quite fit his immoral conduct. He was not prepared to welcome his wife joining him in extramarital sexual relations, as “open marriage”

implies. He wanted to do that alone. He wanted his wife to “share” him with his paramour. (This loophole allowing the denial was fed to him by Rush Limbaugh.) Therefore he could probably pass a lie- detector test about his denial of wanting an “open marriage.” Yet he wants his adulterous companion to be the nation’s First Lady, and himself to occupy the high position originally designed for George Washington—the most trusted man of his generation. A man whose morality was beyond question. A man who led by example, freeing his slaves in his will as the example he hoped would end slavery without requiring the nation to be torn apart. Newt Gingrich will bring dishonor to any office he holds because of his inability to look beyond self- interest and personal glorification.

When a person is known to be an adulterer, they are by definition also a liar. Liars and adulterers are by any scriptural definition wicked. When a nation on this land chooses to uphold a wicked man to head their government, they are ripe for destruction (See Mosiah 29:27; Alma 10:19, Helaman 5:2).

You uphold such a man at the peril of national destruction. His campaign has also exposed the underlying confused morality of some popular political commentators.

JANUARY 23, 2012

Jensen Comments

The interview of Marlin Jensen by USU Professor Phil Barlow is now on the Internet. The statement below is interesting for several reasons:

The fifteen men [1st Pres. & 12] really do know, and they really care. And they realize that maybe since Kirtland, we never have had a period of, I’ll call it apostasy, like we’re having right now;

largely over these issues [meaning the church's history]. We do have another initiative that we have called, 'Answers to Gospel Questions'. We are trying to figure out exactly what channels to deliver it in and exactly what format to put it in. But we want to have a place where people can go. We have hired someone that's in charge of search engine optimization. We realize that people get their information basically from Google. They don't come to LDS.org. If they get there, it's through Google. So, we are trying to create an offering that will address these issues and be available for the public at large and to the church leaders, because many of them don't have answers either. It can be very disappointing to church members. And, for people who are losing their faith, or who have lost it, we hope to regain to the church.

Another questioner asked how these fifteen men know. Is it through anecdotal means or from statistics? Elder Jensen said that he has received much information anecdotally and added,

The church has a very progressive research and information division, with tremendous public opinion surveyors. And the church is constantly running surveys, and employing consultants that do focus groups on a variety of topics, but especially on the ones that we are talking about right now, that are so sensitive to the faith of members. Where has the prophet laid his emphasis right now? It's on something called 'The Rescue'. And with good reason, because we are suffering a loss; both in terms of our new converts that come in that don't get really established in the church, as well as very faithful members who because of things we're talking about, as well as others, are losing their faith in the process. It is one of our biggest concerns right now.

If I could offer something useful to the “fifteen men” (whom I am certain could care less what I’d have to say), it would be the following:

Standing in an echo chamber and hearing the same things repeated to you is not a conversation. The “crisis” will not be solved by the approach that has precipitated the crisis. This is not at all like the Kirtland Apostasy, other than the vastness of the scope involved. It is because the leadership has lost the confidence of large numbers who simply do not trust them to tell the truth about things. It is being packaged and marketed. That is not cured by “search engine optimization” because it is not believed.

Taking just one incident as an example: Those who study our history know the contemporaneous accounts all fail to mention the “transfiguration of Brigham Young into Joseph Smith” on August 8, 1844. It was not the reason the Nauvoo population voted to sustain the 12. They did NOT sustain Brigham Young separately to anything, nor did Brigham Young ask to be sustained to anything apart from advancing the claims of the 12 to preside. It would be years before Brigham Young sought to be separately sustained to lead. Repeating the false inspirational story of his transfiguration is not useful. It is not inspirational, but evidence of duplicity and dissembling. There are hundreds of other examples which could be given. They are discovered by reading history.

Very progressive research using public opinion surveyors is NOT going to help. After all, Mitt Romney was ahead by a large margin two weeks before his resounding defeat in South Carolina. Today he is behind by more than 10% in Florida, after leading for months. When the vote is taken in a few days he may well win. The shifting sands of opinion are as unstable as water. The Lord warned against establishing a house on such vulnerable sand. We

should instead build upon the rock of knowing Christ. Everything I've written is intended to point to that rock. All that is required to vastly shift opinions is more information. Employing consultants who do focus groups on a variety of topics is what has caused the problems now facing the church.

A steady tune of fixed truth, bold declaration of doctrine, even when it fades from popularity, and seeking light from God is what built the church. It is the reason for the church's existence. When it lapses into another well managed business operation whose product is the religion called Mormonism, it ceases to attract men's hearts. Opinion polling and focus groups are not a substitute for revelation.

People want to believe in the restored Gospel. They want to hear truth. They know the Lord spoke to Joseph Smith. We want what was restored through Joseph to be preserved, not to be repackaged and squandered at the feet of popular opinion.

For the first time since Joseph Smith it is possible the restoration may continue without the church. The prophecies declare the work will culminate in establishing Zion. Whether the church chooses to be involved or not, it is coming.

As a final aside, the reason I say the "fifteen men" have no interest in what I have to say is because they use these professionals who conduct opinion polling and focus groups as a substitute for knowing the hearts of the faithful. Someone who is active, doing 100% home teaching and faithfully serving in their callings like myself is viewed as an inappropriate source of information. If my views differ from the leadership's then I am considered to be 'out of harmony' and in error. When they employ non-believing professionals who could care less about the underlying faith (apart from it being the product to be marketed), they are viewed as objective and professional. The result is to prefer the views of the non-believer

over the views of the faithful, and to discard, and even question the loyalty of the faithful. The system is broken. You must fix that first. Blaming the members for “apostasy” like Kirtland is incorrect.

JANUARY 24, 2012

The Lord’s Witnesses

When the Lord returned from the grave, the first witness He showed Himself to was not one of His apostles. It was Mary (John 20:11–16). He appeared to several others throughout the day (which I discuss in detail in *Come, Let Us Adore Him*) before finally appearing to some of His apostles in the evening of the first day of His return to life. When He met with the apostles, He rebuked them for not believing the reports of those with whom He visited earlier in the day (Mark 16:14).

It is interesting the first witness was a woman. It is interesting the Lord spent hours walking and talking with two disciples, Cleopas and an unnamed second companion, on a journey to Emmaus. [In *Come, Let Us Adore Him*, I explain why I believe the companion was Luke.] As He walked with them, He spent the time expounding the scriptures and prophets, showing how they testified of His death. He “opened the scriptures unto them” (See Luke 24:13–32). This is how the risen Lord chose to spend the afternoon of the first day of His return to life. (The talk I gave on this walk appears as an appendix to *Eighteen Verses*.)

Again, it is interesting that, after first showing Himself to a woman, He then spent hours walking and talking with two disciples, neither of whom were apostles, expounding doctrine and the scriptures to them.

I’ve searched the scriptures diligently to try and discover where the Lord ever commanded that we follow a man. I’ve not found

it. Instead, I've found Him warning us to "Follow [Him]" (see Matt. 4:19; John 10:27; 21:22; Luke 5:27; 9:59; Mark 2:14; among many others). The phrase "follow the prophet" does not appear anywhere in scripture. It does not appear there because it is an institutional invention designed to reduce resistance to centralized church decision-making. It was implemented deliberately during the administration of David O. McKay in the fourth phase of Mormon history. It is an idea which is altogether alien to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Instead, what appears in the scriptures is a curse pronounced on those who follow man or put their trust in man's arm (See 2 Ne. 4:34; 2 Ne. 28:31; D&C 1:19). Nephi's final address warns the gentiles how vulnerable they are to this mistake, and how they will be cursed as a consequence. He offers hope, however, conditioned on repentance and return to following the Lord (See 2 Ne. 28:31-32).

I am grateful for all who serve in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. From my own Home Teacher to the President. They all have my gratitude, my prayers, my support. I do not challenge the right of any who preside in the church to conduct and to manage the church's affairs. I do not envy them in assuming the burdens they bear. It is an almost impossible responsibility for any man. I am confident they do a better job than I would.

Despite my gratitude to them, I trust my salvation to no man or set of men. For that I rely entirely on my understanding of, acquaintance with, covenants and promises from the Lord. If I can encourage anyone else to pursue the path to know Him, I want to do so. The difference between truth which can save and error which will damn is so fine a line it is sometimes compared to a two-edged sword, cutting both ways. Encouraging people to find that edge and to rightly divide between truth and error oftentimes

will offend. It is still the truth. We really ought to fear God and not man (D&C 3:7). The One who keeps the gate of salvation is not a man or men, for He alone will open or shut that gate. There is “no servant” employed there (2 Ne. 9:41). If you arrive at that gate having been misled regarding your obligation to **Him**, having “*followed the prophets*” you will be among those whose eternal opportunities have been curtailed, no better off than liars and whoremongers (D&C 76:98–105). [If you read those verses from Section 76, you should ponder the difference between “following” and “receiving” a prophet. If you “follow” him, what are you substituting? If you “receive” him, what are you doing? Therein lies a distinction worth pondering.]

CHAPTER 9

Interpreting History

JANUARY 25, 2012

Interpreting History

There is an art to interpreting history. No matter what the schools teach, in the end there are judgment calls that are always made in arriving at a final interpretation.

The problems of church history are not evidence that some people are acting in bad faith and others are not. Everyone should be motivated to seek and know the truth. However, even when claiming to seek the truth, various motivations color the results of our interpretation.

When a court case is presented to a jury, both sides are duty bound to tell the truth. All the witnesses are sworn in before they are allowed to tell the jury anything. Then whatever they say is supposed to be the truth. If they lie, they do so under the condition they will be charged with perjury. Despite this, in almost every case the story told by the Plaintiff is completely at odds with the story told by the Defendant. If you believe the Plaintiff's witnesses and arguments, the Plaintiff will win. If you believe the Defendant's

witnesses and arguments, the Defendant will win. The jury's responsibility is to decide who to believe.

Sometimes a witness is believable because of their demeanor. Sometimes it is the content of their statements, sometimes the way they appear. Their age, opportunity to observe, self-interest, relationship with the parties, clarity of explanation and other things all play a part. There are intangibles that affect credibility, some so difficult to explain they are reduced to "impressions" or "feelings" about the witness. Their reputation for honesty, or personal history matters. When the case ends the jury deliberates all they've heard and seen, consult their common sense, talk the matter over and reach a consensus. That consensus becomes the verdict. The case is then concluded.

History is no different. The witnesses are evaluated, and what they have to say is considered. But in the end, they are weighed and either believed or not. Orson Hyde arrived back in Nauvoo on August 13th. He was not present on August 8th. Therefore, his two lengthy reminiscences of the transfiguration of Brigham Young on August 8th cannot be believed by me. I suppose *you* could decide to believe Orson Hyde, despite the fact that his story could not possibly be based on what he saw August 8, 1844. But if you decide to believe him, you must show me the courtesy of allowing me to disbelieve him.

The daily diaries of Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards and Wilford Woodruff all had entries on August 8, 1844. None of them mention the "transfiguration" of Brigham Young. Nauvoo newspapers, *Times and Seasons* and *Nauvoo Neighbor* both covered the debates on August 8, 1844 and neither one mention the transfiguration. Even Orson Hyde's accounts written in 1844 and 1845 fail to mention the transfiguration. He did not begin to pro-

vide his elaborate account of the event until 1869, when he claimed Brigham Young's "words went through [him] like electricity. It was not only the voice of Joseph Smith but there were the features, the gestures and even the stature of Joseph before us in the person of Brigham (*JD* 13:181, 6 Oct 1869). So, when I weigh the evidence, I conclude the story is merely faith-promoting, and much like Paul Dunn, bearing something less than an accurate retelling of the truth.

The truth of the restoration does not depend merely upon men's imagination to support it. After all, Joseph produced the Book of Mormon, revelations found in the Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, and other unpublished revelations. He left a body of letters, talks and ordinances. What Joseph did accomplish is more than enough proof of his stature as a prophet of God.

I am interested in the truth of the restoration. It is not important for me to justify succession, or to defend any office or friends. I do not want to be popular or to have anyone follow me. I hope only to please God and defend the truth. If it causes anyone, including myself, embarrassment I couldn't care less. We have a duty to our Maker to act our part in helping one another to find our way back to Him.

I also don't care if someone chooses to believe otherwise and to weep like a child while retelling the story of Brigham Young being transfigured into Joseph Smith as he pleaded for votes following Joseph's death. I can endure that without insulting them or arguing the point. They are free to believe what I regard as false. But what should not happen is for someone who holds this view to forbid or condemn me for thinking them wrong. I enjoyed Paul Dunn's stories. They were inspiring. If you accept them as inspirational fiction, you can enjoy them too. The likelihood is that Job is pious fiction also. It is part of a category of "Wisdom Literature" written

to explain a true principle, but probably not based on an actual person named Job. It is “true” in the sense of teaching principles of truth, not in the sense the characters existed.

I’ve weighed the evidence in our history, sorted through what I accept and find persuasive, and what I find less than believable. It has involved considerable effort. It is fine with me for others to disagree. When a disagreement is based on a superficial review of the available record, or on bombast without ever studying the history, then I’d appreciate the courtesy of allowing me to continue in my honest, good faith delusion.

JANUARY 26, 2012

Job

I got an email stating: “Job is not pious fiction. D&C 121:10 reads, ‘Thou art not yet as Job; thy friends do not contend against thee, neither charge thee with transgression, as they did Job.’”

I responded:

I understand your point. But could it also mean “you are not yet like Little Orphan Annie, you still have a family,” or another similar analogy? That is, the Lord refers to the character to illustrate a circumstance. That would be akin to His use of parables to communicate truth.

The reference in Section 121 does not settle the question of historicity. It merely employs Job as a reference point to console the imprisoned Joseph Smith. That leaves whether or not Job is a real person unresolved.

Job, like many of the Psalms, was borrowed from other surrounding cultures and adopted as part of the Jewish religious text.

This has resulted in many scholars concluding that he wasn't a real person, but a character developed to tell a morality tale. I'm not challenging that view, I'm accepting it. If he was a real person, then I suppose one day we will all meet him. In the meantime, his story does help us understand truths about this life.

JANUARY 26, 2012

Book of Mormon as Fiction

I got another email asking: "If Job is pious fiction, I've read about other folks who think the Book of Mormon is too. What do you think of that?"

I responded: Since Moroni came to and was seen by Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris we know at least one of the book's characters was a real person. Which implies the others were also. Personally, I think they were all real people.

JANUARY 26, 2012

Interpreting History, Part 2

Everyone who contributes to the documentation of history must be evaluated to decide if they are a believable source or a source to be discounted. Even an otherwise unreliable source may be believable on a point. Deciding whether to accept or reject their information is part of your responsibility in interpreting history for yourself. You can't put that responsibility on others. We are each one accountable for what we believe about life's most important topic.

Another standard I use to evaluate a someone's story is also drawn from the law. When a witness admits something contrary to their own position, or contradicts the position they are trying

to advance, that should attract your notice. Admissions against personal interests are almost inherently credible. When someone is saying something self-deprecating they are almost always telling the truth, both in the courtroom and in life. For example, throughout John D. Lee's final *Confessions*, he makes a number of admissions of his own failings. He acknowledges his guilt and attempts to set the record straight with members of his family and close friends. These admissions expose his failures. It is not likely he is lying when making such personal admissions of guilt. Therefore, I do not dismiss his material out of hand. Instead, it becomes something to weigh and consider piece by piece. As I do that, I also consider that there are a number of incidents which are distant in time and location that would tax the memory of anyone trying to retell the events. For such things his accounts become useful only in a big-picture. The details are likely to be the product of his imagination rather than his actual memory. So there needs to be other sources consulted before reaching a conclusion about such details.

When Brigham Young makes the same admission multiple times, using almost the same words over a period of decades, I think he is telling the truth. Particularly when the admission is contrary to his own best interests, or they reduce his stature as a religious figure. That is why in *Passing the Heavenly Gift* I quote his repeated admission about never seeing an angel or having contact with heavenly beings. It is an important and believable factor in understanding Brigham Young. When he goes on to explain that God is "duty bound" to support his best decision, we can then know and understand how he led the church. He used his best judgment. He proceeded without angelic guidance and fully expected that the Lord would uphold his decisions.

Put yourself in his shoes and try to understand what pressures that would exert on a normal person. When there were serious mistakes made, like the incident at Battle Creek near Pleasant Grove, there is no time to second-guess the slaughter of the Indians. You just move on. When Blackhawk (a survivor of the slaughter) later leads a war against the saints in retaliation for the event, Brigham Young knew he had created the mess. I read in his reactions a detectable crisis. It was a deep personal loss of confidence. There was a breakdown. For all the bombast we are used to in reading Brigham Young, he was very troubled by some of the things that resulted from decisions he made.

The Reformation he led in the 1850's grew out of his frustration with the hardships and overall failing of the early western movement. He reacted by blaming the saints for their personal impurity and lack of faith. The Reformation was an attempt to have the saints to take their religion more seriously. He thought they needed to repent. God would not be visiting all these troubles on the church if the saints were living their religion. So he started the Reformation, with all its excesses and threats. The Reformation, a terrible moment, now all but forgotten, confirms several things: first, the saints were not doing well as a people; second, Brigham did not think the problem came from the top; third, the members were blamed and then punished because Brigham believed they were not living the religion well enough. (He even cut off the entire church from receiving the sacrament for a period of time.)

Interesting that throughout Brigham Young's Reformation there was never a thought given to the failures in Nauvoo discussed in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. Instead, the leaders presumed they were right, and God was punishing the unfaithful membership. This approach led to mistakes.

Today, as Elder Jensen discussed, there is a view that the church is undergoing an apostasy comparable to Kirtland. But no thought is being entertained that the church itself has created these problems through leadership decisions at the top. The presumption is that God has been behind all that they've decided in their counsels, and therefore, the problem lies in the membership.

I've already posted about the unfolding disaster of the "raising the bar" program that resulted in preventing many young men from serving who wanted to serve. Eighty percent of the results in the mission field were being produced by 20% of the missionaries. So the church cut back the missionary rolls to purge the ineffective few who required babysitting from the mission presidents. We now have thousands of young men who feel rejected, judged and found unworthy by the church. They bear deep inward resentments as a result of this rejection. They all knew older brothers, or friends of their older brothers, who did as much wrong, or worse things than they had done. But these older brothers and their friends were allowed to serve.

Some of them were noble missionaries. Their lives changed while serving. But the "raised bar" kept these younger brothers out of service and stigmatized them. Now we have earnest young men who wanted to serve, were told they weren't good enough who now have to reconcile that rejection by the church.

The missionary who baptized me would not have qualified under the "raised bar." [I hesitate to confess another's sins, but I do not view that acknowledgement as a criticism of him. It reflected his true intent to repent and serve. For that I am eternally grateful.] He was a gift from heaven and a servant of God when I met him. He taught and testified of the truth, and baptized me with authority. He is active and faithful still today. Some of his own conversion

happened while serving. I thank God there was no administratively imposed “bar” to his service.

The point is that some, perhaps much, of the church’s present malaise is driven by mistakes made at the top. But those mistakes become very difficult to discuss in an atmosphere where every subordinate is expected to testify that God is making the decisions and never question the mistakes as they are made. “It’s good Bart did that” is the mantra. [You’d need to have seen the *Treehouse of Horrors* episodes of *The Simpsons* to understand that remark. Get one of your kids to explain it to you.]

At the risk of having some think it is blasphemy, I think the current problems stem largely from top-down mistakes more so than the members being disobedient and unfaithful. I think the people at the bottom want to please God. But they’re led that in many instances they err. Not for any lack of good faith on their part, but because there are not enough true principles taught to permit them to govern themselves correctly. There is at a minimum some shared responsibility. Our history prevents leadership from sharing any responsibility because of the fundamentals established in fourth phase Mormonism. The adoration of the president has been co-opted by Correlation to spread a veil of implied inspiration across everything done at the top. This problematic historical issue leaves us with little choice now but to blame the members for current problems. All the leaders need to do is what Marlin Jensen says they’re presently attempting. Just optimize search engine results, direct the public to the church’s website where the faith promoting stories are found, and everything will turn out just fine.

All of this arises from our history. All of this fits seamlessly into a continuation of steps begun more than a century ago. The issues run into our past and cannot be adequately understood apart

from our history. But a corollary to our history also arises from the present difficulties. History brought us to this moment. There must be answers to be found there. But the 'only-faith-promoting' account of our past does not give an adequate answer. Therefore something is missing. We need to let other views help explain how we arrived here. *Passing the Heavenly Gift* provides a better answer to the questions than the traditional narrative. Even if you decide it is not persuasive, it offers another view to be considered to explain how we got where we are now.

JANUARY 27, 2012

Interpreting History, Part 3

I believe in Mormonism and want it to succeed. I am cheering for our success. I evaluated it as an investigator while taught by missionaries, and received a spiritual impression sufficient to believe in the religion. So I joined. After joining I studied the faith. A spiritual impression was not enough for me. The impression was the beginning, not the end, of the inquiry. Then the new found faith needed to be scoured to find what it offered, what great truths it held, and what mysteries were now available. Therefore, its history needed to become part of my study and inquiry.

Mormonism has an important history that has been little explored even now. Its history should be celebrated, not cautiously guarded. The history contains wonderful lessons that will aid in moving the faith forward. But to do so it must be based on a truthful telling. You cannot create the kingdom of heaven from a foundation of lies. So history must be faced, even if it proves temporarily painful and disorienting while sorting through the errors.

Toward the end of the Jensen interview someone asked him about problems of history and mentioned his own struggle. He

explained that new data-points had been disorienting to him. He had to work his way through them to emerge with faith once again. The question was more than illuminating. It was an honest Latter-day Saint who had triumphed in retaining faith in the face of troubling historic truths. This is an issue at two levels.

First, when mistakes are discovered, they require you to adjust what you believe to take into account the new information. This is work. It requires effort to sort out incorrect or false information from the information that is correct. Some ideas about your religion must now be adjusted, adapted or abandoned. It can be painful. But what emerges from the experience is better than what you started with.

Second, and perhaps much more formidable an issue is that you discover the church is not reliable on some important details of its history. You are forced to grapple with the realization that some of the people you've respected, even admired, either did not tell the truth or were ignorant of the truth. Whether they were dishonest or just mistaken, it is painful. No one wants a hero to fall. When the heroes are thought to be God's agents, true prophets, bona-fide revelators, and you discover they didn't know what they were doing the fall leaves a choking cloud of dust behind. You have to emerge from that cloud with your faith in God intact.

When stripping truth from error, we all need to be careful not to throw away perfectly sound truths because of our disgust at the errors. It is better still if you can be compassionate about the errors rather than disgusted. Unfortunately, human nature is such that we tend to start with disgust and only proceed to compassion after we've lived long enough to have failed repeatedly ourselves. Our own humiliating defeats permit us to gain a sense of perspective regarding other people's failings. Compassion grows from our injuries.

Marlin Jensen's questioner was stating his faith while asking about the possibility of broader acceptance of more accurate history by the church itself. The question is now before us all. Whether you study church history or you just see a spreading crisis of faith among your fellow ward members, it is now before you. We are all in the same dreadful mix.

What is to be done? Are we going to adopt an increasingly militant and cloistered defense of our myths? Are we going to purge our ranks so we are left only with a small handful of intensely devoted believers in faith-promoting errors? Will we become the church of Paul Dunn? Or will we allow some to search deeply into the history and reach new conclusions? Will we allow those who have different, and perhaps more well informed conclusions to teach? To defend their understanding? To speak in sacrament meetings and present new ideas to the rest of us? Will we open up general conference to allow discussion openly of the many problems of inaccurate church history? Will we break apart?

Our history is too central a matter for it to be co-opted by a central hierarchy intent on limiting, packaging and controlling the truth rather than revealing the truth. We will save the church and our own souls if we are only interested in knowing truth. There should be an eager openness about it all. The restoration of the Gospel is too wonderful a matter to be reduced to lies. We should all fight against that. It *will* survive. It will be vindicated. God did originate this process. It is His work, and fear does not change that.

I'll return to two great problems with Mormons and our history in Part 4.

JANUARY 29, 2012

Interpreting History, Part 4

Two great obstacles in Mormon history are institutional lying and inner secrets. Both have been built into our faith. When Joseph Smith was confronted with plural marriage in a society that would be scandalized by such a practice, he hid it from public view. We all know the public statements and even scriptural declarations about marriage between a man and one wife were belied by the private practice of Joseph Smith. Therefore, our religion's history starts with a gap in telling the truth. We accept the fact that church leaders, beginning with Joseph Smith, lied to the public. There was an "inside" story and a "public" story. This is a problem for Mormon history.

Second, any Latter-day Saint who has been through the temple is aware there are things we regard as sacred that we just don't talk about. We keep secrets. Our faith reaches its deepest meaning in an atmosphere of secrecy and hidden knowledge.

When these two parts of the faith are present, it creates a challenge to telling our history in a frank, forthright and true manner. You must create filters in your analysis to account for the presence of these two skewing factors. One of the most significant historic disputes between the RLDS (Community of Christ) and the LDS church arises from this very problem. Emma taught Joseph Smith III (and her other children) that their father never practiced plural marriage. So when "young Joseph" came west, he was shocked by the stories and thought (at least initially) that the Utah Mormons were lying. Emma used well known public statements of Joseph denouncing "polygamy" as well as several canonized statements on the subject to support her claim that Joseph never took other wives. To reconcile it all a person must come to grips with the fact

that Joseph Smith was not telling the truth to the public. There are echoes of this disparity still today.

Plural marriage caused the hierarchy to lie to the public. They did it when plural marriage was both coming and going. It was practiced in private, shielded from public view and shrouded in lies, both before it was acknowledged in 1853 and after it was publicly abandoned by the Manifesto in 1890. The Manifesto was a public relations document intended to hide the fact the church was continuing the practice. There are too many available sources now in public to claim otherwise. But the adoption of Official Declaration 1 makes it awkward to admit the practice continued. So most church members are unaware that it continued in secret even after the Manifesto.

Oddly, neither Joseph Smith nor the church itself could pass a temple recommend interview (“Are you honest in your dealings with your fellow man?”) Any faithful Latter-day Saint with just a small amount of knowledge about our history knows the church and its leaders have been less than honest in the past to prevent the public from knowing what they were doing.

In saying that I want to be clear. I am not condemning the church. There were sufficient reasons for these public dis-information campaigns, and there has been a theological justification used to defend the practice. The church has pointed out that Abraham said Sarah was his “sister” rather than to candidly acknowledge she was his wife. But the theological implications are not what this line of discussion is about. So I’m leaving that topic unaddressed.

The bottom line is that when you attempt to unravel the church’s history, you must contend with the fact that the church has a history of dissembling. They publish lies to prevent embarrassment or prosecution. You must include a filter, or detector,

or whatever you want to describe it as, in order to arrive at the underlying truth.

The idea something is “sacred” is also important in understanding our history. It has been used to compensate for missing revelation. At one extreme the leaders are thought to meet regularly (every Thursday) with Jesus Christ in the Temple. Under this happy view, the leaders are never wrong because they’re just doing what Jesus says each Thursday. To suggest this may not be the case is so foreign a concept to these people that anyone who does so is weak in the faith and on the road to apostasy. Therefore, you must also account for the mythical elevation of leadership through the “too sacred to discuss” veil which makes honest analysis difficult and emotionally charged.

These are two great challenges to anyone trying to know the truth. Any person seeking to understand our history must account for both as they evaluate the events.

JANUARY 30, 2012

Interpreting History, Part 5

In the search through our history, at some point you must reach conclusions on events. The weight of the evidence accumulates and you reach a conclusion. Your conclusion may be different than mine. Each of us is free to find something persuasive and believe it. But we all must make our minds up about the events.

The evidence you find convincing may be based on what a single person had to say. Even if there are fourteen witnesses saying something else, you may choose to believe a single witness telling a story you are willing to accept as the truth. The reasons for that are personal. For example, your own great-grandmother may have

told a story that was handed down within the family and now you cherish that version of the events because it was told to you when you were a child by people you love. Other proof may never convince you otherwise because you have an emotional need to believe that story. For you to think otherwise would feel tantamount to rejection of your own family.

However, suppose you learn that the great-grandmother's story originated with the popular retelling of an earlier event. The actual event was in the 1840's but it was popular to retell it in a much more inspirational way some twenty years after the event, in the 1860's. The push to belong among the saints was so compelling they began to compete with one another to embellish the retelling. As a result the story grew well beyond anything that was recorded contemporaneous with the actual event. Even after learning this, you may still resist changing your view because you worry it makes your great-grandmother a liar. It really does no such thing. Her faith produced a culture. She lived inside that culture. The culture encouraged her to say faith-promoting things like others in the culture. She succumbed to the temptation, joined in the recasting of the event, and it helped secure both her own faith and the beliefs of her children. Your life and your parents' were all enriched by the story.

But when it comes to your understanding of history, something more than traditions ought to at least be considered. If that is impossible for you, then at a minimum you must allow others who do not share your great-grandmother in their genealogy to explore the question and reach their own conclusion. You can believe as you do for the reasons you find convincing, but others should not be required to join you. They do not share your emotional need to believe the retelling, and therefore ought to be free to consider other

sources. What we all share, however, is faith in the religion. We all believe this is a true faith restored by God through the Prophet Joseph Smith. I can have tolerance for your view and your needs, but you should permit me to believe as I do. My beliefs should not threaten you. Yours do not threaten me. I freely allow you to hold onto the family tradition, and respect the value that has provided your family. I am a convert. There are no family traditions I need to honor when it comes to Latter-day Saint history. I am not being negative when I think differently than you. Instead I am honestly trying to grapple with the events to reach my own conclusion about the truth. When I read the fourteen other witnesses I may disregard the one you believe.

As people of good faith attempt to retell Mormon history, there will always be events some people view differently than others. For example in Richard Van Wagoner's book *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess*, he puts Joseph and Sidney into the underground Danite movement in Missouri. I was surprised he did that. I don't agree and thought he was wrong, but I don't for a minute doubt he believed his conclusion.

Since Sampson Avard's testimony before the Court of Inquiry was not believed by even the hostile anti-Mormon crowd, I discount him as a reliable source. He was trying to save his own skin. He was like a jailhouse snitch who got free for telling a lurid tale about another prisoner. Motivation, background, overall credibility and inconsistency make him an unreliable source to me. Sampson Avard was the primary mover behind the Danite group. He had a great interest in pushing Joseph and Sidney forward and retreating into the shadows. His story did that. I don't believe him.

This issue illustrates how difficult it is to weigh the evidence and reach the right conclusion. When someone as good as Van

Wagoner reaches this conclusion, any fair-minded person needs to consider his evidence. I checked his footnotes, considered his arguments, re-thought the matter and found I was not persuaded. I kept my view that Joseph Smith was not involved and was the victim of a perjured witness in the Missouri court proceedings. If someone else chooses to believe it, that is up to them. It certainly complicates Joseph Smith's story. It does not utterly compromise it. The primary effect it would have, in my view, is that Joseph learned from the Missouri disaster that a violent response to the church's enemies was a very bad idea. He never did it again. When the next crisis arose in Nauvoo, he surrendered the Nauvoo Legion state arms and surrendered to the authorities. He did not use his army to protect his followers.

So the choice is between what I believe (i.e., that Joseph was already pre-disposed to avoid violent reactions) and Van Wagoner's view (i.e., that Joseph attempted violence through the Danites before learning that violence was not useful). Either way the final lesson is the same. I believe mine is more consistent with Joseph's overall behavior and character, both during Zion's Camp and later in Nauvoo. Van Wagoner has Joseph fluctuating in between. But there is no real meaningful difference to the alternatives.

What this issue illustrates, however, is that the matter has been out there since 1838 and remains unsettled and open for debate and discussion today. The discussion is very interesting. More information will undoubtedly arise as more of the church's archives are made available to read. Hiding the information does not alter the truth, it only temporarily hides it. Those who distrust our leaders, resolve all questions by claiming the failure to open the complete historical records to public view is evidence there will be incriminating things found there. That argument no doubt

has some weight to it, but on this point of Joseph Smith's Danite involvement I very much doubt there's a hidden "smoking gun" to be found in unopened archival material.

The Jensen interview ended on a troubling note to me. He explained the Church History Department was a tool for the "fifteen men" and ultimately "the Prophet" to direct. The Department was going to act in conformity with their desires, and would not proceed as an independent source of historical information. That aside puts the problem of candor and motivation back to the fore. It makes absolute sense the Church History Department supports the church's leadership. However, for anyone interested in a full disclosure, you must remember that the Church History Department acts as an agent controlled by a group whose agenda is not always to let history be told in less than a "faith promoting" way. They feel the responsibility of promoting faith. That is natural. They don't want to challenge people's faith by letting out any ugliness. It risks turning the Department into the purveyor of propaganda, rather than history.

This may have worked well in the past, but in the age of the Internet there are leaks. It is all coming out. It will be better for the church to take the initiative than to let it just slip out through inadvertence. If Mitt Romney is the candidate, and even more so if he becomes the President, there will be pressure from the media, perhaps even efforts to pay church employees for copies of previously undisclosed documents. Who knows what will occur in the future to empty the vaults of the hidden materials. The recent dust-up over the *Joseph Smith Papers* draft volume on plural marriage between an apostle and the staff working on the project is now known by a wide group. To their credit both Dallin Oaks and Jeffrey Holland were supportive of the effort. Another member of the twelve was

scandalized by it, thinking the church membership was unprepared to read the material. It will all be out there eventually. Those who advocate candor will be respected in the future, and those who insist on secrecy will be less so.

Nothing will remain hidden. Even if the Lord is the one who does it, the day will come when it will all be “shouted from the rooftops” and every hidden thing will be revealed. It will be too late to acquit yourself if you’ve been one hiding the truth. Better to do it now, before the coming forced confession.

JANUARY 31, 2012

Interpreting History, Part 6

There will always be those who are skeptical about our history. Converting someone to believe (a process I underwent to become LDS), cannot proceed without facing critical examination of the stories. On occasion I think about what would have happened if I were investigating the church’s claims today for the first time. Without question I would use the Internet to check what the missionaries were telling me. Given the fact that I would have to decide whether to believe this new faith, and the troubling perception our critics urge that it is being offered by a Fortune 500 corporation, I do not think I would trust anything on the church’s own website. I think I would avoid considering that until I had first been convinced of the missionaries’ message.

I think my approach would be typical. There’s nothing more troubling to someone thinking about changing their religion than the risk of being duped by foolish believers in some nonsensical cult. And like it or not, Mormonism is thought of in those terms. I know. I’ve been there, but I came aboard in the days of flannel

board missionary lessons and computers driven by punch cards. There was no Wikipedia or Google. The world changed. So Mormonism must face down the challenges of widespread information. This information challenges the traditional stories and presents very different views of the events. Missionaries must be able to overcome these many honest questions. I'm certain today I would ask a good deal more than what I asked in 1973. Church members also must become part of the solution.

When a prospective convert comes to hear our lessons, observe our meetings, and talk with our members they come equipped with a body of questions arising from the acidic environment of the Internet. Every omission in our story can become the stumbling block to accepting the challenge to convert. I would never have prayed and asked God if Mormonism was true until after first inspecting enough of the Mormons to determine they were sound people. Sound in their lives, marriages and teaching. The “weirdness gauge” was employed. Any strange, aberrant behavior would have sent the alarm sounding and I would have been unwilling to proceed further; but I found the church quite likable. Understand I did NOT want the Mormons to be likable. I wanted to dismiss them, and continue on with my happy life. However, they satisfied the initial concerns enough that I was willing to consider it seriously.

Today, when asked about troubling matters, every Mormon should to be able to show the faith in a positive light. In a very real way the only progress we can hope to make in today's environment will come through an educated population of believers. Myths and half-truths may be “inspirational” and keep immature faith around for a while, but sooner or later the acid of today's information age will burn away anything that is not gold. We have tens-of-thousands of adults now leaving the church after having

spent their lives believing Mormonism. They are discovering the information exists to challenge every step of our faith, from Joseph Smith's youth to the 1978 revelation on priesthood. Members are vulnerable and they are leaving. The problem is already well underway. What we've been doing with our history has not prepared us for what is now happening.

Confining the church's educational efforts to "faith promoting" stories may have been enough in the 1950's through the year 2000, but it is absolutely not enough now. If the church insists that this must continue, then the church will become a tiny organization of myth believers who cloister together and repeat endlessly a litany of imaginative stories. That is the course we are on at the moment. The great apostasy underway is because the environment changed. The church's opinion polling and focus group testing is not adequate to adapt to the real challenges. The real challenges are to undergo the rigors of opening the history up to deal forthrightly with our past. The church needs to undergo a metamorphosis into the most open, most candid, most self-critical and inviting faith on earth. We must allow ideas to be expressed in an environment of tolerance and learning. Militant insistence on following a centrally produced lesson manual as an unyielding standard will not be enough. People are walking out of those classes. Either they are turned off and mentally checking out, or they are physically leaving. This is not their fault. They cannot control the fact they are bored.

What is almost impossible to accomplish has been accomplished by the central planners of Mormonism. The most exciting thing in the world is to learn new truth. Nothing is quite as delightful as finding new truths. **The Gospel contains all truth.** Our lessons and meetings should be celebrations of truth. Instead they have become wary gatherings of fearful people who are on the lookout

for unorthodox comments. Some feel Mormon meetings are held inside a police-state. The central planners are fearful of new ideas. They guard against freedom of thought precisely because they are living in a bunker, trying to uphold a dishonest or incomplete history. It will not work. We must openly discuss our history. We must return to delighting in the doctrine. The Gospel is wonderful, not oppressive. It is not mere tradition to be guarded or defended. It is Christ's message of love and hope for all mankind.

Our history has influenced who we call to leadership positions because it has affected what the leaders responsibilities are. They MUST administer a far-flung corporate empire with almost unmanageable human resources challenges. Budgets, staffing, property management, liability management, accounting, banking and legal concerns are overwhelming. These are the realities of the top leadership's job. It is the result of the events in phase 2 and 3, and the explosive growth in phase 4. There aren't many mystics available in our ranks who have enough banking, accounting, legal, business management or personnel competence to occupy the present leadership responsibilities. That is a product of the church's history. But it is also the church's present reality.

The church itself has a great challenge now directly bearing down on it. I sympathize and lend my prayers to its success. The struggle will require perhaps more from it than the church is willing to change. One great advantage grows out of one of the church's apparent weaknesses. We elevate to the highest position a man who is almost always elderly, frail and beyond the age of most unhealthy appetites. Such a man will consider carefully his proximity to the judgments of God, and likely will be willing to do what is right, even if painful.

FEBRUARY 1, 2012

Interpreting History, Part 7

The topic of our history becomes even more challenging when it is overlaid with emotion and fear. Since the study of Mormonism is also the study of what will save your soul, we associate grave importance to being “right” about things. Therefore, when we make up our mind about a storyline, we defend that story against any challenges offering another view.

As is apparent from the last question posed to Marlin Jensen in the interview referred to previously, there are painful adjustments involved in going back into your belief system, taking part of it down, or adding something new, and then adjusting everything else to accommodate the new data. It is upsetting. We don't like to unsettle what we thought was settled. This is why once a tradition takes hold it is almost impossible to make changes to it.

In the Book of Mormon, the word “tradition” or the phrase “traditions of the fathers” is almost always used in a negative way. Do a word study yourself and see how “tradition” is used. That is one of the Book of Mormon's warnings to us. We have to be very cautious about accepting something as true because it came to us through tradition. **Every one of us needs to be converted to the truth.**

Also, the “converts” in the Book of Mormon were almost always religious apostates. They had been part of the truth and fallen away. Notice how the splinter groups who were converted were almost without exception being re-converted. From the macro-level (with the Lamanites) to the micro-level (with the Zoramites—who were dissenters from the Nephites (Alma 31:8)), the missionary effort was

to bring believers back to the truth. These apostates were religious. They were firm believers in all kinds of religious ideas handed to them through incorrect traditions.

Our story is similar to the Nephite story. It has been marked by traditions that have time and again discarded what we were originally given through Joseph Smith, and are foundational to the restoration. To go into our history is to discover wonderful, exciting things that were once taught, but now are either slowly or quickly being lost. We need to ask why they were lost? If they belonged in the first place, why did we discard them? When Joseph introduced the teachings and claimed they were from God, why did we fail to preserve them? Did we lose them because we heard from God and He said, “don’t do that,” or “don’t believe that anymore?” Was it because we were jarred from our settled places in Kirtland and Nauvoo, and in the forced migrations had a hard enough time retaining part of our religion? Is our forgetfulness perfectly understandable?

To be able to discuss this openly we need to stop reacting with emotion and fear at the thought of the discussion. We can go back and consider what happened and suspend judgment about the correct narrative until we have studied and discussed the matters more fully. It should be fun. It should be wonderful. It should excite us, but instead we fear it. That is not healthy and will only preserve a continuing dwindling tradition of the faith. The process of Correlation has enshrined the process of dwindling. Go to the Book of Mormon and look up “unbelief” and you’ll find it almost invariably associated with “dwindling.” That is, the apostates of the Book of Mormon got out of line with the Lord because they “dwindled in unbelief.” They lost truths they were supposed to have remembered. Look at the word “remember” in the Book of

Mormon and you'll also find it is a very important principle. How can we ever avoid dwindling and be able to remember if we fear a close scrutiny of our history? They go hand in hand. Once again the Book of Mormon proves to be the "keystone of our religion" because it bravely faces the very problems we are currently struggling with but are afraid to discuss openly. We fear what the Book of Mormon expects us to discuss.

If you love your faith, you will allow it to inform you. You will not fight against it and only look at part of it. If you insist it can only conform to your present notions, then you do not really believe the religion at all. You only want to hold to your traditions. You are like the Book of Mormon apostates who have dwindled in unbelief because they refused to remember the original faith given to them by the Lord. None of us should want that. Open discussion should not threaten Latter-day Saints. Nor should those who are willing to engage in the discussion be called apostates or wolves in sheep's clothing. That only ensures we will continue to ignore problems, and as a result of ignoring see a collapse in church membership.

We should be open to discussing our history in our church meetings. We should not be afraid. The discussion itself is healthy even if nothing changes in the lives of most saints. It will leave them better informed and allow those who are struggling a safe place to voice concerns and help find answers. At present, our church meetings are pretty hostile to the whole history discussion. We tolerate only centrally approved propaganda which some good-hearted people have found to be more fiction than fact. The people who view it as fiction shouldn't be renounced for their honest questions. Instead they deserve answers from a friendly, open church.

FEBRUARY 2, 2012

Interpreting History, Part 8

When you come to understand something in our history as an actual event then you need to understand the event. What are its details? How important are differing accounts? If there are contradictions among witnesses, how are they harmonized? When you've sorted through the material and arrived at the most accurate version, what does the incident mean? If you change the details does the meaning change?

In the King Follett Discourse, for example, there were several note-takers who left accounts of the sermon. Most people are acquainted with this talk through *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. That version is an amalgamation of the various notes of those who were present. In compiling the consolidated version, some of the trimming and harmonizing left details out of the final transcript that may be important. Almost all of the notes from that day have been gathered by Andrew Ehat and Lyndon Cook in their book *The Words of Joseph Smith*. That very valuable book allows you compare what one person preserved of the talk with what another person preserved. The contrasts are important and make actual doctrinal differences.

If you are content with the *TPJS* version and have developed some of your religious views based on it, then discovering that it may have omitted details from Joseph's talk may alarm you. You must decide whether you want to know what Joseph actually said, and perhaps what he actually meant, or if you are only interested in keeping what you already believe.

Many people "feel" the truth. They determine what they believe by how it makes them feel. Their "truth detector" is not rational,

but intuitive. I've been involved in litigation for long enough to realize there is an irrational component to every conclusion we make. Despite the effort to be rational, we always have our personal filters and our hidden biases. Humans are rational, but not entirely so. Therefore this "feel" for truth happens in us all. Malcom Gladwell has written several books exploring this trait.

The challenge is to control your impulse to come to a conclusion about something before you let all the available information develop. You may come to a conclusion that you can defend rationally and emotionally, but it may not be true. If, instead, you suspend your impulse to decide something and let information expand, you may still reach the same conclusion, but it will be deeper, richer and more complete.

I've found that since my conversion, the simple stories told in 1973 have remained basically intact. But they are now much more complex, more nuanced, poignant and wonderful. Sometimes it has been painful to approach a new and expanded account of familiar events. D. Michael Quinn's work has sometimes left me wondering how he could make such mistakes. But I've never doubted the impressive, even amazing capacity he has for gathering information and adding new sources to tell the stories of our history. He is valuable and almost irreplaceable as a pioneer in moving our understanding of Mormon history forward. I still disagree with some of his conclusions, but I respect and admire his work. Some of what I originally thought were mistakes by him I now find I accept and believe to be true.

It made me nervous to read some of Quinn's work at first. I was afraid I would encounter something that would break my heart and show there was nothing to this faith I had adopted as my own. That would be difficult for me. I stared down that dark corridor

and decided to proceed anyway. As I did there were painful moments, and anxiety-filled nights. I know the bitterness expressed by some of the people who have fallen away from our faith and now are vocal critics. If Mormonism is a fraud and I was certain of it I would also probably express a vocal opposition to it. Therefore, if that is their conclusion, they are coping with their sense of loss by venting. I understand it. I was willing to risk it too. But my faith has remained intact.

I still believe God spoke to young Joseph Smith, and that Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris saw the angel Moroni and the gold plates. I've also very much appreciated the "apostasy" of both Cowdery and Whitmer and their post-church affiliation writings. They remained true to their testimony as witnesses of the Book of Mormon, even if they left the church. That enhances their credibility in my view. In my opinion, if they hadn't seen the plates and the angel, they would have denounced Joseph as a fraud after they were disaffected toward him.

These three witnesses make a formidable obstacle to dismissing Joseph Smith. As a result, there have been efforts to diminish the significance of their testimony. I think the best summary of the reasons to question their testimony can be found in Grant Palmer's book *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins*. He does a good job of putting together the best way to disregard the Three Witnesses' Testimony. But his work is entirely derivative from other critics and therefore you need to begin with Palmer and work your way back through the footnotes to the earlier stuff to arrive at the point of departure. In the case of his book, I was already acquainted with his sources and therefore found nothing new in it. The approach is basically to discount the idea of "second sight" and to "spiritualize" away the event. For me it was not a problem. I've seen angels. I've

been taught by them. I know what the experience is like. Therefore, I know what the challenge is to convert the otherworldly into this-worldly. That other world is more real and even more concrete than this. But it isn't here. It is more tangible, but not the same as what we experience here. Joseph taught about "shaking an angel's hand" (D&C 129:4-5) so you can know it is possible to touch and feel them. They are tangible. But if you're quickened and they are quickened then it is not like this place. So how do you make it possible for someone else to understand. Paul says "whether in the body or out I cannot tell" (2 Cor. 12:3) and that's a pretty good way to put it. He just couldn't tell. Because it is concrete even if you want to say you saw it with "spiritual eyes." So Grant Palmer takes those statements and turns them into the ephemeral, then into imagination, and dismisses the Testimony of the Three Witnesses. In that way he hoped to evade the Book of Mormon by turning it into a work of fiction. None of that persuaded me. I know better. Not only do I have experience in studying history, and the lives of Cowdery, Whitmer and Harris, but also in comparing other scriptures and experiences of Paul, Daniel, Joseph, Abraham, Enoch, Moses, and so many others. In addition to all the rest I have personal experience.

On the matter of "feeling" things to be true and right, we should not be hasty about closing the door on additional information. New information may change your view dramatically, and then with the new insights you will "feel" right about another, better informed view. When you deal with less information you may think in your heart that everything is just as you believe it to be; only to later find that good-faith belief was sadly under-informed or misinformed. You can only proceed on the basis of what you know, and never on the basis of what you do not know. This is

why our good-faith critics who advance honest objections are not evil. They even raise questions we should ask ourselves and try to provide an honest answer.

I do not believe it is possible to acquire the faith necessary to arrive at the truth unless you are willing to know the truth. I believe that history is intended to be a test of faith and we bar ourselves from heaven and heavenly messengers through our fears. Fear is the opposite of faith.

All I've written has been done in the hope I can increase faith in others. I understand why I have been denounced, accused of being apostate, and had claims that I'm disrespectful of the church authorities. It is always easy to allow your fears to interpret my motives. But I can tell you that I hope to save souls. The way I write is intended to accomplish that end. If it were possible to do it in any other way I would do it differently. But I don't intend to be popular. I only want the Lord to approve what I've been able to do with what I've been given.

FEBRUARY 5, 2012

Interpreting History, Part 9

History and doctrine are linked. To alter history is to alter doctrine. You can see the links throughout scripture. Just one example from the New Testament illustrates the point:

Jesus was confronted by the Pharisee lawyers and accused of breaking the law. He and His disciples had taken plucked wheat (labor of harvesting), then rubbed them in their hands (threshing), and eaten it on the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-2). As His explanation Jesus reminded the accusers of an earlier incident involving King David and his men. They had eaten the showbread which, under the law,

was forbidden to be eaten by any but a priest (Luke 6:3–4). This incident involving David was the precedent Jesus pointed to as justification (1 Sam. 21:1–6). The law said only Aaron and his descendants could eat this bread (Lev. 24:5–9). However, Jesus relied on an incident from history to justify His and the disciples' conduct. If the history showed it could be done, then Jesus questioned the “righteousness” of complaining about the matter.

There are hundreds of other examples to draw from, but this illustrates the point. History is the mill whose grist is the stuff from which we construct doctrine. It matters. If we do not comprehend it, we cannot sort through the dangling statements that get tossed about unanchored. We do not understand their original real meaning. One of the problems of fourth phase Mormonism is the apparent corruption of our vocabulary. We use the same words as the first phase, but we have adopted altogether different meanings for them. Meaning arises from context. Context comes from history.

Joseph gazed into heaven for more than five minutes. He knew more than if you had read everything that had ever been written on the subject (*TPJS* p. 324). He was succeeded by Brigham Young, who lamented he had never seen an angel or entertained a heavenly being. Therefore, it is important to study Brigham Young's qualifications in contrast to Joseph Smith's qualifications. If you understand Joseph had the heavens opened to him a number of times, including several audiences with both the Father and Son, you put Joseph's remarks into one category. If you understand that Brigham Young never had a similar experience, then you put Brigham Young's into another category. When Joseph is contradicted by Brigham, the first effort should be to reconcile or attempt to harmonize the two men's statements. If you cannot reconcile them with one another, you can use the knowledge you have about each of them to choose

which one you will rely on. The same would also be true of others. We study the history to learn what the qualifications are/were for any of God's chosen leaders, what God showed to them, whether the heavens have opened to them, and exactly what they knew, or did not know when they contradict Joseph.

History must be true to be useful. If it is inaccurate or incomplete we can reach one conclusion only to find we have made a mistake because there was much more (or less) to the event. The events on August 8, 1844 are critical. If there was a transfiguration of Brigham Young on that day, then we can assume God was directly involved in solving the succession dilemma. If there was no transfiguration of Brigham, then God was not directly involved, and the outcome is a product of our common consent and still binding on the saints. Although binding, if the transfiguration did not happen, then the "precedent" is administrative and voluntary, and not a sign of God's desire to have the precedent followed forever thereafter. It is nothing more than an agreement among the saints on how to proceed

This is important. Before June 27, 1844, the question of who would succeed Joseph Smith as the church president was known. Joseph's successor would be Hyrum Smith, but Hyrum died with Joseph. Before June 27th, the question of what was to be done upon the death of both Joseph and Hyrum was never contemplated. There was no answer to the question.

In the debates of August 8th no one urged the provisions of Section 107 as a revealed outcome for succession. The language of that revelation has since become the scriptural basis for how we proceed, but it was not thought to be relevant in the first debate over succession. Section 107 is anything but a definite answer to the question. If you adopt our system, and then use 107 to justify

our system, it seems to fit, but there is another, more relevant solution found elsewhere. Doctrine & Covenants 43:3–4 was used to appoint Hyrum Smith to succeed Joseph. The appointment was made by revelation in Section 124:94–95. This was the scriptural pattern, and the pattern followed in the case of Hyrum.

Brigham Young's arguments at the time were not as clear about succession as we have made them by our adopting the method of apostolic succession based on seniority. Brigham Young admitted that Joseph Smith's sons had a right to be the church's leader and he was only a caretaker awaiting their development. He explained that since they had never converted to the church, they were not able to lead, and so he served in their absence.

History and the scriptures allow for a different method for succession. In the final analysis it is nothing more than the common consent of the church that has elected Brigham Young and all his successors to the offices they have held. Our last descendant of Hyrum Smith, occupying the office of Patriarch to the Church, is now 105 years old, emeritus, and not likely to be succeeded when he passes. The Smith Family male line will be out of the top level of the hierarchy. Of course, there are female line descendants who are there, including Elder Ballard. But direct male line descendants are gone or will be when the Patriarch Emeritus passes on.

Does that matter? What was the point of having that office? Was it important to the church's organization? Why was Hyrum the successor to Joseph? Why did Brigham Young expect a son of Joseph to come and preside over the church? Does history shed any light on these questions? Do they even matter? What purpose was originally served and does that purpose remain today? Why was the Patriarch sustained as a "prophet, seer and revelator" in general conference right up until he was made emeritus? Could a

general conference sustain him as the church's president, or does the system presently preclude anyone other than the nominees of the sitting president from being considered? Why did the local congregations once choose their own bishops? When did that change? Why did it change? Does the original history matter? Once we give common consent to what is done, are we accountable for the changes that occur?

There are a lot of interesting history-based questions that could be explored. But the questions themselves require us to study something that no longer even gets mentioned.

Well, I'll be wrapping this up in Part 10.

FEBRUARY 6, 2012

Interpreting History, Part 10 - Conclusion

Seriously studying history allows us to recognize unresolved issues or to fix our errors. With a superficial knowledge of our history we risk making presumptions and missing the mark, or risk not even recognizing there are errors to what we believe today. Isn't the subject of our religion and its beginnings important enough to want to carefully examine it?

The mission of Elijah is so important to the wrapping up of God's strange act that the prophecy about his return before the great and dreadful day of the Lord appears in every volume of scripture. From the Old Testament to the Pearl of Great Price, it is mentioned repeatedly.

When we discover Joseph Smith speaking of Elijah's return as a future event in 1844, we get our first hint that our current doctrine on the subject may need further examination. However, if we only know the popular story borne out of Orson Pratt's analysis in the

Deseret Evening News of D&C 110 when it was found and first published, then raising the issue seems unnecessary. Since you think you know the truth already, a reexamination seems stupid. Do you look into the matter, and risk discovering there have been historic, and therefore, doctrinal errors made for 160 years on Elijah's mission? Do you think this is important enough to study it again?

We are the subject and object of many Book of Mormon prophecies. Some of them hold us up in a rather negative light. They seem to suggest we are riddled with mistakes and errors. That we have gone far astray, and are being led to err in many instances. Those prophecies do not trouble us, however, if we accept the self-vindicating narrative that we've been headed in the right direction all along.

One of the things that helps orient an historical analysis is the language of scripture. If the scriptures warn us against thinking all is well in our version of Zion, and tells us to never resist hearing more of the word of God, and further tells us (repeatedly) not to trust the arm of flesh, what does this mean? We have a popular account of events that more or less suggests all is well. We are God's chosen. We have the power to save ourselves. We have a great body of revelation to guide us and don't need much revelation anymore. And some of what Joseph Smith talked about we don't really know much about and aren't sure we believe anyway. We are safe, and the odds are we'll all be exalted. Those ideas are the polar opposite of what the Book of Mormon says about us. Should the Book of Mormon provide us the themes to apply to our history, or do they not matter at all? If we allow the Book of Mormon to inform the dialogue, then do we reconcile the disparity between our claims and the prophetic text by re-looking at our history, or instead merely by trusting we are led that in no instance do we currently err?

People of good faith, who believe in Mormonism, can differ in their conclusions about matters. Those differences are not signs of apostasy or evil. They are, in fact, healthy. They ought to be the source from which stimulating discussion and deep thought comes. An unexamined and superficial belief system is always vulnerable to collapse. A thoughtful and reflective believer does not fly to pieces when something new is told to them. They are already acquainted with the idea and practice of prayerfully and through personal revelation considering and reconsidering their faith. New ideas do not cause despair, but become part of the normal process for them. They consider, suspend judgment, study, reflect, pray and then reach a careful conclusion. The conclusion is put into the larger framework and any necessary adjustments are considered, adapted or corrected, and faith improves. This process is allowed to work over and over as they explore their faith more deeply

The environment of Mormonism is not conducive to healthy discussion at the moment. Correlation and the need for central control has preempted the kind of healthy intellectual inquiry that is needed to solve the present crisis of apostasy. History should be allowed to be merely our true, unembellished, unprotected history. Not a tool for propaganda used by central planners to accomplish a desired end. Using it that way in an information-based society invites the disaster presently unfolding.

I believe in Mormonism. I cherish the faith. It is vibrant and resilient. It does not need institutional protection—borne out of fear. Efforts to protect have, in fact, injured the faith and discredited this approach.

History matters. May we allow it to become the source of truth informing our open discussions, rather than a tool to be manipulate and manage people. Managing people is a dark enterprise. Inform

them and allow them the freedom to choose to govern themselves. That is what the Prophet Joseph Smith did. The mere ambition to control people is the beginning of a dark trail that leads to the imprisonment of souls. Not just those who are the targets, but more importantly the souls of those with the ambition. It should be repugnant to anyone claiming to be a saint to allow anyone to control them. Unless they are willing to retain for themselves their right to choose, and then exercise their choice in a responsible and well informed way, they deceive themselves. Saints are made of sterner stuff. They do not recoil from the obligation, difficulty, pain and work necessary to have their minds mirror the mind of God. Surrendering to other men the responsibility devolving on yourself will never happen. But, then again, mankind rarely produces a saint.

Vanity and pride are no substitute for sainthood. Arrogance and flattery from leaders will not produce a saint either. It comes from man reaching up to God, and God answering the honest petition of the humble soul, reaching down to him. Contact with God will inevitably lead to sainthood. False ideas and incomplete or misleading history will prevent that contact from happening.

CHAPTER 10

It Was Already Like This When We Found It...

FEBRUARY 7, 2012

Marlin Jensen's Last Answer

The last question put to Marlin Jensen began with the questioner retelling his own struggle to adjust his beliefs after discovering new information in our history. The “new data points” required him to change his understanding. He was asking for a more broadminded approach that would allow open discussion of troubling history in church meetings.

The answer given by Marlin Jensen was very interesting and raises another matter about current church decision-making. When the idea of broadmindedness was raised in the context of church history, Bro. Jensen responded by speaking about homosexuality. Church history was gone, and instead his mind turned to the need for tolerance—and that meant homosexuals. It was almost a complete disconnect of topics, but quite important to understanding the internal discussion underway at the top of the church presently.

This apparent change-of-subject shows how important the present “tolerance of homosexuality” discussion has become. When

Pres. Packer's comments about homosexuality as sinful behavior in a general conference talk are edited before they appear in the conference issue of the Ensign, you can know there is a great deal of internal discussion underway. Editing Bro. Poelman's talk is one thing, but editing a talk given by the President of the Quorum of the Twelve is altogether another.

Jim Dabakis is the Chairman of the Utah Democratic Party. He was a radio personality at KTKK when I did a call-in radio show for seven years during the 1980's. He is an articulate, affable and intelligent man. He is also openly homosexual and an advocate for increased legal protection for the homosexual community. His negotiation successes include persuading the LDS Church to speak in favor of Salt Lake City's recently adopted anti-discrimination ordinance. This ordinance protects a homosexual's rights to housing and employment in Salt Lake. The City Council would not have voted in favor of the ordinance if the church had not spoken in favor of it. And the church would not have done so if Jim Dabakis had not successfully advocated and persuaded them to do so.

The success in persuading the church to go from Proposition 8 opposition in California, to advocating adoption of a gay-rights ordinance in Salt Lake City in just a few short months is not possible without the leadership of church at the highest level actively discussing and troubling over the issue.

When Marlin Jensen's mind goes from a question about troubling history and tolerance of differing views of our past, immediately to tolerance of homosexuality, that is not so bizarre a jump as you might think. It is a reflection of the current discussion underway at the very top of the church.

Public opinion is shifting. Particularly among the younger Americans. The trends all suggest that acceptance of homosexual

conduct as normal will be shared by the majority of Americans. Those holding contrary views are aging and dying, and those who hold the more open and accepting view are replacing them. Unless opinions change this is the inevitable result.

Any organization that is sensitive to survey's and polling to determine public opinion on the topic of homosexuality will discover growing demographic evidence of inevitable majority acceptance. Therefore, if you are going to make decisions on the basis of public opinions, you are going to respond to this shifting view.

Given Bro. Jensen's immediate response to the trigger word "tolerance" by introducing homosexuality into the conversation, it is apparent the church is quite actively discussing this issue. Additionally, given the censorship of the talk given by President Packer (the current President of the Quorum of the Twelve) in general conference on the subject, it appears there is an unmistakable alignment of the leadership's inclinations with public opinion.

It will be interesting to watch this issue unfold. For those who believe the practice of homosexuality is wrong because it frustrates the Divine order, and is desolating to humanity because it ends the continuation of family life through the union of the sexes, the idea of church approval for such relations is unthinkable. For more socially progressive Mormons who wish to be aligned with popular opinion, it is a relief to have another divisive issue excised from the principles of Mormon religion.

When an abomination that renders sexual relations desolate (they don't produce offspring) occurs in the holy place, you can know the promised destruction is soon at hand. Christ said those living in that day would live to see the end of the world (See *JS-M* 1:32-36). The way to decide when the virtue of tolerance becomes the wickedness of permissiveness can only be done by those who

treasure up His (Christ's) words (*JS-M* 1:37). For those few willing to do so, the Lord will send angels to gather them (*Id.*, see also *D&C* 77:11).

Some say it is good to be popular. It is better to not care. It is best to have an eye single to the word of the Lord.

FEBRUARY 9, 2012

“Some of Christ”

I was asked in an email what the words “some of Christ” means in Section 76, verse 100. The verse reads:

These are they who say they are some of one and some of another—some of Christ and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch[.]

This verse occurs in a larger explanation of those who are damned because of their false religious beliefs (or more correctly, their unbelief). The larger explanation begins in verse 97 and goes through verse 107.

The context of these verses about false religion makes it clear those who practice it accept messengers who have been actually sent by the Lord with a warning from Him. The names of John, Moses, Elias, Isaiah and Enoch, for example, are names of those who were known to the Lord and entrusted by Him with a message of repentance from Him. However, despite the truthfulness of the messenger and the authentic origin of their message, the recipients have gone astray. They imagine their claim to follow the man is a substitute for receiving the message of repentance. They take pride in their status as followers of true messengers while neglecting the message to repent.

In the case of Christ, it is no different. They claim to be “of Christ” by associating His name with their brand of unbelief. They use His name in vain, however, because their practices and hearts are not inclined to follow His teachings, to endure His cross, to suffer the rejection which comes from this world and the worldly, and to give up honor, friends and family to follow Him (See, e.g., Luke 12:51–53; Mark 10:29–30).

The crux of their defect is set out in verse 101: “But received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenant.” These are four things:

1. The Gospel. You need to know that that term really means. If you do not, then you have not received it. You have claimed, like these others, to be “of Christ” without ever comprehending what His Gospel includes and does not include.
2. The “testimony of Jesus.” Do you know what that term means? Do you imagine it is something you state or something you declare? Have you considered Jesus may have His own testimony which He will give to you? Have you imagined you can receive His testimony without ever entering His presence? What would Jesus’ testimony necessarily include?
3. The failure to receive “the prophets.” This is something different than merely following the prophet, because we saw in the earlier verses the hosts who claim to follow the prophets John, Moses, Isaiah, Enoch, etc. were damned. To receive is different than to follow. But implicit in the phrase, also, is the ability to actually discern when a prophet is sent.
4. The failure to receive “the everlasting covenant.” This, also, may not be what you imagine. Joseph Smith spoke often

about the everlasting covenant. It is worth a good deal of study if you have interest in knowing about those things.

To claim to be “of Christ” without having received His Gospel, heard from Him His own testimony, recognized and received the message to repent from a prophet, not just to say but to do, and to thereby receive the everlasting covenant from heaven, these are the meaningless claims which will damn. Those who fail to do so but still claim to be “of Christ” will be like the liars and thieves who are left suffering until the final resurrection. They will suffer the wrath of God. Their pride will be burned away by the things they suffer. Then will they lament, “O that we had repented in the day that the word of the Lord came unto us” (See Helaman 13:36). Such people are religious, in fact very much so. They are eager to claim the status of a follower of the prophets. They boast they follow them. They think themselves better than others precisely because they claim to worship true prophets who will save them.

But without the Gospel, they are damned. Without the testimony from Jesus they are damned. Without receiving the prophetic message to repent, awake and arise, they are damned. And without these first three they are unable to receive the everlasting covenant. Therefore, they depart this world proudly, filled with unbelief and foolish pride from their false religion, and enter into their suffering.

FEBRUARY 10, 2012

Standing Up To History

LDS scholar Dan Peterson has written an article in the *Deseret News* on February 9th titled, “The Restoration Stands Up to History”. His notion is that there are three levels to church history following an Hegelian model of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Although this

puts a happy face and familiar intellectual language on the subject, I respectfully disagree.

The first level is what could be described using any of the following terms, some favorable and some insulting:

Faith Promoting
Sunday School's version
General Conferencesque
Faithful
Testimony Building
Sanitized
Limited
Burning-in-the-bosom inspiring
True
Incomplete
Propaganda
One-sided
Censored
Correlated
Official
Entirely Trustworthy
Missing Important Details
(many others)

These descriptors reflect the point of view of the one using them. Depending on the person's vantage point, they describe the view a certain way. Interestingly, there are people of great faith who would feel comfortable using some of the more pejorative terms.

The second level could be described in any of the following equally contradictory terms:

Critical
Historically Accurate

The Full Story
Anti-Mormon
Faith Destroying
Sanitized
Incomplete
Propaganda
One-Sided
Faithless
More Trustworthy
Candid
Including Important Details
Unofficial
Not Allowed in Sunday School
Forbidden
True
Uncensored
(many others)

These descriptors overlap with the first and begin to show the problem of the first two category approach (thesis/antithesis). Once again, despite the fact some are unflattering, these second level descriptors could be used by people of faith who strongly believe in the Restoration.

This leads to the final level where Bro. Peterson proposes it is possible to return to something akin to the first level, but with “a richer and more complicated version of history.” This is the happy ending of the process.

This kind of orderly progression is becoming more difficult by the day. The Internet has introduced a new world. The result of that explosion in available information has made the first level an island of isolated views. Anyone participating in such lessons

can return home (or even sit in class), go on-line and look further into anything said by the instructor or manual. What was once “Fantasy Island” is now just a peninsula being besieged. It cannot thrive any longer in pretended isolation. The barbarians are already inside the gate.

If the church persists in imposing the first level as its stock-in-trade, the “apostasy” Bro. Marlin Jensen speaks about will continue. The first level cannot sustain a day long shelf life anymore. We need to drop the pretense of having all antiseptic characters, living or dead. History needs to unfold. It WILL still be faith promoting. But the faith it will promote will be more hearty, robust, realistic and enduring. We will become acquainted with characters who at times made serious mistakes, were struggling, befuddled, headed in the wrong direction, but suffered for their mistakes and came to peace with faith despite the pain of this mortal realm.

The basic argument of Bro. Peterson is absolutely correct. The Restoration WILL stand up to history. In a much more marvelous way than it does in the first level of wasted effort. That may have been good in an era of limited information, and may still be good for the Primary children. By the time they are age 12, the complications of life and the failures of mortals should be introduced and discussed.

Why hide George Albert Smith’s mental illness? Why avoid the origins of his mental instability? Why not let those who suffer from similar maladies know there has been a church president with such serious problems? Why use the pedestal to support a fictional character? Why not let him emerge as the frail, likable man he was?

Why not take the initiative as saints to go to the third level voluntarily? Why not acknowledge, face and discuss the very matters that are costing people their faith right now? Why let them

discover the problems from hostile sources instead of from friendly sources? Why not strengthen one another in our faithful search for the truth, rather than let those who dispense historical events from a perspective which challenges faith get the first chance to tell our children and our converts? When they do that they gain credibility and we lose it.

FEBRUARY 13, 2012

Valentine's Day

We have a few thanks to dispense for Valentine's Day:

Rome, for killing Christians.

Roman Catholicism for honoring the killed Christians.

Pope Gelasius I for designating the Feast of St. Valentine. His decision would be rescinded by Pope Paul VI, but by then it was too late to undo the celebration.

Valentine (there may have been three of them sharing the same name) for giving his (their) life as a martyr(s) to a hostile Rome.

Chaucer for turning the day into something romantic.

Hallmark for dramatically pushing the commercial opportunity in the day.

Wall Street, candy makers, jewelry sellers, teddy-bear companies, and the detritus of commercialism that exploits the relationship between those who care for one another for preying on insecurities and using it to lever us into purchasing stuff.

Commercial television, radio, the Internet, newspapers and outdoor advertising for their contributions to the selling and buying frenzy now associated with the day.

And last and least of all me — for reminding you who bother to come to this blog today or tomorrow that tomorrow is Valentine's

Day and you ought to do something to note the event. In homage to Chaucer, that ought to be romantic, but in rebellion against the commercialism of our day, make it an act or write a poem (or if you're incapable of that then a letter), or show some kindness instead of making a purchase.

Now, I gotta figure something out myself... because I really do love her and want that idea to be clear in her mind. And the commercialism of the event makes it clear is **MUST** be observed.

FEBRUARY 13, 2012

Bishop Whitney's Revelation to Joseph Smith

Years after the revelation (after the problems in Kirtland) informing Oliver Cowdery that it was inappropriate for him to command Joseph Smith because Joseph was at the head of the church, (D&C 28:6), Bishop Whitney sent a note to Joseph Smith:

Thus saith the voice of the spirit to me, if thy Brother Joseph Smith will attend the feast at thy house this day (at 12 ocl) they poor & lame will rejoice at his presence & also think themselves honored.

"Yours in friendship & Love

"NKW" (See Dean Jesse, The Papers of Joseph Smith, vol. 2, pp. 130-131).

Joseph responded by immediately canceling the Hebrew school that day and attending with his wife, father and mother the feast for the poor offered by Bishop Whitney.

Clearly, the idea that another person could receive revelation that involved even the church president was not an apostate idea during Joseph's day as it is in ours. Bishop Whitney was not rebuked

by Joseph. Instead he and his revelation were honored by Joseph responding, attending the feast and being grateful for the invitation.

Since Joseph Smith received the early revelations setting the order for the church, and yet responded to Bishop Whitney's revelation to him, it suggests our current view of limits on who can get revelation may not be the same as Joseph understood them.

It is another interesting topic worth studying in our history to help us understand how the Lord really operates. We should be careful about adopting formulas as the solution to something when the conduct of the Prophet through whom the revelation came did not apply it consistently the same way we do today.

FEBRUARY 13, 2012

Podcast

I reluctantly did an interview with John Dehlin at Mormon Stories Podcast. I do not like doing those types of things. You can listen to it ([link: here](#)). John Dehlin asked that I do the interview and then stay around to answer some questions on his site. I took care of that and anyone who is interested can read the remarks there.

If you choose to listen, the interview is approximately 2 1/2 hours. I had no input on the questions asked and no input on the title of the interview.

FEBRUARY 15, 2012

First Impression

The interview I did for **Mormon Stories** has an introductory title designed to grab attention and get the followers of that site to listen to the interview. I presume most of that audience is unacquainted with what I've written. I know John Dehlin had not read any of

the books I've written before interviewing me. He did read some of the posts on this blog, but has not completed reading any book I've written and has a copy of only one of them. He had limited information from which to conduct the interview.

The impetus for doing the interview came from recommendations John Dehlin received from others who had read some of my writings. He followed up on the recommendation, and persuaded me to participate.

In some of the reactions to the interview, his audience has presumed the headline title to the podcast is an accurate representation of what I'm all about. It's rather attention grabbing to say that someone "Claims to Have Seen Christ." That was a deliberate attempt on John Dehlin's part to get someone who knows nothing about me and knows nothing about my work to listen to the podcast. It gives the impression to a stranger that I wear that claim on my sleeve. That I am a braggart. Worse still, that I have little regard for the sacred and tend to profane deeply personal experiences and to parade them about as if it made me noteworthy. If that were true, I would think such a person would be unbelievable. Therefore, when the listener's reaction is indignation, I can understand that. It is reasonable.

On the other hand, if someone had actually read my writings, they would find there is almost nothing of me in them. I write about doctrine, history and scriptural exegesis. Even *The Second Comforter* is a book about the reader, not the writer. It gets inside the person reading it and causes them to reflect on their own relationship with God. To the extent that I am mentioned, it is in the context of my failings, shortcomings and mistakes. The reader is walked through the process of overcoming their own failings, following a path, and undoing their mistakes. At the end the reader should be

better acquainted with their own deepest desires, and regard me as little more than a flawed, but believing fellow-sojourner in this challenging predicament of mortality.

I am not bothered by the first impression given by the title. The best reaction I can think of to what I've written would be this: "I can't stand Denver Snuffer; but what he has written is of value to me." That reaction will do two things: First, it will establish a proper view of my irrelevance. Second, it will focus on the ideas advanced, which are in my view, a reflection of the Lord's plan to rescue us all from our fallen condition.

Those who collect their first impression of me from John Dehlin's headline will be quite disappointed to find there is very little of me in anything written. Or, perhaps not disappointed, but rather relieved. Either way, I am not responsible for the way he has titled the matter and have no complaints about the way he did. After all, he came into the interview without an adequate basis to know anything about the work I've been doing. Knowing almost nothing about that work, I thought he did an admirable job of asking critical, important and relevant questions. As a composer of headlines, I suppose he displays a flair for that, as well.

FEBRUARY 16, 2012

Priesthood Authority: Pres. Packer's Remarks

In the Worldwide Leadership Conference this month President Packer made this interesting statement:

Any elder holds as much priesthood as does the President of the Church or as I do as an Apostle—different offices. But the priesthood is not delegated out and parceled a little here and a little there. It is given all at once. In the ordinance where

ordinations take place, the priesthood is conferred, and then the office is conferred. So a young man as young as 18 planning to go on a mission has this ordinance, and they first say, “We confer upon you the Melchizedek Priesthood” and then ordain you to the office of elder in that priesthood. (See “Priesthood Power in the Home”)

This statement is interesting in its implications. All the more so because of President Grant’s alteration of the practice. He discontinued conferring the priesthood. Instead he had the church ordaining to an office in the church, which he said was enough. There was no need to confer priesthood, only to ordain to an office. On the point raised by President Packer, we have an earlier statement of President Jos. F. Smith dealing with a slightly different issue. These two statements, however, can be considered together:

Then again, if it were necessary, though I do not expect the necessity will ever arise, and there was no man left on the earth holding the Melchizedek Priesthood, except an elder—that elder, by the inspiration of the Spirit of God and by the direction of the Almighty, could proceed, and should proceed, to organize the Church of Jesus Christ in all its perfection, because he holds the Melchizedek Priesthood. (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 148)

These explanations of the “whole” being present in the conferral to anyone of the Melchizedek Priesthood has profound doctrinal implications regarding the subject of “keys” and their application. Brigham Young claimed possession of keys through his ordination to the apostleship (1835). He would later adopt Elder Pratt’s position that the relevant keys came in the 1836 Kirtland Temple appearances. This topic of how authority is preserved or passed is also quite interesting and worth pondering, I think. Something

about which many claims are made, but the underlying mechanics are not well understood.

Clearly, if it was important for angels to individually appear to Joseph (and Oliver or Sidney), then it raises the question of how widely that gets spread about, and how any surviving Elder could organize the church “in all its perfection.” Then again, what does Jos. F. Smith’s reference to “the inspiration of the Spirit of God and by the direction of the Almighty” include?

President Packer’s teaching that any elder in the church holds as much priesthood as does the church president or any of the apostles is, however, a very valid point. I agree with President Packer on that score.

FEBRUARY 17, 2012

Groups

An observation about discussion groups:

The greatest mischief of discussion groups lies in the mistaken impression that collective effort will help the individual in their personal journey. The path to God is solitary. It is between the individual and the Lord. Groups create an artificial environment. The stage erected lets the group appear to occupy center stage moving the Lord into the wings.

It would be better to spend the same hours pondering or praying. Any person doing that would be better served than they are by devoting time to arguing, debate or the convincing of others.

When you learn a new idea and that is followed up with questions or uncertainties about how to make it fit together with current belief or understanding, pondering and praying is more useful. Groups debate. They argue over how to fit it together. How you

fit it into your understanding will be different than how another does. The group may not share your background or have studied what you have. Therefore, a group discussion may not even address the difficulties you are contemplating.

In a group discussion there is more contention than harmony. Contention is dark and invites errors. It would be far better to contemplate, meditate, study scriptural passages, to look into related statements from prior patriarchs, prophets and apostles than to debate with others. New information can open the mind. Contentious debate will close it.

When the Lord appeared to Paul on the Road to Damascus, there were others with Paul. But the interview was between Paul and the Lord. The same is true of Joseph in the Grove, Nephi on the mountain, Moses on the mountain, the Brother of Jared, Enoch, Abraham, These and the many other times the Lord spoke with or appeared to His followers came in solitary interviews. (There are of course exceptions. There were two disciples on the Road to Emmaus. The appearance at Bountiful involved twenty-five hundred. But these exceptions are just that—exceptions. On the Road, the two disciples had previously been acquainted with and taught by Him. They were prepared. It was the very day of His resurrection. He was looking to establish a body of witnesses. The same is true of Bountiful. As I discuss in *The Second Comforter*, those witnesses were carefully prepared and self-selecting.)

Another problem with discussion groups, or even valued teachers, is the tendency to take attention that belongs to the Lord and give it to a man. No man is supposed to be the focus of your adoration. That belongs to the Lord alone. Men who seek to become the focus or to “win” a debate are likely to draw attention to themselves, rather than to place the focus where it belongs.

If even one member of a discussion group is unprepared, the Lord will withhold from everyone the greater light. If you tie yourself to others, you may find it hinders, rather than helps your progress. Since no two people are similarly situated, there will be hindrances for some participants.

The scriptures are a gold standard for parsing the mysteries. They contain a great deal of undiscovered truth. Unlocking those mysteries is almost always done in study, contemplation, prayer and solitary reflection apart from the world. Discussion groups become part of the world as soon as they deteriorate into contention. Take a look at discussion boards. How often are they wholesome and free of contention? The “comments” on this blog were disabled because of the deterioration that took place here.

No one can help you find your way back to God. Ideas and doctrines will; men will not. They are a poor substitute for truth, careful study, individual prayer and meditation, pondering and parsing the scriptures and developing your mind. If someone has something to teach, let them teach. Then go your way and ponder upon it. But debating and arguing is valueless or worse.

FEBRUARY 18, 2012

A Contrast:

Two dialogues:

Jehovah: Abraham, take thy son, thine only son whom thou lovest, and offer him as a sacrifice unto me.

Abraham: Thy will be done.

Jehovah: Pharisaunt, take thy son, thine only son whom thou lovest, and offer him as a sacrifice unto me.

Pharisaunt: I don't feel good about that. That is neither tender nor merciful. I doubt God would ever ask such a thing.

Lucifer: Take thy son and anoint him, call him blessed, and keep him in thy care.

Pharisaint: Now that is tender!

Lucifer: Sacrifice is not needed, for I intend to save all mankind so that not one soul will be lost. The odds are you shall be exalted.

Pharisaint: Now that is merciful!

Lucifer: Yes, I am the god of this world, worship me and there will be nothing but reward to follow.

Pharisaint: Who was that other one asking for sacrifice?

Lucifer: He has been my opponent from the beginning. He has opposed my ever mercy, my ever tenderness, and he pretends to displace me as the god of this world.

Pharisaint: How can such a being, demanding cruel effort, who does not offer tender mercies as you do, ever hope to be worshiped?

Lucifer: He is not. There are some who pretend to do so, but there are none among my chosen, holy Pharisaints who do.

FEBRUARY 20, 2012

Interview By My Wife

My wife looks at links to the blog, and also searches other sites to review discussions. As a result, she has posed the following questions and asked I answer them:

- 1. Why do you refer to the church presidents as “modern popes” in your new book?**

A: That is not my term, but a term borrowed from President J. Reuben Clark, a respected counselor in the First Presidency. I use it because he used it. I assume he meant no disrespect. I certainly did not.

2. **Why did you refer to the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve as “the fifteen men” on your blog?**

A: That is not my term, but a term used by Church Historian Marlin Jensen, a respected member of the Seventy. I use it because he used it. I assume he meant no disrespect. I certainly did not.

3. **Why do you refer people to your books in answers you give in the Mormon Stories interview? Are you trying to market a product?**

A: The interview actually started and stopped with my first answer. When John Dehlin heard me answer his first question, he stopped the interview and told me I had to let him control the flow and keep the answers short. He explained that long answers would make for a poor interview and we could not get it done, and I needed to trust him. So we started over again and what is on the podcast is the “take two” version involving short answers. Questions that ask about a topic I’ve written 180,000 words to carefully explain cannot be done in a brief oral response. Therefore, I attempted to be clear by referring to what I’ve written rather than leaving a listener with the impression all I had to say was what was included in a brief oral response. I couldn’t care less if someone actually reads my books. I provide them as an explanation of what I believe and why, but it requires someone to take the trouble to find them, buy them and read them. That is a barrier I assume few will overcome, but those who do will have the full answer rather than a sound-bite response. Since my livelihood is practicing law, if I were attempting to promote something of economic value to me it would need to be my law practice. I do not do that. Apart from giving free copies to friends, there are very few members of

my own ward who even know I've written a book. In my stake, there can't be more than a handful. I've never spoken of them while serving in any capacity in the church. But it is actually amusing to think a niche market like Mormon doctrine and history is a money-making audience to begin with. When you add to that the fact nothing I write is advertised, and we've declined two approaches from Deseret Book to have them carry copies, it becomes even less of a money-making venture. The books are not for everyone. They are difficult to obtain and not widely distributed because I know they are not meant for everyone. I mention them on **my** blog, but that is because if someone is interested in reading the blog they should have become acquainted with what I've written first. That is purely voluntary. I don't want everyone reading what I write.

4. Why do you think it appropriate to call Joseph Smith “bone-headed” in your Mormon Stories interview?

A: Joseph called himself foolish. The Lord rebuked him for his carnal desires, boasting and fearing man more than God. These are both Joseph's (*JS-H* 1:28) and the Lord's (*D&C* 3:4-7) characterizations of him. Therefore, I mean no disrespect, but believe the term is a modern descriptor which reflects what both Joseph himself and the Lord have stated about him. It does not lessen him in my estimation.

5. Do you believe the church leaders today are comparable to the Jewish leaders at the time of Christ, specifically do you compare Thomas S. Monson to Caiphus?

A: No. I did not do that in the interview and do not believe that is true. I used the reference Christ made to supporting the clearly wicked leaders of His day to illustrate how great a deference is owed. If those wicked men were deserving respect,

then good men trying hard to perform a difficult job deserve all the more respect and deference. In fact, if you listen carefully to the words used you will find that comparison was not made in the interview, but instead the contrast was made.

6. Do you lead a following?

A: Not as far as I am aware. I tell all who either listen to what I say or read what I write not to follow me. All should remain active and faithful as Latter-day Saints. The church leaders alone have the right to preside over the church's affairs. I believe we all have a duty arising from baptism to mourn with those who mourn, and to serve one another, which is best done inside the church.

7. Have you said the Correlation movement has led the church into apostasy?

A: No. I only quote President David O. McKay's statement that he believed it would have that result. Everyone is free to decide for themselves the results of the Correlation process.

8. You must have extremely good balance in order to walk the razor's edge: pride; membership; priestcraft; discipleship. How do you do it? What lessons have been afforded you, allowing you to remain objective?

A: I'm not sure I understand the question, but I disagree with the premise. I fail in every respect. I suffer for my failings. I will continue to suffer for many things because the failings continue. I do not believe it is possible to be perfect and mortal, but I do believe a mortal can have a perfect intent. God appears to weigh our intent far more than our actions. He knows the desire of the heart motivating the conduct, and can look beyond the errors and foolishness displayed to the underlying desire to serve and

honor Him. Christ repeatedly said this was the case. The rich Pharisee was contrasted to the widow. He certainly gave more. She clearly gave much less. But her heart willed to give all. His did not. Her sacrifice was accepted, his pride was rejected. This is how God views us all. He is not handicapped as we are.

9. Do you think the temple keys are lost?

A: Church presidents have frequently said the keys to perform plural marriages have been taken from the earth. The 1990 changes to the endowment removed some of what had previously been regarded as keys to salvation. However, anti-Mormon crusaders Jerald and Sandra Tanner have preserved them and make them available on the Internet. So, if they are in fact keys, and if they need to be known, then they have not been lost but merely removed from the temple and put onto the Tanner's website. If someone believes they need them, they can still be had and cannot be said to have been lost. Beyond that, I leave it to each person to decide how important such things are to their relationship with God. I'm of the view that the temple rites are not the real thing, but are instruction and an invitation to receive the real thing.

10. Why do you believe it appropriate to speak about something so sacred as an appearance to you by the Lord ?

A: Anyone who has had the Lord appear to them should testify as a witness to that fact. That is paramount. It is important for witnesses to declare He lives. That they have seen Him. That His life did not end on a Roman cross in Judea. That He rose from the grave and all of us have hope through Him for our own rescue from death. That is critical. What is not appropriate for disclosure are details that go beyond what the Lord has chosen

to make public already through the scriptures or ordinances. He controls that. Though He may reveal much to a person, and place them under a different standard than what is given openly to mankind, that is His decision. Until He commands, the line is drawn between witnessing He lives—which is required, and disclosing what He alone reserves for Himself to reveal—which is forbidden. I have said and I do believe our Lord has a continuing ministry. But that is His, not mine. Like any Latter-day Saint with a testimony of the Lord, I testify to help my fellow Saint increase in faith in Jesus Christ. I have an obligation to do so. We all do.

11. Have you ever been criticized by church leaders?

A: No. I've never been criticized nor asked to stop writing by any church leader. Not from my bishop, stake president, nor any higher authority. I have had some contacts, but they have been private, and encouraging me to continue. There have been a number of people who have returned to church activity because of what I've written. Those results are viewed with some support. The criticism I am aware of, some of which has been quite harsh, has come from overanxious church members who have not read the things I've written.

12. Have you singled out President Boyd K. Packer for criticism?

A: No. In fact he is the single most often quoted living authority in my writings. I have a great regard for him and have never criticized him, but have often defended or quoted from him. His "*Candle of the Lord*" sermon was a milestone talk. When Pres. Monson and Pres. Packer die, that will mark the first time there will be no apostles in the Quorum of the Twelve who were there when I joined the church. He represents a symbolic

transition point for me, and I will very much mourn his passing which I hope is many years from now.

13. Why do you criticize the church if you are a faithful member?

A: I do not believe I criticize the church. I believe I respond to criticism by providing an explanation of the issues which are alive and driving people away from activity or membership. If everything I had written disappeared this instant, that would not stop the issues from being discussed. The real critics are studying ways to undermine faith and developing new arguments against the church all the time. They do not need to lie about the church to undermine faith. They only need to tell truths which we have hidden. The best thing we can do is to tell the truth first, and do it from the vantage point of faith. If we still believe, and we know about the problems, then we are best situated to disclose and address them. Being angry with a faithful member for being honest is a futile act. Hiding from the truth is equally futile. The truth is going to be told. Better us than the antagonists to tell it.

14. Do you admit some of Joseph Smith's sexual activities were sinful or immoral?

A: That is not as easy a question as it may appear. You would need to know about the ancient kingship, and the king's duties to begin to answer. That is a topic so foreign to current culture that I'm not even going to undertake an answer. Under American social, cultural and religious mores of the 1800's Joseph Smith was immoral. Under the traditional Christian values of both his and our day, he was immoral. Under an ancient form of kingship, that is a great deal less clear. So the conclusion on the question must ultimately await several things: First, a determination if Joseph Smith was being placed in a very ancient

form of conduct by the commandment of God. I happen to believe he was. But that is not a topic that can be answered in passing. Second, was Joseph Smith's conduct justified under that ancient standard? Again, that depends on Joseph's role and God's command. Third, does this have anything to do with current practices? Clearly it does not. We've long since lost track of those things and perhaps we are the better for it. When Joseph was crowned a "King and Priest" (Melek and Zadok) he was confirming a peculiar and ancient tradition. The tradition does not belong inside a democratic republic like the United States, and the rules governing the conduct of such a person are completely foreign and quite distasteful to modern sensibilities. So we are left with a standard which would condemn him, and the possibility of another standard which would justify him. One of the requisites of this ancient office required the death of the king. Not merely in ritual, though later imitators would substitute a surrogate to kill in the renewal of kingship. The original required the actual sacrifice of the king himself. Joseph did that, as well. In that sense he was perhaps an authentic return of the ancient order at more than one level. As one learned friend of mine has characterized Joseph, "he was a Divine King and a Divine Victim." There is only one of those at a time. And his death by sacrifice is required as one of the incidents of the ancient office. But those ideas hardly belong to our day. Just alluding to it will confuse most people. There are probably only a handful of people who could speak intelligently about the topic. Yet, if you know what you're seeing, it is all over in the Old Testament. So let me reduce it to this: Based on our standards and based on social and religious standards in his day, Joseph Smith was sinful and immoral. Whether God

viewed him as such is a different question. That would need to be taken up with Him rather than me. I would hesitate to reach a conclusion on that question, however, unless you know a great deal more than most people know today, and even then not before receiving the Lord's judgment on the question.

15. Why do you say the restoration through Joseph Smith was intended to bring back something more ancient than the New Testament Church?

A: Because that is what Christ taught. He did not say we would return to conditions like His day. He said when He returned the conditions would be like the days of Noah. Noah's day is to be mirrored in ours. That day is pre-New Testament. I think Christ knew what He was talking about. Even the restoration itself is an imitation of the more ancient family of Abraham.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are the three great patriarchs. The Twelve Sons of Israel are the next tier of patriarchs. There were seventy descendants of Israel who went into Egypt (Exo. 1:5). The church structure imitates the patriarchal family. We will be going back there before the Lord's return. You don't live as "one" when you are inside a hierarchy. You live as "one" when you are a family having all things in common. The family was the "church" in the day of Noah. That is where it is headed. We've just temporarily frozen the process. It will resume again.

16. Why do you ignore the church's claim that the Nauvoo Temple was completed and the fullness was retained by the church?

A: I don't ignore the claim. I explain it. It is called "the traditional narrative" and is set out in my last book. The church's position is essentially that completing the baptismal font is all that was required, and Joseph conveyed the fullness above his red brick

store. That position leaves many questions unanswered: Why did the Lord state the fullness could only come in the temple if the red brick store was sufficient? Is it correct to conflate baptism for the dead with fullness? Why did Brigham Young, upon his return to Nauvoo in August, abruptly change his mind and teach that completing the temple was essential? What about the ultimate failure to finish the structure? Did it matter that in 1847 the structure was not complete, even though it had been “regarded as sufficiently complete” to be dedicated? What about the revealed warnings? Were the saints driven out of Nauvoo, or planted and protected there? Did that matter? Were the saints put through judgments and buffetings rather than being protected and blessed? Did that matter? What reason is there for the Lord to state He had taken the fullness away in 1841?

Does the church’s traditional narrative answer all the questions, or start from the conclusion and reason backward? If you begin with the conclusion that it was successful, and then string together whatever is needed to justify the conclusion, is that a faithful retelling of events?

These and many other questions deserve at least careful consideration. I set out the church’s position or the traditional narrative, then give some careful consideration to the obvious questions which remain worth asking and grappling to resolve. If the traditional narrative is correct, then much of the language in Section 124 is a “bluff” by the Lord, apparently only to motivate the saints to engage in the drudgery of a public works building. But He apparently did not really intend to discipline them, drive them out of Nauvoo, put them through suffering and buffeting, and stir them up to repentance. Therefore, the events in Nauvoo belong inside a narrative of success, blessing,

glory and vindication by the faithfulness of those involved. Their bickering, ambition, and even Brigham Young's condemnation of the those receiving their endowments as being "thieves" because they stole the temple garments intended to be used by others reflects only credit on these faithful saints. It is puzzling to me, but perhaps it is not to others. If the traditional narrative answers all the questions of the faithful, active saints today, it does not do so for other reasonably-minded people. I'm trying to have it make sense to them. So, in a way, those who only want to consider the traditional narrative really don't need to read the book or to consider the difficult questions I raise. But for this question, I maintain I have not ignored the traditional narrative, but have responded to it with a reasonable discussion told in an objective way. I hoped it would be matter-of-fact and dispassionate. It was not written to be any kind of "hit piece" but instead a rational discussion of reasonable historic events holding some importance for those who believe, as I do, in the Lord's involvement in the history of the Latter-day Saints.

17. Do you love your wife?

A: Beyond all reason and forevermore. Apart from the Lord, there is no friend or other companion whose company I long to retain for all eternity than hers.

FEBRUARY 21, 2012

Faithful History

Is "faithful history" required to be accurate? Is it better if there is an effort to improve the facts by adding details drawn from the writer's imagination? Is it our responsibility to be faithful to the truth or to promote faith? Because a "faithful history" could be either of those.

As an example, the sacrifices of those who built the Kirtland Temple were a living testimony of their conversion to the restored Gospel. They literally suffered to build the Temple. They endured poverty to make it possible for the building to be completed. Some went without food, because they were not always paid for their labors. Their heroism is beyond question.

For some reason, however, we aren't willing to retell their great sacrifices without fanciful embellishment. We insist on improving the story by adding a fake overlay about the women donating their best china to be ground up and put into the exterior plaster. LDS Church History researcher, employed by the Church History Department, Mark Staker researched the topic and found the story of the women donating china originated in the 1930's. The story was such good fodder for "faith promotion" that it soon found its way into official versions of Kirtland history.

There was china ground up into the exterior plaster, but it came from a community dump where such things were discarded. Kirtland, like all other communities, had a broken china dump from which the children retrieved scraps to use in the building process.

When the truth of the sacrifices are then overlain with a fictional story about the best china sacrifices/donations, we run the risk of having our members find out about the exaggeration later. Then upon learning this "faithful history" is nothing more than "faith promoting fiction" we risk having them disbelieve everything about the church's history. What is true and what is exaggeration? What is left of the stories we retell? If we'll add this fake account of the sacrifices, does that mean there really weren't sacrifices made?

We invite the crisis of faith when we turn from "faithful retelling" and offer "faith promoting fiction" as our Sunday School fare. We could get away with that once. We can't now.

Similarly, a recently converted Willard Richards visited Kirtland after the Temple had been built. He observed this about the city:

Sectarians build their own houses first, then, if ever, a house for their Gods. The Latter Day Saints first build the Lord a house & now he is giving them an opportunity to build their own dwellings. (Willard Richards letter to his sister Jan. 30, 1837)

This was the example in Kirtland. It was not repeated in Nauvoo, where the brick mansions we have restored today bear testimony to the priority change from Kirtland to Nauvoo. In Nauvoo the brick mansions were all built and completed before the Temple was completed. Indeed, there were no more mansions being built (because the city was then abandoned) while the Temple was being completed. The Nauvoo Temple attic was used from November 1845–February 1846 by Brigham Young and the Twelve to perform ordinances in the incomplete Temple. The first wave of refugees left in February, the day following the last endowment rites performed in the unfinished structure. The Temple was not considered complete enough to dedicate until April of 1846, but even then was not finished. A year following the dedication a Palmyra newspaper editor visited the building in 1847 and remarked on its incomplete condition. He speculated about how grand it might have been had it ever been completed.

We have a tendency to “know” what we want to have other people believe or conclude. Then we adapt our story to support our conclusion. That is not history. It is an approach that invites us to tell faith promoting but unfaithful history. We ought to confine ourselves to a faithful retelling. No matter how poorly that reflects on our history, it reflects credit upon us.

FEBRUARY 23, 2012

Zion

I do not think Zion will initially be where people think it will.

I do not think Zion will be at all what people think it will be.

Nor do I think people are at all ready in our current circumstances to begin to learn what Zion will require; what standards of conduct will be required; what covenants will need to be assumed to establish Zion.

I do not think Zion will be an institutional enterprise. The angels will be the ones responsible for that gathering (See D&C 77:11, Mark 13:27). This presents an apparent impediment to those who either don't believe angels minister to mankind, or who believe they only minister to church leaders, or who think them possible, but have never been administered personally by them.

In the Mark 13 text, the repeated "and then" language of the KJV is not chronological or sequential. It is referring to the generation living at the time it starts, who will live to see it all occur. Meaning "in that day" or more precisely, "among the generation then living."

When there is an abomination that renders desolate in the Temple, you will also see afflictions. You will see those who claim they are Christ, or they are Christ's true living prophet—though they are not. You will see signs and wonders, including great building projects and the astonishing ability to speak in every language across the world in a single time, but that will not deceive those who take the Holy Spirit for their guide. They will be able to distinguish between the truth and error. Heaven will be shaken. Angels will gather those who follow Christ rather than trust the arm of flesh, and ultimately Christ will return and the world will be wasted at His coming. Though there will be some fragment, like the days of

Noah, there will be those who have been gathered by the angels. Those few will be preserved.

Ezra Booth was among the first to hear the original four missionaries sent out at the very beginning of the restoration. He wrote about what Oliver Cowdery told him of the original mission. It was to include identifying the location for the New Jerusalem. Ezra Booth explained:

“his is the person commissioned by the Lord to proceed to the western wilds, and as he himself stated, ‘to the place where the foot of a white man never trod,’ to rear up a pillar for a witness, where the temple of God shall be built, in the glorious New Jerusalem. But alas! he was arrested by man in his course, and by the breath of man the mighty undertaking was blown into the air, and Cowdery was thrown back among the Gentiles, to await for the spirit to devise some new plans in the place of those which had been frustrated. But as the city and temple must be built, and as every avenue leading to the Indians was closed against the Mormonites, it was thought that they should be built among the Gentiles, which is in direct opposition to the original plan. (Ezra Booth, Letter IX, originally published in the *Ohio Star* in 1831)

It has since been reprinted in numerous places and can be found on-line as well.) This is referring to the charge given to Oliver Cowdery, and the other 3 missionaries to find the place where the New Jerusalem would be located. That effort was aborted when the Federal Indian Agents threatened to arrest them if they didn't go back across the line separating the whites and Indians from each other. That line was at Independence, Missouri. So Independence was as close as they could get at the time. By default Independence became the location for the New Jerusalem.

It has remained the location in popular understanding ever since then. Subsequent revelations seem to confirm that as the site.

When Joseph Smith fled Nauvoo on June 22, 1844, and crossed the Mississippi headed west, he explained his purpose was based on revelation. “The Lord warned him to flee to the Rocky Mountains to save his life,” according to his brother Hyrum (*DHC* Vol. 6, p. 547). It was there he hoped to locate the Book of Mormon remnant who have the prophetic responsibility to build the New Jerusalem. It will not be built without their involvement.

If the first missionary assignment for this purpose (finding the location for the New Jerusalem to be built before the Lord’s return) was directed to the distant west, beyond Missouri, and Joseph’s ambition was westward toward the Rocky Mountains, there is reason to suspect that our presumption that the New Jerusalem will be in Independence Missouri is somewhat misplaced. I am persuaded it will not be there until after the Lord’s return. There will be a location elsewhere, in the Rocky Mountains, where the preliminary gathering to a Holy City to be built will occur before the Lord’s return. Then, following His return, activities will also involve Jackson County.

What precedes His return may be diminutive, but that didn’t matter in the case of Noah, so it won’t matter in the coming days *like* the time of Noah. It will be interesting to see how the Lord fulfills His prophecies, promises and warnings, because He does tend to fulfill the prophecies He speaks. Oftentimes not in the way we imagine. Then we will understand the saying “the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence” (D&C 133:31). The initial gathering before the Lord’s return will be in the Rocky Mountains.

This gathering will require a kind of social order we are unprepared to live. We cannot be “one” in the sense required for Zion in our present social, political, economic and educational systems. It requires a kind of inter-dependence and cooperation we find repulsive. Even those in the commune on Isaac Morely’s farm, after converting to Mormonism, couldn’t live the united order and have all things in common. It was this experience, prior to conversion, that led to the revelations about the united order. It fell apart. We’ve never had a successful long-term experience trying to live within that kind of system.

FEBRUARY 24, 2012

Question on Priesthood/Monarch

I received the following question:

I was reviewing the audio version of *Teaching of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, and came across the part where Joseph makes the comment that High Priests are to administer in Spiritual things and hold communion with God. But not to ‘exercise monarchical government’, or appoint meetings without the approval of the Elders. Considering the limited comment you recently made on your blog regarding the divine right of kings, but also considering the invitation found in the temple to be both a priest and a king, I wondered how these thoughts reconciled and was interested to hear your thoughts.

My response:

The object of the Lord’s return is governmental. More specifically, Monarchical. He will return to be a “King of kings” and a “Lord of lords” (See Rev. 19:16). To be a King who presides over “kings” requires the existence of other kings. To be a Lord over other “lords”

requires the existence of other lords. But the church's High Priests are not qualified to be that, and therefore cannot exercise such a monarchical form of government. To do that is a revolutionary act inside the United States of America. That is one reason the Lord has decreed there will be a full end to all nations (D&C 87:6). He will institute a new form of government that will not be compatible with other national interests.

The Lord's plans are quite different than we sometimes presume them to be. Joseph Smith was apparently tuned in to that in a surprisingly revolutionary way. It is no wonder he was killed. He represented a new era where old things were to be thrown down and a new order established.

Joseph represented an opportunity; but we weren't interested in it. Ultimately it was the Saints themselves who complained and got him to return and surrender. He remarked that if his life was of no value to his friends, it was of no value to him. He realized the Saints were unwilling to follow into the kind of remaking of the world his ministry offered.

I doubt Joseph Smith would be any more welcome today than he was in his own time. I think we'd treat him like a crank, who entertained delusional ideas and offered a foolish, magical view of the world unworthy of serious consideration.

Kingship is tied to the promise of land, as we see in the case of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and Lehi and Nephi, among many others. When the land is given to the Lord's "king and priest" it comes from the Lord by His word and is everlasting. It is received by covenant, and when received the king *is* the land in a very real sense. He and it are connected by the covenant, and what goes on thereafter is a reflection of how the king (or his descendants) honor or dishonor the covenant.

Although the Melchizedek priesthood cannot exercise monarchical government (a form of government involving Patriarchal rule), there will be a return of this kind of order before the Lord returns. The remnant will build Zion. There will be an Ephraimite with the authorization there to “crown” those kings and lords who will rule with Christ at His return (D&C 133:32). Everything will happen as foretold. But we can’t and aren’t supposed to be able to see it beforehand. We are only supposed to witness it unfold before us. We cannot comprehend God’s strange act. Those who take the Spirit for their guide will not be deceived or hewn down (Mark 13:5–6; D&C 45:57). This was the original form of priestly order from the beginning of time. It will return at the end of the world again (Moses 6:7). This priestly order is what allowed a small group to gather at Adam-Ondi-Ahman where the Lord visited with them and comforted Adam (D&C 107:53–55). That scene, involving Adam and seven who held this same priesthood will be re-enacted again at the end. We are working our way back in a great chiasm of history as the Lord counts us back to the beginning and we draw to the end. He calls it His “strange act” (D&C 101:95; Isa. 28:21). Joseph’s ministry took us back to an earlier time. The Lord intends to return us back further.

But, again, these are things Joseph understood and began to put in place. Now we have only a tattered remainder of that original purpose and an ambition to become something more modern, like the other faiths. Today we have no capacity for monarchical government under the present organization of things. That might be a good thing. We get into less trouble that way.

Ambition for these things will not accomplish a thing. It will be the Lord’s doing or it will not happen at all. He always tells us emphatically that it will be HIM who brings again Zion, not us (3

Ne. 16:8; Mosiah 12:22; Isa. 52:8; D&C 84:99, among others). Our ambition will not bring it to pass. Only His will can do so. The challenge, of course, is to be among those invited by the angels to participate rather than to be left among the residue who will be hewn down.

FEBRUARY 26, 2012

More Ancient Than the New Testament

Someone made this comment:

I was listening to an interview in which you were talking about the current LDS church being like the New Testament church, as opposed to being like a much older patriarchal religion. I don't see the difference between the two. On my mission, a woman related the following story: Her brother had served his mission in Italy and on a p-day, while participating in some tourism activities, they toured an ancient Roman Catholic cathedral which had some fascinating murals on the walls. This missionary was amazed by the murals, took pictures, and she showed me copies. I requested copies of the pictures which she gave to me.

They were pictures of paintings of people wearing robes which were unmistakably temple robes, the most amazing painting was depicting the veil in a temple. The temple robes were different from what we wear today in some respects, but with enough similarities there was no mistaking them. They had similar hats to what the men wear and they had the fig shaped aprons and most tellingly, they had symbols of the compass and the square. The painting of the temple depicted several posts covered by the veil between the posts. One of the posts had a little mallet hanging down and a hand sticking out

between the curtain and the post. According to the story, the missionary asked the priest about the paintings and the priest could tell him nothing other than they were old paintings. The missionary knew better, as did I and anyone else who had ever been inside a modern temple.

My response: Read Nibley's book *Temple and Cosmos* and you'll probably see these ancient paintings, murals and mosaics. He has gathered together some interesting material. Val Brinkerhoff's two volume set *The Day Star* also gathers together a good deal of photographic material showing the antiquity of the temple themes and ceremonies. There is no question there are temple rites restored through Joseph Smith that relate to antiquity, and not merely to updating and correcting Masonic-inspired innovations. There was a liturgical return to antiquity in the post-New Testament era which many believe was grounded either in secret teachings of Christ during His ministry, or developed in His post-resurrection forty-day ministry.

However, in the case of the Restoration, had Joseph finished his work, there was something more coming. That is the issue I was referring to in the podcast. Look at Facsimile No. 2, Explanatory notes numbers 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21. You'll see there was more to come. Take a look at the *TPJS*, also, and you will find Joseph intended for something more than the New Testament era religion. His work was intended to bring back the very religion of the first man. This was to be more than merely a church, but "this is a new and an everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning" (D&C 22:1).

You can also look at Margaret Barker's work such as *The Older Testament*, *The Great High Priest*, *The Great Angel*, *Temple Theology*, *The Lost Prophet*, *Hidden Tradition*, and *Temple Mysticism* and

you will find a Protestant scholar whose thesis is that Christ was restoring the older faith, not creating a new one. Her work has so impressed Mormon scholars that she has been invited and spoken at BYU, in addition to presenting at the Smithsonian Conference on the Bicentennial of Joseph Smith.

Margaret Barker's writings suggest there was some very ancient covenant, along with an ancient priesthood that Christ was returning to the earth through His ministry. The New Testament church was not the objective of either Christ or Joseph Smith. Both were engaged in returning "that which was from the beginning."

Joseph's restored Temple rites are set in Eden. The quest to find God runs through the earliest contact between God and man involving the experience of the first man, Adam and his wife, Eve. They lived in God's presence at the beginning and the Temple message is that we must return there. Our quest is not to stop with a partial return, but a complete return to the beginning.

We tend to think we "have it all" and we got it from Joseph Smith. We have a New Testament church which is by far better than any other form of Christian organization, Catholic or Protestant. We tend to think that was the object the Lord had in mind when Joseph was spoken to from heaven. Then we claim to have preserved it perfectly from then until now. I'm suggesting two things: First, Joseph may not have given us everything because he died before the Nauvoo Temple was completed. The Lord's planned visit there did not happen. We got a lot, to be sure. Whether we have "that which was from the beginning" in the full panoply of what may have been received had the Lord come to restore the fullness in the completed Nauvoo Temple remains an interesting matter worth at least contemplating. Second, we may not have perfectly preserved what we were given. After the November 1845 to February 1846

endowments ended, the endowment was not performed again until 1855. It was not reduced to writing until the 1870's. Several of the church leaders remarked at how surprised they were at how much Brigham Young could remember. That does not mean it was perfectly preserved, only that the volume of recalled material was surprising to them.

You are free to believe as you choose. You can presume the restoration was intended to deliver a replica of the New Testament church. We got that. If that was the objective, I would not dispute it was accomplished. However, I ask the question of whether the purpose was to reach back much further, and has yet to be accomplished. Will the time come when the restoration will have a look and feel rather more like the days of Noah than like the New Testament? I think if Christ knew what He was talking about then this is likely to be the case. I am of the view that there are many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of Heaven which He has yet to reveal (See, e.g., Article of Faith 9).

I think the path to God will run back to the very beginning. It will involve a return to the original, paradisiacal glory which was Eden. Zion is connected to that very return (See, e.g., Article of Faith 10).

This is why I made the remark. It is my view, and certainly not the view of many others. You are in very good company if you think otherwise. We are, after all, allowed to believe according to the dictates of our own conscience, and are free to exercise that privilege according to how we each understand God's will and intentions (See, e.g., Article of Faith 11).

I like the idea that if an idea troubles you, then set it aside. It is either true or not true, and you are not yet in a position to comprehend it. Either way, it is not for you. Since we are all in the search

to find our salvation before God, I trust God will deal with each of us in His patient, benign way and the truth will unfold before each sincere seeker. Until God in His wisdom makes a matter clear, no one should presume they can rush another person into accepting it.

I also believe the Lord will not leave the sincere seeker uninformed. He will not answer one person and deny another if they both ask and do so in sincerity willing to accept the answer. Any person who comes before God acknowledging He is a God of truth and cannot lie will learn the truth from Him (Ether 3:12). That also means if you are not willing to accept truth from Him, but require Him to meet your standard then there is really no point for Him to clarify things for you.

I am personally satisfied that the objective of returning to the most ancient, original faith, both was and is the purpose of Joseph Smith's calling. And that objective remains an unfinished work. It will finish, I think coincidentally with establishing Zion.

FEBRUARY 27, 2012

Ether's Reference to Christ as Father

Here is a question taken from the Book of Ether. The question:

Explain Ether 4:12 where the Lord says: 'he that will not believe me will not believe the Father who sent me. For behold, I am the Father...' I understand that the Father and Son are unified in everything and I understand that the Son is the Father because he has begotten us through the atonement and that He was also the creator. How would you explain that verse to someone just reading it for the first time? It sounds like a description of the trinity as many Christian religions view that the Father and Son are literally one being.

Response: Foremost in this creation is the reality of Christ. He lived. He died, voluntarily, as a sacrifice. His death was unmerited (1 Peter 2:22; Alma 22:13–14). He died because of other's sins, not because of His own (1 Peter 2:21–23). He did so to make an offering to appease the ends of the law (2 Ne. 2:6–7).

Law has one purpose: It establishes required conduct that when violated requires a punishment to be imposed. Without punishment there is no law (Alma 42:22). We came here to live in a fallen state where we are subject to law and knowing when violate the law the result would inevitably require punishment (Alma 42:18). Christ came to suffer that punishment (1 Peter 3:18).

Overarching all else in this creation are the acts of two parties. Adam fell (Moses 6:48). Christ arose (Alma 11:42). Adam introduced death. Christ overcame it (Mosiah 16:8). Through Christ the law was made unjust because death could make no claim upon Him, but He willingly died to suffer the punishment He did not merit. That forever satisfied death's claim (Mosiah 15:9). Once it had claimed the life of one who did not deserve to die, it could no longer make claim on Him or those He came to redeem. His punishment was infinite, because His sacrifice was infinite. If He did not merit death then death took from Him what was infinite and would have no end (Heb. 4:15). He submitted. His death satisfied the need for dying.

Mankind still die. That is just; but after their death, Christ's sacrifice makes it possible to live again, just as He did (Jacob 6:4). But you know all this already.

The "Father" of your eternal life will be Christ (D&C 35:2). He is your Father who is in heaven, because your continuation after the grave will come through His sacrifice. He will literally provide

you with the resurrected body you will inherit. This makes Him the Father (See Mosiah 5:7).

Secondly, they are His teachings which will provide you with more than just resurrection. He will provide the further possibility of glory to you on the conditions He has made possible through obedience to Him. The one you follow, whose teachings you accept, whose ordinances you accept, is also your Father (1 Cor. 4:15). The role of the Father is to raise His seed in righteousness. Christ's teachings are given in His capacity of a Father to all who will follow Him. Through His teachings you can have a new life here and now. You can be "born again" as His seed (1 Peter 1:23). To do that you must first accept His role as your Father/guide. Then you must further accept His role as Father/Redeemer. When you do that, He gives you a new life by His teachings and new life by His ordinances.

Here, excluded from the presence of Heavenly Father Ahman, we have no way back except through Christ (Mosiah 3:12). (For the name "Ahman" see D&C 78:20 where Christ mentions His Father's name). He must become our Father to bring us back again into the Ahman's presence. Christ visits here. Christ labored here, lived among us, ministers still among us, and though resurrected still walked alongside two of His disciples. He appeared in an upper room, cooked and ate fish on the lake's shore, and appeared to many. He will come to dwell here again. The Father Ahman, however, only appears in a state of glory, has not stood here since the Fall of Adam, and awaits the completion of the work of Christ before He will again take up His abode here.

Christ is not the same person as Father Ahman. Christ becomes the Father of all who are redeemed through Him. Therefore, by redeeming you Christ has become your Father in Heaven. You will

have many fathers, including Christ, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and in our dispensation, Joseph Smith as well. And all these will also be children of Father Ahman.

FEBRUARY 29, 2012

Question on Sealing

Someone asked about sealing power. This is something that I'm not going to be able to answer on the blog. It would require too much, even for a multi-part posting as I have done on the Remnant and on Interpreting History. On the subject there are three chapters at the end of *Beloved Enos*, written from a perspective that accepts the church's claims to this authority. All the first seven books, to the extent the issue arises, accept the church's claim. In *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, the history is viewed from another perspective, but the question of whether this perspective is better than the traditional narrative is left to the reader to decide.

The closest thing to a direct discussion of how the Father seals someone His is found in the last parable in *Ten Parables*. Even there, however, the story is focused on the interplay between heaven and mankind, not those ordinances that exist in the unexplained events happening in the background.

Because of the importance of the subject and the many scriptures and important details which bear on the topic, it cannot be adequately explained without significant effort to marshal together the critical information. That is not appropriate for a blog. Nor are blog readers necessarily even going to understand the posts if they are unfamiliar with why the question would be asked.

I've pointed out that our ordinances contemplate a further ratification from heaven. In D&C 121:36-37 the power of heaven must

ratify priestly power, or it is nonexistent. This is the same principle Joseph wrote about in Liberty Jail (D&C 121:36). In D&C 132:26 the ratification through the “Holy Spirit of Promise” must confirm a sealing for it to become eternal. Then in D&C 132:7 we learn it is possible for this to be conferred “on but one on the earth at a time” which made it possible for Joseph Smith to seal up to eternal life. In effect, Joseph became the Holy Spirit of Promise through operation of the Divine appointment to hold the right. That term “Holy Spirit of Promise” we use without adequate appreciation that it can be an office held by Divine appointment. The office is held by more than just a single mortal man at one time, and includes others who minister here as well. These, at a minimum, are the Lord, John the Beloved, the Three Nephite Disciples, Elijah, other angelic ministers, as well as potentially others about whom we know nothing (D&C 49:8). There is also the meaning of limiting it to one man “on the earth at a time” when it comes to widely separated people without any probability of contact during their lifetimes. An example would be when the Lord in His post-resurrection ministry appointed Apostles in Palestine and Disciples in the New World. He also may have had others in other locations during His many appearances in that season, all of whom were given similar authority to seal. Were they so geographically separated they could be said to be on different earths for all practical purposes? Or is there an exception undiscussed in Section 132 because the world has become smaller and more integrated since the Meridian of Time? I take no position on that, only pose the question.

The Missing Virtue focuses on the love between the man and woman. That love is what attracts the notice of angels, the approval of the Lord and the effort by heaven to bring the couple to salvation. They become fruit worth laying up against the season.

Therefore, the work assigned by the Lord to the angels was to repair what was lacking in the man so as to preserve them against the day of the harvest. The underlying reason, the driving force, the preservative justifying heavenly attention in the story is the love between the man and woman which the angels recognize fits the pattern of heaven.

John said “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Of all the power in earth and heaven, the greatest form of power is love. It is the power of creation, and motivation of God, the reason for existence and the purpose behind all we see here. It is the harmonizing attribute between man and woman, man and fellow-man, God and man, our descendants and ancestors. Our love motivates the highest aspirations, causes our greatest anxieties, moves us to action and summons our greatest will. This is godlike.

The ordinances matter a great deal. They are the physical manifestation of our love for God. They are important and symbolize everything we hope for, and all we desire to be in God’s eyes. Our service to our ancestors through Temple work matters. It is the way we show our love for those who went before, even if we do not know a thing about them. The devotion and service we render does not go unnoticed by heaven.

God will preserve our love above everything else. It is in that attribute we find ourselves most like Him. Or, in other words, most like Them. Heaven is a community. The General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn are all elevated by their love for one another and love for their posterity, and are able to live in peace because they are given over to love.

Beyond ordinances and rites there is a power by which God governs. It is the power which creates, and which binds together as nothing else in the universe. The ordinances point to it, but you

must become love for the Lord to pour power into the things you hope to have preserved.

No act of service will go unnoticed. No act of devotion is meaningless. Our ordinances matter a great deal. When done with love they have power. But the power to seal should be viewed as related to this great power, not as an administrative authorization or a corporate franchise.

That view is so skewed and divorced from heaven that it almost always results in abuse, ambition, and perversion of men's hearts. When that happens, amen to the priesthood or authority of that man. If used to favor friends or to control and exercise dominion over others, it is political power, not priesthood power. But you have the revelations before you so you should already know that.

If I were to recommend any answer to someone troubled by the issue I would suggest first, it is a matter between you and heaven, not you and another man. The Lord has ample means to seal you up to eternal life whether you live in the most remote location on earth or in downtown Salt Lake City. That is irrelevant. Second, the greatest preservative is your love of God and your love of your fellow-man (Matt. 22:36-40). This matters a great deal more than your calling, your connections, your income, your social status, age, genealogy or education.

MARCH 2012

MARCH 1, 2012

More Ado About Church History And Race

We have yet another pronouncement concerning the church's past ban on priesthood for blacks. This is the most recent church statement:

The Church unequivocally condemns racism, including any and all past racism by individuals both inside and outside the Church. In 2006, then Church president Gordon B. Hinckley declared that ‘no man who makes disparaging remarks concerning those of another race can consider himself a true disciple of Christ. Nor can he consider himself to be in harmony with the teachings of the Church. Let us all recognize that each of us is a son or daughter of our Father in Heaven, who loves all of His children.

Recently, the Church has also made the following statement on this subject:

The origins of priesthood availability are not entirely clear. Some explanations with respect to this matter were made in the absence of direct revelation and references to these explanations are sometimes cited in publications. These previous personal statements do not represent Church doctrine.

If this is altogether accepted as a carefully considered, inspired and accurate statement of the truth, it raises some interesting questions about the church today and in the past:

President Hinckley’s statement, reiterated again today, is that “no man who makes disparaging remarks concerning those of another race can consider himself a true disciple of Christ.” If this is correct, how are we to now regard Brigham Young?

[In the priesthood I will tell you what it will do. Where the children of God to mingle there seed with the seed of Cain it would not only bring the curse of being deprived of the power of the priesthood upon themselves but they entail it upon their children after them, and they cannot get rid of it. If a man in an unguarded moment should commit such a transgression,

if he would walk up and say cut off my head, and kill man woman and child it would do a great deal towards atoneing for the sin. .. It is a great blessing to the seed of Adam to have the seed of Cain for servants. ...Let this Church which is called the kingdom of God on the earth; we will sommons the first presidency, the twelve, the high counsel, the Bishoprick, and all the elders of Isreal, suppose we summons them to appear here, and here declare that it is right to mingle our seed, with the black race of Cain, that they shall come in with with us and be pertakers with us of all the blessings God has given to us. On that very day, and hour we should do so, the priesthood is taken from this Church and kingdom and God leaves us to our fate. The moment we consent to mingle with the seed of Cain the Church must go to destruction. (“Address to the Legislature” by LDS Church President and Territorial Governor Brigham Young, Feb. 5, 1852, spellings not corrected)]

John Taylor?

[Why is it, in fact, that we should have a devil? Why did not the Lord kill him long ago? . . . He needed the devil and great many of those who do his bidding just to keep . . . our dependence upon God, . . . When he destroyed the inhabitants of the antediluvian world, he suffered a descendant of Cain to come through the flood in order that he [the devil] might be properly represented upon the earth. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 23, Oct. 29. 1882, p. 336)]

Many others, even President J. Reuben Clark who objected to pictures in the Deseret News showing black and white children mingling together, made disparaging remarks. What of them? Are we now to regard them as not true disciples of Christ? If so, then

what does that do for the church's status? Did the church pass through a lengthy era of being led by those who were not true disciples of Christ and yet retain all of our blessings, entitlements, power and priesthood? How did that operate? Can a non-true disciple of Christ pass along priesthood authority? Or is President Hinckley's declaration an overstatement because it proves too much? Does any of this raise the possibility that church leaders can in fact "lead us astray?" Or instead is it that we are never led astray, but they can make mistakes? If so, how are we to distinguish between mistakes, and errors so serious they cannot be regarded as "true disciples of Christ" and yet preclude leading us astray? Doesn't something have to give? Were the church members who opposed the ban "true disciples" even though they were out of harmony with their leaders? If that is the case, how can we know where "true disciples" are to be found, if there is a possibility for the lesser, dissident members who are out of harmony with those leaders to be "true disciples of Christ?" Does it mean we can have "true disciples" led by those who err in teaching for doctrine the commandments of men? Isn't this the problem the Lord intended to solve in His opening statement to Joseph Smith? Are there some leaders now serving who are "not true disciples of Christ?" How do we distinguish between those who will be regarded as "not true disciples of Christ" at some future point but who are now serving in leadership? When do we know we are being taught for doctrine the commandments of men?

These are very interesting questions. What a great opportunity this presents for more study and careful contemplation by us all. Should I agree with President Hinckley and think the worse of earlier leaders? It seems harsh to think them "no true disciple of Christ" on the one hand, but on the other their remarks are quite

disparaging of those of another race. Actually, disparaging of one specific race, not other races generally. Should culture bend a “prophet’s voice” or does a “prophet’s voice” require culture to bend? Were they originally just reflecting social values when speaking disparagingly about the race, and are they doing the same now there is widespread antipathy for racism? If that is the case, then do we really need anything more than popular opinion to guide us then and now?

If these church leaders spoke “in the absence of revelation” how were they “revelators?” Or weren’t they? If they were sustained as “revelators” but spoke in the absence of revelation and were wrong, how often has that happened? How often does it happen? How do we tell the difference between truth and teaching for doctrine the commandments of men? Aren’t we told essentially everything coming out of the hierarchy is entitled to respect as if it were the Lord speaking? Does that apply when they speak “in the absence of revelation?” What a fascinating assortment of issues the church has now given us to ponder.

Does our eternal salvation require us to resolve these things correctly?

There are so many more questions I can think of now that the church has given this new announcement. I wonder why they weren’t addressed in the latest announcement.

MARCH 1, 2012

Fullness of the Gospel Among Gentiles

I’ve written about the issue of the “fullness of the Gospel” being rejected by the Gentiles on this blog in connection with a discussion of the Book of Mormon remnant and 3 Ne. 16:10. There is

another mention made of this matter by the Lord in a prophecy He spoke to His Apostles at Jerusalem. That prophecy was restored by revelation through Joseph Smith.

The Lord explained to His Apostles that:

- Men's love to one another would wane.
- Iniquity would increase.
- The Times of the Gentiles would come in and the Gospel light would be restored to them.
- The Gentiles would not be willing to receive it, however.
- They would turn their hearts away from Christ.
- They would prefer the precepts of men.
- Then, because the Gentiles refused to accept His fullness, the Times of the Gentiles would be fulfilled.
- Nevertheless, there would be a few disciples who would stand in holy places and not be moved by the overflowing scourge poured out (D&C 45:27–32).

In the prophecy, the Lord returned to His parable of the Ten Virgins. For those who would take the Holy Spirit for their guide, and because of that “have not been deceived” they will abide the day and not be hewn down by the judgments to be poured out (D&C 45:56–57).

This revelation to Joseph Smith was in March 1831. It anticipated more would be given as the scriptures were revised. Matthew Chapter 24 was translated later that same year and appears in *The Pearl of Great Price*, as “Joseph Smith-Matthew.” The latter-day tribulations begin with verse 31. There the warning again refers to the widespread latter-day deception. Even His “elect” will be vulnerable to being misled. However, before His return His ministering angels will preserve and gather those few who “treasureth up [His] word” (*JS-M* 1:37).

The Lord's prophecy focuses on two things His elect will have to rely on: Angels and the Holy Spirit. These two are the last days source through which His elect will find safety. Conspicuously absent are men, or perhaps more accurately, the arm of man.

Interestingly, the elect will be able to see this as it unfolds (*JS-M* 1:39). They will recognize it is like the time of Noah (*Id.* v. 41–42). Then again, if those who thought themselves wise actually knew when the thief was coming in the night to overtake them, they would not have remained asleep (*Id.*, v. 47).

Taken in aggregate, it appears the Gentiles do have a fair chance given to them. We can understand the Lord's lament, "what more could I have done?" Still, there is always a difference between saying, "I am of Christ," and "receiving the testimony of Christ" (D&C 76:100–101).

MARCH 4, 2012

The Importance of Scriptures

As a sign of the Lord's keen interest in the scriptures He pointed out to the Nephites they had neglected to include Samuel the Lamanite's prophecy in their records. He admonished them to "search the prophets" who had testified of Him (3 Ne. 23:5). Samuel the Lamanite was an outsider, whose ethnic identity was with the largely apostate enemies of the Nephites. His genealogy was not kept among the Nephites. He did not live among them. Where he came from and where he went afterwards was apparently unknown to the Nephites. None of that mattered to the Lord, because the Lord sent him.

Samuel had no Nephite credentials. Everything necessary to assess his relevance is summed up by the Lord: "Verily, I say unto

you, I commanded my servant Samuel, the Lamanite, that he should testify unto this people[.]” (3 Ne. 23:9).

When he spoke, Samuel modestly stated his credential: “Behold, I, Samuel, a Lamanite, do speak the words of the Lord which he doth put into my heart[.]” (Hel. 13:5). And, “behold, an angel of the Lord hath declared it unto me[.]” (Hel. 13:7).

Samuel warned them they were condemned because of their love of riches (Hel. 13:20–22). This love caused them to be filled with “great pride, unto boasting, and unto great swelling, envyings, strifes, malice, persecutions, and murders, and all manner of iniquities” (*Id.* v. 22). Samuel warned them they boast they would have accepted the true prophets and not persecuted them (Hel. 13:25), but they were worse than their predecessors because:

if a prophet come among you and declareth unto you the word of the Lord, which testifieth of your sins and iniquities, ye are angry with him, and cast him out and seek all manner of ways to destroy him; yea, you will say that he is a false prophet, and that he is a sinner, and of the devil, because he testifieth that your deeds are evil. (Hel. 13:26)

In contrast, when a man comes to declare the people are righteous, and do not need to repent, but all is well with them, such a man:

ye will receive him, and say that he is a prophet. Yea, ye will lift him up, and ye will give unto him of your substance; ye will give unto him of your gold, and of your silver, and ye will clothe him with costly apparel; and because he speaketh flattering words unto you, and he saith that all is well, then ye will not find fault with him. (Hel. 13:27–28)

Though the Nephites rejected him, and he fled from among them, when the Lord came He acknowledged He had sent Samuel. He criticized the Nephite records for neglecting to include the full extent of Samuel's prophecy, asking "How is it that ye have not written this thing[?]" (3 Ne. 23:11). The content of scriptures should always reflect the Lord's words, no matter the source He elects to speak them.

This example from the Book of Mormon is a clear warning intended for our day. Christ's admonition to "Search the prophets" is just as important an admonition now as it was then. So the challenge remains to keep ourselves ready, and listen to the words of the Prophets. It is our common misconception, however, that there will never be another Samuel the Lamanite who is an outsider and without credentials to be given a message for us by the Lord. We expect that if there is a message for our day it will come from the head of the church, not some obscure outsider, like Samuel. We imagine it is always safe to disregard such characters. It is curious, however, that the Book of Mormon, which is the "most correct book" includes this odd departure as an example. It is odd the Nephites never figured out our system. It is so much better than theirs was. We really are a royal generation, the most blessed of all who have ever lived! We never face such a test, because we imagine we have an authorized source of truth, an institutional charisma that can never fail, and through which we can never be led astray. The Lord has made it so much easier for us in our day. It somehow makes sense to us, but leaves me wondering if the Lord ought not apologize to the Nephites for making it so much harder for them. Then there is that unfortunate recent announcement by the church a few days ago about church leaders speaking "in the absence of revelation" which complicates these questions.

It makes me wonder if our eternal salvation depends on sorting out the truth from error. Or, alternatively, if it matters in the more immediate unfolding history preliminary to the Second Coming and the whole earth being cursed if we get it wrong.

MARCH 5, 2012

Cake: Shadow Stabbing

Cake's lyrical prose sometimes strikes a chord of truth. I've puzzled over why they aren't recognized for their musical genius by more folks.

Adjectives on the typewriter
He moves his words like a prizefighter
The frenzied pace of the mind inside the cell...
Outside, outside the world
Out there you don't hear the echoes and calls
But the steel eye, tight jaw, Say it all, say it all
But the white paint, plastic saints
Say it all, say it all, say it all...
Say somebody's got to say it all
Somebody's got to say it all. (*Cake: Shadow Stabbing*)

How much wasted time is devoted on the umbilical keyboards of the Internet ranting over things that have no value, giving the mis-impression of accomplishing something important? In the din of opinion, we gather that the truth no longer has an independent existence. It is all opinion. If you should sway it then you've done something godlike, because in the polling and measuring what people think really matters.

Outside there is still God. Even if we don't hear the echoes and calls of the flood engulfing mankind when we turn to Him.

There, apart, outside the world, if you should encounter God you will find yourself with a steel eye and tight jaw, and no longer able to look upon the white paint and plastic saints where the world continues to adore and worship.

Somebody's got to say it all....

Not to please others, but to just speak what desperately needs to be said. Somebody's got to speak it.

I am a Latter-day Saint. But that is merely a congregation. It doesn't matter much, really. Within that congregation there are those who want to control what I think. They are waging a losing battle. To win they must persuade, not condemn and intimidate. Show me the errors and I will gladly abandon them. Demand I walk away from truth and I will die first. This is why truth can only ever be spread by gentleness and meekness, by persuasion and kindness. It cannot be dictated (D&C 121:41-42).

When all you have left is a hollow cry that you have authority, you've lost the argument. YOU (no matter who "you" are) don't have any authority. Only heaven has that (D&C 121:35-36). And it isn't sharing it with the proud, vain, ambitious and controlling (D&C 121:37).

Quoting someone in a position of "authority" who is not in possession of the truth should not persuade anyone, and certainly does not persuade me. Those echoes and calls can't even be heard once you've gone outside the world.

Ignorance can be put on stilts and equipped with a bullhorn, requiring everyone to notice it. But it remains unworthy of the time it takes from you.

It would be better to know God than to please men. I doubt many men who know God ever do please men again. Instead they

look with pity at the white paint and plastic saints. It would be good to reach them, but it is only necessary to let God reach you.

MARCH 6, 2012

It Will Be Again

As it was once, it will be again. Adam was born again and received the Record of Heaven, or in other words the Holy Ghost (Moses 6:66). Adam was born of the Spirit and quickened in the inner man (Moses 6:65). Through this he was after the Order of the Father (Moses 6:67). This same Order will return again at the end of the world (Moses 6:7). The end of the world is the destruction of the wicked (*JS-M* 1:4) to happen at the Lord's return (Matt. 13:38–40).

This same Order is connected with surviving the day of His return. "There are, in the church, two priesthoods" (D&C 107:1). "There are three grand orders of priesthood referred to [in the Epistle to the Hebrews]" (*TPJS*, p. 322–23; *DHC* 5:554–55).

God, who presides over this process, created Adam in His likeness and image. The image of God's body consists of both the male and female, and they together are called Adam (Moses 6:9). Through it, the man and woman called Adam begat a son named Seth (Moses 6:10). From this we can see the procreative power, which produces offspring, is possible only through the man and woman called Adam, because together they possess this godlike attribute. Apart they are not in God's image. Their seed continues, which is what God does (D&C 132:19–20). The return of this Order, that was from the beginning, requires the man and woman who have had God's Spirit poured on them, and have been quickened. It is promised to return again before the end of the world.

We do not inherit these things by imposing our views on God, but by allowing ourselves to become converted to His views. His

are as far above ours as the heavens are above the earth (Isa. 55:9). We must receive counsel from Him, not give it (D&C 22:4). God alone makes us a son of God (Moses 6:68). Enoch was also a son of God (Moses 6:27).

Noah, whose days are like the Coming of the Son, was ordained to this same Order by God (Moses 8: 19). Noah called upon men to repent, but men did not listen to him (Moses 8:20). Moses told them to repent and follow Jesus Christ, receive the Spirit and be taught by heaven which will reveal all things; but the people did not listen (Moses 8:24).

When they refused to repent, God destroyed all flesh because of their corruption and violence (Moses 8:28–30). “But as it was in the days of Noah, so it shall be also at the coming of the Son of Man” (*JS-M* 1:41). The good news is that this Order will return. There will be the opportunity to repent. God intends to make sons again. This promise should make us all search the matter and freely repent of our sins, using the Spirit as our guide to find God’s will. Then we should have the courage to conform to it. This is good news, as long as we are willing to heed it.

MARCH 7, 2012

Discarding and Staying Aloft

You can throw things out of the hot air balloon to try to stay aloft. But eventually, you will run out of things to discard and will descend anyway.

There is only one real solution to staying aloft: You must return to what got you lighter than air in the first place. There must be more fire.

You can’t fake such a fire. Your claims to have fire will accomplish nothing. You will continue to descend, even if there are

momentary jumps from throwing something weighty overboard. Rhetoric is powerless to curb the fall.

MARCH 8, 2012

Repentance

I received a question:

Knowing that the local church leaders sometimes misjudge the repentance process and sometimes struggle to know what the individual truly needs. Is it possible to properly repent for serious sins and have the repentance process be between just you and the Lord, without confessing your sins to your bishop? On many occasions, we read in the scriptures that repentance was done by confession to the Lord alone. If you truly had a change of heart and had abandon the sin, wouldn't it be ok for you and I to do the same today, as recorded in the scriptures, without confessing to church authorities?

This question is a reflection of just how “institutional” our orientation has become. The church is powerless to forgive sins. Christ forgave sins during His mortal ministry (Mark 2:5–12). Christ forgives sins in His current ministry (D&C 61:2).

Christ may allow men to possess the power to forgive sins as in the case of Joseph Smith (D&C 132:46), but that has definite limits. Men are given such power because they will **never** use it *independently* of the Lord's will (Helaman 10:5). Even those who will be allowed to “judge” others in the final judgment, will not have independent reign, but must announce Christ's judgment, not their own (3 Ne. 27:27).

The only one who can forgive sin is Christ. He requires us to forgive one another, but will Himself determine whose sins He

will forgive (D&C 64:10). He is the only gatekeeper for forgiveness (2 Ne. 9:41).

If you think the church leader is attuned to the Lord's voice and can give you comfort, encouragement to come to Christ, and help guide you in the path, then counseling with such a man is very worthwhile, but he cannot forgive sins, for that you are required to look to the Lord.

CHAPTER 11

Nephi's Brother Jacob

MARCH 9, 2012

Nephi's Brother Jacob

The first words from Jacob, Nephi's brother, are marvelous. He begins his public ministry among the people of Nephi with these words:

“I, Jacob, having been called of God, and ordained after the manner of his holy order, and having been consecrated by my brother Nephi,” (2 Ne. 6:2).

Jacob was “called of God.” He was also “ordained after the manner of his holy order,” meaning that his ordination came from God. He was like Melchizedek. The manner of this ordination is described in JST-Gen. 14:27–29:

[H]aving been approved of God, he was ordained an high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch, It being after the order of the Son of God; which order came, not by man, nor the will of man; neither by father nor mother; neither by beginning of days nor end of years; but of God; And it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name.

This was the holy order to which Jacob was called by God.

In the restoration of the Gospel, the first time this appeared in the church was in June, 1831 on Isaac Morley's farm. As Joseph Smith recorded it in his history: "the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood was manifested and conferred for the first time upon several of the Elders. It was clearly evident that the Lord gave us power in proportion to the work to be done, and strength according to the race set before us, and grace and help as our needs required (*DHC 1:175–177*). To understand this statement of Joseph you would need to recognize there is a great difference between being "an Elder in the church"—an office held by operation of the church's organization, much like a Relief Society President or a Sunday School President—and the Melchizedek Priesthood. Today there is no appreciation of that distinction. That is because we have little understanding of the history of the church or the scriptures.

In any event, Jacob was ordained by God to "his holy order" or, in other words, received the same High Priesthood as Melchizedek in the only way it can be received: "It [is] delivered unto men by the calling of His own voice." Jacob was one of those.

Despite this, Jacob's right to be a teacher among the people of Nephi reckoned from his brother's presiding authority. Although Jacob was in possession of this calling from God, in order to minister to the people he needed to also be "consecrated by my brother, Nephi." It was Nephi who was the presiding authority. Therefore, to preach to the congregation Jacob needed to be called and authorized. Nephi did this, and Jacob became a recognized, sustained teacher.

Without both, Jacob could have preached, taught and expounded, but he would not be able to speak in an organized meeting of the church over which Nephi presided. From this we see the order

of things. The church and God's authority do not necessarily overlap. But, in his wisdom, Nephi used the very man who God had empowered to be a minister of righteousness within the church over which Nephi presided. Nephi did not envy his younger brother's calling, but supported and advanced him in it. Of course Nephi held the same calling, but that does not matter. Somehow men can find it within them to be jealous of others even if they are called themselves. After all, Lucifer *was* a son of the morning.

Joseph Smith, by revelation in January, 1841, was told that his brother Hyrum was to become "a prophet, and a seer, and a revelator unto my church" (D&C 124:94). Joseph did not envy his brother this calling, but immediately ordained him to the office of Assistant President; in an almost identical manner as had Nephi with his brother Jacob.

From the first phrase out of Jacob's mouth, we encounter doctrine so very meaningful to understanding the way of God. What a great book we have in the Book of Mormon. I do think a man can get closer to God by abiding its precepts than from any other book!

MARCH 12, 2012

Nephi's Brother Jacob, Part 2

Jacob's first *recorded* sermon is not his **first** sermon. Quite the contrary. He admits he was given to a lot of preaching. Jacob records this:

ye know that I have spoken unto you exceedingly many things. Nevertheless, I speak unto you again; for I am desirous for the welfare of your souls. Yea, mine anxiety is great for you; and ye yourselves know that it ever has been. For I have exhorted you with all diligence; and I have taught you the words of my

father; and I have spoken unto you concerning all things which are written, from the creation of the world. (2 Ne. 6:2–3)

Jacob's preaching was plentiful, and always based on two things: First, the words of Lehi. Second, the scriptures. In other words, he was not an innovator. He was a custodian of truth. He wanted to preserve the revelations entrusted to the Nephites; not to add to them, or stray from them.

It is interesting he had this strict orientation in his teaching, because given his background, he could have ventured into a great many other things. We know his knowledge reached beyond the veil. As Nephi put it: “[Isaiah] verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him. And my brother, Jacob, also has seen him as I have seen him[.]” (2 Ne. 11:2–3). In their knowledge of the Redeemer, Isaiah, Nephi and Jacob were peers. Notice how distinct they were from one another in what they revealed. Although Nephi revealed some of what he learned, he used Isaiah as the primary source for his prophetic teaching. Jacob was even more discreet in how he ministered. Isaiah, on the other hand, wrote an extensive prophecy about all of history.

In his earliest recorded sermon Jacob reminds the audience how strictly he confined himself to the two categories above. Then, after Nephi's death, when he took over as the primary prophetic leader of the Nephites, he still displayed the same caution about the text he took for his material. He told the people to come to the Temple and he would prophesy to them (Jacob 2:2). Then in his sermon he quoted at length an allegory from the Prophet Zenos (Jacob 5). When he finished the lengthy quote he added his prophecy:

as I said unto you that I would prophesy, behold, this is my prophecy—that the things which this prophet Zenos spake,

concerning the house of Israel, in the which he likened them unto a tame olive tree, must surely come to pass. (Jacob 6:1)

It goes by quickly, but there it is. Jacob's prophecy is that what he read, the account Zenos wrote, was true. Jacob knew it was true. He had seen it, just like Isaiah had seen it, just like Nephi had seen it, and could tell you that Zenos also saw it and recorded the truth concerning the Lord's unfolding work among the chosen house of Israel.

There is so much about Nephi's younger brother which is a model of the true prophet. His ministry reflects the very things which we should expect to see from a messenger sent by the Lord.

MARCH 13, 2012

Nephi's Brother Jacob, Part 3

When Nephi composed his small plate account, it was approximately 40 years after they left Jerusalem. He included his visionary experiences, but stopped short of giving a full account (1 Ne. 14:25). As he prophesied about the coming of a Messiah to his brothers, they challenged Nephi's teaching of a future Messiah. In that context, he resorted to quoting Isaiah "that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer" (1 Ne. 19:23). Nephi's use of Isaiah in his first book is limited to the single topic of whether the scriptures confirmed his *own prophesy* that there would be a Redeemer (1 Ne. Chapters 20 and 21).

The next quote of Isaiah occurs in Nephi's second book. There the material is quoted by Nephi's younger brother Jacob in his first recorded sermon. In Jacob's use of Isaiah, the scope expands dramatically. Jacob uses it to cover the history, the scattering and regathering of Israel, the latter-day Zion, and then he preaches

and expounds on these materials to give context to the Nephite experience (See 2 Ne. Chapters 6–10).

It is Jacob's more expansive use of Isaiah that seems to have inspired Nephi to turn to the Isaiah materials to complete his own record. When Jacob's sermon is finished, Nephi then adds 14 additional chapters of Isaiah material to complete his record. Then, to end his message Nephi takes Isaiah's themes and gives his final lessons in an American setting, elaborating on the Isaiah themes.

These transcripts raise the possibility that it was Jacob, rather than Nephi, who saw the fit between Isaiah's materials and the Nephite/latter-day Americas. Nephi no doubt used the Isaiah material first, but confined it to the promise of a Messiah. He used it defensively to respond to his older brothers' criticism. Jacob, on the other hand, uses it expansively.

If Nephi was giving credit to Jacob for this expansion (as his two books seem to indicate), then it tells us a great deal about Jacob, and even more about Nephi. For Jacob, we can know:

- He was a careful student of scripture.
- He saw what was possible, not only what was evident on the surface.
- He could apply Isaiah prophetically into the distant future.
- He could put his life and his people's position in history into a prophetic context.
- He was more concerned with the future than with the past.
- He saw their time as important, but not the end of times.

What it would tell us about Nephi is that:

- He was meek.
- He gave credit to his younger brother.

- He allowed truth from the younger brother to instruct even him, the elder brother.
- He refused to fall into his own older brother's jealousy and resentments.
- He was a ready student of Jacob's— the younger brother.
- He recognized inspired truths.
- He wanted others to rejoice in the truth, even if he took a step back in allowing them to be presented.
- He rejoiced in the learning of others.

There is a great deal about the interplay between these two brothers that ought to inform our own approach to authority, truth, learning, “presiding” and recognizing inspiration in others. The Book of Mormon is a treasury of lessons applicable to us. We do not adequately appreciate them.

MARCH 14, 2012

Nephi's Brother Jacob, Part 4

Jacob's first recorded sermon identifies what concerns him. It is the “welfare of souls” (2 Ne. 6:3) and “things which are, and which are to come” (2 Ne. 6:4). The definition of truth is knowledge of things which are, which were, and which are to come (D&C 93:24). Jacob is interested in teaching truth. But the truth he wants to focus on is the present and future of his people.

He identifies Isaiah as speaking “concerning all the house of Israel” (2 Ne. 6:5) and therefore they can be likened to the Nephites. Then he turns to the Gentiles and places them in the future role of “bringing thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders (2 Ne. 6:6). In the dismal future of Nephite destruction by the Gentiles, there is still a more distant day when

Gentile efforts will become helpful, not destructive. When that happens, the Gentile fortunes are reversed, and they will “bow down to [the Nephite remnant] with their faces towards the earth, and lick up the dust of [Nephite] feet” (2 Ne. 6:7). So the cataclysm which befalls the Nephites will also befall their Gentile vanquishers. They will be brought down to the dust as well.

Jacob also reports to his audience “the Lord has shown unto me that those who were at Jerusalem, from whence we came, have been slain and carried away captive” (2 Ne. 6:8). Jacob must have asked to be shown. He asked and was shown, and therefore he knew his family had left Jerusalem in time to avert death or captivity. Jacob was born after they left Jerusalem; but he knew about it, inquired to know, and was shown their destruction.

This reaffirms how the departure by Lehi and the destruction of Jerusalem was inter-related. The Lord uses ‘just-in-time’ scheduling of events more often than not. There is no need to flee until the moment when the destruction is about to begin. Nor is there a need to begin the rainfall before the ark is completed. Nor is there a need to send down fire to consume the offering until the altar is built, the sacrifice offered, the water poured on the offering, and the prayer completed (1 Kings 18:31–38). Timing is always the Lord’s.

Jacob also leaves nothing to the imagination of his audience. He tells them the Messiah will come to Jerusalem, will be scourged there, and will be crucified by them. Jacob knows this “according to the words of the angel who spake it unto me” (2 Ne. 6:9). From this we see Jacob’s pre-sermon preparation does not consist of gathering together thoughts and quotes from poets or philosophers. He consults with angels and dispenses information from heaven. Here is a source which is to be trusted. When speaking of Jerusa-

lem's destruction, it comes from the Lord's showing him, and of the Messiah's mission. It comes from the angel's speaking to him.

We think it an odd thing to have a man speak with the Lord and be ministered to by angels. Yet in the example of Jacob, it is almost matter-of-fact. As if he wouldn't dream of speaking about such things without consulting with heaven.

Nephi's brother Jacob is among the great figures in all of sacred scripture. The critical differences between him and his teaching, and other men giving what they regard as inspirational thought, should not pass by unnoticed. I'm growing to respect this man Jacob.

MARCH 15, 2012

Nephi's Brother Jacob, Part 5

Jacob has some relevant instruction for us. He reports:

And blessed are the Gentiles, they of whom the prophet has written; for behold, if it so be that they shall repent and fight not against Zion, and do not unite themselves to that great and abominable church, they shall be saved; for the Lord God will fulfil his covenants which he has made unto his children; and for this cause the prophet has written these things. (2 Ne. 6:12)

Some of the Gentiles will be preserved, as well. It will be those who:

1. Are among those of whom the prophet has written. Interesting condition. These are already the topic of revelation. That requires us to study the revelations to know something of the Gentiles "of whom the prophet has written." That is no small topic in its own right.
2. Are repentant. Of course, that requires the recognition of the need for repentance. Most of the Gentiles are unaware of their

need to do so. Some because they are not religious. Others because they are overly religious and fail to understand that their religion condemns them. It does not justify them.

3. Fight not against Zion. Here is “Zion” which will come into being at some point. Not today, but by and by. When it does, there will be Gentile opposition to it. Those who aren’t initially invited will find the idea of Zion without them offensive. Their response should be to repent (as in 2, above). Instead, because of their blindness and jealousy, they will “fight against Zion.”
4. Do not unite with the great and abominable church. This is not a single congregation. It is the world itself. The entire world is divided into two: One is the church of the Lamb of God. The other is everything else (1 Ne. 14:10). This is a bigger problem than it may first appear. Inasmuch as there are endless ways to belong to the great and abominable church, but a single way to avoid the great and abominable church, the odds are Gentiles will not find Zion. Instead they will fight against her and join the worldly minions who are opposed to her.

Most of the Gentiles will not meet these four conditions. Consequently, they will be so reduced they will “lick up the dust of their feet” who are in Zion (2 Ne. 6:13). For those few Gentiles who give heed to Jacob’s teaching, there is good news.

Despite all the Gentiles have done to disappoint the Lord, He will “set himself again the second time to recover them” (2 Ne. 6:14). Jacob will elaborate on this future in his own book. Chapter 5 of his book contains an allegory describing all the Lord’s efforts to produce fruit suitable to be preserved against the harvest. Jacob was well qualified to know what he was teaching. His brief confirmation that the allegory is true is so modest, so plain, so direct that it speaks of the man’s confidence. It is unadorned by rhetoric.

The starkness of it suggests Jacob is a man of few words because they aren't necessary.

Jacob bears close study. Unlike the later writers (beginning with Mosiah), Jacob carved his book onto the small plates of Nephi himself.

MARCH 16, 2012

Nephi's Brother Jacob, Part 6

Jacob makes a startling promise for those who live when the destruction begins preliminary to the cleansing of the world before the Lord returns. He says “none will he destroy that believe in him. And they that believe not in him shall be destroyed, both by fire, quakes, and by bloodsheds, and by pestilence, and by famine” (2 Ne. 6:14–15).

This amazing promise is predicated on “believing in Him.” This requires us to understand what the word “believe” means in the parlance of the Book of Mormon. Those who believe in Him know and accept correct doctrine, or the truth about Him. Those who do not know and will not accept correct doctrine or the truth have dwindled in unbelief. They do not believe in Him. They may have religion, may belong to churches, may be active in all their observances, but they are not in possession of belief in Him. Instead they accept for doctrines the commandments of men, and their hearts are far from Him. They teach false and vain things. As a result they neither enter into the kingdom nor suffer those who are entering to go in. This includes those who, though they are humble followers of Christ, are nevertheless led that in many instances they do err in doctrine (2 Ne. 28:14).

There will be many who are destroyed who will be quite surprised by it. They will complain that they have prophesied in

Christ's name, and in His name cast out devils, and done many wonderful works, but they do not know Christ, and therefore never did believe in Him (See Matt. 7:22–24).

If you are one of those who believe in Him, and who will not dwindle in unbelief, will not accept the commandments of men as doctrine, but will take the Spirit for your guide, then Jacob promises that Christ will not destroy you. The rest He will destroy.

Fire will upset the order of things and make societal collapse inevitable. Men's self-inflicted woes will not be the only sign of Divine disapproval. The earth will quake to signal God's disapproval. Interruptions of social order and control will be followed by self-inflicted violence. Bloodshed will be widespread among the survivors. Disease and pestilence will be one of the results of the lack of social order. Air and water will be contaminated. Neglected hygiene will lead to the promised pestilence. As the downward spiral continues, food production and distribution will be inadequate to prevent widespread, global famine. It is as if Jacob could see the sequence of events and gave us the list of how it would unfold, step by step, as the unbelieving are wiped from the earth.

Survival during this bleak time depends on the qualification of "believing in Him." Suddenly, if you think Jacob knew what he was talking about then our doctrines take on terrible significance. What we believe matters. Not just in the distant after-life, but for the preservation of our present lives. Jacob does make a powerful case for studying the Gospel a good deal more carefully than we can accomplish in a 40 minute class-discussion, with an approved "discussion leader," using Correlated materials, rather than a teacher declaring and testifying of true doctrine.

I'm pretty sure Jacob would be a very marginalized Mormon, if he were among us today.

MARCH 19, 2012

Nephi's Brother Jacob, Part 7

The problem with war is it arouses the instinct for killing. As men adapt to war, they become predatory, seeking to destroy those they view as the enemy. They study and train to trade life for death.

Zion will not possess those skills. They won't learn them and will not need them. Zion will be a place of peace, where those who are unwilling to take up arms against others will flee (D&C 45:66–69). Though peaceful, the glory of the Lord will strike such fear among the wicked they will not dare come up against that place (D&C 45:70). As unlikely as this seems, it is true.

When mankind has degenerated to the point of looking at one another as prey, the Lord will not allow *His people* to become prey to the terrible and the mighty. As Jacob (borrowing from Isaiah) explained, “For shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the Lord: Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; for the Mighty God shall deliver his covenant people. For thus saith the Lord: I will contend with them that contend with thee” (2 Ne. 6:16–17). The Lord intends to establish His covenant among those who take the Spirit as their guide, who reject the doctrines of men as truth, who do not trust in the arm of flesh, and who have not dwindled in unbelief.

Those who qualify, and who are in a covenant with Him, will see the destruction of those oppressors who threaten them. The armies and mobs who think they can overtake Zion will learn to their dismay that the Lord intends to protect them in such unmistakable acts they will be compelled to confess He is God and Zion is His people. As Jacob put it:

And I will feed them that oppress thee, with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood as with sweet wine; and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. (2 Ne. 6:18)

The Lord has two contradictory persona's in scripture. He is the Lamb of God, and He is the Lion of Judah. Those two persona's appear in widely separated passages of scripture. They merge together in one passage of scripture written by the Apostle John. It was John who shared Nephi's vision and who was permitted to write of it. Nephi deferred to him. John uses both titles in succession when describing the Lord's role in loosing the seven seals, calling the Lord both "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah" and "a Lamb as it had been slain" (See Rev. 5:5-6). He is the Lion of Judah to those who seek to prey upon His covenant people. He is the Lamb of God to His own.

When you see the Lamb and the Lion lie down together, you may know the Day of Judgment is at hand. It will be both great and terrible to the righteous and wicked.

Jacob knew this. Jacob saw these things before they happened, so he could write his testimony as a warning to those who live in the last days. He was a prophet more for our day than for his own. Provided, of course, we have the eyes and faith to see it.

Jacob's skill in expounding doctrine is not limited to his commentary. It includes the careful selections from Isaiah chosen to illustrate his points and clarify his views. Since he saw the Lord and was ministered to by Him, Jacob becomes adept in recognizing and expounding truth in a way which is trustworthy, and reflects his knowledge of the Lord's great work to save the souls of men.

MARCH 20, 2012

Nephi's Brother Jacob, Part 8

Jacob uses Isaiah Chapter 50 to establish the reality of a coming Messiah, in addition the centrality of Israel to the Lord's plans. Israel is forever backsliding and wayward. Yet the decision to "divorce" Israel is the Lord's and He refuses to do so (2 Ne. 7:1). It was always in His mind to preserve a remnant of Israel as His "fruit" or the product of His mission and ministry. Jacob will return to this theme in his own book. We will look at that later. Here we are just becoming acquainted with Jacob as a teacher.

Even at the end of days, the Lord will continue to focus on redeeming Israel. The "rock" from which they were hewn was Abraham and Sarah, the father of the righteous and his beloved wife (2 Ne. 8:1-2). The problem with Israel is the slumber that keeps them from awakening to their awful situation and repenting of their sins. Jacob sees the end of time, and Israel still slumbers and cannot establish Zion because of their deep sleep. They must awake, put on the strength of salvation or priesthood, shed their filth for beautiful garments, and cease association with the unclean and uncircumcised (2 Ne. 8:24). Zion will not otherwise come to pass.

Zion will never emerge from those who slumber in the dust, whose necks are bound with iron (2 Ne. 8:25).

Zion evades those who desire it because they are too ill-educated, thinking their scholarship has merit and the Holy Spirit does not (2 Ne. 9:29). They are rich, and think it a good thing rather than a hindrance (2 Ne. 9:30). They will not hear, and therefore are as good as deaf. This form of deafness prevents them from hearing the warning and so they will perish in their ignorance of the truth (2 Ne. 9:31). They are also deliberately blind, refusing to see the truth

when it is presented to them (2 Ne. 9:32). They are uncircumcised, liars, whoring after other gods, and worshipping idols (2 Ne. 9:33–37).

It is Jacob who testifies the “keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel” and “he employeth no servant there” (2 Ne. 9:41). Jacob entered through that gate and met the Gatekeeper. He reminds us that He “cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name” (*Id.*).

Jacob then reminds us of his role—the prophet’s role: “Would I harrow up your souls if your minds were pure? Would I be plain unto you according to the plainness of the truth if you were free from sin?” (2 Ne. 9:47). The prophet’s role is **always** to cry repentance. Priests may preside, and kings may rule, but the prophet’s voice is always crying repentance. Prophets have almost never *presided* over a congregation (other than occasionally a small inner-circle). They always speak from the sidelines crying for a return to God’s ways. Even when there were cities who repented in response to the message of repentance, the prophets who gathered them taught repentance and left it to the assembly to govern themselves. So it was with Enoch, and Melchizedek, and similarly Joseph attempted to teach repentance to his people. Enoch and Melchizedek were able to teach the people who wanted so desperately to repent (and did so) that they had angels and the Lord come dwell among them. Joseph sought to accomplish the same, but the Lord never dwelt among the Saints of this dispensation. Jacob bids his brethren and us to repent, hoping his teaching will eventually lead to a latter-day Zion. Apparently there will be a small group who will eventually repent and qualify for the Lord to come dwell among them. It remains a distant possibility, without any concrete progress underway as yet.

MARCH 21, 2012

Nephi's Brother Jacob, Part 9

Jacob remarked about the great holiness of God: “O how great the holiness of our God!” (2 Ne. 9:20). He makes this exclamation after explaining the “mercy of our God, the Holy One of Israel!” Jacob is taken by the enormity of God’s mercy. It is proven beyond any dispute in that “he delivereth his saints from that awful monster the devil, and death, and hell, and that lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment” (2 Ne. 9:19). Having seen what awaits the unrepentant, Jacob marvels at God’s great mercy. The Lord’s “saints” will be spared this torment.

In contrast, Jacob points out that there is nothing but woes awaiting the unrepentant.

But wo unto the rich, who are rich as to the things of the world. For because they are rich they despise the poor, and they persecute the meek, and their hearts are upon their treasures; wherefore, their treasure is their god. And behold their treasure shall perish with them also. (2 Ne. 9:30)

It is a marvel we can read these verses and have no concern for the multi-billion dollar church renovation project underway in downtown Salt Lake City. Upscale housing, retail and office space are being built to stimulate investment in the downtown economy. This is all under the supervision of the Presiding Bishop and First Presidency, using a for-profit corporation. Though Jacob seems to speak about individuals, it leaves us wondering if the same might be said of institutions as well.

Jacob said, “Yea, who unto those that worship idols, for the devil of all devils delighteth in them” (2 Ne. 9:38). That is why we are never to allow any man or group of men to get between us and

God. God alone is worthy of worship. If you put another man or institution between you and God, you are the delight of the devil of all devils, for he has made you his. You will suffer the wrath of God (D&C 76:104–106), and not qualify for the mercy which Jacob taught proved God’s holiness.

Jacob anticipated there would be those who would reject, even become angry by what he taught. But he cautioned them:

Do not say that I have spoken hard things against you, for if ye do, ye will revile against the truth; for I have spoken the words of your Maker. I know that the words of truth are hard against all uncleanness; but the righteous fear them not, for they love the truth and are not shaken. (2 Ne. 9:40)

This is another proof we are reading the words of an actual prophet. They speak the truth. They cry repentance. They point to the Holy One of Israel. Prophets do not fear the anger which others will hold toward them. They know they speak what the Lord would have said.

Jacob observes “if ye were holy I would speak unto you of holiness; but as ye are not holy, and ye look upon me as a teacher, it must needs be expedient that I teach you the consequences of sin” (2 Ne. 9:48). How marvelous it would be if Jacob had been freed up to speak only of holiness. What great things might this prophet-teacher have given us? How might he who stood in Christ’s presence have taught us if we were holy and not in need of repentance?

With almost every new revelation from heaven, mankind learns first and foremost that there is more work to be done to tear down false tradition and error in doctrine. Building Zion will never begin until the errors of teaching for commandments the doctrines of men has been subdued. Jacob is a reminder that great things must

be preceded by repentance, and repentance must be preceded by an awakening to the awful situation in which we find ourselves.

MARCH 22, 2012

Nephi's Brother Jacob, Conclusion

There is a great deal more to Jacob than we have touched on here. This is only intended to lay the groundwork to appreciate the topic I'm turning to next. I want to discuss the meaning of Jacob's Fifth Chapter. Before doing so however, I wanted to touch briefly on Jacob's sound understanding and heavenly qualification to teach the truth. He was in command of the truth and knew what he was teaching.

In his initial sermon, he includes another explanation of how he knew his teachings were sound:

It must needs be expedient that Christ—for in the last night the angel spake unto me that this should be his name—should come among the Jews, among those who are the more wicked part of the world; and they shall crucify him—for thus it behooveth our God, and there is none other nation on earth that would crucify their God. (2 Ne. 10:3).

This scripture tells us:

- Jacob was ministered to by angels, and taught as he was taught from above.
- Jacob was given the Lord's name centuries before His birth.
- Jacob foresaw the Lord's crucifixion.
- Jacob knew this was necessary for God to perform.
- Only a religious people like the Jews would crucify their God.

The irony of a group of religious people, claiming to follow God, killing Christ is set out matter-of-factly by Jacob. Jacob

knew it was the very religious who would resist the truth. It was the very religious who fight against God. They think they are following Him when they persecute the prophets. They believe they are doing God a favor when they urge worship of idols, and seek to kill the Son of God.

Despite man's failure to repent and to worship the true God, Jacob foresaw the ultimate triumph of Zion. When it begins, Jacob promises, "he that fighteth against Zion shall perish, saith God" (2 Ne. 10:13). To make the point even more clear he adds:

Wherefore, he that fighteth against Zion, both Jew and Gentile, both bond and free, both male and female, shall perish; for they are they who are the whore of all the earth; or they who are not for me are against me, saith our God. (2 Ne. 10:16)

Once again Jacob carves the world into two: One small group whom God will protect and guide, and who will be brought into Zion; and then everyone else. The groups are disproportionate. There is no comparison between the diminutive Zion and the world. It is the world that will be destroyed. The small Zion will be protected and defended by God. Everything else will be gathered in bundles and burned.

With this introduction, we turn to Jacob Chapter Five.

MARCH 22, 2012

Comments/Answers

Although "comments" are disabled, I still receive comments on those old threads. They just no longer go onto the blog.

In response to a question about the source of information regarding the church's tithing investment system, I have confirmed that information from three sources in the church offices, therefore

put it up because it was accurate. But I keep confidences, and sources are not disclosed unless they want to be disclosed.

CHAPTER 12

Jacob 5

MARCH 23, 2012

Jacob Chapter 5

Of all the material Jacob could have adopted as his prophecy, his selection of Zenos' allegory of the Olive Tree is telling. The account is a journey through various dispensations of the Gospel, tracking a bloodline of chosen people. To Jacob's credit, he realized the work of salvation was devoted primarily to rescuing the descendants of a chosen line beginning with Abraham.

The allegory is a family story. The use of the Olive tree is a deliberate symbol of a family, and of the tree whose value was beyond question in the culture from which the allegory sprung. To understand the story, it is necessary to settle on meanings.

The tree is a family line belonging to the "house of Israel" (Jacob 5:3). The work of the Lord of the vineyard and his fellow laborers is designed to cause the chosen family line to produce fruit worthy of preservation. The "fruit" is people, or more correctly, children raised in righteousness who comprehend and accept the Gospel and abide by its teachings. The name "Israel" is the new name given to Jacob. Jacob was renamed by the Lord because the Lord took him

into His own family. Naming signifies Fatherhood over Jacob, and the name Israel signifies the Family of God.

Not every descendant of Jacob is also a descendant of Israel. Blood is one thing, adoption into the Family of God is another. The allegory should be read with the proper context. It is about preserving the Family of Israel, or in other words, the Family of God.

To correct and instruct the chosen family, it was necessary for the Lord of the vineyard, in a desperate attempt to cause the family to produce fruit worthy of preservation, to disburse the children, scatter them throughout the vineyard, graft wild branches into the roots and tame branches into wild roots. In one sense the failure of the chosen family is to the world's great blessing. In the end, the world overcomes the chosen family and all those grafted into it, and in the final effort the work returns to the original roots and the original branches in a desperate final attempt to salvage something from the vineyard before it is burned.

Choosing this allegory as the great central theme of Jacob's book shows his comprehension of sacred history and prophecy, and his knowledge of the future. Unlike Nephi, whose muse was Isaiah, the fully mature prophet Jacob turned to Zenos to act as "second witness" to his prophecy. We have in Jacob Chapter 5 the great explanation of how we got where we are today, and what will unfold before the Lord's return to burn the vineyard. It is odd we spend so little time with the material. It is the central theme of all man's history (from God's point of view).

The family is scattered into several different parts of the vineyard: First, the location of the original tree. Second, an undisclosed number of "nethermost parts of the vineyard" (Verse 14).

Third, a "poorest spot" (Verse 21).

Fourth, a “poorer spot than the first” (Verse 23). Fifth, a “good spot” (Verse 25).

However, there is no attempt to quantify the number of spots because the allegory is intended to convey meaning apart from numbers. You can cross check the other prophecies from Nephi (2 Ne. 29:3) and Christ (3 Ne. 17:4) and find there is no definitive number given of how many separate groups are included in the “nethermost parts of the vineyard” where Israel was scattered.

What should leap out to you from this allegory is the nature of the Gospel and God’s work among mankind. It was and is related to preserving a single family line. The “God of Israel” is concerned with preserving the chosen line of heirs. The Gospel was and is a family matter, and the target of the Lord’s work is now and always has been the preservation of a specific group He intends to preserve.

This is an image we have trouble with in our current multiculturalism. We tend to view all mankind as the beneficiaries of God’s plans to save mankind. They are to some extent. After all, He provides the sun and rain to everyone regardless of their ethnicity (Matt. 5:45). And every people are given according to His mercy some portion of truth calculated to benefit them (Alma 29:8). However, Zenos and Jacob agree the Lord’s primary effort has been directed at preserving one family, and the world has been the incidental beneficiaries of this global effort to preserve them.

We will look at the history of this family as told through the allegory of the Olive tree.

MARCH 26, 2012

Jacob 5:3–6

Israel was and is the only family which will be saved. It is the “tame olive tree” that the Lord “took and nourished in his vineyard”

(5:3). Despite all the Lord's efforts, however, the actual family tree "waxed old, and began to decay" (*Id.*). It lost its vitality. It tired of the Lord. His desire and "nourishment" was not able to overcome the tree's indifference to what He offered them. It began to decay.

The Lord was unwilling to abandon His tree even when there was no productivity in it. He intended to continue to create the Family of God, despite the failure by the family to respond to His invitation. He initially set about to "prune it" (that is, to cast away from the Family of God or Israel, those who failed to live worthily) and to "dig about it" and then to "nourish it." In the initial work it is the Lord directly who does the work. He does not send a servant to perform the labor (5:4-5).

"Pruning" involves cutting away. It destroys. The goal is ultimately to bring about vigor and life. But the initial work requires destroying to clear away and make the growth possible. The result is harsh and violent in the short run, but there is something important going on in the work of "pruning" away. The larger purpose is what the Lord has in mind. The short term sacrifices and difficulties are unavoidable and necessary. They must be endured.

"Digging about" the tree is also violent. It is threatening, and imposes upset and difficulties. The Lord's benign intent is not understood when the pruning and digging are measured against short term standards. They must take a longer view.

The Lord's purpose is to "perhaps" produce "young and tender branches" (5:5). It is "perhaps" because the Lord grants the tree agency to respond, not compulsion to force compliance. The Lord can coax, but the tree must grow.

The older branches are not intended to be preserved. They bear nothing but bad fruit. The young and tender branches are the goal.

These, however, will not yield fruit for some time. They must have an opportunity to develop.

This description of ancient Israel shows how the Lord's work was always purposeful and designed to preserve the tree and continue to create sons and daughters of God. However, despite all He did, the "little, young and tender branches" were comparatively small in the scheme of things. As to the "main top thereof" it "began to perish" (5:6).

The infrastructure, the hierarchy, the temple, the priestly class, the learned Rabbis and the schools of thought were rotting. They were nothing like what would be required to produce fruit. They were religious but heretical. They were devoted, but not His sons and daughters. The family line was broken. They needed to be adopted back again, because they lacked the power to remain connected.

This is an odd juxtaposition: The "main top" is corrupt. The "young tender branches" are nothing like the great growth overshadowing them. Yet the Lord sees in the young growth what He seeks. As to the "main top" there is nothing but "perishing" and decay.

Israel is so often in this predicament. They despise the truth, but respond warmly to flattery telling them they are righteous (Hel. 13:27–28). When someone is sent by the Lord of the vineyard calling for repentance, Israel rejects him, says he is a sinner and a false prophet (Hel. 13:25–26). Ultimately, however, for the bloodline of Jacob to rise up and become fruit worthy of preservation, there must be a change from blood connection to Jacob to an adoption into Israel. Then they become sons and daughters of God, and fruit worthy of preservation (Mosiah 27:25).

MARCH 27, 2012

Jacob 5:7-9

As Israel decays, the Lord of the vineyard takes the dramatic step of cutting away the “main branches” or in other words the leading families, the recognized genealogical well-breds, or the families of rank and distinction. They were to be “burned” rather than further cultivated (5:7). Their pride and arrogance disqualified them from preservation or further work. They were riddled with “decay” and unworthy of further effort. They were to be destroyed by fire. Fire is always a symbol of the Lord’s judgments designed to cleanse or purge. Killing the decayed and corrupt leading families was cleansing the tree of the decay that had taken hold in the lofty, inner-circles of the people of Israel.

Men may have respected, even admired the success and status of these “main branches” of the Israelites, but that was nothing to the Lord. All their great rank, position, support structure and apparent security were nothing once the Lord decreed they were to be burned. Invading conquerors would target these specific social leaders for removal as a precaution against further loyalty. These would have to be removed for the outside ruler from a foreign power to succeed. The very thing which made them *secure* was the reason they were targeted to be killed. In a natural political purge the “main branches” who seemed forever entrenched to rule were swept away. No more would they “cumber the ground of [His] vineyard” (5:9).

To replace the notable families of distinction, the Lord determined to bring in “wild olive tree” branches, or those who have no distinction, or even family connections with the roots of Israel (*Id.*). There would be new blood brought in by the conquerors with resultant intermarriages.

Unlike the main branches, there were “young and tender branches” which were not to be destroyed, but were instead to be transplanted. From Assyria or Babylon, these dislocated tribes would be spread into the nethermost part of the vineyard, or in the words of the Lord of the vineyard: “I will graft them whithersoever I will” (5:8).

With the mixing of foreign blood in the remaining “root” of the tree, and grafting of the “young and tender branches” into “wild” trees throughout the vineyard, the Israelite bloodlines become fragmented, scattered and no longer purely either Jacobian (by blood) or Israelite (by adoption). It would not matter if you look to the main root, or to the many scattered branches, they were all mingled with the “wild” gentile stock to produce a hybrid people. The corruption of the family was too deeply entrenched. They would not be able to repent any longer because their arrogance and ignorance prevented them from seeing their true condition. They thought themselves so highly favored of God they could not fall. Therefore, it was altogether necessary for them to fall. Without such a traumatic message delivered to the entire family, they would continue to presume safety meant they were justified. Any sign of prosperity was interpreted to mean they were right with God.

The family of Jacob needed this trauma for the covenant with Israel to be preserved. They were dying and not noticing it. Though it was terrible to endure, the Lord of the vineyard had the ultimate best interests of the entire tree in mind. He did what was needed to restore health and vigor. The covenant had been broken anyway, and this would make possible a renewal of the covenant and restoration from scattered Jacob the Family of Israel.

MARCH 28, 2012

Jacob 5:10–13

The Lord caused his “servant” to perform all He determined to do for the vineyard (5:10). The wild branches were grafted in and the covenant was suspended. The lines were broken. It would require a restoration of the covenant and adoption for the “natural fruit” to reappear (5:10).

Labor was required from the Lord’s servant as well as the Lord Himself. The vineyard required “digging about” and “pruning” and “nourishing” in an attempt to preserve the “root” to which it would be possible to one day to return (5:11). These words tell us how constant the care has been, while scattered and wild remnants have apparently lay fallow without any fruit. Though the people have fallen, the Lord labors on.

Even when the digging, pruning and nourishing have been finished, and while the results are unknown, the Lord of the vineyard directs His servants to “watch” carefully, and to provide yet further “nourishment” when the damaged tree requires it (5:12). Throughout, it is all done by the Lord’s “words.” He is not absent. He is diligent; ever watchful. He owns the vineyard and everything that is located there. Because it is His, He wants the best for it.

As to the young branches He wants to preserve, so it may be possible at last to return to producing good fruit, He decided to move them “to the nethermost part of my vineyard” (5:13). This allegory contradicts the idea of Jehovah as Lord of Israel alone. The Lord claims the entire vineyard, the world itself, as His. The notion of Jehovah being only a local Deity, as is thought by many scholars to be the prevalent idea at the time of Zeno’s prophecy, is destroyed by this assertion of ownership over the entire vineyard. Even “the nethermost part” of the world belongs to the Lord of the vineyard.

Even as He relocates His people throughout the vineyard, He continues to view the scattered branches as part of the same, single “tree” He hoped to preserve. He explains: “[I]t grieveth me that I should lose this tree and the fruit thereof” (5:13). His intent is to continue to have covenant people, part of His Family, His own sons and daughters. Even though they are unable to continue in that relationship during the scattering, it is hoped ultimately it will allow Him to yet “lay up fruit thereof against the season” (*Id.*).

This purposeful and attentive effort was reassuring to Jacob’s people. Though they were long separated from Jerusalem, and although the rising generation had never been there, this allegory assures them of God’s watchful eye. The covenant of Jehovah with Israel continued to be with the scattered branches though they had been transplanted across an ocean and were living in an island of the sea (See 2 Ne. 10:20).

The history of the world is the history of Israel. The events are supervised by a Lord whose purpose is to lay up fruit against the season of the harvest. As we grow ever closer to the season of harvest, the plan will need to result in the appearance of natural fruit again.

Otherwise, the entire vineyard will be gathered in bundles and burned.

MARCH 28, 2012

An Important Quote

That which can be destroyed by truth should be.

—P.C. HODGELL

MARCH 29, 2012

Jacob 5:14–18

When the Lord scattered Israel, He “hid” them “in the nethermost parts of the vineyard” (5:14). The word “hid” suggests the deliberate concealment of the people, their true origin, their blood relation to Jacob, their destiny to become part of the covenant Family of Israel, and their loss from the record of history and even their own memory of the earlier connections. The Lord of the vineyard intended for this part of His plan to remain concealed. He knew what He was doing. He was acting on a plan designed to produce preservable fruit, but mankind would be oblivious to His methods. His ways are not always shared or understood by man (Isa. 55:8–9).

The places are not numbered, but described as “nethermost.” Nor is the design identified other than “some in one and some in another, according to his will and pleasure.” This is an order which He keeps to Himself, but we are told it reflects His “will” and His “pleasure.”

The Lord left the vineyard to continue in the ordinary course “that a long time passed away” (5:15). There is no haste involved. Men come and go across generations while the design of God unfolds. We are impatient and want to see God’s plan unfold completely within our lifetime here, but His work is ageless and spans generations. Rarely does He promise a single generation will witness promised events (See, e.g., *JS-M* 1:32–34).

When a “long time” had passed away, the Lord no longer stood watch, but took His servant and “went down” to “labor in the vineyard” (5:15). His presence and ministry among men took a more direct effort. He “went down into the vineyard to labor” for the souls of men. Behold the condescension of God, indeed!

The underlying “root” was able to give “nourishment” to the hybrid people living when the Lord came. The surviving prophetic warnings and limited practices supported this new Dispensation, making it a field white, already to harvest (5:17–18).

There He found among those grafted into the natural root disciples willing to follow Him. Among them were those who were “good” and “like unto the natural fruit” — which would make them candidates to be adopted as sons and daughters of God, as the Family of Israel. The Lord rejoiced because He realized He could “lay up much fruit, which the tree thereof hath brought forth; and the fruit thereof I shall lay up against the season, unto mine own self” (5:18).

The Lord’s personal ministry resulted in a great harvest of souls. There were many willing to accept His mission, respond to Him, and go through the process of changing into covenant Israel again. Sons and daughters of God returned to the earth by adoption into the Family of God (See, e.g., Rom. 8:16–17; Eph. 1:5; 2:19, 1 John 3:2; among many others).

MARCH 30, 2012

Jacob 5:19–26

After establishing good fruit in the original root, the Lord of the vineyard visited the scattered branches in “the nethermost part of the vineyard” (5:19–20; see also 3 Ne. 16:1–3). The Lord of the vineyard was satisfied that in each of the places where the natural branches were scattered, good fruit had returned (5:20, see also 2 Ne. 29:12).

Whether it was the “poorest spot in all the land of the vineyard” or another place “poorer than the first” it did not matter. The re-

sult was good fruit (5:20–21; 23). The servant was dismayed at the locations to which the Lord had taken the scattered branches. In perplexity he inquired: “How comest thou hither to plant this tree, or this branch of the tree? For behold, it was the poorest spot...?” (5:21). The servant was surprised to know the Lord of the vineyard would go to visit these poor places. It seemed beneath the Lord to have ministered in such humble, far flung lands, among such woe begotten peoples. But the Lord has “descended below them all” (D&C 122:7–8) and found no indignity in visiting with such humble people in diminished circumstances. It may well have been because of the difficulty of the circumstances that fruit was produced (Alma 32:12–13).

As if to confirm that difficulties are a blessing to His vine, when they get to the “good spot of ground,” the transplanted branches have produced conflicting fruit. In this most chosen land of all, the brothers were divided, and fought in continual ethnic-cultural-religious warfare for generations between themselves. Part of these branches produced good fruit, but part was corrupt and wild (5:25). Although this was the best spot in the vineyard, and although the Lord of the vineyard had “nourished this tree like unto the others” it was still half corrupt (*Id.*). This tree required pruning.

The Lord decided to “Pluck off the branches that have not brought forth good fruit, and cast them into the fire” (5:26). Accordingly, nature itself removed the branches: “And thus the face of the whole earth became deformed, because of the tempests, and the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the quaking of the earth. And behold, the rocks were rent in twain; they were broken up upon the face of the whole earth, insomuch that they were found in broken fragments, and in seams and in cracks, upon all the face of the land. And it came to pass that when the thunderings, and

the lightnings, and the storm, and the tempest, and the quakings of the earth did cease—for behold, they did last for about the space of three hours; and it was said by some that the time was greater; nevertheless, all these great and terrible things were done in about the space of three hours—and then behold, there was darkness upon the face of the land (3 Ne. 8:17–19).

The pruning then, like the Lord of the vineyard’s pruning at any time, was targeted and specific. It is designed to remove *only the branches worthy of destruction*. The righteous do not need to fear. Those who reject the prophets sent to them, reject the prophets’ message, and give no heed to the prophets, need to fear (3 Ne. 10:12–14). The message of Jacob comes full circle. He returns to his earlier theme, when he promised the righteous they would be spared (See 2 Ne. 6:18, and the prior post Nephi’s Brother Jacob, Part 7). He is consistent.

MARCH 30, 2012

An Interruption of Jacob

The Jacob 5 discussion will resume Monday. This is a current-events comment:

The City Creek multi-billion dollar project has excited a lot of criticism. The result has been dismay by many faithful Latter-day Saints. Their anxiety over the project has become the subject of many conversations on the Internet.

To grapple with this outpouring of criticism and in some cases disgust, the church has paid employees and volunteers who post on-line responses using personas, or anonymous identities to beat back those who express concern. Many of the multiple personas are put up by the same church employee.

The arguments advanced by those who are concerned about the investment in the City Creek shopping center most often cite scripture. Their observations are based on sincere belief, supported by positions taken from scripture study, and reflect honest concern. The defense is based on the concept of supporting the leadership, sustaining the church's prophet, and uses comments taken from church talks, sermons, etc.

The gulf between these two positions is one of the great divisions in the church today. The numbers of those holding these two positions are not equal, however. The one is held by sincere, believing members of the church who honestly disagree with the use of these funds for this elaborate, costly project. The other is advanced for the most part by paid employees or volunteers who are doing so using multiple personas to justify the church's conduct.

In the realm of political debate, the production of artificial arguments by personas has been termed "astroturf" because it is not real. The artificial "astroturf" is in contrast to the grassroots movement of people. When enough "astroturf" has been sent out by the political machines, the grassroots will often respond. What began as fiction, or hope, turns into actual public opinion. The political parties and big business employ these techniques all the time now.

Interestingly, there are those inside the church's organized effort who do not believe the arguments they are advancing. Some of them have been persuaded the church's position is in fact wrong. They continue to make the arguments. It is their job. But they do not believe in the position they advance.

It is a fascinating moment to watch. It will be equally interesting to see if conference visitors from around the United States and the

world visit the City Creek project and return dismayed, or return home gratified to see this expensive investment by the church.

I'd like readers to note I've not taken a position in this post. It does not deal with anything other than the events unfolding and how the reactions are being advanced and defended. Nothing more.

APRIL 2012

APRIL 2, 2012

Jacob 5:27–33

The servant agreed with the pruning done by the Lord, but wanted to take the remaining branches after the pruning and to “nourish it a little longer, that perhaps it may bring forth good fruit” (5:27). The Lord then visited with the remaining tree branches, established His covenant with them, and made it possible for them to reconnect with covenant Israel and the Family of God (3 Ne. 11:8–17).

This ministry succeeded in establishing fruit-bearing in that and several succeeding generations. [I gave a talk on the Nephite years of fruit-bearing which someone recorded and still distributes. I am not involved with that, having only given consent to allow it to happen. The CD's are sold for a modest amount, and the proceeds are used for supporting missionaries (I don't even handle any of the money). It is the “*Zion*” CD (I don't recall the actual title used) and I think you can get it from Confetti Bookstore in Spanish Fork. I won't repeat that information again, but mention it because it is relevant to the subject of the Nephite people producing fruit for the Lord of the vineyard.]

In each of the places the Lord put the scattered branches, the Lord and His servants visited and labored (5:28). This was a global

post-resurrection ministry. He told the Nephites (3 Ne. 16:1–3) and Jacob’s older brother, Nephi about it (2 Ne. 29:12–13). All of these places in the vineyard began to bear fruit.

Another “long time had passed away” in the vineyard. The end was drawing near, and so it was necessary to recheck the vineyard. The momentum of the Lord’s prior ministry needed to be checked again. When the natural tree root, with its grafted branches was checked, there was “all sorts of fruit” that “did cumber the tree” (5:30). There were Catholics, Orthodox, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Campbellites, and an hundred other sorts of fruit on the tree root’s branches. But when the Lord “tasted the fruit” (5:31) He found that “none of it was good” (5:32).

There was nothing left of the Family of Israel in the original root and its associated branches: “they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: ‘they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.’” (*JS-H 1:19*).

The Lord’s reaction is telling. He immediately wondered “What shall we do unto the tree, that I may preserve again good fruit thereof unto my own self?” (5:33). The Lord is neither an optimist nor a pessimist. He is a pragmatic laborer. It is not about blame, only about taking the required next step to rehabilitate the cumbered and unprofitable tree. God’s ways are indeed higher (Isa. 55:9).

APRIL 3, 2012

Jacob 5:34–37

The servant observes that the original group of people have been preserved by the efforts of the Lord. There is still a “root” which

“have not perished” (5:34). The bloodline remains. The covenant can be renewed with them. While it would require work, the potential for reviving the failed family remains possible.

Despite the potential, the Lord of the vineyard has a more practical objective in mind. There must be actual saved souls, part of the Family of God, for the work of preserving souls to matter. “The tree profiteth me nothing, and the roots thereof profit me nothing so long as it shall bring forth evil fruit” (5:35).

They have been preserved to allow for the possibility for a return of covenant Israel (5:36). However, it must result in an **actual return**, the living tree bringing forth good fruit, children of promise, raised in righteousness, schooled by parents who will raise them to keep the ways of God as His people, for the effort to have been worthwhile (*Id.*).

The root, and all the various manner of fruit which sprang from it, have “overrun the roots thereof” and only “evil fruit” was left (5:37). Not just evil fruit, but “much evil fruit” was the result of this long apostasy from the original (*Id.*). The overwhelming production of this vile product has overtaken the “root” so that the entire tree appears to “perish” and “it will soon become ripened, that it may be cast into the fire, unless” the Lord does something to alter the course it was following (*Id.*).

Christianity failed in its original purpose. No one was being saved when the Lord considered His vineyard. Left to its own, the result would be universal destruction at His coming. He would burn the vineyard and remove all the various Christian offshoots claiming to have originated in the New Testament stock.

This allegory shows the need to separate ourselves from Historic Christianity. If we are part of it, then we are nothing worthy of

being preserved. Like them, we should be gathered into bundles and cast into the fire.

When the Lord declared that “they were all wrong” and ”that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight” and “that those professors were all corrupt” (*JS-H 1:19*) He was confirming the allegory of Zenos and the prophecy of Jacob. This was the condition of the vineyard.

We should view the ambition of being considered part of that “abomination” and “wrong” “corruption” as an unworthy ambition. We are NOT (or at least should not) be part of the Historic Christian tradition. It is riddled with “much evil fruit” and the people who profess their creeds are “all corrupt.” Not in the sense that their hearts are vile, but in the sense that they do not comprehend what it means to be part of the Family of God, much less even occupy that association with Him. They are orphans, unconnected with the “living vine” (John 15:4–6). Unless they occupy a family relationship with God, they are not His and will be gathered and burned at His coming.

APRIL 4, 2012

Jacob 5:38–41

The Lord’s inspection of the vineyard was global. Even the “nethermost parts of the vineyard” were examined for fruit (5:38). Despite the opportunities given to the vineyard, “the fruit of the natural branches” which belonged to the original root and should have been able to bear fruit “had become corrupt also” (5:39). No matter where you looked, “the first and the second and also the last; ...they had all become corrupt” (*Id*). The apostasy was now universal. It was not possible for the Lord to find fruit worth preserving anywhere

in His vineyard. The ordinances were changed. The covenant was broken (Isa. 24:5).

Apostasy is always marked by a change of ordinances and breaking of the covenant. Then everything can continue to mimic the truth, but there can be no fruit. The apostates can keep the vocabulary, claim to have the truth and worship the God of Israel, use the same scriptures as were written by those who were in and kept the covenant, and assume they are either in or headed toward Zion and that “all is well” even as they are covered in chains and bound for hell (2 Ne. 28:23–25). Then the apostasy can rule from the rivers to the ends of the earth, but no-one is capable of telling them to be afraid. While in Satan’s power, they think themselves blessed.

The “fruit” to be “laid up against the season” is highly specific. It is God’s own family. Those who are bound to Him directly, in an unbroken covenant of adoption, where He recognizes them as His “sons and daughters” and has told them so in an unbreakable bond (Mosiah 27:25). Those who receive Him receive this oath from Him. And through it, He covenants with them, in a bond which He cannot break, that they are His sons and His daughters and heirs to all the Father has (D&C 84:35–40). It will not be an imitation, which does not create “fruit” but it will be Him and His covenant. For “all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord” (D&C 88:35). He will come to and “comfort” those with this covenant (John 14:18). This is not by proxy, or through an appearance “in the heart” through some feeling, but is an actual appearance leading to an actual bond that cannot be broken, and therefore comforts the sojourner in this lone and dreary world (John 14:23; D&C 130:3).

Because there were no longer any who remained in the vineyard with this covenant, or who were adopted into the Family of God, or who were suitable to be preserved through the burning of the vineyard, the entire vineyard, from the first to the last, “had all become corrupt” (5:39). Even in the best spot in the vineyard, “the wild fruit of the last had overcome that part of the tree which brought forth good fruit, even that the branch had withered away and died” (5:40). The Nephite fall was complete. Nothing remained. All was wild and unsuitable, entirely corrupt.

At this terrible state of man “the Lord of the vineyard wept” (5:41). The Lord’s work and glory is to produce fruit from His vineyard (Moses 1:39). The Lord of the vineyard is not able to withhold His tears at our dreadful plight. He is moved with compassion for us (Heb. 4:15, see also Matt. 14:14).

As the Lord looked at the complete failure of the entire vineyard, He reflected with sorrow: “What could I have done more for my vineyard?” (5:41). The Lord does not fault us. He examines Himself. He begins His inventory of what went wrong with His own actions, not ours. We who rebel against Him are not faulted by Him. But He wonders how He might have been the better Lord. It ought to cause us to weep to realize who He really is, and what He really thinks.

APRIL 5, 2012

Jacob 5:42–47

There was no fruit being produced anywhere in the vineyard. The Lord recognized that. The separated branches that He had visited were able to produce covenant sons and daughters of God, only to fail to keep the covenant alive. “[N]ow all the trees of [the] vineyard

are good for nothing save it be to be hewn down and cast into the fire” (5:42). That does not mean they aren’t going to be preserved. They will, but they will suffer the wrath of God. Then they will come forth at the end of the season, and be placed in a position of Telestial Glory to dwell in the same condition as this fallen world (D&C 76:81–85). From the Lord’s perspective, that is undesirable. It is failure. It is tragic. This is the native condition this vineyard repeatedly lapses into, even with the Lord and His servant’s continuing care. What more could He do, indeed!

How often would He have gathered us, but we refuse (3 Ne. 10:5).

Even when the Lord bestows peculiar advantages on the branches of His vineyard, the results are not dissimilar to what goes on elsewhere. Highly favored and greatly blessed people seem as indifferent to their salvation as those who inherit challenges and difficulties (5:43). The Lord “cut down that which cumbered this spot of ground, that I might plant this tree in the stead thereof” (5:44; see also, Ether 13:1). He provided the best spot in the vineyard by destroying the people inhabiting it. Then, as we shall see, He destroys the branches brought there once they also fail to produce suitable fruit.

The good spot was cleansed of the bad branches, yet the bad still overcame the good (5:45). The Nephite civilization was, in the end, entirely overcome and destroyed because it failed to produce any more sons and daughters of God.

As the Lord surveyed the entire vineyard, He saw nothing but universal failure. There was no fruit able to be preserved against the coming season of judgment. The whole earth was worthy of destruction, because there were none whose hearts were sealed to the fathers in heaven, members of the Family of God, who could

endure His presence at His return. In other words, there was no righteous branch living on the earth. All manner of fruit claimed to be good. All kinds of pretenders were claiming they were of God. They clamored “lo here!” and “lo, there!” and claimed they could deliver souls from hell. Yet no one was able to bring the living into contact with God, which was required in order for them to receive the “testimony of Jesus” promising them eternal life (D&C 76:51–55). The Lord needed to begin over again. The vineyard was void of fruit-bearing trees. Despite this, the Lord reflected “it grieveth me that I should lose them” (5:46). The Lord takes the salvation of mankind seriously. It is His work. And when they fail, He grieves.

The Lord lists all He does to try to provoke His “tree” to bear fruit. He does not “slacken his hand” nor does he fail to “nourish” it (5:47). He “dugged,” and He “pruned,” and He “dunged” the tree. These efforts include sending the Light of Christ, the Holy Ghost, scriptures, prophets, angels, visions, dreams and signs in the heavens above and the earth beneath. He has done this continually for His vineyard. But these many gifts from God, and the great work He has done have failed to produce fruit. At last He poses the question to His servant: “Who is it that has corrupted my vineyard?” (*Id.*). A worthy question, indeed. The answer is surprising, because it does not require a devil to be involved.

APRIL 6, 2012

Jacob 5:48–51

The vineyard fails continually because of “the loftiness of the vineyard” (5:48). That is, the pride and arrogance of Israel itself is the cause of continual failure. They run faster than they are able, reaching what they cannot attain, claiming to have what they do

not have, and relying on their conceit rather than the Lord. As a result, the branches overcome the roots. They grew faster than could be accommodated, and took strength to themselves, which always defeats fruit production (*Id.*).

The Lord's exasperation with this complete failure results in the announcement that He was going to return to the vineyard, "hew down the trees" and then "cast them into the fire" so they no longer cumbered the land (5:49). It was time to return and destroy everything. Or, to use a phrase from Malachi, to "smite the whole earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:6). We see in this that the Lord does actually consider smiting the entire earth. The allegory reveals it. It is indeed possible for the Lord to consider that as an option.

The only way to prevent it is for the "vineyard" to again bring forth fruit worth laying up against the season of the harvest. It failed. There was a universal apostasy. The Lord announced it was His intention to destroy all the people of the earth (5:49). But it was the "servant" who pleaded for the Lord to "spare it a little longer" (*Id.*). In Zenos' allegory, the Lord is the one wanting to destroy the vineyard. When He was in His mortal ministry, the Lord reversed these roles. He had the angels wanting to destroy, and the Lord being patient (See, Matt. 13:28–30). In both, the judgment is postponed until something worthy of preserving can be brought into the harvest. The Lord agrees to spare the vineyard despite the universal failure to bring about "fruit" because it "grieveth" Him to see such a loss, so great a waste (5:51).

Now all of this is about history. It has already happened. Zenos wrote in the unified kingdom, before the division into the Northern Kingdom, or Kingdom of Israel, and the Southern Kingdom, or Kingdom of Judah. He wrote before Isaiah, and before Jeremiah.

His prophecy became a benchmark from which other, later prophets would draw in fashioning their own prophecies.

Using these allegorical themes and images (tree, branches, transplanting, grafting, laboring, gathering, burning, trimming, pruning, etc.), we can see what happened historically with the scattering of Israel. Now, however, we have reached a point in the allegory where the events are either current or future. They are underway. This part of the allegory relates to us. It is meant to warn us about the time we live.

We think we've gotten the benefit of the Lord's hand in the effort now underway. However, there is nothing going on at this time in the vineyard that should make us think we can relax. There is more pruning, gathering and yet more labor, before we yield fruit.

As we continue from this point forward, we must pay more attention. It is a blueprint for how the Lord is dealing with us. We should take every opportunity to consider how the prophecy may be intended to warn us against our own "loftiness" and ultimate failure.

APRIL 7, 2012

Easter

Tomorrow is Easter, April 8th. The Lord rose from the borrowed tomb while it was dark on that morning approximately two millennia ago.

The assortment of thoughts that run through my mind wanders from past to present to the future. He dominates the landscape no matter where the thoughts run on this approaching Easter:

What are these wounds on your hands and feet?

"Those I suffered in the house of my friends."

How is it possible?

“By the power given unto me from the Father I have overcome all things.”

Did not our hearts burn within us?

He is dressed in red, coming in judgment, to reward those who waited on Him and to punish and remove the wicked.

The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The Lion of Judah. The Son of David. The Scepter of Judah. The Slain. The Risen. The Redeemer.

So we might understand who He is and have faith in Him, He declared in meekness: “I am greater than them all,” and “I am more intelligent than them all.” And again,

I am the light and the life of the world. I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning.

“What I call ‘clean’ call thou not ‘unclean.’”

Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all that they might not suffer if they would repent; but if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.”

Why is it “preparations” Lord?

“It is given unto you to choose. I can prepare, but you must choose to repent. I call upon all men to repent and come unto Me.”

Seeing, they do not understand, hearing, they do not listen. They have lost the desire for knowledge and they have fallen away. Isaiah said we would change the ordinances, break the covenant, but Christ tells us to pray continually: Thy will be done, thy kingdom come...

To rescue a broken and fallen people, we have His light and the life He gave for us. Look unto Him and live. We have hope in Christ Jesus.

The Glorious One. The Father of the saved. The Firstborn. The Son of God. Jehovah.

APRIL 9, 2012

Jacob 5:52

We reach our day. In it the Lord of the vineyard has a highly specific intention. He will take the various scattered branches, the far-flung and long lost descendants of Jacob who are in “the nethermost parts of [His] vineyard” and will “graft them into the tree from whence they came” (5:52). This is the work Joseph Smith identified as the most critical work of the restoration of the Gospel. This is the only thing that will prevent the earth from being “utterly wasted” at the Lord’s coming (D&C 2:3; *JS-H* 1:39).

The manner of this gathering involves connecting the “children” who are disassociated with the House of Israel—and have altogether lost their status in that family back through an adoption by God into His House. In other words, to make them members of the Family of God again. The “fathers” to whom they are to connect

are not their ancestors. Their ancestors will require vicarious work to be saved. Connecting to them in their fallen, disconnected condition will not save “the children.”

Joseph taught the way this connection is to be accomplished. I would refer you again to the Elijah Talk which is available for download here. I won't repeat it again. You can read it for yourself.

This leads to several side issues, including: Who are the gentiles and how do they fit into the plan of regrafting? Who are the remnant, and how do they fit into the regrafting? Who are the Jews and how do they fit into the latter-day scheme? What about the latter-day saint practice of identifying a Tribe of Israel in the patriarchal blessings and the effect that has on regrafting?

These questions require a specific reference point from which to answer. The Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants provide answers. In the vocabulary of both, the “gentiles” are the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the unconverted European residents of “this land.” You should be able to see that for yourself just by reading the material. As a quick example, Nephi explains who the “gentiles” are in 1 Ne. 13:14. Moroni explains who they are in the Title Page of the Book of Mormon written by him. Joseph Smith identifies the church as “gentiles” by identity (D&C 109:60). We, the latter-day saints to whom the Book of Mormon was given, and who are among the very few readers of the text, are the “gentiles” of prophecy. Notwithstanding that status, there are many among the “gentiles” who have blood of Jacob in them. They are potentially candidates for restoration to the House of Israel. They are the intended targets of the restoration, but their restoration will not be completed until they are adopted back to the line of “the fathers” who are able to save them from the coming harvest.

The “remnant” are those who are descended from Lehi. They are still identifiable (to the Lord) as Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Lamanites, Lemuelites, and so forth (D&C 3:16–20). They are known to Him, and are still here, but are without knowledge to save themselves. For that, they also must come to the knowledge of the truth and be restored (D&C 3:20; 3 Ne. 5:23, among many other places).

The Jews are those from Jacob who have retained their original identification with Jacob, but who are also lost as members of the House of Israel, or members of the Family of God.

Remember, the vineyard is utterly corrupt no matter which group the Lord considers (Jacob 5:39). The status alone will not restore good fruit to the vine. There must be a direct connection, through “the fathers” by adoption into the Family of God, restoring them to “the living vine” (John 15:4–5).

The identification of a Tribe of Israel in the latter-day saint patriarchal blessings does not restore the covenant, nor does it connect you to the “living vine,” nor does it alter the status of being “gentile” by identification. There is another group who are not identified as “gentile,” nor as “Jew,” nor as the “remnant” who are considered “heathen.” These people are “remembered” by the Lord (2 Ne. 26:33). Their inheritance is to come forth in the “first resurrection” where “it shall be tolerable for them” (D&C 45:54). But these other people are not the target of the regrafting. The intended audience and the covenant people to be restored are the “scattered branches” who are unable to bear fruit because they have lost their identification with the original “root” or the “fathers in heaven” as Joseph explained it (See Elijah Paper).

The Lord of the vineyard has a plan. It is His. He knows all of us and cares more about each of us than we can even understand.

However, His ways are His and are reckoned from the vantage point of the one who owns the vineyard, and who has every intention of providing the highest and most exalted outcome for His vineyard. We would be much better off if we took counsel from Him instead of resisting and rejecting it. As Jacob, whose book we are now considering, put it: “Wherefore, brethren, seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand.

For behold, ye yourselves know that he counseleth in wisdom, and in justice, and in great mercy, over all his works” (Jacob 4:10).

APRIL 10, 2012

Jacob 5:53–56

The Lord is quite realistic about salvaging something from the vineyard. He does not state He can produce fruit again, only that “perhaps, I may preserve unto myself the roots thereof” (5:53). The vineyard must respond. He respects our agency. He can encourage, invite and entice us, but we are always free to choose (Moroni 7:13). It is that freedom to choose that results in the vineyard being condemned. They could have responded to the Lord’s invitation, but decided not to (D&C 101:78).

So this final dispensation is not a guaranteed success. Notwithstanding the optimism of many of our revelations, the Lord of the vineyard knows success (fruit reappearing) will only “perhaps” occur.

The bloodlines are still here. Though they are separated, mixed and disbursed throughout the nethermost parts of the vineyard, they are “yet still alive” (5:54). The Lord has determined, and is now taking the steps, to graft back together the branches to the root in hopes of producing “fruit” again (*Id.*). Notice it is not the restoration of the link, the regrafting of the branches, or the suc-

cessful return of the Lord's husbandry to the vineyard that matters. Despite all the coaxing and work, and even the regrafting of branch to root, the purpose is not fulfilled until there is "fruit" produced. The organizational structure of the reassembled tree is nothing. It is the "fruit" and the "fruit" alone which is the object of the effort. **A Divine reconnection of branch and root is not and never has been the object of the Lord of the vineyard.** Bragging about how you are part of a "restored branch" distracts you from the fact you are still unworthy to be laid up against the season. Lacking fruit, you are only worthy to be gathered in bundles and burned.

This restoration of branch to root does not bear and was never expected to bear any fruit at first. It was the preliminary step, intended to lead to a time when the restored branch takes its opportunity seriously and repents, finally returning to Him. "[T]hat when they shall be sufficiently strong perhaps they may bring forth good fruit unto me" (5:54). It was always expected to take time. Generations, in fact, before there would be "fruit" in the vineyard." No matter how millennial the first generation of the saints expected their faith to prove, no matter what prophecies and patriarchal blessings the first generation of latter-day saints shared with one another, and no matter what promises Joseph Smith obtained—everything was contingent on producing "fruit" which the Lord of the vineyard could lay up against the season. I've written the last book about the obvious conclusions we ought to reach regarding the beginning of the restoration. It is my effort to explain where we are and how we got here. It is also intended to help us now produce "fruit" in the vineyard.

The Lord began the process (5:55–56). He and His servants took the wild branches and regrafted them. The potential covenant was restored. He returned again the pattern of covenant-making, the

ordinances which testify to us of Christ's Atonement, the ritual return through the veil to the Lord's presence, and the ideas of a priesthood which is inseparably connected with heaven. He gave us the warning that when we undertake to assert the right to compel others to follow the priesthood, then we forfeit it. No power and no influence can or does exist by "virtue" or by reason of the priesthood. It exists because someone has humbled themselves, repented, come into the presence of Christ, and thereby been redeemed from the fall (See, e.g., Ether 3:13; D&C 84:35).

The Lord of the vineyard and His servants did the work. The graft was begun. Now it remains to see if it will bear fruit.

The Lord knows the end from the beginning (Abr. 2:8). Everything He revealed to Zenos about the past has happened. We ought to respect that enough to allow the prophecy to inform our present and future.

APRIL 11, 2012

Jacob 5:57–59

The restoration begins with an amalgamation of old and new. The only things removed are the bare essentials that are required to begin the transplanting or grafting. "Pluck not the wild branches from the trees, save it be those which are most bitter; and in them ye shall graft according to that which I have said" (5:57). The restoration was not a wholesale affair at the start. There was and were a lot of wild, unredeemed and unredeemable participants in the work underway. There is a great deal of "loftiness" and "bitter fruit" left to be trimmed away.

As becomes apparent from the incidents in Nauvoo, Joseph Smith's death was as much a result of internal conspiracies to get

him into the hands of the Illinois civil authorities as it was the result of outside fear and hatred. He could have left on June 22nd and never returned. When he lamented “if my life is of no value to my friends, it is of no value to me” he clarified the reason for his return. The accusation that he was a false shepherd because he was “fleeing” when “the flock was in danger” was enough to bring him back, surrender to arrest and incarceration, and ultimately be killed. It wasn't the mob that made the accusations which brought it about. It was the saints, his inner circle, his trusted friends.

So when we reflect on how the restoration was interrupted in its beginning states by the death of Joseph, we cannot lay the blame entirely on the mob that ultimately killed him. It began inside the church itself. If we are partly to blame, as I believe the record shows, then killing Joseph was not just an act of violence *against* the church, but also an act of treachery from *within* the church. Such things generally provoke a reaction from heaven which requires a third and fourth generation to pass away before the Lord of the vineyard begins anew to cultivate, water, dig and dung His tree again. That would make it about now when the Lord's work would resume.

The work required to begin the restoration was not to produce fruit. It was to make it possible for fruit again to return to the vineyard. To that end, the work to “trim up the branches” and then to “pluck from the trees those branches which are ripened, that must perish” will be an ongoing process once the work begins (5:58). There will be trauma. There will be casting away. There will be those who are “plucked” or removed. The patience required will endure for generations, as the Lord rids the tree of the many wild, unfruitful and unworthy growth found in the undisciplined, wild tree.

The Lord's commitment and understanding allows Him to foresee the possibility it will yet result in worthy fruit. He does this "that, perhaps, the roots thereof may take strength because of their goodness; and because of the change of the branches, that the good may overcome the evil" (5:59). It is still a "perhaps" proposition. The tree has its own independence. It will need to respond.

Joseph Smith was attempting to explain some of this process when he taught:

The Holy Ghost has no other effect than pure intelligence. It is more powerful in expanding the mind, enlightening the understanding, and storing the intellect with present knowledge, of a man who is of the literal seed of Abraham, than one that is a Gentile, though it may not have half as much visible effect upon the body; for as the Holy Ghost falls upon one of the literal seed of Abraham, it is calm and serene; and his whole soul and body are only exercised by the pure spirit of intelligence; while the effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile, is to purge out the old blood, and make him actually of the seed of Abraham. That man that has none of the blood of Abraham (naturally) must have a new creation by the Holy Ghost. In such a case, there may be more of a powerful effect upon the body, and visible to the eye, than upon an Israelite, while the Israelite at first might be far before the Gentile in pure intelligence. (*TPJS*, p. 149–150)

There is so much Joseph spoke about we no longer understand, but in the case of restoring the potential for "fruit" to return, the blood of Jacob matters. Even there, each individual is free to respond to the Lord.

There may be "goodness" left in the individual from his birth-right, but even the literal seed of Abraham must do the works of Abraham before they are able to produce fruit.

APRIL 12, 2012

Jacob 5:60–63

The Lord of the vineyard wants to “have joy again in the fruit of my vineyard” (5:60). This is an interesting connection by the Lord of “joy” in His “fruit” or joy in His posterity; for the redeemed are the children of God and He dwells in them (1 John 4:4). The purpose of having children is to have “joy” with them. In this instance, the Lord of the vineyard is describing not only His “work and glory” (Moses 1:39) but also what pleases Him most. He explains that producing such fruit worthy of preserving would be so “that I may rejoice exceedingly that I have preserved” these souls (5:60). It is a compelling thought: A Lord who would “rejoice exceedingly” at our success!

The effort required to accomplish this is not inconsequential. There will be many “servants” called to labor in the vineyard. It will require some to descend without disclosing their true identities and to “labor diligently with our might in the vineyard” to bring about the potential for fruit (5:61). Servants sent into the Telestial condition to labor in the vineyard with their might is a careful description, I think. Perhaps it is worth careful thought to consider how such servants might come among us to do the labor needed to rescue us from the coming harvest.

The effort is to “prepare the way” for the vineyard to be able to “bring forth again the natural fruit” of the original, natural tree. The effort is the return of covenant, adopted Israel sealed to the fathers and able to endure the return of the Lord. Such a people are not only “good” but also “the most precious above all other fruit” (*Id.*). This is because such people are not merely mortal, but also immortal, even infinite because they have no end (D&C 132:20). It

is through such rare “most precious above all other fruit” that the universe itself expands. The infinite itself grows.

The Lord, however, acknowledges that both He and His servants must “labor with our might this last time” to salvage some few (5:62). What an image comes to mind when you consider the Lord of the vineyard laboring with “His might” to bring again some natural fruit in His vineyard. How great an undertaking! How foolish it is for the saints to believe ourselves chosen. How foolish to think that our careless church activities will save us. How arrogant a proposition it is for the saints to point with pride at our institutions and think it reflects credit upon us. It is, in a word, fruitless.

Because the living must be redeemed for the dead to be saved, the labor begins with the last and goes to the first. The work begins with the living, who are last in the vineyard (5:63). They must be grafted back to the fathers who are in heaven (See, e.g., D&C 132:29, 37). God’s children living today must be sealed to those who now sit upon thrones in the heavens. Then the deceased ancestors may be sealed to the living so the whole earth is not smitten with a curse at the return of the Lord.

Joseph’s instruction about adoption to the “fathers in heaven” was short lived. As I pointed out in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, many of the surviving church leaders who were taught this by Joseph didn’t believe it when he said it. Brigham Young said he never understood it. The allegory of Zenos makes it apparent that there must be a connection, and that connection must produce natural fruit. The thing that will be saved will be the “fruit” and not the roots, trees and branches. There must be children born into the covenant, raised in righteousness who will live an order that can bring to pass the Savior’s great petition in prayer. The Lord’s prayer

instructed us how to pray and what to pray for: “Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:9–10). Zion will return.

How can fruit be harvested and laid up against the day if we cannot endure His presence at His return?

APRIL 13, 2012

Jacob 5:64–65

When the regrafting begins there is still more work to be done. In addition to the initiation of the regrafting, there is also the need to “dig” about the tree (5:64). There will be disturbance. The tree and the grafts will also need to be “pruned” because fruit will not come unless some considerable growth is cast away (*Id.*). The Lord is interested in His “fruit” and not in the tree, mind you. Worshiping the tree, celebrating the tree and idolizing the tree are distractions. The result has always been focused on the “fruit” alone. But, of course, you cannot produce fruit if you lack a tree. Elder Hallstrom’s talk was correct. There is a difference between the Gospel and the church, but you do not produce, protect or preserve the Gospel without the church. It is the church that preserves and publishes the Book of Mormon (the very text we are now considering). It is the church where we assemble together to edify and instruct one another. It is in the church we offer service, receive ordinances, fellowship, offer our tithes and offerings, bear testimony and discharge our obligations to God and one another. The tree is essential. But the tree can exist for a long time without producing fruit. And the Lord of the vineyard will destroy the tree if it fails to produce fruit, because it is then “good for nothing” (Jacob 5:42).

The Lord also provides “dung” or nourishment for the tree. Soil gets tired and its nutrients depleted, and therefore He must

introduce more vitality to the environment of the tree to stimulate growth and vigor. This is designed to provoke the right kind of effort by the tree.

The Lord and His servants watch over the “grafts” to see whether they “shall grow, and bring forth the natural fruit” (5:64). This is a careful, deliberate work.

Though it may take some time, eventually the great initial effort to restore the tree should result in some signs of life in the grafts. “And as they begin to grow ye shall clear away the branches which bring forth bitter fruit” (5:65). There will be trauma to the tree and to the grafts. Much of what remains after the initial restoration will still bring about “bitter fruit.”

Paul wrote a letter about the difference between fruit coming from above, and the bitterness of the flesh:

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (Gal. 5:16–23)

It is a matter of survival that we avoid the bitterness of these sins, and produce the kinds of things that will make us suitable for adoption as God’s sons and daughters. At a minimum, this will

require us to possess love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness and, in a word, to become godlike.

The patient work of the last days will not result in the Lord “clearing away the bad thereof all at once” (5:65). There will be bad, bitter fruit in the restoration. Generations will need to be removed from the vineyard before it will be possible for the natural fruit to return. If it were all corrected at once “the roots thereof should be too strong for the graft, and the graft thereof shall perish” (*Id.*). The doctrine Joseph was attempting to restore was confusing and offensive to many in the church. It seems a difficult thing even today, with generations entrenched in the traditions in which they were raised. The doctrinal roots of Mormonism are overwhelming, and even now tend to choke the grafts who find our beginnings riddled with difficult, challenging and offensive teachings. We have not humbly, meekly, faithfully or joyfully reexamined what was originally offered us. My last book attempts to discuss that origin and how it has fared in our history. The reaction to that retelling of our history has been hatred, wrath, strife, and anger.

The allegory suggests we have a good deal of work to do if we want to produce fruit. That work will necessarily require us to not only endure the roots of our faith, but to accept the nourishment which flows from it.

APRIL 16, 2012

Jacob 5:66–70

In order to develop and grow the tree, the Lord requires there to be good fruit growing before cutting away the bad (5:66). The pruning and trimming away the bad will accelerate as good continues to grow. The good growth cannot be threatened by the bad, because

the Lord will cut off, cut down, and discard the bad as the good develops.

Ultimately, the purpose is to have the good overwhelm the bad. When that happens, the bad will be cut down, thrown in the fire, and burned (*Id.*). They will not be allowed to overcome the good, or “cumber the ground” of the Lord’s vineyard (*Id.*).

It does not matter if the bad occupy positions of authority, or have been “called of God” into the lofty positions of the tree. They will be struck down when they attempt to overcome the good growth (D&C 85:7). The intention of the Lord, and His prophetic promise is that His house will be set in order (*Id.*). This, however, is still future.

The natural branches are to return to the natural tree (5:67) to produce the natural fruit again (5:68). That is the original doctrine, the covenant of adoption to God’s family, the return of covenant Israel. Children suitable for Zion are the Lord’s agenda. It hasn’t changed. He will bring it to pass, and we cannot claim any credit when it comes, for it is the Lord alone who will “bring again Zion” (See, e.g., 3 Ne. 16:18; Mosiah 12:22, 15:29; D&C 84:99; Isa. 52:8). This is His work, after all. We get to participate in it, but the work is His.

Those who falsely claim to be the Lord’s will be “cast away” from the tree, because they can never bring again the natural fruit (5:69). This great last work, which will unfold over generations and result in a restored tree, will be the last time He will work in His vineyard (*Id.*).

The Lord sent His servant to labor. There were to be others. But the numbers of the servants who would be sent were disproportionately small. The servant went, and there were “other servants; and they were few” (5:70).

We do not get to choose who the Lord sends. He does. When He sends a servant we have the rare and infrequent opportunity to be invited back to the roots of the restoration again. There is no point in insisting that we are doing things right, and that we have no need to repent and return. We must respond, repent, regain whatever was offered, reconnect with the fathers, or risk being utterly wasted at His coming.

I think the proposition is self-evident that this will always be in or near the church. The numbers may not be large in comparison to the world, but the work of the Lord has never created a great harvest. The last days vineyard is either filled with bad branches requiring trimming and burning, or in the Lord's parable, always mingled with tares needing gathering and burning (See Matt. 13:30; D&C 86:7). The field is always to be burned (D&C 86:7).

Remember, however, that any fruit produced is infinite, eternal, and will produce forever in His House (See D&C 132:20). Even if there were only one couple saved, from that single source there would be worlds without end, and seed like the sand of the sea or as the stars in heaven for their number (See Gen. 22:17). Therefore, from this vantage point, you cannot look upon the harvest as meager. From the vantage point of the Lord in His vineyard it is infinite and eternal. Even if the harvest produced but one, how great would be the joy in heaven over that one (See D&C 18:15). And if there were one, how much greater would it be if there were as great a number as seven? (D&C 18:16). Remember the first Zion was made of seven patriarchs and their families (D&C 107:53).

The labor to produce fruit is great. The amount of humility and meekness required to repent and return is almost beyond the tolerance of mankind. Even those who learn a little think they know much more than they do. We tend to gather together, speak

reassuring words to one another, and stop up our repentance by the mutual praise we lavish on each other. We interfere with our own repentance.

I've often reflected on our presumption that we can apply the words of scripture that were originally given when Joseph Smith was the church's presiding officer to all later times and individuals. Joseph, of course, stood in the presence of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Therefore, the revelations to him—about him—have their veracity derived from that standing. Can we now apply statements to him, or about him to every situation we've encountered since then? Do we have the right to do that without some further revelation giving us that right? Is God's promise about His protection of the church from error, given while Joseph was living, still applicable when we have lost the man who communed with Jehovah? Are we to expect all successors to also act as if they too hold the keys to the mysteries and sealed truths (D&C 28:7) even when some have told us they have never received any audience with angels or the Lord? Are we allowed to presume the Lord invariably "sends another" when we vote to fill Joseph's former office? (*Id.*). Our traditions gives us an answer that we heard again in last General Conference through President Eyring's Priesthood Session talk ("Families Under Covenant"). That talk was reassuring indeed. I hope it is altogether correct. I hope it answers this question.

APRIL 17, 2012

Jacob 5:71–73

Once the decision is made to recover fruit from the vineyard, the Lord and His servants set to work, although there were only "few" sent. The laborers were told to work "with your might" because

the “time which will soon come” will harvest only the suitable fruit. This will be “the last time” for such labor before that day of harvest (5:71).

When the servants appeared within the vineyard to labor, they “did go and labor with their might” because this is serious work, not to be idled away with distractions (5:72). They will relentlessly seek to reclaim souls, preach repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. They have no time to set themselves up for a light, nor to practice priestcrafts (2 Ne. 26:9). Getting gain, engaging in commerce, diverting attention from the Lord, becoming the object of adoration; all these things cannot distract the true servants. Their only labor, which involves all their might, is to provide sufficient for their needs and then seek only the welfare of Zion. Zion’s welfare, of course, consists primarily in qualifying people to be called to Zion. That is no small feat.

The laboring servants are not left comfortless. The Lord of the vineyard “labored also with them” (5:72). They will not be confused about whether He is laboring alongside them. He will, of course, take up His abode with them (John 14:23). The Lord of the vineyard cannot “labor also with them” if He does not return to assist the laborers directly. He will not be an absentee landlord. He will be with them.

This process is not immediate. It is not automatic, nor is the outcome guaranteed. It may be generations before the work results in any fruit. But, at length, “there began to be the natural fruit again in the vineyard” (5:73). We will see this. There will yet be sons of God, daughters of God, and a people who are “natural” and within the adopted family of God. They are coming. But, as they return, the first appearance is so small a matter that the only thing which can be said of them is they “began” to return.

These beginnings will be marked by something “peculiar” indeed (1 Peter 2:9). The idea of a “royal priesthood” is apt. It captures the idea of nobility, or royalty, or, in other words, a connection with the Family of God. And the co-extensive proposition is that it will necessarily involve “priesthood” also. This is because one cannot receive the Lord without also receiving priesthood (See, e.g., D&C 84:35).

When the Lord bestows this royalty on the individual, it is through His own voice (JST-Gen. 14:29). This happened in the days of Joseph Smith (See, e.g., D&C 52, when Joseph reported the Melchizedek Priesthood first appeared in the church). This continued to be the case through March 1835, because the revelation reported there was yet Melchizedek Priesthood in the church at that time (D&C 107:1). By January 1841, the fullness of that authority was taken away (D&C 124:28). The Lord offered to restore it again, as discussed in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. I won't repeat that again here.

What is clear from the allegory is that no matter what labor is required, the servants who are sent will labor with their might to bring again some start to the return of “natural fruit.” They will gather those who are born to parents who have received the covenant, been sealed by the Lord, have a lively and warranted expectations of inheriting eternal life, and are acquainted with He whom they serve (D&C 93:1).

When it begins, there will be no going back. The appearance of the “natural fruit” signals the beginning of pruning away the wild branches. As the one appears, the other begins to be destroyed, removed, plucked off and cast away (5:73). The Lord is interested in preserving, producing and cultivating the branches producing natural fruit. For the rest, they will be destroyed because they cumber the ground and do not (indeed cannot) produce fruit. You

cannot have Zion without qualified residents, and Zion must exist on the mountains before the Lord's return. So the focal point of the Lord's labors will shift from the initial cultivation, and grafting to those places where the natural fruit appears.

APRIL 18, 2012

Jacob 5:74–75

When the final work in the vineyard begins, and the natural fruit reappears, the process of casting the bad branches producing bitter fruit accelerates. The bad is cleared away to make room for the good (5:74). The remaining gentiles will be swept away and their cities will be inhabited again. This time they will be swept away by the natural fruit, to whom the land belongs (3 Ne. 22:3).

Though there are two gatherings in the last days, when the natural fruit returns it will be to both. Servants will minister to both. They will all be gathered in, and Israel will gather together in Zion and the long dispersed of Judah will also be given their land in peace (Isa. 11:12). The Lord will hasten His work when the natural fruit reappears (D&C 88:73). Some will say it is like before and everything continues from day to day uninterrupted and the Lord delays His coming (Luke 12:45). Some will think the Lord will allow everything to be destroyed and still not return (D&C 45:26).

Then will be the time when “they became like unto one body” though gathered in both Zion and Jerusalem (5:74). Zion will have her kings (D&C 133:32) and Judah will have her prophets (See Rev. 11:3; D&C 77:15; Isa. 51:19–20; Zech. 4:11–14).

It begins with the regrafting. Joseph Smith began that process. The purpose was to establish a relationship where it is possible for natural fruit to return. It would take generations before the natural fruit would reappear.

In the work to reestablish the natural fruit, the Lord of the vineyard would send both servants, like Joseph Smith, and He would work alongside them. In other words He would appear to them (See *JS-H* 1:17–19; D&C 84:35; D&C 93:1). The Lord will be present for the work of producing natural fruit in the last days. He will appear to them, and both He and the Father will take up their abode with them (John 14:23). These will be those who are the natural branches, capable of producing the fruit for the final harvest (John 15:4–5). This is the culmination of the final chapter in the vineyard. His work and glory is to bring this about. He knows the end from the beginning. His work has always pointed to this great, final labor.

Those who will be gathered will not need to tell one another to “know ye the Lord” for those who remain will all know Him, from the least to the greatest (Jer. 31:34; D&C 84:98). These are those who have been redeemed from the fall, for they have been back into His presence (Ether 3:13). These are those who receive a testimony from Christ that they are saved (D&C 76:51). Those who claim to follow prophets, but have not received the testimony of Christ that they have part with Him will be burned at His coming and appointed their place in sorrow and suffering (D&C 76:98–106).

There will be no lukewarm saints allowed to stand in that day. If they have received and followed the truth, they will be saved. If they have not, they will be gathered in bundles and burned. The result will be an era of peace in which the entire vineyard, as if one body, produces again natural fruit (5:75). There will be joy at that day. The Lord and His servants will rejoice, and the Lord will give praise to those servants who labored with Him (*Id.*). When He could take credit, instead He shares it. And He promises to those

servants: “behold ye shall have joy with me because of the fruit of my vineyard.”

APRIL 19, 2012

Jacob 5:76–77

Zenos wrote at the time of a united Kingdom, before the days of Isaiah, and in another dispensation than John. However, when it comes to the prophetic destiny of the vineyard, Zenos and John tell the same story, using different images to tell the tale.

The allegory has a “long time” in which the vineyard produces natural fruit (5:76). This peaceful and productive era is Paradisaical (See Articles of Faith, 10). The vineyard will allow the Lord to “lay up the fruit of [His] vineyard” because there will be an end to this era of the vineyard (5:76). There will come a time for final accounting. The vineyard will need to be re-created, and a new one brought in its place. But before that day the vineyard will produce “for a long time, according to that which I have spoken” (*Id.*). During that time Satan is bound and children grow up without sin.

The story of the end of this creation culminates in the last, great day, when Satan is loosed again for a season: “But when the time cometh that evil fruit shall again come into my vineyard” will happen after the period of Paradise. In the allegory, it is when “evil fruit” returns. In John’s vision it is when “the thousand years are expired” (Rev. 20:7). John describes how “Satan shall be loosed out of his prison” at that time (*Id.*). When he is, he “shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth” (Rev. 20:8).

Despite all the Lord of the vineyard has done for His trees, the accuser will still find fault. The things of God will again be

challenged, criticized, debated, accused and maligned. The Lord's motives will be questioned, and His means will be derided. Why so little natural fruit? What right is there to discard the bitter fruit? Is not the worth of each soul great enough the Lord of the vineyard should have done more? Why should so much of the fruit have been gathered and burned? How can the Lord have the best interests of the vineyard in mind when there were so many who have not been gathered as natural fruit? What of those who came into the vineyard and were produced through wild branches, how can it be fair to leave them for the burning when they were given an unfair challenge? Their plight is not of their own making, and the Lord of the vineyard is unfair!

You see it is one thing to claim you believe in and follow the Lord when in your mistaken arrogance you assume His plan requires nothing from you and will exalt you to the sides of the north (See Isa. 14:12–13). But it is another thing when you realize “the summer shall be past, and the harvest ended, and your souls not saved” (D&C 45:2). Then will they lament:

O that I had repented, and had not killed the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out. Yea, in that day ye shall say:
O that we had remembered the Lord our God. (Hel. 13:33; see also 3 Ne. 8:24)

When all men stand before God and realize He did expect obedience, sacrifice, consecration, chastity and a godly walk of all who are saved, then many who profess to follow Him when it was to their vanity and pride will find they cannot profess to follow Him when it is to their shame and condemnation. They will, with the accuser, join in denouncing the Lord. They will also compass the camp of the saints and make war against them and their Lord.

The Lord of the vineyard has done all He could, and respected the agency of men. The arguments at the end of the Millennial Day will prevail. John reports that the number of those who align with the accuser will be so much greater than the camp of the saints, that they will “compass the camp of the saints about” because their numbers so vastly exceed the mere “camp” of the righteous they will be able to entirely surround them (Rev. 20:9).

These rebellious branches are “burned with fire” (5:77) or, as John describes it, “fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them” (Rev. 20:9).

This then leads back to the major themes of the allegory. It was included by Jacob for us so that when these things come to pass we are not left surprised or wondering why we were not warned by the Lord.

from the desk of
Denver Snuffer

VOLUME 5

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VOLUME 5

APRIL 20, 2012—NOVEMBER 2, 2012

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

A Note to the Reader:

This multi-volume series covers blog entries beginning in 2010. Scripture references in the text refer to the LDS versions of scripture found in the King James Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. Beginning about March 2018 the scripture cites change to the Restoration Edition of the scriptures. Cites of the Restoration Edition scriptures are typically denoted with OC, NC and T&C references e.g., (NC Matt. 8:10), or alternately (1 Ne. 1:22 RE) setting them apart from the former LDS scripture version references. For those interested, a scripture reference conversion tool that allows navigation between the various scripture references and versions can be accessed at: <https://scriptures.info/Scriptures/ReferenceTranslator>

CHAPTER 1

Themes From Jacob 5

APRIL 20, 2012

Themes from Jacob 5

There are important themes in Zenos' allegory. Here are five of them:

1. The Lord of the vineyard controls overall history through His involvement and the involvement of His servants. However, they can only accomplish two things: 1) removing the bad, bitter fruit by cutting away branches and burning them. 2) encouraging the good, natural fruit by pruning, grafting, nourishing and laboring. Whether or not the natural fruit reappears is left to the tree itself. Mankind cannot be compelled to be good. As agents of their own, they are free to choose. No amount of ministering will force the natural fruit to appear. The Lord and His servants can only present the opportunity.
2. The tree and its branches are prone to repeatedly producing bitter fruit. Producing natural fruit does not come easily. From the beginning, the tree was prone to loftiness and pride. It required cutting away, scattering and destroying the main top in order to have a chance to cause the natural fruit to reappear.

This is the tendency. As soon as people learn they are “called” they will presume they are “chosen,” even though these are two entirely different things. The Lord of the vineyard has learned by sad experience that it is the nature of almost all men that they begin to exercise unrighteous dominion over one another as soon as they have a little authority as they suppose. This is why He does not distribute, and cannot confer, the priesthood on mankind through generations of hand-me-down lines of authority. As soon as it is abused, it is lost. And when the Lord says “amen to the priesthood of that man” he is powerless to give it to another.

3. The Lord has occasionally come to the vineyard. On one occasion He labored directly within the vineyard, choosing to mingle with the scattered branches and to personally minister among them. This produced a period of production throughout the vineyard. However, it was short-lived. The vineyard lapsed into bitter fruit everywhere. There came a point where the entire vineyard produced nothing but bitter fruit, in every part of the Lord’s possession. When that time came, the Lord determined to labor a “last time” in the vineyard, and to bring a “few servants” to assist. Again this return would involve His personal appearance, but it took the form of periodic appearances with His servants, as in the First Vision and Section 76. When He appears He confers authority. Joseph and Sidney both “received of His fullness” when He ministered to them (D&C 76:20). Indeed, no one can behold His glory and not receive of His fullness (D&C 84:22). To receive His priesthood, He must redeem from the fall (Ether 3:13) and thereby receive Him (D&C 84:35). This is not an appearance in the heart, but is rather a personal

appearance, The idea it is something merely in the heart is an old sectarian notion and is false (D&C 130:3).

4. In the Lord's last labor in the vineyard, the commencement of the work does not signal the end of His involvement. Once begun, He will continue to labor with the tree to encourage it to produce fruit. He will send servants who will labor with all their might to bring the fruit about. However, it will be the tree's response and not the Lord's nor His servants' work that will bring again the natural fruit. This will take a long time before the roots are able to take hold again. The grafted branches will require pruning and additional work before they respond and return to respect and take nourishment from the natural roots. What was shocking and hard to bear with will need to be accepted in humility and gratitude before the natural fruit can appear once more.
5. When the natural fruit begins to appear, the Lord will begin to trim away the bad to make way for the good to prevail. Therefore, those who fight against the natural fruit will be cut down. Even those who entertain high positions will be struck down if they oppose the return of the Lord's natural fruit (See, e.g., D&C 85:7). The Lord of the vineyard controls which branches are allowed to survive with His tree, and not the tree itself. The inclination to produce the lofty and high minded remains the tendency of the tree. But those unwanted and unproductive branches will be cut away, burned, and not allowed to interfere with the natural fruit.

APRIL 23, 2012

Themes from Jacob 5, Part 2

Here are five more themes:

6. The work of the last labor will not be abandoned. The Lord did not establish the restoration of the Gospel only to abandon it. Though it will take some time before it produces natural fruit, the Lord intends to stay with the grafts, labor with them, and trim away as necessary. Joseph Smith suggested the church needed to stay together, and the Lord's hand would continue to watch over the church. As they have left, the splinter groups have all fallen into neglect, and ultimately abandonment. Whether it was Sidney Rigdon, the William Marks/Emma Smith "reorganization", the William McLellin departure, or the various "fundamentalist" movements, the temporary prosperity or success has ultimately ended in collapse and failure. The Lord intends to work within the church until the natural fruit reappears. Though the church may not be synonymous with the "Gospel," it is the means by which the Lord preserves the Gospel. To see the Lord's hand, all you need to do is be near to the laboring full-time missionaries. The Lord *does* bear testimony to the investigators that the Book of Mormon is true, and Joseph Smith was His prophet, and the revelations are trustworthy, and the sincere soul should receive baptism at the hands of the elders of the church. I received this testimony when I investigated, and have received also the blessings associated with fellowship among others who accept and believe in the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith, the restoration scriptures, and all the associated practices we have inherited. Though we have departed somewhat from the

roots that came from Joseph's ministry, at this moment, for the first time, the church has begun publishing *The Joseph Smith Papers*. We are the chosen generation who can see the records for ourselves. The ability to take nourishment from the roots has become more of an opportunity for us living today than any of the prior saints, from Joseph's day till ours. Thanks be to the church for opening this valuable library that has remained unavailable to the common church member for these last three or four generations. It is as if the Lord has finally moved, despite all we have done to forget our beginnings, to make important change possible and return to His foundation by giving us the original records.

7. The natural fruit involves more than just the regrafting. The establishment of the church was the necessary first step, but the prophecies do not mention The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the target church. The revelations speak of another name for the Lord's church (See D&C 76:54; 78:21; 88:5; 107:19; Hebrews 12:23; among many others). The temporal church is essential to produce another group within it. They are not going to reappear as a group disconnected from the temporal church, but instead from within it. The Gospel net will gather all manner of fish, but the angels will gather the good and cast away the bad (Matt. 13:47-49). Being gathered into the net is not the sign of being good and worthy of gathering by the angels. It is only the first step. There is another step beyond that which requires the virgins to have oil in their lamps in order to be with the Bridegroom.
8. The history of the tree is told from the most ancient of our preserved history until the distant end of a millennium of peace. There is no other history that will take off in a different

direction. The tree is fully accounted for in the allegory. You needn't look for another, separated, surprising or unaccounted for sequence of events or long interruption of the Lord's labors. He is working NOW and it is currently underway. The story is complete. Although the reappearance of the natural fruit is not immediate, it is going to reappear. When it does it will be in the young, tender growth. The high minded and lofty which are barren and tend to grow in their own self-interests, but do not seek the welfare of Zion itself will be trimmed away. The Lord's hand will be most apparent inside the church, not outside of it. But likely in a young, tender place where nourishment from the roots has taken hold. Watch, therefore, and you will not be mistaken when it begins. This is, after all, the Lord's work, and it is marvelous in the eyes of those who can see it (Mormon 9:16).

9. Although there are many different groups of people, the Lord's work has always focused on the House of Jacob and the potential for it to return to covenant status as the House of Israel. This is the "natural fruit" that the Lord seeks to have return to His vineyard. Although having some religious connection to God is desirable, the "harvest" is looking for this particular kind of "natural fruit" to preserve against the season. This kind of fruit requires the very same thing Joseph was so excited about in his last few talks in Nauvoo. The Elijah Talk followed on the history retold in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, and goes to the heart of this need to reconnect with "the fathers in heaven," or the original Patriarchal Fathers who were chosen by God as His. It requires us to track back, reconnect to the roots of the restoration, and return to belief in doctrines long neglected if we want to participate in the Lord's work. The

Lord invites all to know Him, to come to Him and to form this connection with Him. However, if you are waiting for the process to be unfolded in a weekly Gospel Doctrine class, you will first need a new manual. Nothing of these topics remains in our formal curriculum, though the information is still available if you will search for it.

10. The Lord has actually considered burning the entire vineyard before, and fully intends to burn all but the natural fruit in the future. The risk of the entire earth being cursed at His coming is not just an idle notion designed to make us lukewarm in our church affiliation. It is intended to cause us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philip. 2:12; Mormon 9:27). When we think our simple affiliation with our church is enough, we are deceived and show disrespect to the requirements of the Lord's plan. The best scriptural passage to put the problem into context is Mormon's description:

...Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with him under a consciousness of your guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws? Behold, I say unto you that ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell. For behold, when ye shall be brought to see your nakedness before God, and also the glory of God, and the holiness of Jesus Christ, it will kindle a flame of unquenchable fire upon you. (Mormon 9:3-5)

That day will come; now, if you prepare for it, but it will come. If that day "burns you up," then you were not natural fruit (Mal

4:1). Therefore, it makes sense to do what is needed now, repent, call on His name, and live by every word which He imparts so you may see His face and “know that [He is.]” (D&C 93:1).

APRIL 24, 2012

Themes from Jacob 5, Part 3

The most striking theme of all is the Lord’s patience. The work of the vineyard is never immediate. It is generational. Those who enter the vineyard impatiently expect the Lord’s work will result in reordering the world for them while they spend their brief moment here. There has been some confusion in Historic Christianity over the New Testament era expectation of the “end” of things. One of the questions Hugh Nibley asked was “the end of what?” He parsed through the material and arguments and suggested the “end” was of the church itself. The world would continue on, but the church would end. That is one of the themes of Jacob 5. The labor in the vineyard to bring back natural fruit is always against opposition. The success is brief. It requires considerable effort to coax the natural fruit back into production, and when left untended it quickly lapses back to wild, bitter fruit.

The Lord of the vineyard has never been in a hurry. The allegory was originally composed by Zenos in the time of the united Kingdom, some 2,900 years ago. It tells the story of Israel for the next 5,000 years. Jacob put it into his writing approximately 2,400 years ago when the events were only at about verse 14 of the allegory. This allegory was important to Jacob. It is also important to when Jacob’s record would be restored again. We are now at about verse 55, the era when the Lord and servants are trying to bring again some small appearance of natural fruit in the vineyard. We want the

fruit from verse 73 to appear long before the story predicts it will return. We expect it to have begun as soon as He sets His hand to the labor by calling Joseph Smith. The allegory allows for no such interpretation. We want that because we think ourselves “natural fruit” and worthy to be saved against the season.

There is a great preliminary work with only the grafting back at first. It started with Joseph Smith. That graft hasn't taken hold yet, nor produced fruit. It wasn't intended to do so at the start. The graft will require the branches to take nourishment from the original roots; hence the notion of “restoration,” but the roots from which nourishment is to be taken are quite ancient. At first it is likely (measured by our conduct and preaching) that the only aspiration of the graft is to become merely another New Testament era faith, and not to find nourishment from the ancient roots which run back to the beginning. It is apparent, however the natural fruit will not reappear until the original, first generation teaching's of man, which were in the beginning, return again at the end.

The Brother of Jared was redeemed from the fall, and was taught about the history of man from the beginning. Enoch's vision included the story of man from the beginning until the end. Moses also. The vision on the Mount of Transfiguration included a similar visionary show of mankind's history from the beginning. The reason Zenos composed, and Jacob transcribed this vision of the history of Israel through the end was because they shared in that instruction of what the Lord is trying to bring back into His vineyard. Joseph Smith was not being inadvertent when the accounts of Moses and Enoch, in the Book of Moses were restored. Nor when the Book of Abraham was revealed. These, as well as the Book of Mormon, pre-date the New Testament era. They tell about an original, ancient faith which was to return again so there

would be fruit, or in other words, the hearts of the children would turn to the fathers.

When we take our reckoning from the New Testament era and claim ourselves to be like the other “Christian” faiths, we are not looking to the rock from whence we came. We are not taking nourishment from the roots. We now hardly understand Joseph’s preoccupation with the most ancient of themes and religion. Joseph now seems antiquated to us, and he hardly began to introduce the ancient faith which is still to come.

God’s patient cultivation of the tree can continue for so many generations as needed, and will linger without the return of natural fruit so long as we choose not to take nourishment from the original root where the strength lies. The Lord of the vineyard creates the conditions which allow growth, but it is the tree itself that must respond and grow.

Our impatience and expectation that God has given us all we need, and everything He intends for us to have, precludes us from taking in what we still lack. God may intend to yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God, but it will fall on deaf ears if we think we have everything we need for our salvation and exaltation already restored to us.

God’s very long-term view contrasts sharply with our ‘must-be-in-our-lifetime’ outlook. Generations come and go and think themselves saved while God waits patiently for natural fruit, willing to take nourishment from the strength of His Gospel, to finally reappear. Proud and vain men strut about proclaiming how special they and their cultic-following are before God, while God pleads for our repentance, humility and willingness to return to Him. Lofty branches still need trimming and only produce bitter fruit still. We witness how blind, fallen men think it is sufficient for the

branches to feel themselves vindicated by reason of their loftiness. If our present form of "Zion" wasn't "prospering" then we might be more acutely aware of our sickness, sores, disease and stench. We use the measuring rod of Babylon and conclude we are among the greatest of people rather than the standard of heaven against which we are loathsome, bitter fruit.

It is good the Lord of the vineyard is patient. It is good He waits for natural fruit to begin to appear before the next round of cutting down and casting into the fire. We should be grateful for His patience, but never fooled by it. His hand does not stay because we deserve it, but instead from His hope there will yet reappear the natural fruit He can lay up against the coming season.

CHAPTER 2

Criticism Of The Church

APRIL 25, 2012

Criticism of the Church

I do not believe it is at all useful for anyone to criticize the church. When I write, I try to explain what I believe, avoid any direct criticism and leave the rest alone. I also explain history. It is my effort to grapple with the inconsistencies and omissions that plague the understanding of anyone who looks carefully into doctrine and history. Since the traditional stories we hear repeated in the normal discussions cannot be reconciled with primary historical materials, I make the effort to come to grips with the challenges and then to explain my understanding. I know there are others who grapple with the same issues. They receive the benefit of my efforts which I hope proves to be faith promoting.

What I do not do is force my opinions on others. When I teach in church, I use the church's materials and scriptures. I have written eight books. Seven of them are about the Book of Mormon, the Gospel of Christ, and the prophecies given to us. They are written to be faith promoting and bring people to Christ. If someone wants to read what I've written, they have to go to the trouble of finding

it. They then have to purchase it and read it. As for the eighth book, *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, it is my attempt to explain the issues I have grappled with as I have read and studied the Gospel and our history. If people have gone to the trouble of finding and buying that book, they have already learned about some upsetting issues and are trying to reconcile the matters for themselves. If they're already trying to find answers, then they can look at what I've written to help them. On the other hand, if they are completely content with what they hear from the inside sources of the insular Mormon community they have no reason to have even encountered what I've written. Unless they have searched into the matter and made the discovery for themselves, my own ward members are unaware I've written books on church doctrine and history. I am not sold at Deseret Book stores, not advertised in any LDS publications, and I do not do advertising or book signings.

The church is an important and valued part of my life and the lives of my family. I attend weekly, and very much enjoy associating with my fellow ward members. I do not understand why people go out of their way to provoke a dispute with the church. If you belong, then follow the rules. If you're unwilling to follow the rules, then why belong?

If in your own studies you find there are issues, then you should search for answers. I've done that. I've found answers and I am willing to state what I believe and to defend why I believe it. It is on display for those who are anxiety-filled and uncertain after learning of problems in doctrine, history, practice and scriptural interpretation. All I have done is help the fellow-explorer who has encountered the many issues which are not adequately understood or taught as yet.

When someone thinks they know all the answers, and can give the chapter-and-verse answer from some Deseret Book publication of a former or current general authority, I have no disput with them. They are free to believe as they wish. They are free to consider only “orthodox” (although there is no such thing in Mormonism) sources and to confine their inquiries to the traditional stories. However, there are so many saints who no longer do that and who are in a crisis of faith as a result. Someone needs to take seriously the problems and attempt to give answers. If you have no crisis, don’t know there are issues, and think all is well with everything then you shouldn’t be reading either this blog or much of what I’ve written. I am writing for those who want to know what the scriptures say. I am writing to those who are interested in the prophecies in the Book of Mormon given to us, the Gentiles. I am writing for those who wish to seek the Lord and Savior. I am writing for those who wish to strengthen their testimony of the Gospel of Christ. I am writing for the troubled, the searching, and the inquiring open soul who honestly wants to believe in the truth but has become alarmed at what they’ve discovered about our faith.

There are answers to the problems. I offer my conclusions as a consequence of my own search and discovery. It is my belief the Lord is pleased by this effort, and has actively assisted me in doing so. I also know there are a great many who are offended by my work, and that I am unpopular among many of the saints. The Strengthening the Members Committee does not approve of what I am doing. I believe myself more accountable to the Lord than to them.

In the last book I wrote, I divided the church’s development into four phases. That is a convenient way to see how and why the church has changed. I am completely converted to my faith, but

the version I believe in is the first phase, the original faith which Joseph Smith was developing methodically line-upon-line from the beginning in 1820 through his death in June 1844. It is the foundation of my relationship with God. I rejoice in that faith, and have found God through practicing it. I recognize there are many fellow latter-day saints who hardly understand that version of the church, and dis-prefer it to what is the fourth phase. While I explain my beliefs, and I willingly accept fellowship with anyone who shares faith in the restoration, I do not expect the church or anyone else to adopt a first phase view of Mormonism. It is largely gone. In that respect I am also antiquated. But as an antique Mormon I try to be low maintenance and not require anyone to accommodate me. Instead I'll accommodate them.

I believe God still speaks, and will do so with anyone who follows the steps Joseph Smith followed. I would not want anyone to follow me, and have never even invited anyone to do so. I think everyone should follow Christ, who will lead them to the Father. I think Joseph Smith is the most current prophetic example of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, because he was in Christ's presence and rescued from the fall. That is the Gospel. I do not worship Joseph Smith, but have tried to replicate the religion he held, and through it to come to know God. It has worked for me.

The church introduced me to Joseph Smith, gave me the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, baptism, ordinances and covenants. I took it all in, accepted and have honored the things I've received from the church and been benefited as a result. The church has my gratitude. I would not want to injure it. When there are others who are disaffected from the church, and who have discovered issues or problems, they are

welcomed to look into what I've written as my best effort to state what I believe and why.

In writing I try to be candid. I know there are those who trust in fourth phase Mormonism who resent, even revile against me and what I write. I'm content with that. What God thinks matters a great deal more to me than what some errant blogger hiding behind a pseudonym puts on some discussion board. I am not a coward and intend to stand accountable for everything I write. I make no apologies for my faith. It is honestly and deeply held. As a result of study and prayer I think I know what I am talking about. Those who have spent only a fraction of the effort I have devoted to my religion cannot affect me by their criticism.

Long ago I realized this honest approach would disqualify me from being popular. It makes me "too suspect" for any significant church callings. That is perfectly fine. It was never the intention to become popular or successful in religion anyway. Only being true to what I believe matters. Everything else is, in a word, vain.

So if you want criticism of the church, you will have to look elsewhere. I try to avoid it. I would encourage others to search into what they believe, and stop complaining about what others believe. Search it out for yourself and be content to believe in what you find.

Mormonism is the last place where God touched mankind. It is the place where His hand will begin again in moving mankind upward. Therefore it is where I intend to faithfully remain.

APRIL 25, 2012

Enabling Comments

We have enabled comments. We will NOT be posting them. It is a terrible distraction and destroys the spirit. We will (within reason)

read them all. We will NOT be responding to them. If there is something contained in a comment that would be useful to address in a blog post, we will do that.

Hopefully, this gives you all (supporters and naysayers alike) somewhere constructive to address your concerns.

This is a plea from the CM—the disclaimer at the top of the blog asking that you read Denver’s books before you start getting your panties in a bunch (over whatever), that many of you find so arrogant or distasteful is actually neither. It is designed to let you know there are places to find out what Denver believes and why. The books he writes are annotated with scriptures and bibliographies. The information he puts in his books is available to all of you. You don’t need to read either his books or his blog to find the information. Go find it for yourselves. Truly, the stuff on this blog is all ancillary and supporting material. There are many things that won’t make sense to you. If you don’t wish to read his books, that’s fine, just don’t comment. The gospel is not made up of “sound-bites.”

APRIL 26, 2012

Criticism of the Church, Part 2

Frailty or insecurity in the mind of a person oftentimes interferes with the ability to cope with facts or truth. For example, a secure and healthy woman can be told “the horizontally striped dress you have on makes your hips and shoulders look large.” She will thank you for pointing it out, and take it into account. She may or may not change the dress. It is, after all, merely appearance. But an insecure and fragile woman whose self-consciousness interferes with interpreting facts will have a different reaction. She may think the person pointing it out to her hates her, thinks she is fat, even

ugly. She will resent the remark and never pause to think there was no criticism or hidden insult in the observation.

Facts are not criticism. Opinions which differ from traditional historical opinions that I have fully explained and gathered the evidence from the sources to support, are also not criticism. If an event occurred and is accurately retold, it is not criticism even if the event is troublesome.

When it comes to evaluating our faith, indeed any faith, there are moments where two things are going to happen: First, you will encounter things you simply do not understand. For those issues, you may struggle with dissonance, or the inability to resolve the question sometimes for years, as I have. That is perfectly normal. It means you have more work to do. It does not mean you are wicked, lack faith, or are out of harmony with God because you are unable to understand a proposition. For me, plural marriage was a difficult topic which caused me to leave it unresolved for over two decades. It was not something I had time to resolve. During that time, the issue was an admitted “problem” for my faith. But despite that, I had a testimony, continued active in the church, paid tithing and served in callings. From time to time, when the topic was being discussed, I listened, asked questions, considered what others thought, and kept the matter in the mental file-drawer to be sorted through at some point. During that time many Latter-day writers took the effort to gather and publish histories of the practice. They aided me as I pondered the question. It was literally only a couple of years ago before I finally reached a conclusion. I’ve never fully explained my conclusions or why. I have, however, mentioned the matter in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. That is a broad-brush treatment, and not an elaboration of my full understanding on the subject. I am now comfortable with how *I* view the subject.

Second, you are going to encounter information that proves what you believed before is wrong. It may be wrong because it was not true, or because it was poorly understood, or because it was based on a story or incident that never happened. It may be wrong because someone you trusted was mistaken, or they were dishonest. Whatever the discovery that reveals things in a new light, you will undoubtedly find along the path of faith that you were wrong at some point about some things in your religion. I've encountered that a lot since becoming a Mormon.

When you encounter such things you have a choice to make—Either you can react with dismay and bitterness, or you can sort through what adjustments now need to be made, and proceed with faith and security in God to sort it out. In other words, you can act like the secure woman who was told the horizontal stripes had an unintended effect on her appearance, and proceed forward with that in mind.

There are those who have never ventured into our history. They don't want to do so. They feel insecure and frail, unable to encounter the material because of fear that it will unhinge them from what they value. I get that. In the case of *Passing the Heavenly Gift* I'm not writing to even address them. For the life of me, I can't understand why such a person would even read that part of what I've written. It was certainly not intended for them. The most frail and insecure of all, however, are those who have never read anything I've written and yet presume to be able to evaluate the intentions and even value of the work I have and am doing. I am not a critic of the church. I have never been one.

I have never said the church does not have the sealing power. Instead, I have discussed the scriptures and teachings of Joseph Smith, the revelations in the D&C, and Joseph's public addresses,

the critical moments when the authority has been conferred, and both how and why it is given. There are three chapters in *Beloved Enos*, and several chapters in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, and some material in *Eighteen Verses*, along with a paper on Elijah in which I discuss things relating to the topic. In none of that have I ever said the church lacks sealing power. In *Beloved Enos* I discuss an example from President Monson where I refer to its use. I also concede regularly the claim by the church that it has it and I do not question that claim. Never have.

The fact that the power to seal is given in only one way is very clear in the scriptures and teachings of Joseph Smith. That is a fact. That fact has been shown in what I've written. Therefore, there are several facts which ought to be considered. First, in scripture, the sealing power comes to man by the voice of God and in no other way. Second, I have never said and don't claim the church lacks that authority. Third, the church claims to have such authority, and I do not question the claim.

Frail and insecure church members, particularly those who presume they have the right to evaluate the faith of others are well advised to first ground themselves and their own testimony before deciding if an accurate observation about "horizontal stripes" is really an insult or merely a fact.

Here is a sample of the kind of foolishness my wife brings to my attention from various blogs:

Interesting that there are those who are "in the know" from inside the church who feel at liberty to gossip on the Internet about things such as this. What kind of an organization are they running? Why would the church pretend to have confidential conversations between members and leaders if there are going to be such leaks from within the COB?

Shame on all those involved. Shame on those who refuse to discuss openly the important issues rather than resort to subversion of members through back-channels.

For the Strengthening the Members Committee I have another thought for you: “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion” (Prov. 28:1). That was Solomon. Today, if it were me, I would say instead: “Grow a pair. For the faithful tire of dealing with eunuchs.”

If I err in doctrine, and you have several million words of mine propounding doctrine in very public places then correct the error. Show me the mistakes. Teach me the better view of history. Show the better argument. If I err, I will gladly be instructed. But effeminate men hiding inside a tower who lack the testicular fortitude to confront me and debate the truth are unworthy of any serious consideration. They have chosen to hide from the arena in which ideas are doing battle. Anybody creeping about behind a pseudonym when they dare to comment at all is in sharp contrast to my own public disclosure, public accountability and public defense of the faith I hold as true.

Here’s another truth for the self-righteous eunuchs accusing me of wanting the glory of leading my own following: You can’t find a picture of me on this blog, or in any book I’ve written, or in the advertising to the very few speaking engagements I’ve accepted. You can look into the Chiasmus Conference at which I spoke and you’ll find that there is no picture of me in any of the material advertising it, nor in the book when it came out. My picture isn’t in any of the material from the Portland Conference I spoke at last year. I’m not looking to be recognized. It is my IDEAS that are advanced, not me. I am nothing. I don’t matter. You shouldn’t recognize me, pick me from a line-up, or think you know me. I do not do that. Even

the interview with John Dehlin was predicated on it being a voice recording, NOT a video. If it were a video, I would have turned it down. I'm not a publicity hog, and offer no competition to the folks who want a following. I do not want one. I do not accept speaking invitations. I turn down dozens of them and rarely speak because I do NOT want to attract attention to myself. I want the IDEAS to have a life, not me.

If you want to search for men seeking to rival the Brethren, take a look at CES. For example, one of my former Bishops is able to fill a stake center to overflowing mid-day with Mormon housewives who dote on the man. I can assure you I have no intention of trying to accomplish anything similar. I KNOW that what I've written is deeply offensive to many, many church members. It has no advantage apart from being honest, and the honesty of the material is accompanied by my sincere belief in it also being TRUE. If it is wrong, then grow a pair and openly confront the ideas, tell us your name, give us your basis for contradicting the material, and act like you are confident in your beliefs. Or keep your skirts on and snipe from the sidelines, but never expect me to respect the frail and insecure who are unable or unwilling to compete in the arena where the valiant are found suffering for the Lord's cause. I occupy a place where insults come from those who ought to be supporting the struggle; making the Lord's cause all the more difficult for those making the sacrifice He has asked be made. It is not pleasant, but it does conform to a law ordained before the foundation of the world upon which blessings are predicated. Those blessings are personal, between God and myself, and worth enduring your attacks. I will not be deterred by weakness and criticism.

I have a testimony of the church. I have and do serve wherever asked. I pay tithes to her. But the horizontal stripes nevertheless are being worn, and they do affect her appearance.

APRIL 27, 2012

Criticism of the Church, Part 3

I reject the idea it is criticism or “evil speaking” to discuss candidly the church’s history. Here is a sample of one fact which I welcome anyone to correct if I am wrong:

It is my conclusion that the Nauvoo Temple was never completed. Those who worked on it, went inside it, participated in work on it, and knew its condition never claimed it was completed. Never. The words used by those who knew about it were carefully phrased. They said it was “considered sufficiently completed to dedicate.” That is much different than being completed.

Joseph Smith died before the walls were completed to the second level. The lower part of the Nauvoo Temple was essentially a copy of the Kirtland Temple. The upper levels were not fully designed. The top attic floor was largely open, a few offices at either end and a large, open area in between. When the attic was adopted as the location for endowments, the area was unsuitable because Joseph never lived to work with design and construction crews to adapt the facility for use in endowment work. It did not have the kind of privacy and separate rooms needed to initiate through the ordinance.

Joseph had ordered a large quantity of canvas to cover the outside bowery next to the Temple. The weather made public meetings unpleasant, and many ended early because of rain or snow. The canvas was intended to let these meetings continue despite the weather.

In the winter of 1845, when the pressure to abandon Nauvoo became so great, the decision was made to use the attic space to do the endowments. The canvas was used to partition off areas in the attic and divide the area up so the ceremonies would be possible. The attic was “tented off” into separate rooms where the endowments were performed from December through early February. As they pulled out of town, the church’s leadership prayed for the Lord’s assistance in completing the Temple. The next day the attic caught fire and the attic area burned. The fire was extinguished, but not without considerable damage to the roof and attic area.

The roof was repaired, but since the attic was no longer going to be used, the interior was again not completed. The rest of the temple interior was never completed. It was merely “considered complete enough” and was dedicated.

A year after the dedication of the Temple and before there was any damage done by the mobs, a newspaper editor from Palmyra, New York toured the Nauvoo Temple and remarked about its condition. Among other things, he observed in an article titled “The Deserted Mormon Temple,” these things about various parts of the Temple:

The first sight we had of it gave us a pang of disappointment, for it looked more like a white Yankee meeting house, with its steeple on one end, than a magnificent structure that had cost, all uncompleted as it is, seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. But as we approached nearer, it proved to be something worth seeing... [In the attic:] The chamber itself is devoid of ornament, and I was unable to ascertain whether it was intended to have any, if it should have been completed... [In the basement baptistery, speaking of the font:] It is very plain

and rests on the back of twelve stone oxen or cows, which stand immersed to their knees in the earth. It has two flights of steps, with iron bannisters, by which you enter and go out of the font, one at the east end, and the other at the west end. The oxen have tin horns and tin ears, but are otherwise of stone, and a stone drapery hangs like a curtain down from the font, so as to prevent the exposure of all back of the forelegs of the beasts... The basement is unpaved... [Overall comment:] The whole is quite unfinished, and one can imagine what it might have been in course of time, if Joe Smith had been allowed to pursue his career in prosperity. (*The Palmyra Courier-Journal*, September 22, 1847)

In a 1962 Deseret Book publication, the Nauvoo Temple's state of completion was described in these words:

Perhaps there were many rooms in the building whose walls were not covered with lath and plaster. Perhaps factory cloth, canvas, or other curtain material covered the walls and ceilings in the upper story rooms. There were some large assembly rooms and many small rooms that were not to be used in the temple ritual, so they were not put in order and beautifully decorated and furnished with the best of equipment. In all such rooms the pungent odor of fresh pine timber, uncovered by plaster, pictures or carpets, greeted the visitors. There may have been many plank floors and stairways uncovered with carpets, and many walls and ceilings presenting an unfinished condition. ...Bare boards in many rooms, large and small, might have been visible, but the rooms that were necessary for the temple ritual were quickly prepared, and the endowment was administered within the new temple though the building was

not as elaborately furnished as was the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. (*The Nauvoo Temple*, E. Cecil McGavin, Deseret Book, 1962, p. 56)

The content of Section 124 *is what it is*, and *requires what it requires*. History shows the Temple was only “considered complete enough” and was not in fact complete. The diaries of church leaders commented on the incomplete condition of the Temple. It appears to be a fact that “considered complete enough” to be used in the endowment, and later for purposes of being dedicated, is not the same thing as completed. Subsequently, after the Saints abandoned Nauvoo, and after the Palmyra editor’s visit, the building was burned down. Later it was struck by a tornado. Then the remaining, partial structure was considered a hazard and demolished by the City. By the time it was reconstructed, not one stone of the original building remained on the site. Some excavation located the font area, and some artifacts were recovered, but the structure was gone.

My view is that this has some relevance to our history. I think the early Salt Lake City refugees from Nauvoo suffered through great want, difficulty and hunger. Because of their hunger, they were boiling saddles to soften the leather enough to be able to eat it. This was very real privation and seems to represent something other than God’s blessings upon them. In the context of Section 124, it is at least plausible it represented God’s displeasure, and not His vindication of the Saints. It states

If ye labor with all your might, I will consecrate that spot that it shall be made holy. And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place. (124:44-45).

This was the revelation given in January 1841, three and a half years before the death of Joseph and Hyrum. The “servants” appointed were Joseph Smith, and the new Co-President, prophet, seer and revelator who was also to be ordained to the Priesthood and given the sealing power by the word of God, Hyrum Smith (See 124:91–95). The saints were warned that if they failed to complete the temple, according to the revelation that:

I will not perform the oath which I make unto you, neither fulfill the promises which ye expect at my hands, saith the Lord. For instead of blessings, ye, by your own works, bring cursings, wrath, indignation, and judgments upon your own heads, by your follies, and by all your abominations, which you practice before me, saith the Lord. (124:47–48)

It is clear we have history to help us answer the questions: Were they blessed? Were they not moved out of their place? Were they cursed? Did God’s wrath and indignation visit them?

None of this is criticism of the church. It is an attempt to understand history and to read the meaning of events through the lens of scripture, rather than through the lens of conceit. Why should scripture not be used to help us understand history? If God chastens those whom He loves (Rev. 3:19), then why do we fear acknowledging chastening from God? Can’t that be a sign of His love? What is the powerful insecurity that prevents us even considering the possibility of an early failure and God’s displeasure? Even if the work was interrupted, we can still have faith in the Restoration. After all, the Book of Mormon predicts we will get off track. It also assures us the Lord will set His hand a second time to recover us. The allegory of Jacob 5 also foretells of the eventual return of natural fruit. What fear should we have? Why

would we not want to fully understand the Lord's work instead of some alternative carefully composed fiction, or in other words a cunningly devised fable telling us "all is well," when the evidence strongly suggest things are not at all well?

This is not criticism. This is a labor of love to understand fully the Lord's dealings with us and our true standing before Him. Why would we reject it? Because it requires repentance and return to Him? What right do we have to think we don't have to repent? How much of our story is motivated by pride, contrary to scripture, and inconsistent with facts?

If you attribute ill-will to those who diligently seek the Lord, then we ought to just disband as a religion claiming to follow God, and admit we are content to be a social group instead. We would still qualify for tax-exempt status. Then we won't be encumbered by any of the rigors of what required the lives of Joseph and Hyrum, and which requires the sacrifice of all things, including our own lives if necessary, to produce faith.

It is in vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtain faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they, in like manner, offer unto him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him. (Lecture 6:8; *Lectures on Faith*)

When we will tolerate only praise for one another, and cannot abide correction from the Lord in the revelations He gave us, we are no different than the Zoramites scaling the Rameumptom and proclaiming our conceit.

There is a great difference between pursuing truth, accepting the unpopular role of saying what needs to be said inside a group who

does not welcome it, and merely criticizing the church. I utterly reject the idea. I know I am not qualified to be popular, or advance in the organization because of what I write. The organization resents me, and has made that clear. Even as I seek its best interests, I find myself the object of its ire. On the other hand, I have come to know God by the things I have sacrificed for Him, and I would never alter that bargain; even for the whole world.

APRIL 28, 2012

Comments

I've been reading comments this morning. Those who have submitted them and wondered if they were getting through can know they are. And I have been catching up on all of them.

There are some things raised which I will eventually address. Next week, however, will be taken up with the Joseph Smith History all week. There are a few other posts to follow that. Then I will address some of these questions you've raised.

CHAPTER 3

Joseph Smith History

APRIL 30, 2012

Joseph Smith History

The Joseph Smith-History found in the Pearl of Great Price was composed shortly after John Whitmer left the church and took what history existed then with him. He was the church's Historian at the time. The bitter Missouri conflict left a lot of former top level church leaders disaffected and no longer followers of Joseph or the church. David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and several members of the twelve were among them. Some signed affidavits supporting the Missouri citizens' campaign against the church, and were responsible for persuading the legal authorities that there was reason to justify arresting and holding Joseph. This series of events resulted in Joseph beginning again to write the history of himself and his church.

Given the fact he was starting over in 1838, I think the account in the Pearl of Great Price is remarkable. I think Joseph, like Nephi, could measure the importance of events he had lived from the distance of some years' reflection about them than he ever could have as he lived them. What we get in the *JS-H* is the benefit of Joseph's considered hindsight. He also could write better the

meaning, or intent, of the message he received. He could *interpret* the visits, and make much more sense of them than he could when they happened. Nephi did the same thing. His Small Plates of Nephi were a production of his history begun some 40 years after the departure into the wilderness from Jerusalem. He wrote with all the insight and understanding of how the early events led in turn to the later results. He could see the preliminary disputes in the wilderness against the backdrop of the rebellion and rejection of Nephi following the death of their father, Lehi. He could align his visions with his father's, and show how the elder brothers rejected both.

Joseph Smith used the First Vision and his account of Moroni's first visit to foreshadow in the narrative all of his later prophetic work. It was an inspired explanation, using both scriptural and doctrinal coordinates to establish the Divine and angelic origin of his history and ministry. The *JS-H* is all the more valuable because of this inspired approach. We are better informed about what was really going on in Joseph's ministry because he told the account by using language of scripture to testify of what he experienced.

I want to comment on the process of Divine or angelic communication and how that makes its way into the written record of a prophet. It is more complex and subtle than most readers can conceive. For the most part, we read the scriptures as a completed work, and think the words give us everything we need to understand doctrine. That is not at all the case. We must arrive at the same place as the ones who wrote the scriptures in order to be able to understand what they mean. Until we share the same view, take in the same Spirit, and have similarly been exposed to the direct influence of heaven, the words are incomplete and can be very misleading.

The angel Moroni appeared to Joseph in his bedroom, and took hours to communicate understanding to young Joseph. The version of that visit we have in the *JS-H* was written about a decade and a half afterwards. It reflects Moroni's meaning and intent, but accomplishes it by supplying direct quotes from scripture. The account we have looks like a doctrine class, with Moroni as gospel doctrine teacher and Joseph as student. It is doubtful, however, there were any "words" exchanged between Moroni and Joseph. It is also unlikely there were "scriptures" used. Instead, the encounter likely consisted of Moroni conveying directly into the mind of Joseph the thoughts of Moroni's own mind. Joseph would later attempt to explain this using these words: "All things whatsoever God in his infinite wisdom has seen fit and proper to reveal to us, while we are dwelling in mortality, in regard to our mortal bodies, are revealed to us in the abstract, and independent of affinity of this mortal tabernacle, but are revealed to our spirits precisely as though we had no bodies at all (*TPJS* p. 355). This makes it seem as if it were less "real" than if it involved normal faculties, but it is in fact far more real, far more precise, and far more communicative to the mind, heart and spirit. It "imbeds" the information within the person. As a result, the impression becomes more clear with time.

As Joseph worked to reconvey the information to us, writing in 1838, he resorts to using scripture to make the meaning clear to us. Moroni is quoting various passages of scripture to Joseph, as described in these words:

He first quoted part of the third chapter of Malachi; and he quoted also the fourth or last chapter of the same prophecy, though with a little variation from the way it reads in our Bibles. Instead of quoting the first verse as it reads in our books, he quoted it thus:

For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall burn as stubble; for they that come shall burn them, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

And again, he quoted the fifth verse thus:

Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

He also quoted the next verse differently:

And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.

In addition to these, he quoted the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, saying that it was about to be fulfilled. He quoted also the third chapter of Acts, twenty-second and twenty-third verses, precisely as they stand in our New Testament. He said that that prophet was Christ; but the day had not yet come when “they who would not hear his voice should be cut off from among the people,” but soon would come. He also quoted the second chapter of Joel, from the twenty-eighth verse to the last. He also said that this was not yet fulfilled, but was soon to be. And he further stated that the fulness of the Gentiles was soon to come in. He quoted many other passages of scripture, and offered many explanations which cannot be mentioned here (*JS-H 1:36-41*)

You have two options to explain this retelling of the visit. 1) Moroni said these exact things and a decade and a half later Joseph could remember and quote it exactly as it was spoken, or 2) Joseph

could remember exactly the impressions, and drew from scriptures known to him in order to convey to the reader the information Moroni passed into his mind on that evening.

I believe the second is the accurate way to comprehend the interview. Moroni visited with Joseph, conveyed the information precisely as if Joseph had no body at all, and did not rely upon the eardrums, or the vibration of atmospheric pressure, in order to clearly and accurately enlighten Joseph's understanding. Then, when it came time for Joseph to inform us of the event, he resorted to familiar words of scripture to recount the event.

It begs us to ask: "Why?" That is where we turn next.

MAY 2012

MAY 1, 2012

Joseph Smith History, Part 2

Joseph was still a young man when Moroni visited with him. He was practically a child when he first saw the Lord and the Father. In both encounters, as Joseph recorded his best retelling of the incident, he used the words of scripture to weave his account together.

In the First Vision, when the Lord addressed Joseph, the account tells it in these words:

I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: "they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.

Or, in other words, Joseph has the Lord borrow from Jude 1:4: For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

And Isaiah 29:13:

Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.

And from Titus 1:14: “Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.”

And 2 Tim. 3:5: “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”

Or, the Lord conveyed into the mind of Joseph an indelible impression of truth, which would remain with him and expand and distill as he pondered on its meaning. When at last Joseph was able to set it out in an inspired retelling, the words of scripture flooded into his mind and equipped him to compose an account that would ring with truth, convey what happened, and testify of the authenticity of the words of ancient prophets, while letting the world know what the Lord’s message was to Joseph. But the language, even the quotes, are not what transpired. They are an accurate retelling, but reduced to our form of communication. The Lord’s manner of telling is quite different. It is unencumbered by our vocabulary, and conveys pure meaning and intent. Therefore Joseph was able to capture and compose the information with power and meaning to us. But to do so Joseph had to resort to scripture.

Which again, begs the question: “Why?” Why do prophets resort to the scriptures to explain the truth as revealed to them? Why does a new revelation get put into the words of an earlier revelation? Why does a stunning new truth come forth as an exposition of the already familiar words of scripture?

In perhaps his greatest sermon, Joseph drew from and expounded on the scriptures to proclaim new doctrines, unheard of by those who had studied the Bible for two thousand years. As he did so he remarked:

It has always been my province to dig up hidden mysteries—new things—for my hearers. Just at the time when some men think I have no right to the keys of the Priesthood—just at that time I have the greatest right. (*TPJS* p. 364)

He goes on to expound from the Bible on the true meaning of “eternal judgment” and the resurrection, “salvation for the dead,” the plurality of Gods, Abraham’s teachings, eternal glories and the pre-mortal exaltation of some who lived on the earth. “Sons of God who exalt themselves to be Gods, even before the foundation of the world” (*TPJS* p. 375). He used as his text the Bible.

Prophets see the meaning behind the words of scripture, and not the words themselves. This is because having been taught by angels and the Lord, they know the intent. Hence Joseph’s proclamation that it is his “province to dig up hidden mysteries—new things” using the scriptures. They are not a sealed book to them.

In like manner the Lord spent most of the day of His resurrection opening the scriptures in a private conversation between Himself and two disciples while they walked on the Road to Emmaus. “Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning

himself” (Luke 24:27). The Lord could do this because the Lord was there when they were written, and they reflect His mind and His teachings. Therefore, He could see clearly within them the teachings about Him.

To bear testimony of his encounter with the Lord, and with Moroni, Joseph Smith employed the scriptures to expound unto us in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. How like his Master was this servant! Joseph completely mirrored the pattern of the One who can save! We should be able to recognize the Master in the servant! In Joseph’s case, the parallel is unmistakable.

Because he had received a dispensation of the Gospel to him from heaven, Joseph proclaimed the truth using scriptures to confirm the message.

It is the order of heavenly things that God should always send a new dispensation into the world when men have apostatized from the truth and lost the priesthood, but when men come out and build upon other men’s foundations, they do it on their own responsibility, without authority from God; and when the floods come and the winds blow, their foundations will be found to be sand, and their whole fabric will crumble to dust. (*TPJS* p. 375–76)

Joseph, having secured the truth from heaven for himself, did not need to build on other men’s foundations. He was privileged to declare the truth to us from his own understanding, from his own knowledge and in conformity with his own dispensation of the Gospel.

The scriptures weave together the truth from dispensation to dispensation because those who wrote them had seen the same vision, conversed with the same heavenly hosts, and found the inspired language that allows the truth to be declared.

When Joseph wrote his account in 1838, he had pondered and gained the insight to be able to weave into his history the corroboration of his Divine mandate employing the words of scripture to justify what he taught. He was a prophet indeed! He knew the things of which he spoke. All he needed to do was expound the scriptures to be able to dig up hidden mysteries, new things, for those who would hear him. Those who heard him were amazed, just as the disciples on the Road to Emmaus.

MAY 2, 2012

Joseph Smith History, Part 3

Joseph Smith's entire ministry was connected to scripture. It began with an encounter between him and God which he was only able to describe using the language of scripture. It extended to an encounter with Moroni which he again described using a host of scripture to convey the meaning of what the angel impressed into his mind.

It turned to translating a volume of scripture. This required him to take every thought of the ancient prophets and translate them from one language into another. The language of the Book of Mormon repeatedly adopts phrases from the King James version of the Bible to weave together the ancient narrative. Given the circumstances, and what we have been told of that process, Joseph's mind was embedded with phrases that would have seemed familiar to him as he struggled to capture in his own tongue the ideas of the long dead authors. It would not have been derivative from the King James' Bible, but would have sidled alongside it in phrasing, structure and concept.

Just like Nephi's vision of the fullness of God's works, Joseph Smith likewise saw God's unfolding plan. Nephi was forbidden

from disclosing what he beheld. To bear testimony, however, Nephi adopted the language of Isaiah to explain his own (Nephi's) testimony. It is important for us to recognize that when Nephi was writing Isaiah, and then expounding on the material he'd etched into the plates, he was acting the role of a prophet. Isaiah's words WERE Nephi's testimony. They allowed him to tell us what the Lord wanted us to know, and to do it using the words of scripture composed by Isaiah.

Jacob accomplished the very same thing. Jacob adopted the words of Zenos, and the allegory we've been reviewing, to testify of the things he had seen and heard from the Lord. I went over how Jacob had, like his brother Nephi, been visited by the Lord. Jacob was also looking for the language to express his own vision. He invited his people to the temple where he was going to deliver to them his own prophecy. When they arrived, he read them the allegory, Zenos' prophecy, the story of the olive tree. When he completed that retelling, Jacob announced the following: "as I said unto you that I would prophesy, behold, this is my prophecy—that the things which this prophet Zenos spake, concerning the house of Israel, in the which he likened them unto a tame olive tree, must surely come to pass (Jacob 6:1). Jacob, who beheld the Lord and was ministered to by Him, bore his testimony and established his prophecy by retelling Zenos' olive tree story.

Christ's great Sermon on the Mount was based on the Law of Moses. The law of retaliation (*lex talionis*) set out in the prior law was contrasted with what the Lord now established as the underlying meaning for that law. Instead of striking back, bear the blow and forgive. Instead of refraining from adultery, remove lust from your heart. Instead of rebuking, harbor no ill will toward your brother.

Christ's entire ministry was based on expounding the scriptures. Interestingly, He forbid us from calling one another "fools" in His great sermon (Matt. 5:22). Then He called men "fools" for their blind misapplication of scripture (Matt. 23:16-19). The same scriptures which, in the hands of the Lord will save a man, are the tools for deceiving men and leading them into destruction when used by the Pharisees and Scribes.

For Nephi, using Isaiah was the perfect means to preach salvation. For Jacob, using Zenos was the perfect means to preach and prophesy about his people and us. For Joseph Smith, using the words of scripture to translate into English the words of earlier prophets was a master work of a man who received a dispensation of the Gospel. For Christ, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He was able to show how necessary His own sacrifice and offering was to fulfill all righteousness.

However, for the blind guides, the use of scripture to develop as commandments the doctrines of men, the Lord only had the term "fools" to describe their wickedness. They would not enter into heaven, and would instead hinder others who followed them from entering.

Joseph was commanded to "translate" the Bible. His Inspired Version was a work which led in turn to some of the greatest revelations of our day. Reading about "heaven" in John 5:29 led to an inquiry which provided Section 76 to us all. The Vision of the Three Degrees of Glory was given because of an inquiry about scripture. Earlier John the Baptist came because of an inquiry about baptism as a result of translating scripture. The work of the Prophet Joseph Smith was intimately linked and could not be separated from the words of scripture.

At one point a calm Lord told His critics to search the scriptures, because His detractors claimed they would have eternal life from what was contained in them. But, He added, they testify of Him (John 5:39). So it is not merely claiming the scriptures support a proposition that deserves respect, but instead whether the matter taught has underlying it the truth. Joseph's history shows what an adept prophet can do when employing scripture to inform the reader of God's will. In that respect, Joseph Smith does not take a back seat to Nephi or Jacob. It is a marvelous thing to behold; assuming you recognize it as one of the signs that testifies Joseph was indeed a prophet.

MAY 3, 2012

Joseph Smith History, Part 4

Once Joseph had an encounter with God through the veil, he hesitated to discuss the matter fully. Even at the end he remained reluctant, even forbidden, to share all he knew from the encounter (*JS-H* 1:20). The first attempt to tell someone about the encounter happened only a few days afterwards. He records that it was to a Methodist minister, the sect he had been most impressed with as he investigated the various religions (*JS-H* 1:8). This fulfills one of the laws ordained before the foundation of the world (D&C 130:20–21) because it is necessary for the Lord's servants, and even the Lord Himself, to first make an offering of the truth to the existing religious authorities before either Christ, or Joseph, or any of His servants could then move forward independent of them (See John 1:11; D&C 10:57). Query in your own mind what would have happened if the Methodist minister had accepted Joseph's experience as authentic.

Joseph explains this encounter as follows:

Some few days after I had this vision, I happened to be in company with one of the Methodist preachers, who was very active in the before mentioned religious excitement; and, conversing with him on the subject of religion, I took occasion to give him an account of the vision which I had had. I was greatly surprised at his behavior; he treated my communication not only lightly, but with great contempt, saying it was all of the devil, that there were no such things as visions or revelations in these days; that all such things had ceased with the apostles, and that there would never be any more of them. (*JS-H 1:21*)

This theme of the false minister opposing new revelation found its way into the endowment ceremony Joseph later restored. That portion of the ceremony was eliminated in the 1990 temple changes. Before then the endowment taught how professional ministers were men in Satan's employ, but true messengers were angels, sent from God's presence with a message from God. This endowment teaching came from the actual experiences of Joseph's life, as shown above. It is repeated, of course, in the experiences of all those who follow God, are taught by angels, and opposed by professional's making their living from religion. Ultimately there must be a choice between those who come bearing a message from God and those who oppose it, and claim there can't be any such revelation, and that the organized faith they advocate (i.e., Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Catholic, etc.) is the guardian and possessor of the right to teach *all* truth. They claim to be the spokesmen for heaven and heaven does not really send any messengers apart from themselves. Of course it follows that those like Joseph Smith were "all of the devil" and not to be trusted.

Joseph lived this. As did Christ. The temple rites, until 1990, fortified the endowed against this particular deception of Satan's.

Joseph's history includes an observation about the reactions the religious critics had toward him. It is always the false, pseudo-religious who are offended by the truth; not the atheists or agnostics. The atheists and agnostics allow others the liberty of believing as they wish. The religious are another story. They were the ones who, throughout Joseph's life, worked against him. Ultimately it was the disaffected within the church, and the ministers outside the church, who were directly responsible for killing him.

There is a passing comment in Joseph's history which is so undeniably authentic it leaps off the page. He writes that he was:

persecuted by those who ought to have been my friends and to have treated me kindly, and if they supposed me to be deluded to have endeavored in a proper and affectionate manner to have reclaimed me. (*JS-H 1:28*)

Joseph is absolutely correct. The right way to proceed, if those who claimed Joseph was wrong and they were followers of God, would have been to have treated Joseph kindly, and endeavored in a proper and affectionate manner to have reclaimed him from error. But they didn't! This is a great key to understanding how the plan of God works. It conforms to a law irrevocably ordained in heaven. The false ministers cannot help themselves.

Why was it that the people claiming to be religious were persecuting Joseph rather than trying to persuade him with affectionate persuasion? It is because when men think that they have God on their side, and they do not, then they become abusive. They seek to have control, dominion and power over others in order to *force* the true disciples of the Lord to change and surrender faith.

They abuse their position by claiming to follow God, while actually doing the opposite.

They had to follow the law of their master, Satan, who deceived them. This was because only in this manner could Joseph also obey the law ordained by God upon which blessings were predicated. For Joseph to grow, it was required for the men inspired by Satan to be revealed in their true light. They had to suppress, oppose, persecute and defame Joseph because they *could not* “in a proper and affectionate manner” have ever reclaimed him while serving Satan. He had the truth and they did not.

Joseph—

had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision; and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation. (*JS-H 1:25*)

Joseph was following the law ordained before the foundation of the world, and so were his critics. This is the same battle fought endlessly when God intervenes in the affairs of men.

We see the same thing when King Noah feared that Abinadi may have actually been sent by God. Noah was about to release him, but the priestly committee he surrounded himself with interfered. They aroused the vanity and pride of the king to make him angry. As a

result, King Noah did not repent, and instead followed the law of the persecutor (Mosiah 17:11–12). Joseph Smith lived according to law, and according to law he was persecuted. According to a higher law he was vindicated by God, though like Abinadi it required his life. We are the beneficiaries of Joseph's death. Through it the latter-day work is sealed, and will ultimately triumph. Temporary set-backs will not prevent the final return of natural fruit, and at last Zion itself.

Joseph's history is the story of how one individual obtained salvation by following the laws ordained for saving any of us. It is authentic. He shares details that conform to the same pattern all disciples of the Lord must follow. He is saved, while his persecutors who followed the law of their master, Satan, opposed the truth and were damned. It is always the case.

Joseph explained:

The world always mistook false prophets for true ones, and those that were sent of God, they considered to be false prophets, and hence they killed, stoned, punished and imprisoned the true prophets....and though the most honorable men of the earth, they banished them from their society as vagabonds, whilst they cherished, honored and supported knaves, vagabonds, hypocrites, impostors, and the basest of men. (*DHC* 4:574)

Joseph was not just a source of new scripture, but his life conformed to the pattern of it. To study his history is to see the hand of God acting again to offer mankind the opportunity to repent and come to Him. The way never changes. The pattern never varies. Occasionally men who are initially following the law of persecuting the Lord's chosen will repent. Mostly they do not. Instead they reject what is offered, and incur the wrath of God.

Joseph's life and death are testimony to this ancient, yet still intact, system of law by which men choose to be saved or damned.

MAY 4, 2012

Joseph Smith History, Part 5

Joseph's education did not open his mind. Translating the Book of Mormon did not open his mind. He clarifies in his history the point at which his mind did open up. He writes of it:

so soon as I had been baptized by him, I also had the spirit of prophecy, when, standing up, I prophesied concerning the rise of this Church, and many other things connected with the Church, and this generation of the children of men. We were filled with the Holy Ghost, and rejoiced in the God of our salvation. Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of. (*JS-H 1:73-74*)

This was the moment of greatest change. At that moment Joseph's mind greatly expanded.

Later he would provide a description of the effect the Holy Ghost has on one who receives it:

This first Comforter or Holy Ghost has no other effect than pure intelligence. It is more powerful in expanding the mind, enlightening the understanding, and storing the intellect with present knowledge, of a man who is of the literal seed of Abraham, than one that is a Gentile, ... for as the Holy Ghost falls upon one of the literal seed of Abraham, it is calm and serene, and his whole soul and body are only exercised by the pure spirit of intelligence. (*TPJS*, p. 149)

This is in stark contrast to what some people think the “Holy Ghost” is about. They associate sentiment and emotion, rather than enlightenment and intelligence with the presence of this member of the Godhead.

Joseph could understand the meaning of the scriptures because he acquired access to the same source of intelligence which animated the authors when they composed the scriptures. He did not need to seek an “interpretation” or study the methods of Biblical exegesis. He knew what they meant because the enlightenment from God laid open to his understanding the true meaning and even the intentions of things that before were merely “mysterious.”

This is what Peter was referring to when he asserted: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:20–21). In other words, no one has the right to assert any prophecy means anything because they think they can “interpret” the words, because such right belongs exclusively to the Holy Ghost. The words came (and still come to those who have received priesthood—D&C 68:2–4) from the Holy Ghost, and therefore, the meaning is only given from that source. [Section 68 was addressed to one of those who, in June 1831, was given the Melchizedek Priesthood at Isaac Morley’s farm. According to Joseph Smith, that was the first time the Melchizedek Priesthood was given to the Elders of the church. That is another topic.] Notice also, the appearance of John the Baptist was only to provide the means to be baptized. He specifically speaks about some future visit of Peter, James and John, who held the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood (*JS-H* 1:72). Yet Joseph and Oliver received the Holy Ghost without

any other ordinance and immediately following baptism (1:73). This mirrored my own experience.

So in Joseph Smith's History, we end at the same point where we began: His ministry as a prophet was directly connected with scripture. He walks through events that happened, including an audience with the Father and Son, repeated visits by Moroni, educational instruction given there, and the appearance of John the Baptist, but for Joseph, it was the Holy Ghost which enlightened his mind. When enlightened, the result was his capacity to understand the scriptures. He tunes into the very same frequency from which they originated. Sharing the mind of those who composed scripture, Joseph could understand what the authors meant. Therefore, when Joseph explained scripture to us, it was his right to tell us things we hadn't known before, interpretations we hadn't considered before, and the true meaning of what seems to us mysterious.

As people debate the meaning of latter-day prophecies, and think they can unravel the correct interpretation of such topics as Zion, gathering, priesthood, sealing power, the "one mighty and strong" and many, many other things we learn of from our unique body of scripture, we should remember Joseph's ministry. We ought to stop researching the threads of comments from oftentimes mystified commentators, and instead "ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally" to find the answer. Joseph did. It took him on a journey which resulted in him gaining a dispensation of the Gospel. He did not need to build on another's work, because heaven worked with and through him.

Joseph was above all else, the prototype of a Latter-day Saint. Would that all men were similarly Latter-day Saints, who actually believed and practiced the religion restored through Joseph. A religion in which people are able to ask God and get an answer.

A religion which Joseph began, but which God has yet to finish. One where no one needs to say to another: “know ye the Lord” because all know Him.

Little wonder the prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28–32) spoken of by Moroni (Joseph Smith History 1:41) was yet to be fulfilled.

MAY 4, 2012

Responses to Various Comments

Here, in no particular order are responses to various comments received since we opened comments up a few days ago:

To the fellow wondering if he'd wasted his time serving a mission: I don't think so at all. The work of bringing people to knowledge of the restoration through Joseph Smith, introducing them to the Book of Mormon, and the modern revelations, as well as baptism, laying on hands, sacrament, and other ordinances offered through the church blessed and changed lives. It was a very good thing. Anyone you converted was given a great gift, and your sacrifice will be one of the things the Lord will account for righteousness.

To the one asking how to reconcile my ancestors contacting me while I did ordinances in the Jordan River Temple for them and the possibility we were rejected, I would respond as follows: Rejection of the church is not rejection of the individual. IF (and I have always left that tentative and for each person to decide for themselves) there has been a rejection, that does not mean anything other than the organized efforts were unacceptable. Each individual is accountable for their own conduct. There was a Temple rebuilt by Herod, presided over by wicked men who would kill the Lord, and yet He called it His “Father's house.” In that Temple a publican

came in and offered a great offering, and was rejected. A widow, however, entered and gave but a farthing, and she was accepted. The difference was not the building, nor the act of paying, but the intent of the individual. In the same Temple there can be acceptable work and unacceptable work proceeding simultaneously.

To the one asking if I would clarify the sealing power: I can tell you there are at least three different ways sealing power is made available. The church purports to have only one of those. I will not be able to do the topic justice in a blog post. It would require a lengthy paper which I will undertake at some point. If there is anyone who thinks they have command of the topic, perhaps they will come out and write something and then I wouldn't need to.

To the one asking if I thought there was a hidden, wise, or heaven-sent reason to change the temple rites in 1990: I can't think of any. It wasn't introduced as a revelatory change, or as an improvement. It was done because the church had the "right" to change it. The church leadership asserted they held "keys" that made them powerful enough to take the changes on and implement them. That is quite different from being either a revelation, a command from God or necessary for salvation of man. The change came about because of the research done in follow-up to an article suggesting dissatisfaction with the temple experience. That article was confirmed in polling of approximately 3,600 families in Canada and the U.S. The whole process was provoked by the members' concerns and dissatisfaction with the temple rites, rather than Joseph having gotten it wrong in the first place. The leadership had two choices—change the members' minds or change the ordinances. They changed the ordinances. I do think, however, that when we give our common consent to the church leaders, and they stand in their offices and make changes, and we then sustain them after

the changes are made, that we (meaning the entire church) are accountable for the change, not just the leaders. Therefore, we (all of us) are similarly situated and cannot just lament a change made by church leaders. All of us are together moving in the direction we move and are all equally accountable for the changes when we continue to consent by common consent to the implementation of changes.

To the one asking about how I pass the temple recommend question about sustaining church leaders: I sustain them. They have my common consent. I don't think I have any right to call my new stake president last month, but Elder Nelson did. I don't think I have the right to build a multi-billion dollar shopping mall adjacent to Temple Square, but the church leaders did. I don't think I have any right to separate the "tithing dollars" from the "investment dollars" belonging to the Lord, but the church leaders have done that for generations and have the right to do that. I'm not a leader. I appreciate being able to attend meetings and to receive the sacrament. I'm grateful for it. I neither envy nor want to join the leaders. I think they have a heavy and unenviable burden to carry, and do a commendable job accomplishing it.

To the one asking about how I see Zion unfolding: Not the way most people do. I tend to think the scriptures are quite clear. It will be the Lord's work, not man's. It will be initially in the mountains, only later in the plains. It will be the work of angels to organize. The Lord will provide the means, not men. The residents will not be like the typical nosey, overbearing sort who meddles in other's lives, like the Strengthening the Members Committee. In fact, I doubt very much anyone on that committee will be fit to invite, because they presume to judge others rather than to serve humbly and provide by their meek example a fit pattern for living as "one"

with others who hold perhaps very different views. Those who come will be open to growing into a unity of faith, not asserting that they have the right to compel agreement on pain of some penalty being inflicted. They will use meekness, love unfeigned, and pure knowledge to persuade one another of the truth. While outside the gate the demanding, compelling, presiding and coercing sorts will be burned.

To the one asking about organized atheism: I agree. Organized atheism is a religion. They do attempt to impose their views and do persecute others, but I was speaking about the individual atheist, and in particular the persecutors of the Prophet. For the most part, they were not interested and didn't care about what Mormons, or anyone else believed. The atheists I know are more broadminded, and tolerant, than the folks in the Strengthening the Members Committee, and a good deal more discrete, too. The Strengthening the Members Committee leak confidential information on the internet, compromise legal issues and the right to claim certain legal exemptions. I think that is a problem for the church, and ought to result in them abolishing the committee, or firing those responsible for this significant mistake.

To the one asking if I can explain the various events in priesthood restoration: I haven't attempted to give that history for a reason. Therefore, I'm not going to undertake that now. I will get to it, but the blog is not the means to accomplish it.

To the fellow who wants to know why I don't provide my books free for download: First, I don't want everyone reading my books. If someone is interested, they must be inconvenienced to do so. That will remain the case. Second, there are others who need to make a living through publishing the books and with whom I have contracts I intend to honor. One of those involved suffered a stroke

a few years ago, and is partially paralyzed. It is an honor for me to be able to provide some revenue through the books (though it is not much) for this man and his family. If you think you should have something free, then read this blog. I've put more words here free, (and in the downloadable papers) than in my books. But the books deal with a single topic, and require the entire scope to accomplish the discussion. It must be a sustained discussion. One of the books (*Removing the Condemnation*) is entirely on this blog. I've been encouraged to put the Jacob 5 series in a short book. I may do that, too, but it is available free here. Your suggestion that I'm profit motivated is foolish (and wrong). I'd suggest you borrow from the local library. We've donated books to many Utah libraries, but my wife tells me there are submission guidelines which may keep them from being made available. So I can't control if they actually put them on the shelves, or throw them away, or if people just take them once donated.

To the one asking about lunch: No.

To the one asking if I'd be willing to come and talk at the family reunion: No.

To the one asking if I'd recommend an order to read my books: In the order they were written.

To the inquiry about *Eighteen Verses*: It is a selection of those problems currently facing the church. They are the eighteen most significant issues we have before us today. The verses were selected to allow that discussion to be put into a single volume, and to show how the Book of Mormon remains highly relevant to our current plight.

To the one asking about which one of the Twelve: You've got to be kidding.

To the one asking about a Harley: The Dyna Super Glide. The basic model. You can do whatever you want to customize it and add anything you want. To bump power about 20% just open up the pipes and air intake using the Harley shop's Screaming Eagle slip-ons and you'll notice an appreciable difference just seat-of-the-pants.

MAY 5, 2012

More Responses to Comments

On the best sources of LDS history: *The Joseph Smith Papers* is a gold mine of information. The diaries and journals of the inner circles of church leaders are very informative. There was a conscious effort to prevent diaries and journals from becoming public beginning in the early 1900's. There were "resolutions" and "covenants" among church leaders that they would stop putting stuff in their diaries for others to find out later. That didn't always work so well. Today the church requires an agreement to be signed by every new general authority (I forget how many pages it is), but it covers, among many other things, the obligation to turn over to the church the diaries of the general authority when they die. I've been told Elder Oaks was the one sent to retrieve the journals of Elder Neal Maxwell when he died. So there is an effort to stop that kind of information from being "inadvertently" released to the public.

When you read diaries or journals it is not really "history" in the narrative-telling-a-story sense. They read just like life. From one moment to the next they don't have a clue what is coming. They are constantly surprised or frustrated by how it unfolds. For example, there was no plan to abandon plural marriage. There were incremental concessions, intending always to accomplish statehood, after which it would be made legal. So the goal was

to do what was needed to get statehood. When the final events take place, the leaders involved were shocked they'd arrived at the point where plural marriage was actually being abandoned. Many of them recorded that if they had known where it would lead, they would NEVER have made the first concessions. So as you read the diaries, you find that the leaders wound up in a place they never intended to go, making concessions they believed would let them avoid forsaking a principle they believed in, and ultimately they were out-manuevered by the Federal Government and corralled into denouncing and forsaking what they thought was a sacred principle.

When Cowley and Taylor were forced to resign because they wouldn't renounce plural marriage, there were some tense moments among the leaders. George Albert Smith said some things which Elder Taylor (who had seen the Lord and was considered a spiritual giant) took as an improper insult to himself. He confronted and warned George Albert Smith to not do that again, but that didn't stop the preaching against Elder Taylor. So Elder Taylor "cursed" him. The resulting mental and physical health challenges that George Albert Smith suffered were thought by some to have been due to being "cursed" by the resigned apostle Elder John W. Taylor.

These sorts of things are not found in the written histories because, well, among other things, Elder Taylor was forced to resign from the Quorum of the Twelve and George Albert Smith became the president of the church. This year we are studying the teachings of George Albert Smith. It doesn't set well to go into this sort of thing when one has been excluded and the other has triumphed into the presidency. So it just sits as an unexplored thread of events, left for those who search into our history to discover. Then once discovered there is always the further question of whether the researcher is candid or protective. If candid, are they

pursuing an agenda to belittle the church and our faith or are they honest and sincere. Even if they are not seeking to belittle the faith, and believe sincerely in it, the problem is further complicated by those who want to gag them, and to prevent any telling of events from something other than what the Strengthening the Members Committee thinks is “faithful” to them. So the history of the church is terribly complicated and likely going to be left to either outsiders of good faith (of which there are a few) or those who must fight to retain their membership because insecure and thin-skinned “thought police” are running amok at this moment.

Returning to the question, the best historians (in my opinion) writing recently are Jan Shipps (non-Mormon), D. Michael Quinn (excommunicated), Richard Van Wagoner, Gregory Prince, and Ronald Walker. Several of those are deceased. That is a horribly incomplete list and I’m not going to look at the bookshelves, but give just this off-the-top-of-my-head list. Bushman’s work is not as useful as I’d like. His tools are academic and have the weaknesses of his discipline. He does not inspire me. Some of Quinn’s work was marred by an agenda rather than objectivity, but that work was important. The second volume of the *Mormon Hierarchy* series is a very important book. The third one has been delayed, but hopefully will be out soon. It is one of the books I’ve been waiting to read for months. For anyone writing, the sources they use are important, and their conclusions are less so. For what I’ve written about history, I’ve tried to “interpret” (history is always an interpretation) through the lens of scripture. Rather than try to conform the story and sources to the theme I want adopted by the reader, I try to let the scripture’s themes lead to interpretation of events. Other writers of LDS history are developing what they hope are objective views based on the events as they understand them.

Fortunately the truth always wins. Even if the church decided to spend its vast resources and repository of good-will among the members, the Internet is providing an inevitable transparency to things. There will be “bootleg” copies of diaries and journals. Right now, for example, Yale University received a donation of a considerable volume of material from the church’s archives, which some intrepid (but anonymous) soul published in limited numbers of copies. I’ve spent thousands of dollars acquiring copies of these limited edition books. I try to use my best sense, my faithfulness to the church and the Lord, and my honest reactions to tell the truth about some things in my last book.

On the question asked about the church leaders being “prophets, seers and revelators” the answer is that this is the ‘title’ given to them in the D&C. It is scriptural in origin. We have always associated the scriptural authorization with the office and therefore anyone who fills the office is entitled to hold the title. I don’t see where that is a problem. Anyone elected to the office has the title.

We have never considered it necessary to search about and find a “seer” to put in the office. Instead we consider that the office imposes the obligation on them, and the scriptures allow them to use the title, and therefore it is perfectly symmetrical. How can you NOT sustain them as “prophets, seers and revelators” when the scriptures say that is the office they have been elected to fill? Doesn’t really make sense. Of course they get to wear the title.

On the German version of the Bible Joseph Smith praised: It was the translation rendered by Martin Luther.

CHAPTER 4

Unity Or Hierarchy

MAY 7, 2012

Virtue and Righteousness

There is a difference between virtue and righteousness. Virtue is laudable, required and necessary, but righteousness has priority. Virtue surrenders to righteousness, not vice-versa. The point can be illustrated from scripture:

It is not virtuous to kill. Nephi was repulsed at the idea, but the Lord required it, and Nephi complied. The doctrinal reasons justifying the killing are set out in *The Second Comforter*, and there were sufficient reasons both under the Law of Moses and the Lord's standards of judgment to vindicate the Lord's decision to kill Laban. The killing was offensive to virtue, but it was righteous.

It is not virtuous to mockingly taunt others. Yet Elijah was pursuing a righteous course against the priests of Baal when he did just that:

And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. (1 Kings 18:27)

Mocking is both unvirtuous and uncouth, and in this context would qualify only as righteous.

It is not virtuous to rail against the religious leaders of any faith. Yet John the Baptist rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees as a generation of vipers: “Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Luke 3:7). This term of derision, “generation of vipers” is graphic and in context it is both offensive and uncouth. Yet he was a righteous man, more so than any other apart from Christ (Luke 7:28).

It was not virtuous for Christ to rebuke His accusers:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!...for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, ye blind guides,...ye fools and blind...(Matt. 23:14-17)

The language of the Lord here is quite blunt, uncouth and in the context of that language, guttural. It was righteous, but not an example of virtuous language.

It was worse still for Christ to call Herod “that fox.” This is a term of derision comparable in our own language to calling someone a “son of a bitch” (Luke 13:32). Yet it was righteous, justified and appropriate.

It was blunt and threatening for Joseph to tell his guards in Liberty Jail:

SILENCE, ye fiends of the infernal pit. In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still; I will not

live another minute and hear such language. Cease such talk, or you or I die THIS INSTANT! (Taken from *The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, emphasis in original)

Calling another a “fiend of the infernal pit” is quite abrasive and offensive; it was intended to be so.

Those who prefer virtue to righteousness will handicap their ability to work for the Lord’s ends. He will always require righteousness to be done. When someone prefers virtue and neglects righteousness, or condemns the righteous for their lack of virtue, their inappropriate standard serves only one purpose. It gets applied against the one proposing to use it. They get to be measured by the standard they apply (Matt. 7:22).

I choose to look at Elijah, John the Baptist, Christ and Joseph Smith, as well as any other person moved to rebuke me or anyone else by the power of the Holy Ghost as fully justified and Christlike. I do not resist the challenge of a righteous rebuke. I welcome them. No one should feel they cannot “damn” me. I’ll consider it important and will respond with my defense, or an apology if I think it is warranted.

It is important for you to know that I do not think Christ is a limp-wristed, lisping chap who dotes on us and has nothing but bouquets of flowers to dispense to us. I think He’s about to return in judgment, dressed in red to burn the wicked. He has said that is who He is and I believe Him. I would like to have as many people take that seriously and consider repenting. We are mistaken in our belief that we are chosen. We are mistaken when we think we are too good to be in need of continual repentance. We are nothing before God. We are about to see His judgments. I know these ideas make me irritating.

As Hugh Nibley put it, “there is nothing so irritating as being awakened from a sound sleep.” But my hope is to awaken some few. Therefore, it is worth offending a great number if the result benefit a few. That is the way things work here and I am quite realistic about it all.

It is also important to be clear about some things. First, the Strengthening the Members Committee is a real group, although its existence was denied for a while by the church. Second, they are not supposed to be pressuring local leaders to harass church members. When they do, it is considered a violation of the process because all church discipline is supposed to be 1) local, and 2) independent. When they interfere it is inappropriate. Third, I WANT them to know there are leaks, and they have spilled onto the Internet. They should do what they need to do to plug them. It should be noted that there have been several forum discussions related to me shut down and deleted since my earlier post. Fourth, I want everyone to know if there is a problem which has offended a distant and imperial committee, it is not because I believe too little in the Lord, but too much in Him and too little in men. Fifth, they are misbehaving in a cowardly, unmanly way by this stealth attack. It would be far better, if they want to be credible, for them to address it openly. Do as I have invited them to do. Show me where I’m wrong. Let me respond. Let some sunlight on the matter. It is shameful, even cowardly, to avoid and accuse from a shadow, only to later pretend they weren’t involved. Pressuring local, reluctant leaders who know better from personal experience with their local members is manipulative.

I consider the words (<http://denversnuffer.blogspot.com/2012/04/criticism-of-church-part-2.html>) chosen by me to be measured, appropriate and inspired by the right reaction to

a cowardly and shameful act by this subversive committee. They are wrong to behave this way. They have probably engaged in illegal activity by leaking onto the Internet what should be kept confidential. I have done them a service by alerting them to this misconduct. Surely, no matter how misguided their deliberations may be, they intend to preserve their legal protection to claim to have privileges under the law. That protection is forfeited when they act this way.

MAY 8, 2012

Organizational Changes

I teach a Business Leadership class in an MBA program. One of the trends in modern business is “flattening of the structure” because a top-heavy management structure is no longer needed. It is possible, with new technology, for the top to be a single layer, and middle-management to be eliminated entirely.

I’ve thought about the possibility this presents for a religious movement. As I’ve written in several of my books, the origin of Mormonism makes it much more suited as a “movement” than as a controlled institution. However, the history Mormonism originated in made it impossible for the religion to survive separate from the institution created to perpetuate it. If it were not for Brigham Young taking the extraordinary steps he took to preserve the faith restored through Joseph Smith, it would have died. Brigham Young did act, reaffirmed the institutional structure, argued it could NOT exist without the bulwark of ordered offices and holders of authority, and as a result, the institution remained. More importantly, through the institution the religion has been able to stay. The religion was altered in form because of the merger of religion and institution, now having no life independent of the institution. The interplay

between these two (the religion and the organized structure), has been that the religion has been dominated by the institution. Indeed, it has stayed around only because of the institutional power to keep it here.

However, new social and technological advances have given the religion an opportunity to assume life on its own, unlinked to an institution. When Ronald Poelman gave his talk separating the “Gospel” and the “Church” in general conference (“The Gospel and the Church”), the talk was censored and re-written. A comparison between the original talk and the replacement is available on-line here. However, in the last general conference, Elder Hallstrom’s talk, (“Converted to His Gospel through His Church”) dealt with the subject again, this time making the distinction without being censored. The advances in social and technological management of information and people between the 1984 and 2012 have been more than significant.

The possibility exists now for an entire religious body to become “one” in heart and in belief, not because of periodic visits from a distant hierarchy, but because they are in constant communication amongst themselves. Though they are in India or Mexico or Russia or the US, they can stay abreast of the very latest through direct communication with each another.

This global change is the harbinger of changes coming to every organization on earth, including the church. The church has been an early adopter of technology for decades. As they continue to adapt to new technical capabilities, it will not be long before, once again, we can “live in the same small village.” Just as Joseph Smith would answer questions over the fence in his yard with his neighbors in Nauvoo, the possibility is coming for all of us to log into a continuing, flattened structure with no middle management. The

top and the bottom of the organization becoming one. No longer any lofty branches, exalted to the sky, with the lesser members confined to the shade, but a uniform and equal access among one another from top to bottom.

In Joseph's day there was no technology that would allow Joseph to be in contact with converts or members worldwide. There was an absolute need for a vertical, hierarchical organization with Presidency, Twelve, Seventy, Stake, Ward, and Quorum leadership levels interfacing between the top and bottom. In contrast, today if the president of the church wanted to address you and I, he could send an email, or post a message on a board where we could all visit and hear directly from him. He could record a MP3 message for us to download. Just like the rest of the world, the church itself could now be "flattened" without any of the difficulties Joseph would have encountered.

Although we tend to think the structure is absolutely essential, it isn't. For example, the revelation giving the overall church structure was not followed by the church from the time it was received (March 28, 1835) until 1975 when President Spencer W. Kimball organized the First Quorum of the Seventy. Between those times, the Seventies had an on-again-off-again existence at the general level of the church, with only the Seven Presidents regarded as General Authorities for almost all of that time. Needs arose, the Quorum was activated, and it has been in existence since then. Is that a one-way street? Could the expansion that happens at one moment because of global needs be reversed at another time? Could the structure be simplified if it isn't required just as it was expanded after 140 years?

As technology expands capabilities, it should not surprise us to find one day that the many layers of the church's organization will increasingly be shortened, condensed, consolidated and simplified.

It is now possible, for example, for the Lord to return and speak to us all at the same moment, no matter where located, using existing off-the-shelf means. I use that to illustrate a point, not to suggest the Lord will use those means. However, the economy of heaven is such that miracles are not employed when simple physical means will accomplish the needed work. The Lord prefers “small means” because they conform to a law (Alma 37:7; also 2 Ne. 2:11).

The idea the church could be “flattened” while the Gospel remains unaffected is an idea that can only occur if you think of the church as separate from the Gospel. The church opposed that idea just a few years ago. Now it is taught in general conference. We should not be surprised if other, presently unlikely ideas one day soon are part of our religious practices.

How can the people of God become “one” if they entertain the idea there must be a hierarchy in control? In fact, Zion and a hierarchy are mutually exclusive. You can have one, or the other, but not both. Hence the Lord’s frequent assertion that HE will bring again Zion (not us) (See D&C 84:99–100; Mosiah 12:22; 15:29; 3 Ne. 16:18, among others). Removing all the barriers between the top and bottom, and establishing only a great equality between His people, is a likely prerequisite for the return of Zion (D&C 78:5–7). The technical environment exists and the pressure will grow to flatten the church’s organizational structure. The only reason to resist that pressure would be a deliberate desire to keep distance between the top and bottom of the structure.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is never spoken of in scripture as the Lord’s elect in heaven. There is another body called the Church of the Firstborn. This group is equal in earthly and heavenly things (See, e.g., D&C 76:54–57; 88:4–5; 93:20–22). This will not be some fundamentalist group taking multiple wives,

calling themselves by that name. It will instead be called that by the Lord. [I have little confidence in self-identifying individuals or groups. The Lord calls and sends whomsoever He elects; they make few claims to authority. Instead their message is their credential, like the Lord before them.] The Church of the Firstborn is likely to be comprised of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who have taken their faith seriously and used the scriptures as their guide. They will be those who are not sleeping when the Lord, as a thief in the night, returns unwanted.

The Church of the Firstborn will be humble, obscure members of the church. Those are the ones the Lord associated with during His ministry. It was scandalous how He mingled with the bottom of the social order—prostitutes, tax collectors, lepers, and outcasts. His people were and are “the least” in this world. So have been His messengers. It is almost amusing to think of Isaiah or Nephi or Jeremiah getting an honorary degree, or humanitarian award for their valuable contributions to society. Indeed, when society celebrates a messenger by heaping acclaim on them, it strongly suggests they have too much of the world about them to have chosen rightly (3 Ne. 12:10–12). Mormon was alarmed to see this penetrating into the Holy Church of God in the last days (Mormon 8:38).

Well, the point is technology and communication are making organizations everywhere “flatter” and without the complex hierarchies once necessary to manage them. From multi-national to local organizations, the trends are accelerating in that direction. It will not be surprising to me if the prophetic promise of Zion’s return is made possible, at last, because there is no longer any necessity for hierarchical organization as we speed along in new communication and information development. Today a single

person sitting at a keyboard can send a message to millions of people by posting on a blog or message board. What a marvel that is! Imagine how that would have changed Joseph Smith's mission had it been available then!

Imagine how futile it is in this new connected world to attempt to force people into believing things about doctrine, history, and truth. I suspect only the foolish will attempt it and only for so long as it begins to produce widespread failure and rejection by the better informed worldwide audience.

I expect the next Enoch sent to cry repentance before the return of the final Zion will have little more than "a red guitar, three chords and the truth" (Bob Dylan). There will no longer be a need for "the words of the prophets to be written on the subway walls and tenement halls" because they will be available on everyone's handheld (Simon & Garfunkel). The question is, of course, whether anyone can distinguish between the truth and error. That has always been the challenge. Flattening the structure, or even eliminating it altogether, does not remove the burden upon us to choose correctly between the invitation to repent and humble ourselves and the temptation to think ourselves justified by our religion. The return of "natural fruit" will come from conversion to truth, not commitment to organizational behavior.

We should not seek to be a manufactured product, but individuals who all know God. Our destiny lies somewhere other than putting ourselves inside little boxes (<https://youtu.be/LM8JhvfoqdA>). Mormonism today is working on a model of management which is about to be abandoned by the world. Strong, central organizations, tend to flatten people. Inspired people only need a flattened organization, because they govern themselves.

MAY 8, 2012

Today

Today I was told there are some people growing impatient at not achieving an audience with the Lord. I replied: It is not a goal to be achieved, but a mercy to be received.

CHAPTER 5

I Am a Mormon

MAY 9, 2012

I Am a Mormon, Part 1

The rant by the MSNBC reporter denigrating Mormonism, provoked by the political season we are in, has inspired the following response:

By faith I self-identify as “Mormon” because that was what we called ourselves when I joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I believe the faith, accept the Book of Mormon as scripture, and have received the ordinances offered by the church, including the temple rites. I appreciate and respect these rites and trust in them as a covenant between myself and God.

It is as silly a proposition for someone from my faith to “interpret” my beliefs and say I’m “not a good Mormon” or that I’m “not a faithful Mormon” as it is for the larger “Christian” community to say that Latter-day Saints aren’t “Christian.” (I’ll get to that in Part 3) In this, however, I want to look at the criticism of Mormonism by the self-identifying “Christians.”

I’ll concede that Mormons don’t accept Historic Christianity. I don’t accept it. I think it is riddled with errors, believes in a falsely constructed set of mental gyrations which produce an incoherent

definition of the Godhead that even self-proclaimed “Christians” admit they can’t understand. I am not sure they could even say they actually believe it. At least those who have it explained to them don’t believe it. What does “uncreate” and “of the same substance” and “not dividing the parts” of the three members of the Godhead give us, anyway? It produces a God who is “wholly other” and therefore as alien to me as the stuff living in tubes beside the volcanic openings on the bottom of the Pacific. That God (or those Gods) or whatever sense you want to make of it, is something I reject. Not only do I reject it, it repulses me. It makes me think the Historic Christian God is a complete fabrication, unscriptural in origin, incomprehensible in form, the product of such contradictory assertions that only a fool could trust in the existence of such a thing. I reject it. Period. It is damned foolish for anyone to trust in it and think it will save them. It won’t. It is a complete fabrication and utter nonsense. Now, having said that, I have no interest in questioning their “Christianity.” If they want to believe that, they are free to do so and call themselves Christians.

On the other hand, I do believe in Jesus Christ. Not in the sense that He’s everywhere and nowhere, but that He at one time occupied an actual manger on the evening of His birth. He was baptized in water by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. His Father witnessed it; not from “inside Jesus” because they were co-mingled; instead the Father (a separate Being occupying a separate location) looked down, saw His Son baptized, and then sent a sign to testify of the Son while speaking in a voice heard by John the Baptist. I believe in Jesus who was crucified, died, was laid to rest in a borrowed tomb, and then rose from the dead. I believe in the man whose body was torn and had the prints of nails in His hands and feet, and who then returned to life. I believe in that

Jesus. He showed those hands to 11 surviving Apostles and then to a crowd gathered in the Americas. All of them touched His physical, wounded hands. I believe in Him. Because of my belief in Him, I have done whatever I have come to understand He wanted from me. As a result, I have obtained faith in Him. Moreover, because of the things I have offered in obedience to Him, and by making an acceptable sacrifice, and enduring what others apparently are not willing in this day to endure, I know Him. I know His hands have wounds, His arms are open to welcome those who will come to Him, and He embraces those whom He saves. He is not a God of the dead or the distant, but the God of the Living. Real. Tangible. Resurrected and living now.

So when Historic Christianity presumes to judge my faith and relegate me to non-Christian, I'm absolutely willing to say I do not believe as you do. I reject, outright, what you say about Christ. It is nonsense to me, and I refuse to be included among those who claim to follow Historic Christianity. It is powerless to save. It is the doctrines of men, mingled with scripture. Your creeds are an abomination to God. He has said so. I believe Him. Consequently I MUST reject your creeds. But despite this, I still have faith in Christ. Not as you do, but as I do.

If your inauthentic, incomprehensible, creedal God wants to damn me because I do not accept the creeds of Historic Christianity, then I'm pleased to go into a lake of fire and brimstone and enjoy the heat. I think it is stupid to think that kind of flimsy and man-concocted God exists. And even more foolish to think your pious condescension is going to bind God to accept your opinions about my faith. I am Christian. Just not dazzled by your creedal nonsense.

I've studied the pre-Nicean debates, am acquainted with the political and social arguments leading up to standardizing the

disputes of then-extant Christianity, and know why they returned again to adopt the follow-on creeds of the Apostles and Athenasian Creed. Here, for you good Historic Christian readers, is what your creeds say I must believe to be saved:

We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is all One, the Glory Equal, the Majesty Co-Eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father Uncreate, the Son Uncreate, and the Holy Ghost Uncreate. The Father Incomprehensible, the Son Incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost Incomprehensible. The Father Eternal, the Son Eternal, and the Holy Ghost Eternal and yet they are not Three Eternals but One Eternal. As also there are not Three Uncreated, nor Three Incomprehensibles, but One Uncreated, and One Uncomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not Three Almighties but One Almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not Three Gods, but One God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not Three Lords but One Lord. For, like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by Himself to be God and Lord, so are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion to say, there be Three Gods or Three Lords. The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father, and of the Son neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

So there is One Father, not Three Fathers; one Son, not Three Sons; One Holy Ghost, not Three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is afore or after Other, None is greater or less than Another, but the whole Three Persons are Co-eternal together, and Co-equal. So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity is Trinity, and the Trinity is Unity is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.

To me this is not merely confusion, it is complete crap. Undiluted and unfiltered. I agree there is not “three incomprehensibles” here, but dozens. And there are not “one uncreated” thing going on here, but instead many foolish mental creations launched in a torrent of contradictory and nonsensical gibberish. It is worthy of Lewis Carroll. They multiply as soon as you begin to read them. It is nothing I can, do or ever would accept; and certainly not something to be worshipped. The better approach might be to adopt *Through the Looking Glass* in its place. At least that nonsense is interrupted occasionally by brilliant prose. This “Christian” creedal stuff is neither prosaic nor sensible. And, all the worse, to be saved you “must thus think of the Trinity!” Well, there you go. You’ve set the bar too high for me. I cannot pass over. I cannot get to “Go.” I surrender in my inability to manage this capacity to “thus think of the Trinity” because my mind requires something “comprehensible” rather than “incomprehensible.” Or “Incomprehensible.”

Christ said it was “eternal life to know” God (John 17:3). Your God is by your own definition “Incomprehensible,” and therefore cannot be known. So you see, you’re damned too if you take this stuff seriously. Because you can’t “think thus of the Trinity” and comprehend, much less “know” the only true God. So you are as

damned as I in your profession of the “Incomprehensible” God of your creed.

However, I allow you the privilege of believing this stuff. I trust your sincerity when you say you do believe it. I do not question whether you are in your right mind for claiming to believe and to “think thus of the Trinity.” After all, you have a whole lot of history on your side. I respect that. But I’d ask that you not presume to speak for God when you try to speak about Him. Unless He has said it, then I’m not particularly interested in what men have to say about Him.

Furthermore, I do not believe Historic Christian Councils are entitled to any respect in their compromises and voting to establish the “truth” about God.

Either you’ve met with Him, have a message from Him, and can tell me what He said to you, or you have a political rally and you’ve produced merely more noise, like any political convention does.

This creedal system has resulted in a history of excesses designed to protect it from criticism and to coerce skeptics. I will touch upon that in the next post.

MAY 10, 2012

I Am a Mormon, Part 2

The “Historic Christian” faith fragmented because of centralized control seeking to govern even the thoughts of “Christian” believers. The creed I quoted in Part 1 says Christians “must think thus” about God. The rulers of the church were not content to claim they held the keys, but wanted to micromanage even the minds of their followers.

On November 1, 1478, Pope Sixtus IV issued his edict titled “*Exigit sincere devotionis*” which authorized the appointment of

“inquisitors” to assure the thoughts of faithful “Christians” were doctrinally pure. This authorization allowed the Catholic kings of Europe to not merely preach the religion, but also to police and compel orthodoxy. Those who were regarded as non-conforming were to be treated as heretics and to be persecuted, even destroyed.

If what they were doing was good, then in the eyes of the hierarchy no deed done in pursuit of the “true Christian faith” was to be avoided; even if the means used involved treachery, deceit and torture. The “truth” was just so important that it justified whatever needed doing to accomplish it.

To incentivize the inquiries, the kings were allowed to confiscate heretics’ property. Thus it was financially beneficial to the kings to determine there were heretics among them. In the extremity of torture, almost any person would confess they were heretical to end their pain.

The Inquisition was made possible from the work done two centuries earlier by the man now known as “St. Dominic.” He envisioned the idea of moving from persuasion to excommunication to compel conformity among “Christians.” If that failed to reform, then he thought it well to engage in even more coercive means, such as confiscation of property and corporeal punishment. This would allow the wayward to be reclaimed. After all, if the church held the keys to save people, then using those keys in coercive ways was justified by the ultimate goal of saving souls. Pope Pius XII would cooperate with Hitler in the Balkans using the same justification.

St. Dominic conceived of a religious order that would be devoted solely to the duty to combating heresy and propagating the “true Catholic faith.” This order, now known as the Dominicans, was known by other, earlier nicknames. They were initially the Militia of Christ. They took St. Dominic’s name only after his

death. Much later, after they headed the effort to eradicate heresy by policing the Inquisition, they were known as the “hounds of God” or the “dogs of God” because of their zeal in shedding the blood of heretics.

When a religion abandons the obligation to persuade, and resorts to intimidation and coercion, it has lost the battle. Whenever this happens, the faith declines. “Christianity” was already losing its grip when the Pope Sixtus IV Bull was issued. The Inquisition that followed guaranteed there would be protests against the greatly altered church which benefited and promoted the Inquisition.

In Mormonism there is a doctrinal bulwark in place to prevent this kind of historic error from being repeated. Our scriptures decry the use of any means, however slight, to compel conformity. We have no “orthodox” creed in Mormonism. We welcome all truth, from whatever source. We have the following statements in our scriptures:

“We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.” 11th Article of Faith.

We condemn those

whose hearts are so set upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson — That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness. . . . [W]hen we undertake to cover our sins, or gratify our pride, our vain ambitions, *or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens*

withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man. (D&C 121:35–37, emphasis added)

Our faith permits one means to “control” members: “[O]nly by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul” (D&C 121:41).

We are hemmed in, curtailed and cannot behave as St. Dominic deemed necessary, and as the Holy Inquisition performed. We are relegated to use only persuasion. If we hold a truth as correct, then the burden rests on us to advance it persuasively and to bring others to voluntarily accept it. Our only power, as a church, is in the meek advancement of truth by our persuasion and example. Force, dominion and control is not ours to use. So in this sense also Mormonism departs dramatically from Historic Christianity.

Furthermore, a well respected official LDS Church Historian published an article in the BYU Studies magazine titled, “I Don’t Have A Testimony of Church History.” In it, Assistant LDS Church Historian Davis Bitton explained that when it comes to the LDS Church’s history, we are free as church members to believe and express our beliefs on any topic because we do not have an official version. For example, he remarked specifically he did not have a “testimony” of the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

One of the great strengths of my religion is the open willingness to allow freedom of thought, and to require the better view to be established only by persuasion, and never by coercion.

We should never lapse into the darkness of policing the thoughts of Mormons by a central hierarchy bent on extinguishing different thought among Mormons. We have no “orthodox” criteria which

can be used to carve some believers out and relegate them to the status of “apostate” or “heretic,” and thereby dismember the membership. Our faith was established on a scriptural and doctrinal foundation which precludes it. Each Mormon is responsible for what they believe and to provide reasons to persuade others of the correct view.

This necessarily requires a good deal of work for Mormons. We are required to research and gather the information for ourselves. We are free to believe as we will, but to defend our religion we must undertake some work to find it. Therefore, the most devout members of the religion are also among the most studious of the church. We are permitted to believe as we will, but the church is under no obligation to do the work for us. We study, research and ponder this faith individually. For we believe salvation is individual, not collective.

MAY 11, 2012

I Am a Mormon, Part 3

I am a Mormon. That is because I believe in this faith. Through-and-through, I am convinced Joseph Smith really was called of God, translated the Book of Mormon — an authentic new volume of scripture telling the account of a fallen people.

What I believe and why I believe it has been the subject of eight books to date. I’ve made no secret of my thoughts, experiences and reasons for becoming and remaining a Mormon. There are a handful of fellow-Mormons who resent or question my views. This is quite odd, since I do not question theirs. Apparently they do not know Mormonism is non-creedal, and respects every person’s right to worship as they wish. There should be very little “control” over

beliefs in Mormonism, and a great deal of freedom for its converts. As shown in the prior post, even an Assistant LDS Church Historian claimed he didn't have a testimony of church history. We are free to reach our own conclusions. Those who criticize are apparently unaware of the contours of the religion they espouse.

I do not question church leaders' good-faith, or their right to make decisions, even ones I disagree with. It is not a sin, nor apostasy to have an opinion different than the leaders. They alone have the right to lead and I believe they do so to the best of their ability. Their right is upheld by the common consent of the church. Until someone is dismissed by the common consent, we all sustain them in our prayers and actions. At least if you are an active Mormon, as I am.

The church's leaders are empowered by the common consent of the church, according to a pattern established by God. I work to make their job easier by doing whatever is asked of me in donating church service. Yet now I find myself the object of fellow-Mormon's ire, and judging from leaks on the Internet also from the Strengthening the Members Committee of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I absolutely disagree that I am not allowed to believe as I do and also be a faithful, active Mormon. I have explained what I believe and why, and discussed problems in church history from a faithful, but candid view.

Fortunately Mormonism is not Historic Christianity. Historic Christianity splintered into the Protestant and Catholic divisions because the church hierarchy attempted to suppress freedom to believe the truth among the members. That inappropriate overreaching created the Lutheran Church, then all the others, as believers in the Gospel of Christ were unable to believe or trust a hierarchy determined to suppress thought and limit discussion.

Mormonism has the advantage of knowing this history, and can avoid making that kind of foolish error. That does not mean we will avoid it, only that we are well enough informed by history to be able to avoid it.

I am a “Mormon” whether another church member thinks my faith is consistent with his or not. This is because I am converted, and sincerely do accept these teachings originated from God when He once again intervened directly in mankind’s affairs. The Lord was able to intervene because a young man, following a promise in the Bible, asked in faith which church he should join. The Lord answered him, and set that young man on a course in which the Gospel of Jesus Christ was returned to the earth. The return began with God’s direct involvement, and included a return of angels to minister to and teach Joseph Smith things worth every person’s time to investigate.

I investigated Joseph’s claims. In fact, I continue to investigate them, searching deeper and deeper into understanding this great, final work by God. It was begun by the Lord through Joseph Smith. But it was not finished then, and our new scriptures promise yet greater things still in the future (see 9th Article of Faith). When anyone asks God in humility about this work, they can get an answer from God (James 1:5). In fact, at the core of Mormonism is the obligation of every believer to study, ponder, pray and ask God for themselves (Moroni 10:4–5). Every Mormon is supposed to know God by hearing from Him. Then, once having secured a testimony that Mormonism is true, we have an obligation to testify to others about this new work of God in our day (D&C 38:41; 88:81).

I have been doing that for many years. Elder Ballard has told us all to go to the Internet to defend our religion, and I have done

that too. I have been dutiful in observing what I've understood my obligations to be as a faithful Mormon.

There is a claim made by some uninformed fellow-Mormons that as a result of what I've written in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, I have caused unintended "collateral damage" to some people's faith. Meaning, they want to condemn my efforts because they think there might be some few who were discouraged by that book. There have been dozens of letters and emails I have received by those who, after reading it, were strengthened in their faith. There are many who had been inactive or disaffected from the church and returned to activity after reading the book, and yet there are allegedly some few who have been so challenged by the book that they have left the church. I have to say, first, I am honestly unaware of and have never heard any credible account of someone leaving the church because of what I've written. If there is someone who has, or if you know of someone who has, then I'd appreciate it if you would post a comment giving me some information about that. But I want names of those who have "left the church" because of the book. I don't want rumors, or fictitious personas or pseudonyms adopted by someone concealing their identity. That kind of dishonest "Astroturf" is not proof of anything. You know who I am because I'm being honest. I'm exposed to view, accountable and honest. The fake community of posters and commentators are, in reality, a few dishonest souls trying to multiply their importance by their frequent posting of themes. Many of them are being paid to do so.

So far, despite the dozens of emails and letters from real people, giving their home addresses or names and email addresses, confirming that faith has been supported and aided by what I wrote, I have nothing from anyone saying anyone left the church. A handful of have disagreed, but none of them claim to have lost

their testimony or left the church. Therefore, I am left thinking this “collateral damage” theory is just a mirage intended to inhibit my honesty and not a real phenomena, but if it is a reality, I’d like to know.

Second, I do not believe it is appropriate to judge anyone (leadership or myself) on the basis of alleged “collateral damage” from actions undertaken in good faith to help others. It is a false standard which will only lead to condemning people by an unjust standard. If this is the standard to be applied to me by a fellow-Mormon, then I would ask them to see what happens if you adopt that standard for the church. As soon as they do, they will condemn those leaders who adopted the “Raising the Bar” program which left thousands of young men feeling dismissed and rejected by the church. Many of these young men are no longer active in the church. They are resentful of the way they were “judged” and told they were not worthy and **COULD NOT** become worthy through the atonement of Jesus Christ as far as the “church” was concerned. Jesus Christ paid the price for these young men and women willing to repent. Satan tells you you are unworthy. The total numbers on the “collateral damage” are shocking.

Add to the list of the “collateral damage” all those who are not ministered to because of policies in the Church Handbook of Instructions. The mischief that has actually resulted from strict enforcement has caused several people to leave or stay away from the church.

General relief society president Julie Beck aroused a firestorm of controversy and alienated some church members a few years ago in a general conference talk. Is she “guilty” of causing “collateral damage” by that talk? Can we apply that standard to her? I would hope not.

There are returned missionaries drifting into inactivity by the thousands (roughly 50% within two years of returning), because the experiences on the mission have been unsatisfactory for a host of reasons. Mission presidents have verbally abused some of these young men and women. Some have been told to baptize the unworthy and unconverted to create statistical proof of the success of the mission. One young missionary who served in England was told by his mission president to baptize a drunk man (he actually showed up to be baptized inebriated). He did, but it left a scar on the conscience of the young Elder. Indeed, if “collateral damage” is a good standard, there are many who we know have left the church as a consequence of policies and procedures implemented through the good faith decisions of leadership. Not fictional, but calculable numbers of actual injured young men and their families, or inactive and disassociated members now disaffected. These are real stories. We all know people affected. Yet I am confident the leaders were acting in good faith in all they have done. They were doing the best they knew how. Therefore, I reject the idea this measure is fair or appropriate. It should not be used against you, or the leaders, or me. It is a fake standard, adopted to find an excuse to condemn me, and not a sincere concern by any legitimate fellow-Mormon.

Third, I would caution those who want to adopt this standard that they risk condemning themselves. I do not apply it against others because I do not want that to be the standard used against me. I prefer to measure the missteps made by the church on the basis of my belief and trust that they want to help others. When they inadvertently cause harm or injury, I forgive them and do not measure “collateral damage” as accountable against them. If that standard is adopted by them against me, I worry the Lord will use it in the Day of Judgment against those now applying it. He

said in the Sermon on the Mount that this was the standard (See Matt. 7:2). I do not ask this for my sake, but for the sake of my fellow-Mormon accusers. I want them to avoid condemnation by the application of a standard no man can meet.

Fourth, I would suggest there are so many who have been helped that there should be some consideration given to the fact that something good has come from something you call evil. That is, if faith has been restored in some demonstrable group (and I've furnished proof of that), then such good cannot come from something bad. It is impossible. The true intention, and the actual result of what I've done is to create and affirm faith, not to destroy it. It has actually produced faith. I would suggest you take the provable results of increased faith as the appropriate measure, not the theory of "collateral damage."

Fifth, the phrase "proud descendants of Nauvoo" is a phrase intended to be memorable. It is used to capture an idea that suggests there is an almost impossible task asked of those who are so personally involved in the history of our church. How can someone look objectively at the past, when these are people's grandfathers and grandmothers? They can only do so if they are first reminded of the inherent bias associated with their status. It is altogether reasonable, perhaps inevitable, for them to be proud. It is a fact that their families have endured much for the faith. However, when it comes to measuring our past, these personal and prideful feelings, although natural and justified, cannot allow us to discard the tools of scripture and history to reveal what has been underway in God's dealings with us. The phrase is a shorthand way to alert the reader to this inherent bias. The reader can then decide for themselves if this shorthand and very pregnant phrase is useful to them in reading the account. I can tell you that there have been many "proud

descendants of Nauvoo” (and they identify themselves as that in emails to me) have been pricked in their hearts and persuaded by the information presented in the last book I wrote, and who have thanked me for awakening them to their unique challenges. The phrase is a plea for dispassionate review of facts, not a deliberate insult. I did not write it as such, and it should not be taken as such.

I will continue to defend and assert my faithfulness to this religion which I accept, believe and defend. It is peculiar that I find myself accused by fellow-Mormons of being less than they, because there is no such standard permitted in my religion. We are told not to judge one another, but to endeavor to use pure knowledge, gentleness and love to persuade. We simply can't demand someone change their view. That is not permitted.

I am a Mormon and I have no intention of trying to supplant leaders, or to acquire a following. I submit and defer to them. I have no right to lead, but I do have, as all Mormons have, the right and obligation to express and defend my beliefs and bear my testimony. If you study what I've written, there is almost nothing of myself in them. A good deal of Latter-day Saint leaders, writers and speakers have themselves in the “starring role” of whatever they say, teach or write. That is not true for me. I am absent, or when present I show my weakness, foolishness and failure. The only time I appear in a positive light is when I bear testimony of the Lord, whom I have met and is a friend of mine. Even there, however, the contrast between Him and His glory and me and my weakness causes me to use words like “crushes” and “unworthy” to describe my position. In stark contrast, some of the most popular LDS personalities are constantly holding themselves up as an example, as the center of their stories, as the hero of their tales, and as the ones to admire. I'm not like that. I am disgusted by anyone who puts me on a pedestal.

I don't belong there. If you cast about and do a little looking, you can find many who want to move attention from the Lord onto themselves. I'm not one of them. For me, the Lord is and ought to remain the focus of devotion for us all.

I am a Mormon; through and through, and converted to this religion. I believe it originated with God, and that God will watch over it. The measure of its success, however, cannot be gauged in statistics, convert rates, or tithing dollars. It can only be measured in whether it results in reconnecting man to God. For me it has succeeded in that. That alone makes Mormonism the "pearl of great price" Christ spoke of purchasing, even if it required all a man has to obtain it (Matt. 13:46). Now I try to offer that same great prize to anyone else who is searching to reconnect with God. Not through me, but through the Lord's invitation, teachings and guidance.

MAY 12, 2012

Answers to Last Week's Questions

There are some more questions asked this week that I'll try to answer. The series on "I Am a Mormon" will be 7 parts, but aren't finished. I'm reading comments from the blog and thought I'd respond to some of them:

On blog traffic: Approximately 750,000 total visits to the blog.

The traffic comes predominately from the following in the order of the top ten countries: United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Russia, Finland, Spain, Thailand, Ukraine. The traffic is worldwide, including Brazil, Belarus, Japan, even Mongolia.

In response to my request, I received an email from a woman who explained that her husband was very troubled by reading *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. Though they had not left the church,

they had become suddenly discontent. In response to her I want to express my thanks for responding. She was not just the first, but is the only one who has spoken up saying anything like this to me. In response to her inquiry about my feelings toward the church:

The church remains important, even central to progressing toward God. In *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*, I remark that “the truth will scratch your eyes out, and then scratch them in again.” That is a reference to how seeing the weaknesses and failures of all those around you can be quite discouraging, but it is necessary. It is when we see clearly how limited and failure-prone mankind is that we turn in desperation to the Lord and call on Him for mercy. We must be uncomfortable before we seek the only source of comfort. The Lord is the answer. The church is not the answer. It is pointing, or should point to Him. The church is only a means. The Lord is the journey’s end. The church is the wonderful home where we get to render service to one another. It is where the Lord has asked we serve. The service is for Him, as an act of devotion to Him, and to comply with what He has asked. It is not for our own recognition or advancement. It is because we want to come to know Him. In the quiet service for others, when our minds finally come to rest on the only one who can save us, we can find that peace where the Lord comes to us and speaks words of comfort. He is real. He exists, and He comforts those who come to Him offering a broken heart and contrite spirit, and to none other.

If the book has scratched your eyes out, then let the truth scratch them in again. Do not go away blinded. Let the truth that lies beyond the despair now come to you as well.

The question about poverty and giving raises the intractable question of how to deal with the poor. Our system is broken. The

answer to the problem ultimately lies in changing the entire system, but that requires people to be of one mind, and one heart, and to have Christ as their center. We are far from that. The best economic solution is a theological one. We can't have "utopia" separate from Zion. We can't have Zion while we are filled with envy, jealousy and lack conversion to Christ. We can't be converted to Christ and lose our envy and jealousy until we are brought to awaken to our awful situation. We can't be awakened until we are willing to recognize we are no different than the "Lord's people" who have failed every time He has chosen a people (other than in past Zions). We can't come to that recognition until we take much more seriously the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants. We are not prepared to do so until we are buffeted a bit more by the winds of failure and humiliation to bring down our pride. So in a very real sense it will be poverty and struggle which holds the best hope of starting us down the process that will unite us and then end poverty. So we're not going to solve poverty until the Lord first gives us the necessary experience to acquire broken hearts and contrite spirits.

On why I continually say "I'm nothing and nobody" there are doctrinal reasons. Those who are religious, and follow a converted disciple of Christ, are still damned if they substitute a man in the place that belongs only to Christ. Sincere, but deluded people who claim they are disciples of Paul, Apollos, Peter, Moses, Isaiah, even Thomas Monson, but who do not receive a testimony of Christ, are damned. They suffer the vengeance of eternal fire (D&C 76:99-106). They are consigned to hell, and are resurrected as Telestial beings. This is because they followed a man. It is a grave mistake and salvation is lost when that mistake is made. Those who invite people to follow them, and deliberately seek devotees are anti-Christ and bringing souls to destruction. These religious

Pied Pipers will incur the greater damnation. If someone is going to make that mistake by claiming they are following me, they will not do so without being told by me unequivocally and with some frequency that they are mistaken. I am nothing, and I have not ever attempted to become an anti-Christ. I point to Christ, for He alone can rescue you from the pains of hell and eternal torment. Those who put themselves up for adoration and worship are mistaken, are practicing priestcraft, are anti-Christ, and in the employ of the enemy to our souls.

In response to the question regarding good books about history, there is another book I quite liked. The new LDS Church Historian, Elder Steve Snow, recently recommended the employees of the Church History Department read the book *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism*, by G. Prince and R. Wright. I've quoted from that book and have also cited it in bibliographies. I agree it is worth reading by anyone interested in church history. David O. McKay's daily activities were kept in a record written by his secretary, Sister Clare Middlemiss, from 1935 until his death in 1970. She was the aunt of Robert Wright, who obtained access.

Ultimately, the journals were donated to the University of Utah and are presently housed in the

J. Willard Marriott Library, where the public can have access to them. The *Modern Mormonism* book is the first history written that is taken from these extensive journals. The journals are no doubt going to become a source for many other works of history. This volume was well done and introduces a host of behind-the-scenes views of the events during President McKay's presidency.

MAY 13, 2012

I Am a Mormon, Part 4

I am a Mormon. The church I belong to, support, and believe in has intentionally kept a good deal of its history concealed. The archives are not completely open, and have never been available to the public. One of the reasons Assistant LDS Church Historian Davis Bitton “did not have a testimony of church history” was because our history has yet to be fully written. It is a work yet to be discovered and revealed. Right now we have only glimpses and excerpts, not the full panoply of material to draw from in order for any of us to reach fully informed conclusions.

The church could remove this impediment by opening its archives. However, it is apparent they aren't going to do this. Therefore, we all live (and I'm talking about all of us, including the ones defending this faith among our peers and friends) with the justified concern the church has something it thinks it must hide. Although I can use the materials that were released, or information that has leaked out, to show there are believers who can tolerate the foibles and weaknesses of humanity and still retain strong faith in the religion and confidence in the church, I can never advance a good enough argument to overcome the perception that there is embarrassing material that won't see the light of day. In *Passing the Heavenly Gift* I show that, to the extent the history can be reconstructed from what is now available, even the moments of profound human failure are not a good enough reason to abandon belief in the faith. That is a defense of the faith, not an attack on it. I reject the idea the book was intended as an attack. It wasn't. So, from the scattered comments I've heard let me continue to address concerns about that book as I understand them:

I did not criticize President Harold B. Lee about his development of Correlation. That was President David O. McKay and his counselor President Moyle. I quoted them. They were opposed to the Correlation program that Elder Lee was advancing. They thought it would lead to the apostasy of the church from abuse by future hierarchies using their position to control and dominate other, equally deserving branches of the church. They thought it was improper for the central priesthood to claim the right to control everything instead of the separate branches having independence. I only quoted these former members of the First Presidency (It was President Harold B. Lee who presided over the church when I joined.) Therefore, if you think that is an inappropriate idea, your quarrel is with a church president and his counselor, not me.

I did not characterize President Grant as being more interested in money than religion. That was his mother. I quoted her. Or, to be even more exact, it was President Grant quoting his mother in his own diary that I quoted. I made no independent accusation. I reported what he said about himself (and what his mother accused him of in her communication with him). Then I defended his candor and integrity because he made this self-revelation of his weakness. If you think that is an inappropriate assessment of President Grant, your quarrel is with him and his mother, not me.

It was President J. Reuben Clark who compared the modern church president to the Pope. I merely quoted him. It was LDS Church Historian Marlin Jensen who called the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve “the fifteen men.” I only quoted him. I do not think either President Clark or Elder Jensen meant any offense. Nor do I think offense should be taken. But most of all, if offense is to be taken, then place it where it belongs: with the LDS leaders I quote, and not me. I am trying to make sense of the things

they have said and done from a faithful perspective. Be careful who you damn, because you are actually turning on the very leaders you think you are defending. What I have done in *Passing the Heavenly Gift* is to defend the faith I believe in and accept, despite human weaknesses and failings. I am realistic about the shortcomings of mere men. This is why our faith must be centered in Christ, rather than foolish and weak mankind.

Is it really impermissible for a faithful member, who wants those who are worried about history, to quote from the diaries and letters of former First Presidency members? Have only the critics the right to tell more accurate history of our faith? Do those who believe have no permission to also be candid with the public while defending the faith? How, exactly, is that supposed to work out in our favor? I'm willing to be enlightened about that approach, and if you can persuade me the truth must be avoided then I will fall in line with what I'm required to do; but with all due respect the problem is not me. The problem is that from top to bottom our faith must be more truthful in this Internet age or we risk being mere caricatures and not real functioning adults with bona fide and defensible beliefs. We risk putting "fiction and fairy tales" above a sound defense of the faith. We begin to look as foolish and as immature as our critics want to paint us. Is that the goal? If not, then how should we deal with problems in history? Are we only allowed to ignore them? Or to tell versions of events that can be easily disproven?

Does not the current collapse in faith among adult members who have been previously lifelong active members raise the concern that we must be more truthful? How much more damage are you willing to inflict on the religion before you reach the conclusion we must be truthful, even when the truth is unflattering?

All of the “problems” are already before us on the Internet. If you only study what is Correlated and sanitized, your children won’t. If you have no answers, then you will find you are unequal to the challenges that lie ahead of you and your family. Whether you are ready for it or not, the waves of challenges are breaking upon us. Our missionaries return with more questions than answers because there is an organized opposition working to challenge all of our teachings, doctrines and history. We **MUST** be better prepared. Not from composing more limited fiction, but from facing what is known to be true.

I am not worried about the faith collapsing under the weight of truth. It will instead be vindicated by the truth. It is far more handicapped by the fiction we presently serve as the defense of our faith than by a rigorous application of truth in examining the failures of men. Even when men fail, the faith is unaffected.

It is my belief that the recent assertion by the church in the Professor Bott matter did more damage to the interests of the church than anything I’ve ever done. The official statement was:

“The origins of priesthood availability are not entirely clear. Some explanations with respect to this matter were made in the absence of direct revelation and references to these explanations are sometimes cited in publications. These previous personal statements do not represent Church doctrine.”

In my view, this is no defense of the faith or our history. It is a worse condemnation of previous leaders than anything I’ve ever written. How does this kind of statement get approved as a public statement by the church? Can a “revelator” speak (as did Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and many others in the first presidency and twelve) about this crucial matter for over a hundred years “in the absence of revelation?” How, if this critical issue

involving the personal lives of so many faithful church members for generations was wrong and did not represent church doctrine, can we now trust that anything that is said by anyone on any topic represent church doctrine? There were faithful Saints kept out of the temple because of this doctrine. There were heart wrenching discoveries of genealogy issues for people who were previously ordained who were told they could no longer use their ordination to serve in the church. They were turned down because these men at the highest levels were acting “in the absence of revelation?” Why? This is not a defense of Mormonism by the church, it is an abdication of responsibility. It makes the church look far worse than quoting President McKay’s concern that Correlation will lead to apostasy.

Again, I am not worried about the faith collapsing under the weight of truth. It will instead be vindicated. It is far more handicapped by efforts to appear consistent when we are completely inconsistent than by admitting we made a mistake. We are human. We fail. That is one of the great features of humanity. We tend to let ourselves make sometimes terrible mistakes and wish we could do them over. Christ died to make that possible. He is the champion of forgiveness. Why can’t we acknowledge that from time to time the church itself needs to ask for forgiveness? It would be given. Members at the lowest level of this organization are rooting for you, supporting you, and upholding you with our prayers. We want you to do your best, and know that sometimes that won’t be good enough. We know you’re going to fail us. I am perfectly willing to forgive you when you do. It is alright. I do not expect perfection, but I do hope for honesty. Lying to cover up a mistake is not easily forgiven. That inspires contempt, not forgiveness or respect. We forgive readily your mistakes because we all make them, but not

everyone is going to lie to spare themselves embarrassment. Those who do, break trust with the public and with membership of the church. The first step in repentance is confession, and we know you forsake sins when you first confess them (D&C 58:43).

This is why in all I've written I've tried to tell it as truthfully and honestly as I am able. I know that the Lord will forgive me when I fall short. I hope the church is willing to allow itself, and me, to fall short and still be friends mutually supporting one another in a greater cause. That greater cause is where God is involved. Our mutual mistakes are our creation, not God's. So we shouldn't pretend we are better, or more inspired, or less flawed than we all are. I am certain I will disappoint you, because I have not been and never will be free from sin and error in this mortal estate. But my heart is in the right place. I'm not trying to cover anything of myself up. I'm not pretending I am better than I am. I have repeatedly acknowledged I am flawed, and not worth following. I point to the Lord, because He is worth following. I readily admit I think the church and its members oftentimes pretend to be better than we are. I still defend her and hope for her best interests. My weakness does not limit God's grace and forgiveness. The weaknesses and mistakes of the church are able to be overcome, too, through God's grace and forgiveness.

I am a Mormon. Devoutly and actively. I intend to die as a faithful Mormon. You should never think my form of faith is too insubordinate, too candid and too open to be endured. In my view that is not a problem at my end. Exactly what is it about the truth of human failure you find so threatening? I can associate without condemning, with fellow Mormons who advocate a very shallow view of the faith I hold as true. I can let them alone and never foist my views on them. However, in the exchange of ideas among those

who are actively searching the Internet and bookstores to find truth, I should be allowed to explain how I have maintained faith and active support of the church in the face of troubling history. No one is required to read what I've written. You don't have to come to this blog and let me interrupt your view of Mormonism. Go your way, believe as you like. Let those who struggle, for whom I provide some aid in coping with the difficult things they've learned about our past and our doctrine, be permitted to peaceably consider how I've come to reconcile the Gospel with these many challenges.

I think those who condemn it, rather than offer a reasonable explanation and defense of their beliefs, do not understand Mormonism. They do not understand our scriptures. They do not understand what Joseph Smith said of the religion he gave his life to restore. I've studied for years, hours a day, to gain through hard effort and prayer the things I have learned. Then I have spent decades sincerely applying those things I learned. I am most certainly a Mormon. My faith is only gained by the kind of diligence and heed I've given to it. If you don't understand or sympathize with my practice of Mormonism, that does not make me less a Mormon nor you more one. It just makes us different in how we accept this great latter-day gift from God.

The fellow-Mormons who condemn me without reading what I've written employ means that are brutal, unkind, coercive, and intimidating. They should be trying to reclaim me from the error they think I have made. I have tried through persuasion and knowledge to bring about understanding. I cannot be intimidated by what others say or do. I know He whom I serve. And therefore I must speak boldly about this faith I hold so dear.

MAY 15, 2012

I Am a Mormon, Part 5

The purpose of the faith restored through Joseph Smith was not to enshrine mere men as idols. It was to proclaim that all men, every one of us, can know God. The whole of Joseph's message can be summed up in the proclamation that God is no respecter of persons, but will give to all men liberally who ask of Him. It is James 1:5: God does answer prayer.

This message came to me from the Mormon elders who taught me about the Restoration of the Gospel. These young men were not "slick," but quite homespun. They used flannel boards and paper cut-outs. One of them was from Nephi, Utah. He was inarticulate, butchered grammar, and spoke with an odd accent. For several lessons, I literally thought he was saying "p-r-i-e-s-t-e-d." A few weeks into investigating, I was a bit chagrined when I realized he was actually trying to say "priesthood." Later, Elder Black (who baptized me) presented a better image. Some 39 years after baptizing me he is still a friend.

I did not join the church because it was powerful, rich, or slickly marketed. It appeared to me to be homely, rough and extremely unpopular when I joined. As I recall, there were less than 350,000 total priesthood holders and only a minority of them were active. What the church offered was information from, and a connection to God. I tested the process. I received an answer to my prayer about Mormonism from God.

When I joined the church I gave up everything. I lost my friends and family. I was alienated from the life I had known and lived. It required all of it to be put on the altar and set on fire. But, having heard from God in answer to prayer, there was no hesitation. Though I was realistic about my own flaws, and thought I could

never be a good enough Mormon, I intended to try. I had the courage to do so because God had spoken to me in answer to prayer and I believed He wanted me to become a member.

Now, I find a nameless, distant committee in the Church Office Building questioning my faithfulness (based on Internet leaks from the COB). Though the local authorities have shown nothing but acceptance for me, and I have served honorably and without controversy in my ward and stake, these distant Strengthening the Members Committee, who know nothing of me and have never talked to me, think it their prerogative to meddle.

I left all I knew to become a member of the church because I was following God. I still follow God. I began this journey to follow God. I did not begin this journey to follow men, elders, bishops or presidents. I gave up friends and family to follow God. I will not hesitate to make that trade again. I can be cut off from fellowship with the church, but you have no power that can cut me off from God. It is His company that brought me to you, and will be His company I keep whether you stay in fellowship with me or not.

I would prefer to stay in fellowship with both God and the church. But the church is a poor trade to make in a bargain that would cost me association with God. I do not measure my standing before God by how many people think well of me. I could not care less. It is absolutely fine if you think I'm unworthy, misinformed and even a crank. The things I have written can, have and will help some come to Christ. Some of the things I have written can, have and will help some who are struggling with the church's doctrine and history. The Gospel originates from God, is to save mankind, and cannot be safely ignored.

I took Joseph's teachings to heart. I also asked God. He has given liberally to me. Therefore, I testify of this process and invite

others to have faith and to seek Him. Not me. Not men. Not some intermediary. Seek for God. There is none who can save you but God. If the Strengthening the Members Committee determines to pressure the local authorities to make a decision they would never have made on their own, then you are casting away a friend, not an enemy. To my knowledge this would be the first time you decide to impose discipline from inside the Church Office Building against someone who:

- Does not challenge your right to preside.
- Sustains the leaders.
- Has written about the scriptures and doctrine from a faithful view.
- Has defended the restoration and Joseph Smith.
- Has attempted to conform our history to the scriptures.
- And who will be weighed against your vanity and injured pride rather than the tenants of the underlying religion.

For my fellow Latter-day Saint (and the Central Command) who choose to condemn me, there is something about this moment you ought to pause to consider. This intersection is not one you want to be in, really. What if I am telling the truth? What if I'm right? In the final analysis, I am a Mormon. I am converted to this faith and will remain converted to it whether you decide to withdraw fellowship or not. My religion will remain whether you let me remain a member of this church or not. Were I in your shoes, I'd welcome someone as committed to the faith as I am, and never adopt the role of an accuser of any Saint. I claim to belong to God, not to you. If you decide to pressure local authorities to cast me off, there is another law decreed before the foundation of the world you will perhaps inadvertently invoke against yourself.

This is not the intersection you want to be in, and I mean that in all seriousness and with all my heart; for your sake, not for mine. I know my standing before God, and nothing you can do will alter or affect that, but how you treat me may alter your standing before Him. For your own sake, I would ask you not to do something you will later very much regret.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is true, authentic and holds the means for redeeming mankind. Whether the church's history is an unmitigated series of correct choices and flawless performance by leaders and members alike, it does not change one whit the obligation each of us has to come to Christ for redemption. Whether the church has everything it claims or not, doesn't change our obligation to God. So where does any of this matter? We all still must repent and obtain hope in Christ. I focus and write to further that. I have no other agenda.

MAY 16, 2012

I Am a Mormon, Part 6

The presentation by the missionary Elders that convinced me to “ask God” was weak. Just like the scriptures commend us to become when we tear down the false things of this world (D&C 1:19). The young men had little appeal, and were not well equipped to advance the religion. They had come to me with nothing of any value, apart from the religion being true and the Spirit bearing witness to me of that fact.

So when the church invests millions in the infrastructure to test, market, gather focus-group insights, and then opinion poll to improve the marketing of Mormonism, I am very skeptical it has any value at all. You see, I came through the conversion process.

None of the marketing I saw was professional. It was amateur and simple. For the most part, the leaders of the church inherit this religion and the church from their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. I did not. I endured the rejection of my parents and sibling when I joined the faith. I lost family and friends because of the faith. I know why someone joins an inconvenient, challenging faith because I went through the process. It has nothing to do with the church being physically impressive.

The success of the church is not dependent upon, nor guaranteed by, a multi-billion-dollar downtown complex of religious and commercial buildings. If that is what motivates someone to join, they do not have the right reasons or focus, and will not contribute anything to the faith. We do not need to gather into the net those who find a slick marketing approach convincing enough to become Mormon. We only need to gather those who are pricked in their hearts, humble and who prayed to know if this is God's work or not. Those who get an answer are going to join because they got an answer. Such people will have an inner strength that flows from having spoken with God. They will remain and grow in their knowledge of godliness—as long as we feed them. They will perish, however, if we feed them nothing but myth and superficial portions of the Gospel. The truth is exciting, and we risk killing their faith when we make it dull, incomplete, and mingled with misrepresentations. They will die, even if they are active in the church.

People who will listen with their hearts are going to join us. We do not need to be using Wall Street consulting firms to put together a new, improved marketing campaign. The Lord will vindicate His messengers. The expensive infrastructure detracts from the message delivered by a simple carpenter from Galilee

who went about doing good. I love the Latter-day Saints. They are delightful people. When I joined, they were among the most humble people I'd ever encountered. However, as the church has grown in population and prosperity it has lost some of its humility and kindness. There is a hard edge creeping into the community of saints from the top down. The leadership knows that. They can see what the Correlation process has done and how it afflicts everything it touches. It is blighted with that hardness, and it is beginning to permeate the structure.

As committees impose central rule, they impersonalize a deeply personal faith. That impersonalization has unintended consequences. In cases we are all familiar with, it occasionally results in local leaders trying to attract favorable attention from the central command. These aspiring men do not feel the required attachment to their sheep. We have all seen them, lived with them, and know they are seeking upward mobility in the church organization. Their loyalty has shifted toward a distant hierarchy they seek to impress, then join. They want a "red chair."

I have been fortunate to have encountered some wonderful local leaders. The last two bishops of my current ward were/are examples of faithfulness and humility. My stake president who was just released was an extraordinary leader and disciple of Christ. My stake has been blessed with great leaders, but that is not always the case in the stakes I have been in before. A former bishop from another stake would only bear his testimony about how great a man he was. His wife, likewise, only bore her testimony telling us how great a man her husband was. He's now a pretty respected LDS personality. I'm puzzled by that. When those called to serve are converted to the Lord, they minister with His commands in mind.

When men who are not converted to the Lord, but who want to rise in the church are called to preside, we suffer.

Like all who join the church in response to an answer to prayer, I am not a Mormon because of YOU. I support you, but my testimony was and is based on the Lord. I do not think the Strengthening the Members Committee is any better an idea than the Inquisition pursued by the Dominicans. They thought they were doing something of value to preserve the faith. That is not how it turned out. Instead it led to the breakup of Catholicism and the enduring historic conviction that the Roman Church was absolutely wrong. We should learn from that, not repeat it.

God lives. He is real. Joseph knew Him. Joseph stood in His presence. This church was instituted to bring people to the Lord. And this church has brought me to the knowledge of, and then the companionship with Him. Therefore this church has my loyalty and my gratitude. I am indebted to the church for that, but I will never change allegiance from God to men or man. It just won't happen. If that is your goal and you insist on the choice, I've already made it. As for me and my house, we will follow God. Now and always.

MAY 17, 2012

I Am a Mormon, Conclusion

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints introduced to me the idea that God would speak to mankind again today, if we asked in faith and listened for an answer. It was a very difficult idea to accept at first. It seemed God was a distant being whose involvement was ancient, and who concluded His work with man in the Bible.

When the missionary Elders “bore their testimony” and said they knew their religion was true, it puzzled me at first. I wasn't

sure what that meant. They approached the subject of religion and their knowledge of their belief system with a sort of confidence I hadn't seen before. When they said Joseph Smith had seen and spoken with God the Father and Jesus Christ, it was almost too much to take in at first.

The religion they offered did not come quickly or easily to me. It was very hard for me to accept. But their sincerity affected mine, and ultimately I did "ask God" and got an answer from Him. It was so subtle, and so small an answer that at first I wondered if it was an answer from God at all. I trusted in it, acted on it, and the light grew.

From small means to greater and greater light, I have been converted to the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ. And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of Him, this is my own testimony, last of all, which I give of Him: That He lives; for I have seen Him. He has ministered to me. I adopt the words of others and confirm they, too, have seen Him:

I can say, like Nephi:

And now I, Nephi, write more of the words of Isaiah, for my soul delighteth in his words. For I will liken his words unto my people, and I will send them forth unto all my children, for he verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him. And my brother, Jacob, also has seen him as I have seen him; wherefore, I will send their words forth unto my children to prove unto them that my words are true. Wherefore, by the words of three, God hath said, I will establish my word. Nevertheless, God sendeth more witnesses, and he proveth all his words. (2 Ne. 11:2-3)

I can say, like Moroni:

And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things; And only a few have I written, because of my weakness in writing. And now, I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever. Amen. (Ether 12:39–41)

I can say, like Alma:

And now, behold, I say unto you, and I would that ye should remember, that God is merciful unto all who believe on his name; therefore he desireth, in the first place, that ye should believe, yea, even on his word. And now, he imparteth his word by angels unto men, yea, not only men but women also. Now this is not all; little children do have words given unto them many times, which confound the wise and the learned. (Alma 32:22–23)

I am a faithful Mormon, who, like the missionaries who first told me of Joseph Smith and God's answer to his prayer, also affirms that God does still answer prayer. He is accessible and willing to make Himself known to anyone who follows the path to get that knowledge.

Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am... (D&C 93:1).

If there is a problem with Mormonism today, it is that it doesn't believe and practice the original faith restored through Joseph Smith.

Leaders have inadvertently put themselves between the members and God. They don't belong there. I have written eight books (at great personal cost) showing respect to the church, gratitude for all it has done and is doing to preserve the faith restored through Joseph, but also reminding all who read that it is ultimately about connecting with Jesus Christ. You will be damned if you are a successful Mormon with a good relationship with the brethren, but neglect your relationship with Christ.

Those in the Strengthening the Membership Committee are in the gall of bitterness when they suggest my writings are threatening to them. To promote faith in Christ threatens their fiefdom? To testify of Christ somehow diminishes the men who claim to represent Him? The idea is so patently off kilter that it reveals a dark motive to place respect for men above faith in Christ. I make no apologies for my testimony of Christ. Nor for my healthy skepticism of men. We are given free agency and we are required to use it. We must have the choice. Everyone has to choose. No matter how good the man is, men are all prone to mistakes, to vanity and pride, and to self-interests above the interests of others.

I am and will always remain a Mormon. I have more than faith in the religion, I have knowledge from Christ about my standing before Him. Therefore, I state with confidence what I believe, knowing that the Lord has made things known to me which He has kept hidden from others simply because they will not ask Him and let Him inform them also. My confidence in the religion is not the same as my confidence in the church, and this misbehavior by the Strengthening the Members Committee only reduces confidence in these mere men.

Despite the fact that the church has changed dramatically in the four decades since I joined, I have not changed all that much.

Because of the increasing changes and the pace at which those changes are now taking place, I began to look into church history. What I concluded is shared in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. It is my effort to help all those fellow believers who are disoriented by the increasingly rapid changes made by the church. If it isn't "true" then disprove it.

However, if it is, then why persecute me for telling the truth?

The truth will prevail. No matter who fights against it, it will prevail. I will stand with truth, and against all who oppose it; either high or low, inside or outside the church. The truth matters. Men and institutions do not.

CHAPTER 6

Power In The Priesthood

MAY 18, 2012

Power in the Priesthood

Here is a quote from the Journal of Discourses recently brought to my attention:

This failure to realize all the blessings and powers of the Priesthood does not apply to the elders and lesser Priesthood only; but it applies to the higher quorums, and comes home to ourselves, who are Apostles of Jesus Christ. We are presented before the Church, and sustained as prophets, seers and revelators, and we have received oftentimes the gift of prophecy and revelation, and have received many great and glorious gifts. But have we received the fullness of the blessings to which we are entitled? No, we have not. Who, among the Apostles have become seers, and enjoy all the gifts and powers pertaining to that calling? And those who are called to perform special missions in opening up dispensations of the Gospel to the children of men, as Joseph and others were called of the Lord, He endows more fully with these gifts; but this does not hinder others from enjoying similar gifts according to

His promises, and according to our faithfulness. And I have thought the reason why we have not enjoyed these gifts more fully is, because we have not sought for them as diligently as we ought. I speak for one, I have not sought as diligently as I might have done. More than forty years have passed away since these promises were made. I have been blessed with some revelations and prophecies, and with dreams of things that have come to pass; but as to seeing things as a seer, and beholding heavenly things in open vision, I have not attained to these things. And who is to blame for this? Not the Lord; not brother Joseph—they are not to blame. And so it is with the promises made to you in your confirmations and endowments, and by the patriarchs, in your patriarchal blessings; we do not live up to our privileges as saints of God and elders of Israel; for though we receive many blessings that are promised to us, we do not receive them in their fullness, because we do not seek for them as diligently and faithfully as we should. (Orson Pratt, *JD* 25:145–146)

This candid statement of Elder Orson Pratt is a beautiful and faith promoting statement from an earnest and faithful Apostle. He was called by the Lord, through revelation to Joseph Smith, and held the office given him. His lament of failing to attain, because of a lack of diligence, should summon to each of us a renewed resolve to be faithful and true to the Lord. When so many have fallen short, the Lord deserves to have someone succeed. Why is that not you? Why do you not summon the faith and diligence to become His friend? This is an open invitation to everyone (D&C 93:1). Therefore it is an invitation to you.

I think the best way to view all priesthood assignments in the church as entirely probationary. That is, ordination is an invitation

to come and receive. It is up to each individual whether they will come and will receive. Ordination is invitation. Acceptance is through living the principles and ordinances of the Gospel.

The Lord often spoke to “the elders of my church” as one category, in contrast to “priesthood” which is another category. We conflate the two. An elder is invited to become an actual priesthood holder, but that is dependent upon heaven, alone. It may be conferred on us, but heaven must ratify (See D&C 121:36–37). Therefore, there are a lot of elders in the church who have no priesthood. Yet they have an authoritative invitation to connect with heaven and rise up and receive it.

We conflate so many things because we tend to be lazy. We want to be able to acquire priestly authority as easily as we acquire a merit badge. It just does not, cannot work that way. Heaven controls that end of our faith. We conform to the conditions or we do not receive. The test is measured in our hearts, not just in our outward conduct. I suspect Elder Orson Pratt was never closer to attaining what he sought than when he humbly confessed his failure and sincere desire. His heart seems broken, his confession sincere, his desire authentic.

When someone has the fullness of the priesthood, they have the ability to ask and get an answer. When Joseph received it by the voice of God in the early 1830's, the Lord confirmed “I restore all things, and make known unto you all things in due time” (D&C 132:45). When the voice of God declared that it was also to be upon Hyrum Smith, it was declared by revelation that he would have the keys “whereby he may ask and receive” (D&C 124:95). When Nephi, son of Helaman received it, the Lord declared: “all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will” (Hel. 10:5). Joseph Smith explained

this relationship when referring to Noah conversing with the Lord preliminary to destroying the wicked. Noah was told by the Lord how he (Noah) could save himself and his family. Joseph explained,

thus we behold the Keys of this priesthood consisted in obtaining the voice of Jehovah that he talked with him in a familiar and friendly manner, that he continued to him the Keys, the Covenants, the power and the glory with which he blessed Adam at the beginning and the offering of Sacrifice which also shall be continued at the last time, for all the ordinances and duties that ever have been required by the priesthood under the direction and commandments of the Almighty. (*Words of Joseph Smith*, 5 October 1840, Monday morning, Robert B. Thompson's account; spellings corrected)

One of the reasons we know Joseph Smith had the fullness was his ability to always get an answer to his inquiries. During his life, the Lord called the church a “true and living” church because it was in constant communication with the Lord (D&C 1:30). While Joseph was at the head, the church could always ask and get an answer from the Lord through him. There was never any reason for the church or its leaders to speak in the absence of revelation. The Lord hearkened to Joseph. Joseph held “the keys of the mysteries and the revelations” (D&C 28:7). He had the “keys of the mysteries of the kingdom” (D&C 64:5). He held the “keys of the kingdom” (D&C 81:2). Joseph had “this greater priesthood [which] administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God” (D&C 84:19). For Joseph, the fullness was getting answers, solving mysteries and always using revelation to do so.

When the Lord designated Hyrum to receive this same authority, then the Lord was bound to also heed Hyrum's inquiries and answer

him. Joseph could be removed, but the church still had someone at the head who would be able to ask and get an answer, just as with Joseph.

It is a great thing when the church is “true and living” and has, at its head, someone like Joseph or Hyrum who could ask and get an answer. That is why it is so puzzling and offensive for the church’s press spokesman to recently claim the church’s leaders for generations spoke “in the absence of revelation” about a matter of critical importance for salvation of an entire race of people. When they said:

The origins of the priesthood availability are not entirely clear. Some explanations with respect to this matter were made in the absence of direct revelation and references to these explanations are sometimes cited in publications. These personal statements do not represent Church doctrine.

The church has repeatedly claimed to have the fullness of the priesthood, therefore it is a terrible indictment of Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith, Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, David O. McKay, among many others, that they spoke “in the absence of direct revelation.” This surprising claim by the press spokesman contradicts the established order, recognized authority, and most importantly the church’s claims. I have taken some criticism for suggesting an alternative view of our history in my last book, but I’ve never made such an attack as this. This is a serious accusation, and one which the spokesman ought to provide us with an explanation. Did the leadership proceed on a matter of such importance “in the absence of revelation?” That seems heartless and unkind. Perhaps it was, but I would hope we would have some follow up explanation, because the assertion is troubling.

MAY 19, 2012

Last Week's Comments

I wanted to respond to some of last week's comments:

There is a difference between calling and election and Second Comforter. I've written about The Second Comforter, but haven't ever commented on calling and election other than what is said in *Beloved Enos*. It isn't useful, in my view, to spend time discussing or studying a topic that is between the individual and the Lord, because if they are brought to the Lord, they will receive what He intends for them to receive.

In a quote from Joseph Smith (which is on page 3 of *The Second Comforter*) the order he puts these events in is the calling and election first, and Second Comforter second. However, as I pointed out in *Beloved Enos*, it did not happen in that order for Joseph.

These are important concepts to understand. But knowing the concept and then undertaking the process are quite separate things. I have friends who know a good deal more about the literature of deep Mormon doctrine than they have the capacity to practice in their lives. I think you draw closer to the Lord when you faithfully serve in primary, or as a home teacher, or as a young women's counselor than when you are amassing knowledge of trivia about our history or doctrine. It is in the doing that the learning occurs. We must do what the Lord asks to understand Him. The four part Power in the Priesthood series will address that issue.

The idea of "evil speaking" has never been clearly defined by anyone, including the scriptures. Implicit in the idea is that you are trying to falsely make someone hated or reviled. You are, in essence, seeking to make a good man, or an innocent act to appear evil or corrupt when it is not. In essence you are calling good evil and evil good. The measure for that is best taken from inside the

person. That is, they intend to call someone or something which is good or innocent as “evil” when they know or should know better. It reflects a malignant or at least indifferent heart.

I have suggested “the Lord’s anointed” should be interpreted to be anyone who has been through the temple, which is the broadest meaning. I’ve never thought it is safe to narrowly define obligations. If we are wrong by narrowly defining the term, then we miss the mark. Whereas, if we are wrong in broadly defining the term, we proceed cautiously and safely.

I understand “sustaining” or “supporting” the Brethren to be doing what we are asked when asked. We get assignments or callings, and we ought to do them. When, we are asked to obey the word of wisdom, or we are asked to attend a conference, or to undertake some kind of conduct, then we do it.

On following the Prophet: I think that is quite easy. What, exactly, do you find hard about this? It is not at all difficult to attend sacrament meetings, pay tithing, do our home teaching, attend the temple, etc. They really do not ask much of us. What they do ask is by and large simple.

What is the problem? The scriptures ask us a LOT more. It is not incompatible for you to do everything the church asks, and still pursue the things you understand the scriptures instruct you to do. They are not mutually exclusive. They are complimentary. Or, at least they ought to be. In my experience they are complimentary and the one (what the Prophet asks of us) is by far the easier of the two. I wish the scriptures (and the Lord) only wanted what we are asked to do as active members of the church. Full, faithful, diligent service in the church is a small thing. Each of us should willingly submit to it, and find joy in service there. Faithful Latter-

day Saints are among the best people on earth, and are actually seeking to find God.

On detailed knowledge of church history: For faithful, active and satisfied Latter-day Saints: It certainly isn't necessary, no. But everything needs perspective. Ultimately you are alone in your test, in being proven, in finding God. The church is a profound help and a great hindrance. It is a help in all it has preserved: ordinances, scriptures, organization, libraries of material and the venue for performing ordinances and meetings. It is a hindrance when it becomes a substitute for God, and refocuses your attention away from the Lord. If you can receive its help without becoming idolatrous, then detailed study of church history is not useful or necessary. For disaffected, alienated and inactive Latter-day Saints: It is necessary, yes. It puts into perspective the things which have alienated them. When the weaknesses of men are apparent, they are easier to forgive and for you to move on to finding God. When you can see the hand of God moving in spite of the weaknesses and failing of men, you can resort the things which alienated you, put into categories the mistakes and errors, find what is good and retain faithfulness to that goodness.

On my schedule: It isn't important.

On evil spirits: I've never felt it important to discuss the topic. They exist. One of the side-effects of an inordinate preoccupation with the topic is the misunderstanding that you can relate to them. You can't. They are your enemy. Their tool in trade is deception and lying. Summary dismissal is what is taught in the scriptures and in the temple and should be the approach when dealing with them.

Internal committees of the church are all presided over by a general authority. When the committee works, they work as a group of men assigned to the task, and churn out their product.

The assigned general authority will meet on occasion with them, some weekly, some monthly, some less often, to “preside” and give face time to the committee. The committee produces a product or a project and whatever that is is said to belong to the general authority because it is “his” committee. In truth, however, the work goes on among the faceless, nameless members with little more than thin oversight by the assigned general authority. This gives the Correlation process its power because the committee uses the general authority’s name to shield themselves from criticism or accountability. It is “Elder Holland” or “Elder Ballard” who takes the assigned credit for “his” committee’s product. This insures that even though he has but very little to do with it, the work-product is regarded as his. Almost anyone would question a bureaucratic process and decision if they knew how it worked. However, almost no active church member would dare to question “Elder Oaks.” Speaking of Elder Oaks, he gets credit for the Sunday School Manual because that’s his committee. Interestingly, in one of the Mormon Stories Podcasts, a member of the BYU Religion Department who helped write the manual told an amusing story. (I think it was Peterson, but I’m not sure.) In a New Testament manual book of Acts, there is the incident where Paul spoke till midnight. He put a young man to sleep who fell from the window and died (Acts 20:7–12). One of the discussion questions he put into the draft manual was something to the effect, “Have you ever killed anyone in a Sacrament Meeting talk?” Of course this was tongue-in-cheek. To his surprise, the question made it through to the print proof stage before he removed it. The story shows just how “tightly” the manual committee actually scrutinizes their work. A good many of those involved are more interested in the “face time” with the presiding general authority, hoping that will give

them opportunity for advancement in the structure. I believe you can be critical of a committee without having anything in mind for the general authority who has the unfortunate assignment of being “over” the committee. The purpose of Correlation is to conflate the two. Correlation relies on that conflation to work their disastrous mischief presently underway. There are a significant number of general authorities who would undo Correlation, and that number is growing.

At some point I will contrast the Light of Christ, Spirit of Christ, Holy Ghost and gift of the Holy Ghost. But that’s not appropriate in a quick response here.

Fasting in the form of abstaining from all food and drink may not be practical for the elderly, those who are diabetic or ill. For some, refraining from food and drink is possible without any danger to their health, but if they choose to do so for more than a day, then eating once in the evening allows the fast to continue the next day. For someone unable to fast, but who can surrender some part of their diet—abstaining from all sweets, for example—it can serve the purpose. Underlying the idea of the fast are two things. First, submission to God. Second, aiding the poor (Isa. 58:6). You can accomplish those purposes even if the “fast” you choose has nothing to do with food. However, our appetite for food is one of the most direct ways to discipline the will of the body. Remember though, it is your thoughts, not your belly, where the real battle is fought.

Christ sanctifies us, we don’t sanctify ourselves. Our “righteousness” is borrowed from Him. It can be symbolized in this way. He provides a white robe, we put it on, and then He looks upon the whiteness and purity of the robe we received from Him and treats us as if the borrowed robe is our condition. We

owe Him for that. He is willing to proceed with us as if we merited the robe (See 2 Ne. 9:14).

Colors all have symbolic meaning. Blue is the color of priesthood. Red is the color of judgment. Gold is the color of heavenly royalty. Green is the color of healing. There are colors we can't see. All you have to do to make something veiled from our view is to put that color on what you want to conceal. It is rather like our own practice of wearing camouflage when hunting.

MAY 21, 2012

Power in the Priesthood, Part 2

When Joseph Smith was confined to Liberty Jail, suffering personal abuse and abuse for his people at the hands of government, he received a revelation regarding abuse of authority. However, it was not about the power or authority of government, but instead about abusing the power of God. Sitting in a Missouri dungeon, Joseph (and all those who read this revelation) are cautioned about how to handle priesthood. Things all follow rules, or laws ordained before the foundation of the world (D&C 130:20–21). They cannot be violated and are invoked whenever men make choices. Choices lead to consequences, and these are ordained by God.

We are free to choose. But we are not free to change the consequences.

The power of priesthood is connected with heaven. If any of us sever that connection we sever the priesthood (D&C 121:36–37). If or when we abuse others by exercising unrighteous “control, dominion or compulsion” and thereby forfeit priesthood, we are left to ourselves. We no longer have a connection to heaven. This is true of husbands who “rule” over wives by claim of priesthood. This is true of any of us serving in the church.

The priesthood is to bless others. It succeeds when we elevate others, bless their lives, bring them truth, and connect them with the Lord. When we focus on ourselves, or seek our own vainglory, we are abusing the priesthood and therefore, do not possess it. It is a call to serve, to kneel and wash another's feet. It is not to claim superiority over anyone we are asked to serve.

When we behave like the “gentiles” (Luke 22:24–26), we are left without authority or power.

This solitary state of being alone, without God in the world (Mormon 5:16), or being “left to himself” has a natural progression. The progression that follows, once our priesthood is gone, is that we “kick against the pricks” — meaning we then oppose the will of God, and it will harm us (D&C 121:38). It is a law we are following. We cannot help ourselves. We must thereafter oppose the will of God and bring harm upon ourselves. In doing so, we also must “persecute the saints” — meaning that when this route is taken, we will look for and oppose those who have remained in contact with the Lord (*Id.*). It is a natural result, and it is irresistible. If this is the chosen course, anyone who follows it must seek out and oppose those who follow God's will, because they “fight against God” when they are in this gall of bitterness.

This an explanation about priesthood abuse. It cannot apply until someone has first been ordained, or in other words “called” to a priestly office. This is entirely internal to the church and its officers.

Further, the one engaging in the abuse must be in a position to actually assert “control” or “dominion” or “compulsion” over others. That would not include those who are not in positions of authority. Those who have no right to claim control, dominion or compulsion under the claim of priestly office would not be able to abuse that power. In other words, this revelation to Joseph Smith

about abusing priestly authority or status is a fundamental statement of how we conduct our church. It is how we are to behave while serving in church offices.

Note also, it would apply broadly in any context where someone relies on their “priesthood” as a basis for claiming priority or demanding surrender. For most men, that hits closest in their marriage. Persuasion, gentleness, meekness and love unfeigned has its greatest application within the family. Fathers should lead always with “pure knowledge” and through revelation.

The result is that while many are called (offered the chance to receive priesthood from heaven) only very few will be chosen, or receive power in their priesthood (D&C 121:34, 40). Along the way the many who are called will refuse to submit to heaven and will instead become preoccupied with “covering their sins, gratifying their pride, and accomplishing their vain ambition” (D&C 121:37). When they do this they will exercise unrighteous control over others, establish their dominion, and wield control over the souls of men. This is the order the Lord’s return will crush, because it is the commerce of Babylon to trade in the “souls of men” (Rev.18:13). Churches, like the Roman Catholic Church, or some of the Fundamentalist LDS sects, claim to hold keys to consign men to hell or raise them to heaven. Such purported keys and power from God let them trade in the souls of men. These are the only ones who could conceivably trade in the “souls of men” referred to in Revelation. They are, therefore, Babylon, and the target of the Lord’s destruction at His return.

On the other hand, when you find a soul in possession of the priesthood their conduct is altogether different. Since it is impossible to compel men to salvation, the priesthood can only invite, and persuade. The priesthood acknowledges it has the burden

to persuade, and to convince, and cannot simply say something is so because they have authority.(D&C 121:41). Those who hold priesthood power can only proceed using “persuasion, longsuffering, gentleness and meekness” to enlighten those with eyes to see (*Id.*). When this process is followed there is another law which confers upon the practitioner “love unfeigned” for those to whom they minister. When they walk alongside their Lord and accept His yoke they find His love for others. This is the natural result of obeying the law governing priesthood. Love does not need to be feigned when the Lord bestows it as a grace, or an endowment, or a gift of His Spirit to one who follows Him.

It is a natural occurrence for those who abuse, rebel and apostatize from priestly ordination to then persecute the lowly and insignificant saints of God. It is natural for those who receive and magnify priesthood to find themselves loving the lowly and insignificant saints of God. These are natural gifts, normal graces bestowed by the power of God through laws instituted before the foundation of the world. It is part of the Lord’s orderly program.

MAY 22, 2012

Power in the Priesthood, Part 3

The most powerful tools in the priesthood are “kindness, and pure knowledge” because these things “greatly enlarge the soul” (D&C 121:42). In this power, the priesthood holder acts utterly “without hypocrisy” because this power forbids it and cannot be used in that manner. Nor can it be done with guile, or pursuing any course other than the Lord’s (*Id.*). If the priesthood holder does not completely conform to the will of the Lord, they cannot retain priesthood power. The law is violated, the conditions are

not met, and the powers of heaven depart from that man. This is why “meekness” is so difficult to recognize. (As explained in *Beloved Enos*). The attribute is found in the relationship between man and God, not man and man. That is, to be meek is to follow the Lord’s will, even when you don’t want to do so. Even when it brings you into conflict with your friends, family or community. You measure meekness as between the servant and the Lord, not as between the servant and his critics.

Loving others does not preclude the priestly man from rebuking those he loves from time to time. The rebuke must originate from God and be inspired by His Spirit, not a jealousy or ambition. When a rebuke is delivered by someone motivated by the Holy Ghost, it will not be accompanied by strong feelings, anger or hurt feelings. It will be godly. In other words, it comes from pure intelligence, designed to elevate the target of the rebuke, to reclaim them, and show them God’s love. It cannot be motivated by any lower source, or it would not be the product of the Holy Ghost (See D&C 121:43–44).

When this pattern is followed, and these conditions are met, then the priesthood holder finds he is able to make intercession for “all men” because he has become a vessel of charity. His “bowels [are] full of charity toward all men” including even “the household of faith” where undoubtedly will be found his persecutors (D&C 121:45). For, as the Lord taught, it will be a man’s “own household” that will be his foes (Matt. 10:36). It is always the case that within the community of fellow-believers, there will be many who are hypocrites, cunning deceivers, proud, vain and ambitious men. These sorts always belong to the “household of faith” but instead of following the religion they hold, they employ it as a tool to judge and condemn others. These sorts are the “foes” of the true Saint.

Still in all, the priesthood holder will have charity toward them, also. At personal risk they will stay, invite and teach repentance, and work to fulfill the will of the Lord. This is a pattern you should recognize from scripture. The Lord was chief in this example, but there are many others. The Book of Mormon is filled with examples. Hence the need for those who come to possess priesthood to have charity “toward the household of faith” for it will be within that “household” the priestly work is begun.

Power in the priesthood is literally the product of knowing and following the Lord. His friends hold His authority. His friends act within the same pattern, following the same law, observing the same principles, and exciting the same opposition as He did.

Only then can a person understand the saying

let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distill upon thy soul as the dews from heaven. (D&C 121:45)

This is a great mystery to many. But it is an actual process to those who follow the pattern.

As I explained recently, virtue is not righteousness. Virtue is almost always passive, constraining from abrupt and improper behavior. It contains and limits. It is a strong barrier against misconduct. It has protocols and expects behavior to be mild. Righteousness will often require or impose action, sometimes action which exceeds mere virtue. Nephi was constrained to kill Laban. Elijah mocked the false priests. Christ rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees as unclean “whited sepulchers” filled with rot and decay. These kinds of righteous actions are not ungoverned or spontaneous. They are carefully controlled, and are undertaken only when the priesthood holder, whose thoughts are virtuous

and disciplined, is led by the power of the Holy Ghost to rebuke sharply. These acts are constrained. They are moved. These servants are taken by God's power to become His instrument to deliver His words. Oftentimes the servant does not enjoy that aspect of serving the Lord, but meekness requires it be done.

When someone is moved to transition from virtue to righteousness there are two direct results. Their confidence in God's presence is strengthened. They know the Master whom they serve. They gain understanding which cannot be obtained in any other way. This is not the natural state for any man (See, e.g., Isa. 6:5; Mormon 9:3-5). It is God's power and His grace which allows this to happen. They are confident because of Him. He has comforted them.

Conforming to these principles and being in the presence of God allows such understanding of God and His ways that "the doctrine of the priesthood shall distill upon the soul as the dews from heaven." Clarity. Simplicity. Understanding. Doctrine. Priesthood. God's ways. His power. His intelligence. The mysteries of God. The knowledge of the truth.

These things are not understood unless they are done. If anyone will do the Lord's will, they will know the doctrine, and if they do not do so, it remains a mystery (John 7:17).

MAY 23, 2012

Power in the Priesthood, Conclusion

All things are governed by God's will. In general conference we are taught that we cannot have the Holy Ghost as our companion unless we are obedient and faithful. In a recent example, President Eyring explained how behavior such as looking at "images which incite lust" or inappropriate Internet or media access to pornography, or even immodesty or vulgarity will forfeit the companionship of the

Holy Ghost (“God Helps the Faithful Priesthood Holder” — link: <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2007/10/god-helps-the-faithful-priesthood-holder?lang=eng&query=withdraw+holy+ghost>) This is describing how the Holy Ghost is a temporary visitor with most people, even in the church.

The power of priesthood, however, is speaking about a higher order of things. In that order the Holy Ghost is a “constant companion” (D&C 121:46). These individuals are no longer wishing they had power in the priesthood, because they have obtained knowledge through the things they have done and the pattern they have followed. They have invoked the law ordained before the foundation of the world and have obtained the associated promised blessings.

The scriptures rarely speak about the instruments of power. In the context of priesthood, however, the Lord does use the image of “scepter” — an indication of wielding the power of God; as well as “dominion” — an image of acting with God’s appointment over a charge or stewardship or message given to you by Him. But in this revelation it is used as a symbol to show a connection of the individual to the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost (*Id.*). The revelation ties “scepter” to “an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth” coming once “virtue” has “garnished thy thoughts unceasingly.” In other words, you have come to see the difference between “virtue” and positive, directed action undertaken on the Lord’s behalf and at His insistence through the Holy Ghost.

This is how priesthood power is acquired. It is how all prophets, from Adam to the present, have been called of God and then endowed with power by Him. It is a principle of action, requiring you obey the law under which this power is conferred. It connects you to Him. For He alone is the source of power.

Truth and righteousness go together, but truth requires you to see things as they really are (D&C 93:24), not through a distorted lens that tells you all is well when it isn't (2 Ne. 28:24). No person can behold the truth unless they are willing to be righteous, and act on what they learn. If they are willing, they will have a scepter forged in the truth and righteousness, in which they see clearly, as if standing in bright daylight while all around them people wander in darkness (D&C 50:23–24).

Such a process gives man dominion over lusts, ambitions, pride and desire to succeed in this world or to have its praise. They follow their Lord and do as He did (Matt. 26:39). They know Him because they have offered sacrifice for Him in the same pattern as He did. Having obtained dominion over their own desires, they are given that dominion everlastingly, for “[their] dominion shall be an everlasting dominion” and they have overcome the flesh (D&C 121:46). The Lord overcame the world. His followers must overcome the world (D&C 63:47). When you subdue the desire to be something in this world and lay everything on the altar other than your love of God, you have won the victory. Then the “god of this world” has no claim upon you; for you belong to another.

When the followers of the Lord have gained dominion over their ambitions and lusts, thereby overcoming the world, they receive an everlasting dominion which will allow them to go no more out into the world. They have learned the principles by which all things are governed, and by their knowledge “and without compulsory means it shall flow unto [them] forever” (D&C 121:46). It is not “compulsory” because they follow the Lord, act with constraint of the Spirit, and know they cannot compel men to come to salvation. They have been taught the three grand truths by which God governs. They can invite, testify, and teach, but they cannot

use compulsion. Therefore, they have arrived at the point it is possible to understand the doctrine of the priesthood. They live it, therefore they understand it. They are it, and their understanding reaches into heaven itself.

Joseph knew this. It was revealed to him, and to us through him, but to understand it we must live it like Joseph lived it. For the doctrine is understood only in the doing (John 7:17). To everyone else it remains only a matter of mystery, or of abuse when they pretend to things which are not given to them.

Everything is in the scriptures and before us all. So we are all accountable for knowledge we claim we possess. Therefore, since we claim to have “all truth” and to offer “salvation” to all the world, even the dead, we will be judged by the standard we claim to hold. It would be wise, therefore, to begin to give careful heed to the scriptures.

CHAPTER 7

Mosiah

MAY 24, 2012

Mosiah 3:2–4

The third chapter of Mosiah is one of the most important accounts in the Book of Mormon. Like Section 76, the content is delivered by a visionary encounter through the veil with a message sent by God to King Benjamin. This was between Benjamin and the angel. This is the same pattern as Moroni's nighttime visit with Joseph Smith. In both of these encounters the message was for all mankind.

There is no mistake about the source of the message: The angel told King Benjamin to "Awake" in the same manner the Lord called to Samuel in the night, calling him by name (1 Sam. 3:3–4). The "angel of the Lord" after awakening King Benjamin then "stood before him" to speak the message (Mosiah 3:2).

The angel reiterates a second time for King Benjamin to "Awake"—and it is not redundant (Mosiah 3:3). It is one thing to awaken from sleep, it is another to awaken to the news given by the angel. King Benjamin needed to awaken to both.

In order to “awaken” to the second, Benjamin needed to “hear the words which I shall tell.” Or, in other words, to allow the message from God to enter into his heart (*Id.*).

Benjamin merited the audience, and it was given. The angel was to “declare” this message, and it was the king’s duty to listen, then hearken, and then declare to others. It was not a negotiation, or a discussion. It was a declaration. Through that process Benjamin will finally awaken to his own salvation. It is in doing the will of heaven that we all draw near to God.

Before delivering the content of the message, the angel characterizes the message in words similar to what Gabriel would declare to the shepherds keeping watch over the flock at night; “I am come to declare unto you the glad tidings of great joy” (*Id.*, see also Luke 2:10). When angels or the Lord explain His ministry to a prophet, the universal reaction is “joy” at the great redemption provided through the suffering of the Lord (See, e.g., Moses 7:47; Isa. 53:10). There is always a juxtaposition of the Lord’s suffering and universal “joy” at the result obtained from His sacrifice.

King Benjamin is told, like Zacharias would later be told, “the Lord hath heard thy prayers” (Mosiah 3:4; see also Luke 1:13). Both men were seeking the welfare of others. In the case of Zacharias the prayer was for the return of the light of God’s countenance to Israel. In the case of Benjamin, it was for his people. They were intercessors in similitude of the Lord who would be the Great Intercessor. Therefore, their prayer was aligned with heaven itself.

In response to Benjamin’s prayer, the angel declared the Lord “hath judged of thy righteousness, and hath sent me to declare unto thee that thou mayest rejoice” (Mosiah 3:4)

When the Lord determines a man's "righteousness" is acceptable before Him, then He redeems that man by parting the veil and bringing him into the company of the redeemed (See D&C 76:67).

Benjamin is not to keep the news of redemption to himself, but he is to "declare unto thy people." We are all required to bear testimony of the truth to one another (Mosiah 3:4). The purpose of King Benjamin bearing testimony is so that others, who receive his testimony "may also be filled with joy" (*Id.*). Of course, if they refuse to receive and accept the testimony, then they do not share in that joy.

This pattern of the angel appearing in quiet solitude, to the lone witness, is the same as the Lord's dealing with Zacharias, Joseph Smith, Nephi, Enos, Samuel, Joseph F. Smith, Paul, and Elijah; all of whom were then required to tell others of their testimony. The Lord is the same. He acts the same. We tend to impose on Him rules which have never governed His conduct.

This chapter is one of the most doctrinally rich chapters in the Book of Mormon. It is worth careful study.

MAY 25, 2012

Mosiah 3:5-6

The angel speaking to King Benjamin undoubtedly understood doctrine better than we do. If we proceed with that premise then we can learn some things we don't presently know. We can correct the errors we presently have. It is preferable that we allow scriptures to inform us than for us to distort the scriptures to fit our preconceived notions.

The angel declares:

Christ is "the Lord Omnipotent."

Christ is the one “who reigneth” in heaven.

Christ is “from all eternity to eternity.”

Christ is the one who will “come down from heaven among the children of men.”

Though He is a glorified, eternal God, reigning in heaven, and holding the power to exist from eternity to eternity, He will condescend to “dwell in a tabernacle of clay” (Mosiah 3:5).

If you can take that in, then you can understand what Joseph Smith said about “sons of God, who exalt themselves to be gods, before they were born” (*TPJS*, p. 375).

To be “exalted” is to already be in possession of what we hope to acquire in mortality. That is, Christ was already exalted. He did not come here for His advancement, according to this angel, but He came and descended into a “tabernacle of clay” in order to serve us.

They (the noble and great) prove us. They (the noble and great) are not being proven. They are already proven, and have exalted themselves to be gods. This doctrine being taught by the angel to Benjamin agrees with Joseph Smith’s Nauvoo era sermons and the lessons in the Book of Abraham. At the end, Joseph was beginning to appreciate the doctrine of the Book of Abraham.

The “Lord Omnipotent” was to put His great power on display by “working mighty miracles” among men. These were to include “healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases” (Mosiah 3:5). In other words, the Omnipotence of the Lord would not be diminished by the tabernacle of clay He would inhabit. He would bring power with Him, rather than needing power to be given to Him.

It is true enough that He would come with a veil of forgetfulness. He would have to endure the frailties of the tabernacle of clay. He

would need to study, search, pray and submit. He would have to walk the exact same path which all of us are required to walk.

It is the great condescension of God because God left His place of glory, descended here and reversed the grip of death on mankind. Once we read the words of the angel, none of us can be mistaken about how great the God's descent was to accomplish this rescue mission. This is not merely "our older Brother" who came here. He is much more, and we are ever indebted to Him.

His power includes and has always included the commanding of devils and casting out evil spirits which men allow to dwell in their hearts (Mosiah 3:6). He subdued them before and they are required to obey Him here. Though He allowed Michael to physically cast them from heaven (Rev. 12:7-9), it was Christ who accomplished the victory there (Moses 4:3), and limited Lucifer's power here.

Notice the location of the evil spirits that Christ will cast out. It is from "the hearts of the children of men" (Mosiah 3:6). It is in our heart that we dwell on lusts, ambition, unholy desires, anger, jealousy and resentments. It is the center of our feelings that we permit evil to dwell. Christ's victory goes directly to our hearts.

MAY 26, 2012

Answer to Michael

Michael: I would be baptized were I you. The church has a commission from the Lord to offer that ordinance to whoever will receive it. If you receive it in faith, you will be benefited for having done so. The church is where I worship, fellowship, serve and raise my kids. It is a great blessing. It would be wonderful to share fellowship with you in the church.

The Lord has never told me He has abandoned the church, nor do I expect Him to do so. I pray for the church, and do what I

can to benefit and advance it. I believe I have obligations I owe to her, and I intend to fulfill those obligations.

Having a realistic view of the church's many failings should not make you turn from it or become bitter toward it. Rather, it should allow you to serve with a renewed dedication in doing what you can that is right. You can be a great example by your service and dedication to the church in spite of what may or may not be wrong with the organization.

On the Internet and in books I've written, I address issues which those searching for answers would be interested in reading. Inside my ward and stake, I am quite content to leave the teaching to those called to teach, the presiding to those called to preside, and the conversations undisturbed by anything negative or challenging from me. I recommend that course because you needn't do more than serve faithfully to influence others. Until they ask, you needn't say a thing.

My ward and stake are remarkable. There are many very admirable acts of service and devotion going on among these faithful members I am privileged to live among. I hope when you join, the ward you enter will be full of similarly faithful members. But if not, take what good they share, and continue your own search. It is an individual religion in any event, and you can't be hindered by others.

MAY 28, 2012

Mosiah 3:7

This verse is the greatest summary of what the Lord would suffer in atoning for man's sins given before His mortality. King Benjamin is given this instruction because God wants all mankind to understand the great sacrifice made by the Lord Omnipotent.

Christ suffered “even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death” as part of the burden He bore (Mosiah 3:7). What was the burden?

First on the angel’s list is “temptations.” Isaiah would call it “our griefs” and “our sorrows” and “our transgressions” and “our iniquities” (Isa. 53:4–5). Alma would call it “afflictions and temptations of every kind” (Alma 7:11). Paul explained how He “who knew no sin” was made “to be sin” for our sake (2 Cor. 5:21). In other words, though Christ was not personally responsible for any transgression, He was made accountable for every one of all our transgressions. He was made “to be sin” and to feel the loathsome filthiness of our unworthiness before God.

Mormon had been in the Lord’s presence. He knew how painful it was to be before God in our fallen and guilty state. Mormon explained how terrible it is to bring the weight of your own sins into God’s holy presence. He describes it as “under a consciousness of your guilt” and “a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws” and “more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would be to dwell with the damned souls in hell” (Mormon 9:3–4). He explains that in God’s presence “ye shall be brought to see your nakedness before God” and it “will kindle a flame of unquenchable fire upon you” (Mormon 9:5). Since Mormon had been there, and knew what it was like to behold God’s holy presence, he understood the great challenge we all face if we do not repent.

When the prophet Isaiah was brought into God’s presence he collapsed in guilt and anguish, proclaiming, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts” (Isa. 6:5).

Beholding God brings with it the keenest appreciation of your own unworthiness before Him so it is possible to understand He is a “just and holy Being” in whom there is no darkness.

Christ succumbed to no temptations. Yet He was made to feel the guilt and misery of all mankind’s great surrender to sin. Christ explained what that involved when He declared:

repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I. (D&C 19:15–17)

Christ, looking back on His atonement, called the pain of it “exquisite” and “hard to bear” from a distance of two millennia.

The scriptures tell us how His suffering was accomplished. As He knelt in prayer, He was visited by a “just and holy being” to borrow Mormon’s words (Luke 22:43). There, in the presence of the Father, Christ struggled through all the guilt, sorrow, nakedness, consciousness of guilt, and torment of being sinful, unworthy, unclean, and having ever transgressed the law of God. It was an unquenchable fire of emotion and pain, torment of mind, and recognition of failure before God. He, like all the wicked, “trembled because of pain” and “shrank” away from God in horror at His condition (D&C 19:18).

Abraham was on the mount with the knife in his hand at the sacrifice of Isaac, and God the Father was present at the sacrifice of His Son. Indeed, Christ’s sufferings required the Father to be present in order to reconcile man to the Father. It was the presence

of the Father that made the suffering possible. Therefore, we know the identity of the unnamed angel in Luke (Luke 22:43). Christ could not have suffered the guilt of all mankind in the presence of a just and holy God, unless during this moment of torment His suffering was before that very Being.

MAY 29, 2012

Mosiah 3:7, Continued

The suffering of Christ in atoning for mankind was not limited to spiritual torment, but was physical as well. The angel explained He would suffer “pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue” as part of His great ordeal (Mosiah 3:7).

Alma explained this would include “pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind.” It would extend into “the sicknesses of his people” (Alma 7:11). All disease, even death were overcome by Him.

This was so the Lord could rise again, and with healing in His wings (2 Ne. 25:13; Malachi 4:2) be able to succor all our ills (Alma 7:12). Because He has felt all of our “infirmities,” whether they are spiritual or physical, there is no limit to His ability to understand our plight and give to us His compassionate aid (Alma 7:12).

This does not remove our own cup of suffering. Even the Lord’s most favored servants endure suffering, sometimes in perplexing magnitude that seems beyond our ability to endure (D&C 121:3–4). Sometimes the way He consoles the suffering servant is to remind them the Master has endured more (D&C 121:8).

He knows our limits, even if we do not. He protects us by limiting what the faithful endure to only that which we can handle (1 Cor. 10:13).

The angel was sent to inform King Benjamin of this (and in turn his people and those who read the Book of Mormon) so we may understand the Lord's purchase of us from death, hell, and torment. He wants us all to understand this so we can take advantage of it by repenting.

If we look upon His suffering and remain unrepentant, then we are left to endure the just punishment for our unrepented sins. According to Christ, who suffered those pains of sin, this is beyond our comprehension.

In pleading for us to repent and turn from our sins, the Lord could only inform us: "how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink of the bitter cup, and shrink—" (D&C 19:16–18). Any who have looked upon the suffering of our Lord are moved beyond words at what He endured.

In *Come, Let Us Adore Him* there is a chapter on Gethsemane. The Lord's sufferings came in waves, and included all that mankind has done to one another, all mankind did to Him. This suffering gave Him the right to claim each of us through His victory. It was a hard won victory. It means nothing if we do not repent. How foolish it is to believe you can escape the claim of justice on your own failings. You cannot. The only way to escape is through the mercy provided by Christ through the price He paid (Alma 34:15). As explained by Alma, the redemption which comes from faith in Christ empowers our repentance, so we can take advantage of His

atonement by forsaking our sins (*Id.*). This is a difficult process, involving constant attention to His mercy which redeems you (Alma 34:18–27).

The angel who visited King Benjamin taught the same truths about our Lord as Isaiah: “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:5).

So why would we reject the invitation to repent? Why in our pride would we talk of God’s great favor and blessing of us all? Why would we claim to be chosen, royal and better than others around us? Why would we ever trust for one moment that all is well and we are Zion? Why would we refuse the mercy offered to us by Christ? Why do we prefer pride and self-sufficiency? Why would we claim some man with “keys” can relieve us of our suffering for sins when the Lord has taught us otherwise? What difference does any ordinance, or ordination, or blessing or promise make if we fail to satisfy the demands of repentance in order to lay claim upon them? The realization of all blessings depends upon your faithfulness. It is only if you are true and faithful that you may later be called up and given more than an invitation through a man. Why do you also harden your hearts so that you also cannot enter into God’s presence? (D&C 84:23–24).

The sermon from the angel to King Benjamin encompasses the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, because it seeks to teach us how to be redeemed from our sins and enter into the rest of the Lord.

MAY 30, 2012

Mosiah 3:8

The angel identifies the Lord by name and title: “Jesus Christ” which is the English version of the Greek form of the name Joshua, or Yesheva, the Anointed or the Messiah. In other words Joshua the Messiah, or Yesheva the Messiah. In our English language equivalent, Jesus Christ.

The name “Christ” is derived from christening, or anointing. Meaning that Christ came to us designated, foretold, sent and anointed with the calling of redeeming mankind. He was God’s chosen sacrifice. He came into the world to be offered as the sacrifice that would fulfill all righteousness.

He is also “the Son of God.” His entry into this world came as a consequence of the Father having been directly involved in introducing Him here. He is God’s own Son. He came with godly parentage, and is capable of offering a godly sacrifice.

He is also “the Father of heaven and earth,” meaning He did not come here as a novice. He has been through this, and knows and presides over it all. His is the power and glory of the Father. He laid that aside to condescend to be here, but He is in reality and truth, “the Father of heaven and earth.”

He is also “the Creator of all things from the beginning.” Notwithstanding anything you may have been told to the contrary, the angel knows what he is saying to King Benjamin in this chapter of Mosiah. After all, the angel lives with the very person he is describing. These are not just titles, but hard won identities belonging to the One you call your “Brother.” In truth, He is much more than that. He earned His exaltation before this world was begun. Therefore, He had the power to create and organize this world as the “Father of heaven and earth.”

The angel adds “and his mother shall be called Mary.” The mother of Christ was not selected to become the one who bore Him carelessly. She, too, was known from the foundation of the world, chosen for the role, and trusted by God the Father to bring His Son into the world. Her name is given by this angel to King Benjamin more than a century before He would be born.

Consider how important her calling was for a moment, and you will have some idea of how carefully she would have been prepared, even before birth, for this role.

From verses 7 and 8 we have some idea of how significant the Lord’s role, titles, power, significance and responsibilities were even before His birth here. We can also contrast the humble, obscure circumstances He came into this world with what great glory was His before birth. The only ones who recognized His birth were His parents, the family of a cousin, a handful of shepherds, and an elderly prophet and prophetess at the Temple of Jerusalem. He came into a family of limited means. He grew up without power, wealth, social standing, control over the church or state, in a beleaguered and subjugated province of Rome. These were the circumstances “the Father of heaven and earth” chose to enter mortality. We attach such great importance to office. Christ attached nothing to it.

To the extent Christ relied on the presence of official “office,” He used it to conceal His presence, and to oppose His mission. He allowed everyone who would see nothing in Him to see just that. For those whose eyes were opened to the things of heaven, He allowed them to see “the Father of heaven and earth” and the “Creator of all things from the beginning.”

How often the Lord chooses to send His messengers in exactly the same way as He came! Without rank or office, and without social significance or recognition; as with Abinadi, Samuel, Peter,

Luke, Joseph Smith, Amos, and Elijah. The test remains exactly the same in every generation. We can know Alma would have received Christ, because he received Abinadi's teachings. Against the opposition of the society he lived in, Alma heard in the message something from the Lord.

How difficult would it have been to have seen in the obscure and lowly station of Christ the reality that this was the Son of God? For the most part, the "Christian" world flatters themselves into believing they would have recognized and accepted Him if they lived in His day. The only reason most people claim Him now is because of the two millennia of Christian conquest, and traditions of their fathers. If they had to choose a living, teaching Christ of obscure and uncredentialed origin, they would reject Him. They want buildings, budgets, hierarchies, and social acceptance. Today Christianity offers all that to them.

The meek and lowly Lord who came was everything the angel foretold. But He came with no credentials that we should respect Him. No office, that we should recognize Him. No wealth and influence, that we should admire Him. He was without form or the kind of regalia we respect, and therefore no reason to desire Him (Isa. 53:2).

MAY 31, 2012

Mosiah 3:9

In Mosiah 3:9 the angel foretells how Christ will "come unto His own" because it will be His own people who were promised He would come (Gen. 49:10). Therefore, to perform on the promise, the Lord must be sent, but it will be His own who reject Him. Indeed, only His own people would consider rejecting and killing

Him, because no other people would be hard-hearted enough to kill their God (2 Ne. 10:3). Only those who are given the truth, and harden their hearts against it, can be blinded enough by the devil to pervert the truth. It takes exposure to and rejection of the light for men to sink into rejecting the Lord.

This is the pattern throughout God's dealing with His own. Whenever He sent a true messenger, the established order was offended at them. They always behave in this manner (Matt. 5:10-12).

This is how salvation comes. There is always authentic tension between good and evil, between the true and the false. The stage is always set with conflict between established tradition that has strayed and inspired messages to clarify. We always see the temporary defeat of truth followed by persistent success of error so the Lord can try the souls of men. Truth returns, within a sea of error, and the humble followers of Christ recognize it. Therefore, through this means "salvation comes unto the children of men" (Mosiah 3:9).

This stage is where the participants must choose between the two "through faith." Tradition and community error will not bring you to Christ. In every generation we are required to recognize Him, and accept "His name" or, more correctly, His names; for they are many. The angel has been giving some of them. Isaiah gave others. Joseph Smith gave yet more. Those who come to know Him come to know His names, for they are known by His friends.

Even after all the truth represented by our Lord, men will say about Him that He is "a man, and say that he hath a devil" (Mosiah 3:9). They call what is good, bad. They insist that what has been sent from heaven is in fact of the devil. By calling God's offering something of the devil, they clarify whose side they are on, and

become the servant of the one who leads them. As servants and children of the devil, they earn their condemnation by condemning the things of God. Hence the condemnation of suffering described in D&C 76:99–105, because they have followed the devil while claiming to have followed prophets and apostles. They worship men, and traditions of men, but have not received a testimony of Jesus.

To establish the truth and the authority of His commission, the Lord left His suffering as a mark of His authenticity. It would be required for Him to endure both verbal and physical persecution for the sake of His ministry. That will operate as a seal upon His testimony, because only through enduring the opposition of this world can we know for certain the message is not from this world. Only by this world's rejection can we have the certification that the message came from above.

Ultimately, as the angel foretells, the Lord will be “crucified.” This clarifies that the Lord in His death would be ceremonially cursed and unclean (Deut. 21:22). King Benjamin knew the Lord God omnipotent would condescend not only to come and live here among men, but to become cursed and slain for their sake.

What manner of love does our Lord have that He should suffer so? How long suffering and patient is He that He would live a life in this manner? How great a God is it who will forsake this world's success, endure this world's curses in order to remain true and faithful to His great commission?

It would have been interesting to observe the angel as He explained, and King Benjamin as he heard this promise of the Lord's future life and ministry. Who would believe such a report, even though given by an angel? (Isa. 53:1). Even today, who can believe the Lord's dealings with men?

JUNE 1, 2012

Mosiah 3:10

The angel's message in Mosiah 3:10 is the same as Zenos' message. Zenos prophesied more than a century before Lehi left Jerusalem. His record was on the brass plates obtained from Laban. During the three days in the tomb, Zenos added the detail that the isles of the sea (which included the Americas/2 Ne. 10:20) would be given the sign of three days of darkness (1 Ne. 19:10). King Benjamin knew this information from existing scripture. Once the angel declared it, however, rather than having belief in the account based on study, he would have faith of the event because the angel told it from heaven. The Book of Mormon regularly moves one from belief, to faith, to knowledge. This is an example of moving from belief based on study of scripture, to faith based on the testimony of an angel.

Not only would the Lord rise from the dead, but He would also “stand to judge the world.” That is an important reference. It identifies the Lord's status as judge, and it clarifies He would “stand” to judge the world. The word “stand” is symbolic. It implies, among many other things:

- He will endure.
- He will be in control.
- He will triumph.
- He will rise up.
- He will command respect and obedience.

However, the strongest implication is that after death He will return to life to “stand” to judge the world. He who passed through the grave, and triumphed over it, will live again as the triumphant judge of the living and dead—for He has been both.

He gains capacity as He passes through these states. He does all these things “that a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men.” Or, the judge will necessarily experience all He will go through so He can understand all things required for a proper judgment (See D&C 88:41).

God’s mercy is extended to all who have “fallen by the transgression of Adam” or, the death that comes upon mankind will be defeated (D&C 88:14–17). Christ’s death, or His “blood atoneth” for mankind’s death. Through the infinite sacrifice of an innocent life, death is satisfied. It would be unjust to ask for more than an everlasting life, for by definition that life is infinite. Christ deserved everlasting life. Instead He submitted to death.

“The sins” of Adam’s descendants are paid, also. He will blot them out. However, those who refuse to repent, or turn away from their sins will remain “filthy still” (D&C 88:35). They may have the power to return from the grave through Christ’s grace. However, if they refuse to abandon their sins, forgiving them will accomplish nothing. Because they love their sins, they remain as if there were no redemption made.

All those who died without knowing the will of God are also benefited by His atonement. For them it will be “tolerable” in the day of resurrection (D&C 45:54). Though they may not have received a fullness because they failed to qualify (D&C 130:20–21), they may still be “added upon” (Abr. 3: 26). Joseph explained it this way:

When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through

the veil before you will have learned them. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave. (King Follett Discourse, *TPJS*, p.348)

No one can arrive at the throne of God in any other way than all have taken to arrive there. Everyone develops the same way, through the successive stages of Jacob's Ladder.

Christ's atonement makes it possible for all of us to attempt that trek.

JUNE 2012

JUNE 4, 2012

Mosiah 3:11–13

The angel informed King Benjamin that Christ's blood is intended to atone for the sins of those who sinned ignorantly, or those who died without knowing God's will (Mosiah 3:11) However, there is a two-fold wo pronounced on those who know they rebel against God. They are cast down, and for them there will be no hope, no salvation, "except it be through repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Mosiah 3:12). That of course, must happen before they die.

The angel explained the Lord has sent "his holy prophets among all the children of men" (Mosiah 2:13). When the Lord sends someone with a message, they are by definition "holy" because they bear the message of God. Having been entrusted with His word, they are derivatively holy (See Acts 9:15) It does not mean they are better than other men because everyone sins. The content of what God has given them makes them "holy" before God. Since

King Benjamin has just been entrusted with God's message for his people, King Benjamin has become "holy" also.

The messages have been sent, at one time or another, "among all the children of men." All nations have had some portion of the word of God given to them. This does not mean they have been given a fullness, for that is rarely given. It does mean the Lord has concern over all of us and will call and send prophets to everyone.

How people react to what they are offered determines how much a prophet is able to teach them. If they will not give heed, then the audience receives only a portion of what they might have received (Alma 12:9). Sometimes people can be offered a "fullness" and reject it, and then have it taken from them (D&C 124:28).

The purpose of the message is for all to have "exceedingly great joy" (Mosiah 3:13).

This joy comes from knowing the Lord. Knowing Him comes from obeying the words given to them through the "holy prophets."

One of the greatest laments of the Lord arises from how the world reacts to His holy prophets. He makes the same offer every time, whenever He calls someone as His spokesman. The offer is by His word, to gather His people into one and be their shelter (D&C 43:24; see also 3 Ne. 10:4-6). Despite the many times when this might have happened, there have been fewer than four occasions we have a record of the Lord actually gathering His people.

The purpose of giving His word to His people is to lead them to Him. If they will actually come to Him, He will come and dwell with them. We were once given that opportunity (D&C 104:59).

We are promised the Lord will return again (10th Article of Faith), and there will be people prepared to meet Him. It will happen, and will be on this land (Ether 13:5-6). Any gentiles who

are going to survive the coming calamities will need to flee there (D&C 133:12; 42:9).

JUNE 5, 2012

Mosiah 3:14–15

When the Lord’s people wanted religion, but were unwilling to accept the fullness, He accommodated their desire and gave to them the “law of Moses” to keep them busy (Mosiah 3:14). It is the nature of “stiffnecked” people that they prefer religious ceremonies, and endless repetition of rituals to coming into the Lord’s presence (*Id.*).

King Benjamin is reminded by the angel that the purpose of the “law of Moses” was not to redeem anyone. It was merely a way to keep the people busy.

In addition to the law of Moses, the Lord gave “signs and wonders” and also many “types and shadows” to acquaint the people with the fact of “his coming” (Mosiah 3:15). These were not ends. They were all means.

Why give the law of Moses?

Why give “signs” and “wonders?”

The people confused the symbols with the real thing. They thought through the symbols they were chosen, elect, and holy. They thought they were a kingdom of priests, a royal priesthood. Instead, what they should have thought was that they were poor because the Lord was not dwelling among them, they considered themselves rich because they had “types and shadows.” They preferred the symbol to the reality. The true religion was only symbolized by the rites. By worshiping the symbols and not recognizing the truths which were their foundation, they became mere idolaters. It is one of the constant risks faced by God’s people, because the devil is

always looking to convert the holy church of God into something perverted and evil (See Mormon 8:33–38).

They could rejoice in their laws, rites, ordinances and rituals. They could consider themselves better than the nations around them because they had God's program for salvation. All the program did was "harden their hearts" because they were proud rather than humble.

These religious and proud people did not understand that all their endless rites "availeth nothing" because it was the Lord alone who could redeem them (Mosiah 3:15). They took their eyes off the Lord, and put them on the religion. They did not understand the religion was nothing, if it failed to point them to the Lord.

How oft might the Lord have gathered them, indeed! It is astonishing that men would prefer religion to God; prefer pride which alienates them from God to humility which could bring them into His presence.

Signs, wonders, types, shadows are nothing if they fail to get you to look at the underlying reasons for them. They are not the real thing. They merely point to the real thing; for that, it is left between you and the Lord.

Some few will see it as it really is. They will not be limited by the failures of the generation they live in. They can be saved in any generation because they see beyond the Lord in His types, shadows, signs and wonders (Alma 12:10).

Salvation is and always has been individual. This is why there are prophets. Some will lay hold on the promises which others refuse to see.

JUNE 6, 2012

Mosiah 3:6–17

Half a millennium following the angel's visit to King Benjamin, Mormon wrote a letter to his son Moroni addressing the topic of child baptism. The angel condemned it (Mosiah 3:16). Mormon condemned it (Moroni 8:11–14). If anything, Mormon's statements are more emphatic, and condemn those who believe in such rites for children. Mormon explains that little children "cannot repent" (Moroni 8:19), and the angel explains it is not possible for children to sin (Mosiah 3:16). Little children are not accountable before God, and therefore their mistakes, offenses and errors are covered by their innocence, and the atonement of Christ on the other. Anyone who thinks otherwise does not understand God (Moroni 8:17–20).

Mankind are all subject to sin. Over a lifetime we are all corroded by this environment. To preserve this creation, death has been introduced so that no matter how far men may fall from God's grace, their lives will end. In their place, children who are innocent before God come into this world. It is by and through children that hope returns, innocence is renewed and creation continues. Little children are where God's great renewal of mankind takes place. If not for them, this world would have ripened in iniquity long ago.

The angel draws a parallel between Adam's fall and Christ's atonement (Mosiah 3:16). The one brought death to all, the other brings life to all. Even those who will squander their opportunity for more are still redeemed from death through Christ.

Then the angel declares where salvation (something more than rising from the grave) is obtained. It is completely in Christ. "[T]here shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and

through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent” (Mosiah 3:17). It is not a church. It is not an ordinance. It is not an organization, initiation, family, relationship with, or promise from a man or men, nor any other means. It will be Christ, or it will not happen.

What, then, does it mean to be saved “in and through the name of Christ?”

What is His name? Or, more correctly, what are His names? How does one become saved through His name?

King Benjamin will later have his people take upon them the actual name of Christ (Mosiah 5:6–7). How are you “called by the name of Christ?” Do you, literally need to become “Christ?” That is, do you literally need to become a “Messiah” or a “Christ” or an “anointed one?”

Because the name “Christ” is akin to the word “christened” or “christening,” meaning you have become anointed.

How do you become anointed? Is it through application of physical oil to the physical skin? Is that an anointing in the sense that Christ was anointed? Or, is the physical anointing a symbol of another kind of anointing, another kind of christening? If so, what does that entail?

When the angel marks a man “in the forehead” (Rev. 7:3; D&C 77:9) is that literal? What kind of anointing, or christening, or seal is involved?

Did Christ set the pattern? Does it mean to “take upon you His name” that you, in like manner, are christened, anointed or sealed? Can you be His without this? Can you take His name upon you without conforming to the same pattern as Christ, who is the “prototype of the saved man” (*Lectures on Faith*, 7:15–16).

It is in vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered

their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they, in like manner, offer unto him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him....But those who have not made this sacrifice to God do not know that the course which they pursue is well pleasing in his sight; for...where doubt and uncertainty are there faith is not, nor can it be. For doubt and faith do not exist in the same person at the same time; so that persons whose minds are under doubts and fears cannot have unshaken confidence;... and where faith is weak the persons will not be able to contend against all the opposition, tribulations, and afflictions which they will have to encounter in order to be heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus; and they will grow weary in their minds, and the adversary will have power over them and destroy them. (Lecture 6:8, 12)

How does one lay hold on the salvation that comes through the name of Christ spoken of to King Benjamin by the angel in Mosiah 3:17?

JUNE 7, 2012

Mosiah 3:18

The angel declares unequivocally that Christ “judges.” Not men, not authorities. Christ “judges.” Men who fancy themselves empowered to judge others deceive themselves. Judgment of others is not permitted (Matt. 7:1). Even the Lord’s twelve disciples were told they were not to judge others, but would be trusted to announce Christ’s judgment (3 Ne. 27:27). Christ is the only judge. He is the only keeper of the gate (2 Ne. 9:41). When men substitute their own

judgment for Christ's, they condemn themselves and do nothing to alter the one they judge before Christ (Matt. 7:2). When men act as if they are Christ, substituting their own judgment for His, they govern others by their own light and not the Lord's. These things are condemned (2 Ne. 26:29).

The Lord alone is judge. Hence the angel saying to King Benjamin: "For behold he judgeth," and adding quickly "and his judgement is just" (Mosiah 3:18). You don't need to fear an unjust judge, nor a partial and imperious man who is looking to magnify his ego or vain ambition (D&C 121:37). Their judgments can never displace Christ "For behold He judgeth," according to the words of the angel to King Benjamin.

Because He alone can judge, those who condemn little children who He has redeemed are substituting their own judgment for His. They are calling His great work of redemption incomplete and inadequate to accomplish the redemption of children. Such men "drink damnation to their own souls" because they will be judged by the standard they have established (Matt. 7:2). They must not only retract their unjust judgment, but must also become like those whom they condemn. "Except they humble themselves and become as little children" they will be lost (Mosiah 3:18).

The angel reminds King Benjamin (and us) there is only one source for salvation. It "was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent" (*Id.*). If you lack salvation, it is because you looked elsewhere to find it, and if you receive it, then you necessarily have come to Christ.

All the judgments of men, all the plans and schemes of men, all the pretenses and arrogance of men will not secure salvation for any soul. Salvation comes from Christ alone.

If you or I were ever to judge another man, the standard to apply is singular: It is Christ's standard. Either He reveals His judgment to you, and you announce what His judgment is, or He does not. If He does not, then the choice is to either refrain from judging (which is safe), or to show mercy and forgiveness (which is safer still), but never condemn. The Lord alone has the right to condemn. For us to condemn anyone the Lord has forgiven is a mockery of His atonement, no less than condemning little children whom the Lord also has forgiven.

This lecture by the angel to King Benjamin is filled with wisdom and light. We are so much the better for having it available for us to study.

JUNE 8, 2012

Mosiah 3:19

The angel asserts that “the natural man is an enemy to God” (Mosiah 3:19). Why is that so?

What is it about the natural state of man that, when a little child he is saved and anyone who thinks otherwise is in the gall of bitterness and offending God, but when grown is “an enemy to God?” How can these two statements at the opposite ends of the spectrum come from the same angel in the same message?

How does man become, in his “natural” state an enemy to God? What is it about this environment and the natural progression into adulthood that, as man becomes tempted he also becomes alienated from God? What forces contribute to this alienation?

- Hunger?
- Fatigue?
- Boredom?

- Puberty?
- Emotional insecurities?
- Abuse by others?
- Ignorance?

Is it inevitable that all develop into a condition where they are not only distant from God, but an “enemy to God?” How does that happen? What is going on here that you fall to this state? Is it “natural” for you to go through that?

If you are going to become by nature alienated from God, then how can you be certain you are not in your “natural” state as you go about practicing your religion? What is there about religion itself which appeals to the “natural” man? How does religion contribute to:

- Pride?
- Anger?
- Judgment?
- Hatred?
- Abuse of others?
- Calling that which is good evil?
- Arrogance?
- Killing the messengers, and even the Son of God?

It is inevitable that the “natural” man who is religious is no better than the “natural” man who is irreligious? Can a man be both “an enemy to God” and devoted to some religion? Are not all the prophets of the past killed by those who were religious? Even the mob that killed Joseph was led by lay ministers. How can you ever be certain your own “devotion” is not, in fact, the faith of an “enemy to God?”

How can any person avoid this catastrophe? What does the angel recommend to King Benjamin?

- “yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit” (Mosiah 3:19).

The word “yield” seems weak. The force of the Spirit is to invite, to request or to petition you. You are free to reject, to resist, and to refuse.

- “become a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord” (*Id.*).

The idea of “becoming” something suggests change. And how does one go about changing “through the atonement of Christ?” What does one have to do to acquire this change? How is the Holy Spirit and taking advantage of the atonement of Christ related to one another?

- “becometh as a little child”

How is this done? I’ll not repeat the chapter on this from *The Second Comforter*, but will only remind you that it requires something more than passivity. It requires the relentless search, as children do, for understanding and knowledge. It requires curiosity and pursuit of truth, as little children do.

- “submissive”

To who? Men? Your peers? Your political, social, cultural, religious, or educational leaders? Or submissive to “the Holy Spirit” which only “entices” and never controls? If you submit to the arm of flesh, even the arm of a good man, are you really “submissive” in the sense spoken of here by the angel?

- “meek”

In the sense explained in *Beloved Enos*.

- “humble”

As between you and heaven, not as between you and the world. Indeed, since conflict with the world is inevitable if you follow the

Lord, then humility is reckoned from a different vantage point. You will appear to the world to be rebellious, discordant, unruly, and difficult. That is because a citizen of heaven is not well fitted to this fallen world. Humility is directed toward the Lord, not your fellow man.

- “patient”

Because this world has little use for the truth, and will test and try you at every turn. It will fight you long enough to prove whether you are faithful in all things. Then some few will join in the struggle and also become a fellow citizen of a higher world.

- “full of love”

Not because of your own capacity, but because by submitting to the Holy Spirit you are able to borrow this as a gift through the atonement of Christ. Just like the angel explained.

- “willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him”

It is the Lord’s work to bring about salvation and exaltation (Moses 1:39). To refine you, the Lord will “inflict” a great deal upon you. He knows when you are ready, when you are proven. You have no idea. You submit, and in the process you learn what you are capable of. Until you submit to all He sees, in His wisdom alone to inflict upon you, you remain an unfinished son or daughter. When you cry out from agony and uncertainty and you hear nothing but the patient silence of heaven, you must endure it, just as Joseph in Liberty Jail (D&C 121:1–3). When your cup is filled and you think you cannot endure more, He will decide if the ordeal continues. He will remind you of His suffering (D&C 122:8). You will learn from your own suffering to appreciate His.

- “even as a child doeth submit to his father.”

If you want to be His child, you allow Him to act the role of your Father. It is His right to punish, instruct, inflict you. It is acceptance of His Fatherhood over you to submit and not question His right to do what you cannot see any need for you to endure. He is preparing you for something so much greater than what you are now, that you cannot receive the blessings unless you are enlarged. How can He “add upon” you without stretching, even breaking you? How can you grow without pain?

How foolish is our impatience? How small our irritations! How unequal His blessings to our gratitude! When He works with us, we resent Him. When He corrects us, we resist Him. When He tries us, we cry out: It is unfair!

The Son of Man hath descended below it all, art thou greater than He?

The “natural man is an enemy to God” and you must overcome that. You proud, arrogant, weak, insecure, devoted and pretentious “Saints.” You must change. Or you remain God’s enemy. . . . At least if the angel who spoke with King Benjamin knew what he was talking about.

JUNE 9, 2012

Response to a Comment

In response to a comment, perhaps the most easily shown “mistake” is President Brigham Young’s claim of Adam as our God. This teaching was opposed by Orson Pratt from the time it was introduced. After hearing the doctrine advanced by President Young as a revelation from God, the following took place on March 11, 1856:

A very serious conversation took place between President B. Young and Orson Pratt upon doctrine. O.P. was directly

opposed to the President's views and freely expressed his entire disbelief in them after being told by the President that things were so and so in the name of the Lord. He was firm in the position that the President's word in the name of the Lord was not the word of the Lord to him. (*The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, Volume 2, p. 1061)

President Brigham Young was opposed by Orson Pratt. Brigham Young was the church president at the time, and for decades after. Later his "doctrine" that he claimed God revealed to him was denounced by President Spencer Kimball in general conference.

President Kimball in October 1976 general conference stated the following:

We warn you against the dissemination of doctrines which are not according to the Scriptures and which are alleged to have been taught by some of the General Authorities of past generations. Such, for instance, is the Adam-God theory. We denounce that theory and hope that everyone will be cautioned against this and other kinds of false doctrine. ("Our Own Liahona", *Ensign*, November 1976)

This "doctrine" was taught by President Young, opposed when taught by one of the Twelve, and later denounced by President Kimball. This is the same as the church's teachings on priesthood being abandoned, and earlier teachings, when taught by earlier church leaders, were claimed to have been made "in the absence of revelation."

This is not a problem for me, and should not be a problem for you. The errors of men and the doctrinal mistakes which get advanced cannot, do not, and will not alter the truth. Orson Pratt was ultimately vindicated for disbelieving in "Adam-God." Anyone

who today holds correct views will ultimately be vindicated. It is the prerogative of the church leaders to claim priority in teaching. When they are mistaken or wrong, that will eventually be discovered, abandoned, and their errors will be made known. In the meantime, it is your right to search for and believe in truth, even if the church does not presently recognize it. As long as you do not make it a practice of publicly opposing the church leaders, there is absolutely nothing wrong with disagreeing with them. It is your duty to study and find the truth, and that duty exists independent of faithfully supporting the leaders.

Notice that Orson Pratt did not leave the church. He disagreed, but served in the Twelve. He did not start a splinter group, nor attempt to unseat President Young. They disagreed and they worked together. This is what believers do.

You do not need to surrender your own independent search for truth, even when you disagree with others who are also Mormon. We share far more in common, even with doctrinal differences, than we will ever share with Historic Christianity. You belong in the church, even if you are not in complete agreement with some of its current teachings.

JUNE 10, 2012

The Perfect Example

The answer yesterday was the perfect example. It was chosen because it fit the issue exactly.

The answer did not attempt to explain whether “Adam-God” was right or wrong, true or false, or to side Brigham Young, Orson Pratt or President Kimball. The point is that “doctrine” becomes “false doctrine” depending on who you listen to and when you tune into the teachings.

Which is the point of the answer. YOU must sort it out, because the church will ebb and flow, and cannot be relied upon to have stable doctrine. Indeed, the reason Bruce R. McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine* is now out of print is because of shifting positions.

Yesterday's post did not explain my view on Adam as God, nor have I ever explained what I think on the topic or why. I appreciate the many comments. Clearly there is a lot of interest and strongly held opinion on the subject.

JUNE 11, 2012

Mosiah 3:20–22

The angel foretells of a time when “knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” (Mosiah 3:20). This raises a question about the word “knowledge” and its meaning in the context of this verse:

- Does it mean “awareness,” or that people have heard of Christ?
- Does it mean to “know,” or to have met Him?

Almost always in the Book of Mormon the term “knowledge” involving Christ involves the second meaning of having met Him. In this verse, however, the context raises the possibility it is in fact the first. That is, once people are put on notice that there is a Savior, they have a duty to investigate. The burden is on them to inquire and learn what the Savior can save them from, and on what conditions He will save.

If you are being cautious, then you would use the first meaning and assume the angel is saying that as soon as you become aware of a Savior, you need to then seek for salvation through Him.

If you are reckless and willing to take a great, eternal risk, then you will confine the angel's meaning to the second, and will assume

the burden is not imposed until the Lord has appeared to you. That, however, seems self-defeating. The Lord will not appear to you until you have met the conditions. Those conditions involve obedience.

The angel explains that once one is aware of the existence of a Savior for mankind because this information has been spread throughout the world, then “none shall be found blameless” (Mosiah 3:21). Or, in other words, the Lord will hold every person to account for how they responded to the news of a Savior. Once they know of Him, they must pursue Him. Like the wise men who embarked on a two-year journey from the east to come and worship Him, we are also obligated to seek after Him (Matt. 2:1-11).

This burden on man is imposed as a reasonable responsibility for anyone who has learned of a Savior. When we have that news, we have that duty.

The duty is to come before God “through repentance and faith on the Lord God Omnipotent” (Mosiah 3:21). Here the angel uses three titles for Christ:

“Lord” because we are to obey Him. “God” because we are to worship Him. “Omnipotent” because we are assured He has the power to save.

And so the obligation remains for us to “repent” to be saved. This is why, of course, any true prophet will always preach repentance. Men can only be saved through repentance. Anything which does not alert mankind they must repent is foolish and vain. Therefore, if a prophet is saying anything other than repentance they are failing in their obligation to God and to their fellow man.

Even if we never meet a prophet of God we have the words of an angel before us. We do not need to have another person declare the conditions for our salvation to us, because we have the words warning us of the duty we bear.

The words of the angel impose upon the people of King Benjamin the duty to repent and “they [are] found no more blameless” because of the words of the angel (Mosiah 3:22). You also have them before you. Therefore you are no longer blameless. You must repent, or you will be cast off because you are judged on the basis of the words given you. You have the words of an angel before you.

There are conditions for salvation, and the Lord can impose those conditions immediately after sending an angel to warn people. It does not matter if you take the warning seriously. The Lord has done what is required to make you accountable. You are left without any excuse.

One of the signs of authenticity in the Book of Mormon is the existence of passages like this one. It is an authentic ancient form that goes back to the beginning. The Lord delivers the message and immediately men are accountable.

King Benjamin, alone and at night, receives instructions from an angel. We have never met King Benjamin, don't have a duty to sustain him, nor reason to respect him, but we receive a written transcript of the audience between one man and an angel sent from God. We are accountable for what is contained in the warning.

How oft would the Lord have gathered us, but we will not see what stares us plainly in the face! The Lord does the same thing generation after generation. So few ever notice, however, even when it is as plain as words can be (2 Ne. 32:7–8).

JUNE 12, 2012

Mosiah 3:23

“And now I have spoken the words which the Lord God hath commanded me” (Mosiah 3:23). The angel added nothing. He hid nothing. He delivered what the Lord told him to deliver.

These are not merely the words of an angel. Because the angel certifies they originated from God, they are the words of God (D&C 1:38).

When anyone, man or angel, is entrusted with a message from God, the message is God’s. God makes no distinction between the messenger and Himself. The words “shall all be fulfilled” (*Id.*).

This system of empowering a messenger with a message, and then holding mankind to account may seem too slender a thread to have power. The truth is that the power is in the words, not in who speaks them. It does not matter that they come from a frail, elderly King from another time who has no authority over us today. It does not matter that he was alone at night with an unnamed angel without a second witness to vindicate the words. It is true and binding because:

It agrees with and does not contradict any other message from God.

It preaches repentance and warns us of consequences.

The words are independently corroborated by the Spirit, if we read with the Spirit.

The words have been certified to us by our own inquiry (Moroni 10:4–5).

This is how the Lord sends His message. Through a solitary figure like John the Baptist, or Samuel the Lamanite, or Abinadi, or Jonah, or Amos, or Isaiah, or so many others. The message is

the credential. It puts us to the obligation of then seeking to know if it is true or not. For that we must turn to God.

The message originates with God, and the message drives us to Him to determine if it is true. The Lord's ways are ever the same. We get no less a challenge in our own day.

As you reflect on this you can see why Zion will be a "city" and not an intercontinental, multi-million member organization spread throughout the world. It will be small. It will be local (D&C 133:12). The Saints will be gathered from all the world into Zion (1 Ne. 14:14). This is because once a messenger has delivered "the words which the Lord God hath commanded me," then we are responsible for how we react and whether or not we repent. If we repent, angels will gather us (D&C 77:11). If we do not, they will not gather us.

JUNE 13, 2012

Mosiah 3:24

Words from God, delivered by someone who is authorized to speak them, "stand as a bright testimony against this people" (Mosiah 3:24). It is a "bright testimony" because it illuminates the wickedness and hard hearts of the people when they reject it. Or, alternatively, it is "bright" because it opens the mind of those who will receive it, and they become enlightened by receiving truth from God. Either way, it is a "bright testimony" and will cut against all who fail to respond by repenting.

The purpose of the message is to make everyone aware of their duty to follow God. That purpose becomes most fully understood "in the judgment day" when the Lord's messengers stand beside Him (Moroni 10:34; 2 Ne. 33:11). It will then be obvious who He sent and who pretended to be sent (Deut. 18:20).

The angel then says “every man shall be judged according to his works” (Mosiah 3:24). This means what you “do” in response to the warning to repent is what determines your final fate. Your “works” matter because if you respond by repenting, then you will “work out your salvation” (Philippians. 2:12). If not, then you have procrastinated and will be damned for your failure to work (Alma 34:33).

The symmetry and simplicity of the message is astonishing. Everyone can understand it, but that is never the challenge. The challenge is always whether or not to take it seriously enough to act on it.

Acting on it does not involve a public display. It only involves what goes on inside your heart. You repent before God, and come to Him with a broken heart and contrite spirit and beg for forgiveness. When the Lord forgives, then you change from the inside out. The only real change that matters comes from within. Outward display first is artificial. When a new heart is inside a man, then the outward behavior, and eventually even countenance, will change to reflect what lies within the man.

Given the seriousness of the message, you would think all who hear it would at least consult with God before turning away. However, it has always been the most religious who will not listen to a message of repentance.

Traditions and social reinforcement from others who think alike, all prevent the message to repent from getting through. Instead of a message of repentance, mankind prefers a prophet who tells them they are good. They are justified. They are righteous! They are chosen! God loves them in their sins! They need only pray, pay and obey and all will be well with them! Then people do pay, so that such characters become rich and powerful (Helaman 13:26–28).

There is perhaps no greater revelation of the plan of salvation ever composed than the Book of Mormon. Beginning with Mosiah the text is abridged by Mormon. I think, however, this chapter from Mosiah was left as in the original. What Mormon did here was keep intact the transcript of the angel's message. I can almost hear it echoing still. Can't you?

JUNE 14, 2012

Mosiah 3:25

And if they be evil they are consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and endless torment, from whence they can no more return; therefore they have drunk damnation to their own souls.

The angel now transitions the message to King Benjamin forward to the time of the final judgment. In that setting he suggests a scene to the unrepentant. Before looking at the words, however, why do you suppose the description is from the vantage point of the damned? Why not from the vantage point of the saved? The final three verses of the message are all viewed from failure, rather than from success. Why?

Is this “negative?”

Does this make you think the angel is offensive? He doesn't “have the Spirit” with him? That you “don't get a good feeling” when you listen to his words?

Do you think the angel should be ignored because he makes you “feel bad” by the things he speaks? Would you prefer to hear a “more positive message” Things like this just “can't be from God” because of how they make you “feel?”

If this is an angel from God speaking, and the above questions reflect your attitude about a message warning you to repent, then perhaps it is your attitude that is wrong—not the angel or his message. Perhaps the annoyance of being awakened from your deep sleep is worth the angel telling you in unmistakable and harsh terms that you are about to be lost if you do not repent. Perhaps the angel would prefer to deliver a hopeful, even lighthearted message, but the words originate from God. God’s efforts are to bring you to immortality and eternal life (Moses 1:39). Maybe God has a better view of our awful state than do we.

The angel speaks in terms of:

- “consigned to an awful view”

What does this suggest? What would be “awful” about failing to repent? Why is it a “view?” What will we “see” in that day?

- “own guilt and abominations”

Why guilt? What “abominations” attach to every soul who does not repent? Why is religious error, pride in believing falsehoods, and failure to repent always an “abomination?”

- “doth cause them to shrink”

Isn’t this the same agony Christ experience in Gethsemane? (D&C 19:18). Why would you “shrink” from the presence of God? What does “shrink” mean?

- “into a state of misery”

Why would you want to withdraw into a state of misery? What is it about failing to repent that causes you to behave this way when judged by God?

- “endless torment from which there can be no return”

Why is this the formula to describe the reaction? (D&C 19:6–12).

What is it about this experience that will last forever in the mind of anyone who suffers it? (D&C 19:15–18). Why would this

haunt the person forevermore? Even if it came to an end at some point, why are you “unable to return” from that experience? What trauma is caused by this that can be avoided by repenting?

- “drunk damnation to their souls”

Why this graphic description? What is it about this experience that makes the very soul be damned by the ordeal? Is the angel overreacting?

Is this terrible assortment of adjectives necessary?

Why would God send an angel with this message to King Benjamin (and to us)?

JUNE 12, 2012

Mosiah 3:26–27

Therefore, they have drunk out of the cup of the wrath of God, which justice could no more deny unto them than it could deny that Adam should fall because of his partaking of the forbidden fruit; therefore, mercy could have claim on them no more forever.

And their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever. Thus has the Lord commanded me. Amen.

The strong, direful, terrible warnings continue from the angel: Those who ignore the obligation will, in the afterlife, have: “drank out of the cup of the wrath of God...”

Notice this is phrased in almost identical language to Christ’s terrible suffering in the atonement (See 3 Ne. 11:11; D&C 19:18).

This is so awful an experience the Lord cannot capture adequately in revelation the words to describe it (D&C 19:15).

“mercy could have claim on them no more forever.”

Meaning that if they choose this path, they will suffer. There will be nothing to mitigate what they will endure. Mercy will not intervene and lessen the ordeal.

How often has the Lord used such terrible phrases to describe the damned as:

“torment as a lake of fire and brimstone” — because we all know the pain of having our skin burned. It quickly conveys the idea of torment into our minds,

“whose flames are unquenchable” — because it will burn away until nothing impure remains,

“whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever” — because this process is eternal and will be the experience of anyone and everyone, worlds without end, who merit this purging and refining fire.

These words from the angel were delivered to a king, to be taught to his people, in a gathering in which all those who attended then covenanted with God. The audience would “have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2).

Why does it require this message from the angel to produce this result?

Could they be saved by praising them, telling them they were chosen and the elect of God?

Could they be saved by telling them they were a royal priesthood?

Could they be saved by telling them that all was well with them, they prosper in the land because God is with them?

Why is it necessary to tell them of hell?

Of damnation?

Of eternal suffering and unquenchable fire?

In *The Second Comforter* I remarked “there is no veil to our feelings.” That is true, but the feelings one experiences by coming

into the presence of God are almost universally fear and dread. The scriptures confirm how fearful this has been to mankind:

To Abraham, it was a “horror” to draw near the Lord (Gen. 15:12–13).

To Isaiah it was woeful, and terrible (Isa. 6:5).

To Daniel and his companions, quaking fell upon them, many fled, leaving Daniel alone (Dan. 10:7–8).

Mormon explains how men react to God’s presence as being “racked with a consciousness of guilt” (Mormon 9:3–4).

When popular mythology constructs fantasies of coming before the Lord, they make it happy—not dreadful. They despise the call to repent because it disagrees with their happy myths. The angel is not overstating the case. He is explaining the great gulf that exists between fallen man and God (See Moses 1:10). The unrepentant and foolish are completely unprepared for God’s presence (Mormon 9:2–6). The words of the angel are attempting to give some indication to the faithful of how deeply, how completely, and how great the scope of repentance must be to avoid the similar pains of death and hell the Lord suffered on our behalf.

We delude ourselves when we think the angel’s message was not meant for all members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. If the King Benjamin’s audience acquired their salvation by coming down in the depths of humility and repentance (Mosiah 4:2), then we fool ourselves if we think anything less will be expected of us.

Was the angel bitter? Angry? Harsh? Unkind? Of the wrong “spirit?” Not the kind of messenger we should expect would be sent from God?

Was his message not kind enough? Not inspiring? Not faith promoting?

Can an angel or a prophet ever save anyone if they do not focus on the great burden left for mankind to repent and return to God? Will flattery ever save a man?

Samuel the Lamanite was sent to cry repentance. He put the case clearly to them and to us, but his words are no more comforting than the angel's words were to King Benjamin and his people:

Behold ye are worse than they; for as the Lord liveth, if a prophet come among you and declareth unto you the word of the Lord, which testifieth of your sins and iniquities, ye are angry with him, and cast him out and seek all manner of ways to destroy him; yea, you will say that he is a false prophet, and that he is a sinner, and of the devil, because he testifieth that your deeds are evil.

But behold, if a man shall come among you and shall say: Do this, and there is no iniquity; do that and ye shall not suffer; yea, he will say: Walk after the pride of your own hearts; yea, walk after the pride of your eyes, and do whatsoever your heart desireth—and if a man shall come among you and say this, ye will receive him, and say that he is a prophet.

Yea, ye will lift him up, and ye will give unto him of your substance; ye will give unto him of your gold, and of your silver, and ye will clothe him with costly apparel; and because he speaketh flattering words unto you, and he saith that all is well, then ye will not find fault with him.

O ye wicked and ye perverse generation; ye hardened and ye stiffnecked people, how long will ye suppose that the Lord will suffer you? Yea, how long will ye suffer yourselves to be led by foolish and blind guides? Yea, how long will ye choose darkness rather than light? (Hel. 13:26–29)

The Apostle Paul described such folks as having “itching ears” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). It is a fairly apt description. These folks think themselves righteous, but they are unrepentant, unforgiven, and unsaved. They follow a religion which cannot save them, because it has become nothing more than a false idol, appealing to their vanity.

CHAPTER 8

Tattoos and Plural Wives

JUNE 18, 2012

The Trick to Apostasy

The trick to successfully pulling off an apostasy is to distract people into thinking there hasn't been one. The "believers" need to think everything remains intact.

So the issue of "apostasy" becomes a discussion about individuals and individual conformity to the expectations of the group. The subject can then be a topic that polite, fellow-believers can discuss without ever searching into the overall condition of a fallen people.

The Jews mocked efforts to tell them they were apostate. They thought it was humorous when Lehi preached the idea (1 Ne. 1:19). Because they were so very religious, so devout, so unassailably active in following God, the idea was absolutely laughable that they were apostate.

The Apostle Paul said the problem would begin at the top with the shepherds, who would teach them falsehoods as truth (Acts 20:29–30). These new leaders would have only a form of godliness, without any real power to save (2 Tim. 3:5).

The Christian world adopted another, false replacement of the original church. It became so universal it was hailed as the Universal, or Catholic Church. It ruled from the rivers to the ends of the earth as the only official form of the faith established by Christ.

To pull this off Satan must be concerned with the “macro” institutional failure, not just individuals falling away. It is the small, minor spirits who follow Lucifer who engage in petty tempting of individuals to sin. Success for the Adversary is not accomplished in petty enterprises. He wants failure for the whole, so none can be saved. For that, apostasy must be universal.

He has never succeeded by admitting there has been a failure. The trick is always to have the apostasy come unnoticed, unacknowledged and from within (See 3 Ne. 16:10).

The topic is worth studying. When apostasy is noticed, acknowledged and exposed, then it is possible to repent and return. Until then, it progresses apace, discarding and rejecting what might have been given. All the while being happily ignored by “believers” whose devotion will not save.

Since Christ predicted that at some point the latter-day gentiles would reject the fullness (*Id.*), we probably should consider what the Book of Mormon has to say about the subject.

To finish the thought about the “trick to apostasy” the D&C has a remarkable statement. Lucifer succeeds when he manages to get us NOT to reject ordinances, but to change them. As soon as they are changed, they are broken (D&C 1:15). That is an important step. Because then religious people can continue to claim they follow a true religion, while practicing one that has been broken. These practitioners become like the ancient Jews, who mocked Lehi because they knew they were still righteous. They knew Lehi was

foolish, even fraudulent. They still had the truth, the ordinances, the temple, and the priesthood. Lehi was just a mistaken crank.

JUNE 19, 2012

The Prophetic and the Priestly

There are two approaches to preserving a belief system. Scholars refer to these as “sophic” and “mantic,” but the scriptural language would be “the priestly” and “the prophetic.”

Priests deal with rites, ordinances, commandments and procedures. This durable approach to preserving a belief system allows a dispensation of the Gospel to continue to have a presence, long after a founder has died. Moses, for example, established a system of rites and observances which then became the religious fare of priests who perpetuated the system from the time of Moses until the coming of Christ.

Prophets deal with God and angels. They receive new insight, promises and covenants. Their conduct can even appear to violate the traditions of the religion they follow, but that is only because they are not bound to the tradition as practiced by the priests. Instead they have penetrated into the underlying meaning, the original power, the purpose of the rites.

Dispensations are founded by those who combine both traditions. Moses was a prophet, and established priestly rites. Christ was a prophet and more, and He also established priestly rites. Similarly, Joseph Smith was an authentic Dispensation Head who was both a prophet and established priestly rites.

The reason an apostasy can be concealed from the view of religious believers is because they confuse the presence of continuing priestly tradition with both. They do not notice the prophetic

presence has left. Concealing the fact that the prophetic presence is gone is possible because priests focus on authority and make that idea the central, even controlling issue for salvation.

Catholics held a monopoly for a thousand years using the idea of “keys from St. Peter” as the foundation upon which the religion was built. Not until the eastern Orthodox faith departed was there any choice to be made between “keys” in Rome and “keys” in Constantinople. It took Martin Luther to finally peel away the fraud of “keys” independent from righteousness. His expositions on the “priesthood of faith” allowed a divorce between claims of priestly “keys” and faith in God.

It took Martin Luther’s revolution in thinking several hundred years to create a religious landscape where Joseph Smith and a new Dispensation of the Gospel could be introduced. These things move slowly because mankind is generally imprisoned by their traditions and are incapable of seeing the difference between the priestly and the prophetic traditions. This blindness becomes the tool through which the priestly tradition controls mankind.

Priestly tradition is stable, authoritarian, controlling, focused on outward conduct, amasses wealth, power and prestige. Priestly tradition can continue in the absence of spirit, revelation or even godliness. Priestly tradition can become the friend of government, business and empires, and can work hand-in-hand with the powers of this world.

Prophetic tradition is unruly, unpredictable, and challenges the god of this world. It cannot work with the powers of this world, but strikes at its authority. It cannot exist without the direct involvement of God and angels and it cannot be divorced from continuing revelation.

You can have both without an apostasy. You can have the prophetic without an apostasy. You can have a priestly tradition exist without an apostasy, but that is much less likely. In any complete apostasy, the presence of the priestly tradition is essential to be able to accomplish the “trick” referred to in the post yesterday.

JUNE 20, 2012

God's People

When God begins work with people, the group becomes “chosen,” and therefore the focus of His continuing efforts to save mankind. Although “chosen people” do not always remain faithful to Him, they do remain the center of His work.

A good illustration of this was during the Second Temple period in ancient Israel. Throughout this time, the people were apostate. Margaret Barker's work reconstructing the era is perhaps as good a job as any scholar has been able to accomplish to date. Israel was led by corrupt and uninspired priests. The nation descended generation by generation until, by the time the New Testament era opened, the nation's “king” was appointed by Rome from a well-connected family having only quasi-Jewish lineage and no real devotion to their faith. The High Priest was also a political appointment, based on family patronage and bribery.

Into this corrupt society, the dawn of a new Dispensation conformed to the old patterns of the fallen, idolatrous religion. The angel Gabriel came to Zacharias in the place and time that honored the ceremonies established by Moses.

Zacharias was in the Holy Place, before the veil of the Temple, burning incense and offering the morning prayer. The prayer asked for the light of God's presence to return to Israel. As the cloud of

incense ascended from the altar upward, symbolizing the ascent of prayers to God, Gabriel appeared on the right side of the altar (Luke 1:11). This is the exact spot a person would stand if they emerged from the Holy of Holies of the Temple, conforming to the then existing religious pattern. The angel announced to Zacharias that “thy prayer is heard” (Luke 1:13), meaning that the set prayer for God’s presence to return to Israel was accepted. The religious pattern was vindicated.

Though Israel had endured hundreds of years of apostate decline, when the time to refresh and restore arrived, the work resumed inside the existing pattern. God honored the religion of His chosen people, even though the religion was at the time fallen, worldly and apostate.

Zacharias lived among this apostate people and yet was unhindered by it. His prayer was heard, the angel was sent, and God’s promise to return to Israel was not only vindicated, but Zacharias was told he would have a son who would “go before [the Lord] in the spirit and power of Elias” (Luke 1:13, 17).

Similarly, the prophet Simeon and the prophetess Anna lived among a fallen and apostate people, but honored the traditions, kept the faith, and saw beyond the evil of their day. Each received by revelation a promise they would live to see their Lord come into the flesh (Luke 2:25–38). These faithful believers, both male and female, were not hindered by the apostasy then underway.

The Lord follows the same pattern throughout, because He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Moroni 10:19). Therefore, once the work recommenced through Joseph Smith, and there was a “chosen people,” the work will always continue, or if necessary begin anew among the same “chosen people.” Though the gentiles

will fail, as Christ prophesied would eventually occur (3 Ne. 16:10), the work will not be abandoned.

General apostasy, therefore, cannot prevent individual participation in the fullness of God's promises. Though it may be interrupted for three or four generations when there is rebellion (Ex. 20:5), when it resumes it will begin among the same people where it left off.

This is the pattern of the Lord. And mankind's failure does nothing to prevent eventual fulfillment of the Lord's promises (D&C 1:38).

JUNE 21, 2012

Salvation and Signs

There are "signs" that show a person is not apostate. Mormon's teachings to his son recount the signs which show God is saving souls. These teachings are in Chapter 7 of Moroni's book. The whole text is worth careful study.

Moroni records that God will let all mankind know with power and great glory at the last day that "the day of miracles" has never ceased (Moroni 7:35). Nor have angels ceased to appear and teach those who are in need of instruction (Moroni 7:36). Nor has the "power" of the Holy Ghost receded (*Id.*). This is because these things are required for "one man upon the face [of the earth] to be saved" (*Id.*).

When there is faith, there are miracles (Moroni 7:37). When there is faith, then angels minister to the faithful (*Id.*).

If the time comes when there are no more miracles and there are no more angels ministering to mankind, then it is because of "unbelief, and all is lost" (*Id.*).

Moroni explains in simplicity and clarity:

For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith in his name; wherefore, if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also; and awful is the state of man, for they are as though there had been no redemption made. (Moroni 7:38)

The priestly tradition mentioned here can provide the rites, teach the doctrine and preserve the truth, but the underlying reality must be pursued for salvation. Moroni explains how we must push beyond the mere symbol to the reality.

Rites may teach us about conversing with the Lord through the veil. However, when the rite is over it leaves you with only the idea, the outline, the admonition of how the Gospel operates. Then it is up to you to pursue the practice of the rites by your life, your faithfulness, and calling upon God to know Him.

Signs do not produce faith and never have. Signs do, always, and will forever, follow faith (D&C 63:9). Moroni taught sound doctrine.

For each of us, the priestly tradition is never enough. Ancient Israel had their rites, observances, feasts and rituals. They could acquire ceremonial cleanliness by following the rules for purification. But, as the Lord observed, outward cleanliness can belie the inward filth if they failed to connect with God (Matt. 23:25–28). It is always easier to be ritually clean and religiously pure than it is to be approved of God. It is much easier to rise inside an organization than it is to part the veil.

However, for those who seek God, no amount of praise in this world can tempt them to ignore the path of faith where they encounter the Holy Ghost, angels, the Lord, and the Father (John 14:23; D&C 130:3).

JUNE 22, 2012

The Trick to Avoiding Apostasy

We began this week with the topic of apostasy. That is where we will end. It is easy to distract and fool people. It is also easy to keep in mind what is essential and will save, and what is distracting and cannot save. Here are a few thoughts that can prevent apostasy:

Never confuse the symbol for the reality.

Never accept a man as your Lord, but reserve worship for Christ alone. Everything and everyone else is idolatry.

Always bear in mind that Christ alone is the keeper of the gate, and He cannot be misled.

Always participate fully in the rites given to you as a gift from God, performed by the priests, and be worthy before God when you do so.

Take every gift from God in gratitude, and recognize His hand in what you receive.

Be grateful for what you are given, and never think yourself better than another because you think you understand more. You are measured against perfection, not your fellow man.

Forgive if you want to be forgiven.

Leaders deserve your best efforts to support them in the heavy burdens they carry. Uphold, rather than criticize them. Most errors deserve your pity and forgiveness— not your judgment.

It is not criticism to search for truth, even if the truth exposes mistakes and errors of men. Be gracious with failure, and not distracted or preoccupied by it.

Nobody's failure can prevent your success. No other organization or person can bring you along in their success. You are required to connect with God independent of all others. Life eternal is to know Him and His Son.

Love your spouse, because this is your own flesh. There was never a saved man without a woman, nor a saved woman without a man. Adam and Eve are “the image of God” for “in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them.”

It is in the private, unobserved moments when you learn the most about yourself. What you think, what you do, how you act when you think you are alone reveals more about your heart than anything else. If you are distant from God, begin to return in those moments alone.

God does live. Never doubt that. Just accept it and move forward to know Him.

It is a thin veil, not a wall, that separates you from God. Do not let it become insurmountable. It was always meant to be parted.

Fear is the opposite of faith.

Do not let borrowed fears become the barrier to your faith.

Men cannot save you, but they can condemn you. You cannot respect men too much without respecting God too little.

Religion has been the source of most of mankind’s cruelty, rebellion and apostasy. Never think your own religious observances can or will connect you with God. They are only habits until you reach out and speak with God directly. Ministers, priests, Rabbis, Elders, preachers, Fathers, Presidents, Apostles and even prophets are not God. Nor should any of these roles be allowed to distance you from God.

Saving belief requires you to accept the truth. Saving faith requires you to act in conformity with correct belief. Saving knowledge comes from contact with God.

JUNE 25, 2012

Tattoos and Plural Wives

If we convert someone who has a tattoo we do not refuse to baptize them. If a person born in the church leaves and returns again covered with tattoos, we don't refuse them fellowship. Nor do we expect anyone to undergo the painful process of having them burned away using a laser.

When the church finally abandoned the practice of taking plural wives, one of the concessions the church wanted the government to make was to allow all existing plural marriages to become legal. No new ones could be contracted, but the existing ones needed to be tolerated under the law.

Heber J. Grant was the last church president with plural wives. He was church president until his death in May 1945. The church was led by a polygamist well into World War II.

Even though we abandoned the practice publicly in 1890 and privately in 1904, we were led by polygamists at the head until respectively, 55 and 41 years later.

The argument used to persuade the government was that it was absolutely cruel to deprive children born into these plural wife families of both parents. Breaking up families was unkind, unnecessary and would cause more harm than good.

Today there are many people who are in plural marriages who ought to be the target of efforts to reconvert them to the Gospel. We stay away from them because they have relationships we condemn. They are, in a sense, tattooed and we are unwilling to accept them back unless they will undergo the painful ordeal of disengaging from their unapproved relationship. We ask more of them than we were willing to allow the government to ask of us when we abandoned the practice.

If a polygamist family is willing to return, we should welcome them. We should allow them full fellowship, and admit them back to practice faith with us. They should know we condemn the practice and we will preach against it. We will encourage and teach their children to discontinue the practice, but we should accept them back into fellowship.

With Warren Jeffs' latest decree limiting all fathering of children to his fifteen chosen inner circle, I suspect there will be a great number willing to abandon his leadership and who would reconsider fellowship with the church. The conditions we have set for reentry are so cruel, so damaging to these families, that we are essentially saying they can never return.

I would like to see polygamy ended. I would like to see those who practice it reconverted. I do not think we can reasonably expect to break apart their families. We should not break up families as a condition of return.

I've written about Section 132 in my last book. This week I'm going to return to that topic and spend a few days discussing plural marriage. I hope it will be a friendly invitation to those who practice it to reconsider whether they can get closer to God by returning to faith among the Latter-day Saints. I, for one, would be willing to fellowship with them. Though I condemn the practice and believe it should never have continued, I am not unrealistic about any existing obligations.

JUNE 26, 2012

History, Lies, Good Faith and Myths

The topic of Mormonism's past practice/teaching of taking plural wives puts you squarely in the middle of problems in church

history. Deliberate deception and public statements which contradict private behavior is a fact of Mormon history. This fact complicates the difficulty of knowing what is true and right, false and wrong, and whether something is a bona fide required part of “real” Mormonism.

The authenticity of the revelation (Section 132 of the Doctrine & Covenants) is debated. This debate is possible because of these problems with Mormon history.

To understand Mormonism requires a level of tolerance for deceit which some modern Mormons refuse to acknowledge. It is a natural reaction to want to put men on a pedestal. We resist any notion that would reduce them to anything less than completely truthful, honest in their dealings, and trustworthy in every statement they made. Therefore, when you encounter deliberate dis-information campaigns designed to mislead others, it is natural to react with disbelief.

The truth matters more than our reaction to it. Whether we find it troubling or not, the truth is valuable enough to warrant study even if it causes discomfort. The practice of taking plural wives is one of those topics requiring discomfort to wade through it and reach a conclusion.

There are some major themes in the argument advanced by those who claim it is essential to salvation. These include the sometimes inconsistent arguments that:

- It is required for exaltation.
- Those who live it are living a “higher law” and those who do not are living a lower law.
- Those living a “higher law” cannot submit to authority by those who live a lower law.

- President Taylor foresaw the discontinuance of the practice, and he gave “keys” to allow it to continue, outside the church.
- The Manifesto was merely a public relations document and did not reflect a serious abandonment of the practice.
- Plural marriages were performed by the church, including the president of the church after the 1890 Manifesto.
- The church’s final abandonment occurred because of the Smoot Senate Hearings, and the pressure brought through interrogating President Joseph F. Smith.
- The “second manifesto” written in 1904 was the real basis for discontinuing the practice.
- Apostles Cowley and Taylor were forced to resign because of the “second manifesto” and the church never sustained it as binding; therefore it is not binding.
- The “fundamentalists” were allowed to use church Temples, including the Salt Lake Temple, to conduct plural marriages through the administration of David O. McKay.
- Several unpublished revelations, including to John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff, show the Lord’s insistence on continuing the practice.

Those who utterly reject the practice claim the sometimes inconsistent arguments that:

- Joseph Smith’s public declarations are more reliable than a secret revelation.
- Joseph Smith is not responsible for Section 132.
- Brigham Young fabricated the revelation, and pawned it off as an authentic revelation from Joseph Smith, but it was never made public in Joseph’s lifetime.
- The church’s declaration on marriage was sustained by the church membership and precludes multiple wives.

- The Book of Mormon condemns the practice.
- Taking multiple wives is an “abomination” which the Lord condemns.
- The First Presidency and Quorum of the 12 have “keys” and they will never be lost.
- The affidavits from putative plural wives were given long after the fact, and in a time when the practice was being challenged by the RLDS movement.
- Emma Smith denies it was practiced. Joseph “repented” and changed his mind; claiming he had been deceived in practicing plural wives.
- There are no children proven to have been Joseph’s other than those born through Emma Smith.

This is not exhaustive of the positions, but a reasonable starting point. All of the foregoing arguments have some historical basis to support them. People who make these and other arguments are not ignoring history. They are choosing sources; sometimes between what a single source said in one place and in another.

It is not possible to accept what everyone said in every instance and come out with a single version of the events. Hence the problem of history, lies, good faith and myths which cloud this topic.

I’m going to try this week to explain why the practice is, in my view, not a necessary (or advisable) part of Mormonism. Those who care intensely about this topic can find material to both support and oppose the explanation I give.

JUNE 27, 2012

Did Joseph Receive A Revelation?

Section 132 of the Doctrine & Covenants is not universally accepted as a revelation received by Joseph Smith. When the discussion

cannot proceed beyond whether this originated from Joseph Smith, by revelation, the discussion goes nowhere. Therefore, the first step must be to resolve whether the revelation came through Joseph Smith, or was a later fabrication of Brigham Young and his inner circle of polygamists.

The following information persuades me Section 132 came through Joseph Smith and was reduced to writing on July 12, 1843:

The Nauvoo Diaries of William Clayton were written chronologically and have the following entries (exactly as in original):

July 11, 1843: At noon rode out to farm with Margt. P.M. J & family rode out in the carriage. July 12, 1843: This A.M. I wrote a Revelation consisting of 10 pages on the order of the priesthood, showing the designs in Moses, Abraham, David and Solomon having many wives & concubines. After it was wrote Prests. Joseph and Hyrum presented it and read it to E. who said she did not believe a word of it and appeared very rebellious. J told me to Deed all the unincumbered lots to E & the children. He appears much troubled about E.

July 13, 1843: This A.M. J sent for me & when I arrived he called me up into his private room with E. and there stated an agreement they had mutually entered into. they both stated their feelings on many subjects & wept considerable. O may the Lord soften her heart that she may be willing to keep and abide his Holy Law.

July 15, 1843: Made Deed for 1/2 S. B. Iowa from J. to Emma. Also a Deed to E. for over 60 city lots.

July 16, 1843: A.M. at home writing bro. Kimballs lecture. P.M. went to the Grove and heard Pres. J. preach on the law of the

priesthood. He stated that Hyrum held the office of prophet to the church by birthright & he was going to have a reformation and the saints must regard Hyrum for he has authority. He showed that a man must enter into an everlasting covenant with his wife in this world or he will have no claim on her in the next. He said that he could not reveal the fulness of these things untill the Temple is completed &c.

July 17, 1843: A.M. at the Temple & at Prest. J's. conversed with J. & Hyrum on the priesthood.

In addition to the foregoing, I checked surrounding public events, and the diary is consistent with other records of those days. For example, the event on July 16th is recorded as having taken place "At Stand in Grove, West of Temple" and appears in a letter of Willard Richards to Brigham Young, the Joseph Smith diary kept by Willard Richards, the Levi Richards Diary and the Willard Richards Diary. The afternoon of the 16th also records a public meeting on the "Temple Stand" in the Franklin Richards, William Clayton, and Levi Richards diaries and in the Letter of Willard Richards to Brigham Young, as well as in the Joseph Smith diary kept by Willard Richards.

Disputes after Joseph's death also confirm a disagreement between Emma and the church over ownership in the Steamboat the Maid of Iowa.

These entries seem credible, and therefore I believe they show Section 132 was recorded on July 12, 1843 and originated from Joseph Smith. In addition, the August 12, 1843 meeting of the Nauvoo High Council records there was "teaching by Hyrum Smith" which four witnesses later confirmed included reading Section 132. These witnesses were Austin Cowles (who rejected the doctrine and left the

church), David Fulmer, Thomas Grover, James Allred and Aaron Johnson. Hosea Stout was absent when Hyrum read the document, but was later told about the revelation. When Section 132 became public, Hosea Stout confirmed it “corresponded to what” he was told about the reading in August 1843.

It is possible to believe it a fabrication of Brigham Young. It was not made public until the 1850’s, and the public disclosure was on Brigham Young’s watch. But the document came into existence while Joseph was church president, and came through him. As much as a person may wish the document did not originate with Joseph Smith, the evidence appears to be more than adequate to show it did. It came from Joseph and was reduced to written form in July 1843.

JUNE 28, 2012

Jacob and Section 132

Through Joseph Smith we have two scriptural sources dealing with plural wives. Jacob 2, in the Book of Mormon condemns the practice as “an abomination,” but leaves it open to be practiced if the Lord commands. The reason the Lord would command is to “raise up seed unto [Him].”

Section 132, beginning at verse 29, discusses why earlier prophets took more than one wife. It “permits” taking more than one wife under two conditions. But Section 132 should be read in light of what Jacob taught regarding the limitations and purpose of having more than one wife.

Before carefully examining the scriptures, a bit of history is necessary. Joseph first learned about the subject during the translation of Jacob sometime in 1829. Oliver was with him when

the answer was first received. Therefore, at least two people knew about the subject as early as 1829.

As the earlier post on William Clayton's Journal shows, Joseph did not put the revelation into writing until July 1843. Between 1829 and 1843, any explanation by Joseph (or Oliver) would have been verbal, private, and not necessarily understood properly, recorded correctly, or practiced openly. In other words, whatever happened between 1829 and 1843 is bound to be extremely difficult to accurately recreate. Those involved were trying to cover it up, and make it difficult and hopefully impossible to know it took place. They did not want it public.

Moreover, not everyone who was taken into confidence by Joseph was trustworthy, or honorable. Some men were predisposed to exploitation of vulnerable women. John C. Bennett, for example, was a sexual predator before coming to Nauvoo. When he became the Mayor and a member of the First Presidency, he learned about these unrecorded teachings and began to behave in a contemptible manner.

John Bennett would later publish salacious details of sexual misconduct in Nauvoo, attributing to Joseph some of his (Bennett's) own conduct. Some of what Bennett wrote was true (i.e., private taking of multiple wives) and some of it was sensational, untrue, and was a reflection of his own behavior projected onto others, most notably Joseph Smith.

The Bennett expose of Nauvoo underground sexual practices acquired increased credibility years later when Brigham Young began to openly practice and advocate taking plural wives. Some people who had not believed Bennett at first, changed their minds and took him as a credible source once the public revelation of plural marriage became international news.

Section 132 was not revealed publicly in 1843. When it was finally made public, it also seemed to vindicate Bennett's accusations about Nauvoo private behavior. The revelation was attributed (I think correctly) to Joseph Smith, and therefore it established a religious basis for the Bennett accusations stemming directly from Joseph.

In addition to Bennett, others also knew of the private taking of additional wives. The most vocal parties with inside information were critics of Joseph Smith who left the church. These disaffected former Mormons had little reason to tell an accurate story. They were trying to discredit the church, not to defend it. Even if they attempted to be "fair" in retelling what they knew, their accounts are colored by:

- Disaffection for Joseph Smith.
- Hostility to the religion.
- Questions about whether or not they fully understood the matter.
- Issues about how "hidden" and "secret" practices were explained.
- Their attempts to make themselves appear more moral than their private conduct actually reflected.

All of this strongly suggests to me that the words of Jacob and Section 132 need to be carefully studied, and the history of how the practice was conducted by the few who knew what was happening must be taken with some careful skepticism about its accuracy.

When characters like John Bennett and William Law were involved in seducing women and claiming there was a secret teaching allowing "spiritual wives" because Joseph Smith had actually discussed the principle with them, it becomes apparent that whatever Section 132 permits or does not permit, the principle can be abused. It was abused by these men, and other insiders. Joseph's

public statements condemning adultery, and denouncing polygamy can be reconciled with Section 132. But to reconcile it all requires some knowledge about these events. It also requires recognition that the neat, tidy history that ignores these rather messy interpersonal conflicts and betrayals of trust is inadequate.

Plural wives is as unpleasant a topic as you encounter in our religion. However, its unpleasantness does not detract from the importance of sorting it out. Given the various conflicting charges and countercharges, it is a relief to just accept a superficial account and hope it is true. That applies to BOTH sides. BOTH those who reject the practice, as well as those who welcome it, need to be willing to sort through it and reach the correct conclusion.

Just because the fundamentalists have recognized more of the truth about the history does not mean they have sorted it out aright, nor that they are living a “higher” law. It may mean they are just as wrong about their conclusions as they think the church is for abandoning the practice.

I’ve taken the topic seriously. I’ve accorded the advocates’ arguments respect. I think they are wrong. As I continue this discussion I’m hoping some of them may be persuaded there is still some of the story they haven’t yet sorted out correctly.

JUNE 28, 2012

Cursing and Abominations

Before proceeding further, it is important to recognize that this is not an inconsequential matter. If someone guesses they can have plural wives and they are wrong, they have gone too far. They are taking a dangerous step. They risk eternity. Therefore this topic should not be approached casually, or because someone “thinks”

this is proper. Either they know because God has instructed them by commandment, exclusively for the limited reasons it is allowed to be practiced, or they are involved in a serious, grievous sin.

In Section 132, words like “he hath broken his vow and hath committed adultery” are included for those who proceed absent the Lord’s command (D&C 132:43). Those who go too far can “fall from his exaltation” when these things are done in violation of God’s will (D&C 132:39).

In Jacob, the improper taking of an additional wife is called “whoredoms and an abomination” by the Lord (Jacob 2:28).

Those who proceed in our dispensation in the absence of the Lord’s direct command to them are included among those the Lord described as gentiles filled with “whoredoms, and of secret abominations” (3 Ne. 16:10). If you are engaged in the practice, and recognize it is an abomination, and you will “repent and return unto [God’s ways], saith the Father, behold they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel” (3 Ne. 16:13).

None but fools will trifle with this topic.

Read Section 132 and see if the Lord commands you to either take or be a multiple wife. Don’t impose it in the language. Don’t force it into the revelation. Instead, read it as if the practice is forbidden, an abomination, adultery, or whoredom. Where do you see it demands you to take or be a multiple wife?

Verses 2 through 28 explain celestial marriage without mentioning anything other than a single wife. This explanation of having a single wife sealed to the man is the law which “must be obeyed” or exaltation is impossible. And “if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory” (D&C 132:3-4). The law,

however, is for a man and woman to be sealed together for eternity and to have that sealing ratified by “the Holy Spirit of Promise.”

But it is a man (singular) and a woman (singular). For example: “a man” and “a woman” and “he” and “she” and “him” and “her” (132:15) “a man” and “a wife” (132:18) “a man” and “a wife” (132:19) “a man” and “a wife” and “he” and “she” (132:26)

These verses, from 2 through 28, speak in the singular throughout. One man. One woman. And these verses are the ones that speak of exaltation, thrones, dominions, kingdoms, principalities, all heights and depths (132:19). In fact, the very verse where these things are mentioned is in connection with “a man marry a wife by” the Lord’s word (*Id.*).

Celestial marriage and the celestial law of inheriting exaltation is set out in the very revelation that mentions for the first time the eternal marriage covenant. This occurs ONLY in those verses which are describing marriage between “a man” and “a woman” and not elsewhere.

The focus of these verses is not on multiple wives. Rather the focus is on the preservation of marriage into eternity by God and by His word (132:12) which is “sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise” (132:7).

Therefore, the question is not whether you have multiple wives. The right questions are:

- Are you sealed by God?
- Are you sealed by God’s word?
- Are you sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise?

If you do not obtain this promise sealed to you by God, through His word, sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, then it does not matter.

[I]f a man marry a wife, and make a covenant with her for time and for all eternity, if that covenant is not by me or by my word, which is my law, and is not sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, through him whom I have anointed and appointed unto this power, then it is not valid neither of force when they are out of the world, because they are not joined by me, saith the Lord, neither by my word. (132:18)

Your individual hopes, wishes, aspirations and ambitions are nothing. The only thing which will endure is that which is established by God. Or, more completely, by God, through His word, which is then sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise.

All of this discussion takes place in verses 2 through 28 of the revelation. None of it forces you to read it as referring to multiple wives. You cannot find the multiple wives information anywhere in these verses. If you think it is there, it is because you have put it there by your own interpretation. Multiple wives is NOT included.

The explanation for multiple wives begins after the explanation of what is required for exaltation. These verses permit two exceptions to the prior, mandatory requirement that marriage is limited to a man and a woman who are sealed by God, through His word, by the Holy Spirit of Promise. These two exceptions will be considered next.

To reaffirm the point of this post: If you guess wrong by taking multiple wives, your mistake is called “whoredoms” and “an abomination” and will condemn you. Unless you repent and return to God, you forfeit your exaltation.

JUNE 29, 2012

Discussion Continues

This current topic will continue with two more posts. I don't normally post on weekends of late, but there will be more on this through Sunday, so I can finish the material.

Donald: I do not think you are guilty of adultery.

JUNE 30, 2012

Plural Wives

Section 132 speaks to two issues: As to entering into an eternal marriage covenant between a man and a woman in this life, before death, and having that occur by God's will and word, sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, the revelation is clear: It is mandatory. As to taking multiple wives, the revelation states conditions, making it clearly NOT mandatory.

The problem with this whole sideshow is that the argument we have going on between devout people over the necessity for plural wives distracts from the real issue. Instead of seeking to have God, by His word, establish a union that will endure into eternity by sealing it through the Holy Spirit of Promise, the debate is over the non-mandatory issue of taking multiple wives.

This sideshow is, of course, a tool of the adversary designed to move focus away from what is required for exaltation onto an issue that will never save a man or woman. Stop being deceived. Stop being distracted. Stop being preoccupied by the second issue, and recognize you will fail in your desire to preserve yourself and your marriage if you neglect to fully comply with the first.

That having been said, the revelation is rather clear about the conditions for taking plural wives. The first requirement is that the

Lord must command it in order to raise up seed. This requirement is not found in Section 132, but is in Jacob 2:30. This is where the underlying reason is stated for the Lord to give the command. Before you presume you understand this underlying doctrine, I would like to pose a few questions to consider:

- If the foundation for giving the command is found in the Lord wanting to “raise up seed unto Himself” then what is to “raise up seed unto the Lord”?
- Are you certain this is childbearing alone?
- Does having children ever “raise up seed unto the Lord?”
- Was Joseph Smith commanded?
- Did Joseph Smith “raise up seed to the Lord?”
- Why did Joseph Smith only father children with Emma Smith?
- Does the commandment to Joseph mean something other than breeding children with multiple women?
- Can a man “raise up seed unto the Lord” as Joseph Smith did, never fathering a child with any other woman than his wife, Emma?
- Who are the “seed” which Joseph “raised up unto the Lord?”
- How were they made Joseph’s seed?

Section 132 gives two conditions for taking plural wives:

- If the Lord commands (As in 132:35 where Abraham was commanded).
- If a man having the correct authority asks and obtains permission (As in 132:39 where David asked and the Lord, through Nathan, gave him these wives).
- If additional wives are taken without the Lord wanting to “raise up seed unto Himself” thereby opening the way, and one of the two foregoing conditions being met, then taking additional wives is an abomination (As in 132:38).

Further, in order to take an additional wife, someone (either the recipient or an officiator) must have the necessary keys to seal the marriage. This is complicated by the fact that there is never but “one man at a time” who holds this authority (132:7). So if Warren Jeffs has these keys, Thomas Monson cannot. But if Owen Allred has the keys, then neither Warren Jeffs nor Thomas Monson can have them. And, of course, if Alex Joseph has them, then that deprives Allred, Jeffs and Thomas Monson.

The problem is, that if you are wrong in guessing which of the groups actually have the keys (because there’s only one, mind you), then you are guilty of an abominable practice and you are condemned. You not only will fail to preserve your marriage, you forfeit your exaltation and condemn yourself.

Though I do not often make disclosures of this sort, one of the reasons I am writing this series is because I have asked, and the Lord has told me Warren Jeffs does not hold these keys. Those who follow him thinking he is leading to a better condition in the afterlife have been deceived. I would advise them to abandon that group and repent. Has not his recent behavior taught you he is in error? Has not his last declaration about who can father children made plain the man does not speak for God? Have you not eaten husks long enough? Is it not yet time to return and repent?

Now, if you are of the view that you need to live polygamy, then you need to take every precaution to first know:

- The Lord has, in fact, commanded you; or
- You are in possession of the correct authority and you have asked God and been given His permission; and
- You are capable of “raising up seed unto the Lord” (which means that in the resurrection, you have the ability to take them with you in the ascent through the heavens, passing the

sentinels who stand guard along the way, leading your company by the knowledge you have to endure that fiery ascent back to the Throne of God.)

If there is any part of that you do not understand, then you are utterly incapable of satisfying the conditions and you should run from this idea because you are not capable of living the conditions. If you understand and think you have authority to go forward, then I would further caution you that this is not something men take on themselves, but something which God or His ministering angels alone supervise. Do not trust some sentimental feeling, or “burning in the loins.” These are serious matters, not to be trifled with by the foolish and aspiring—and NEVER an invitation to the carnal.

JUNE 30, 2012

Answer: Reading Scripture

I received a question this morning about the first two verses of Section 132. The questioner presumes the first two verses frame everything that follows. According to his manner of reading the first two verses the language dealing with eternal marriage requires plural wives.

Here's my response:

God gives “liberally” (James 1:5). This means something. The word “liberally” is illustrated frequently in scripture. For example, Joseph Smith inquired which church to join (*JS-H* 1:18). The answer to the specific question was to “join none of them” (*Id.*, v. 19). But the answer was not limited to the question posed. It also explained that:

- Their creeds were an abomination.
- The professors were corrupt.

- The practitioners draw near with their lips, but
- Their hearts were far from God.
- They possess only a form of godliness.
- Their form of faith is powerless.
- Their doctrines are merely commandments from men (*Id.*).

Then the Lord added “many other things did he say unto [Joseph], which [he] could not write at this time” (*JS-H 1:20*).

This information, beyond which church to join is the Lord giving liberally.

When Joseph sought to know what his standing was before God four years later, he prayed to have his sins forgiven (*JS-H 1:29*). In response to this inquiry, the angel Moroni appeared and gave him information about coming judgments, the future revelations to be poured out as promised in Joel, the restoration of priesthood, and a book buried nearby giving a history of the ancient inhabitants of the American continent (*JS-H 1:33–43*). The answer was far beyond the scope of the inquiry. This was God giving “liberally.”

When the Brother of Jared tried to solve the problem of interior lighting in eight barges, the Lord’s answer had very little to do with the lighting problem (*Ether 3:1*). The Lord’s answer redeemed this prophet from the fall (*Ether 3:13*), included ministering to him as the Lord administered to the Nephites at a later time (*Ether 3:17–18*), and the Lord “ministered to him,” which would have included a great deal more than solving lighting issues (*Ether 3:20*). This is what “liberally” means.

The question asked by Joseph concerned plural wives and created the circumstance where the Lord could then “give liberally” to Joseph. The question is posed in verses 1–2. The Lord gives liberally, and explains the eternal marriage covenant (not responsive

to the question asked). Then he also answers the question, beginning at about verse 34 and going through verse 44. Moreover Joseph receives his calling and election, and is given the sealing authority in verses 45 through 50. This, once again, has nothing to do with the question in verses 1 and 2. This is the Lord “giving liberally.”

Revelations from the Lord go well beyond the question asked. Oftentimes the issue which brings a prophet before God has nothing to do with the reason we later learn of the Lord’s answer. The highly local question (which church to join, how to light a barge, where to hunt food, why some ancients had plural wives, what repentance is required, etc.) is largely irrelevant to us. The “liberally” given material addresses matters of universal concern:

- Apostasy and restoration.
- Priesthood restoration to Joseph.
- The fullness of God’s revelations to mankind, including from the beginning to the end.
- Calling and election.
- Sealing authority.
- Visions of eternity.
- etc., etc.

It is the “liberally given” material which shows what the Lord really intends to bestow on mankind.

Therefore, although the question is posed in verses 1 and 2, the answer goes well beyond, giving liberally, and reveals for the first time the eternity of marriage. You can have plural wives without having an eternal marriage. That is what happens today in the various powerless cults. But the conditions for having an eternal marriage, bound by someone who has been into the Lord’s presence and received from Him that authority (as Joseph did), is another matter.

Therefore I do not think verses 1 or 2 frame what follows any more than I think the ministry of Jesus to the Brother of Jared is confined exclusively to lighting interior of barges; or any more than Moroni's visit was confined exclusively to whether Joseph had good standing before the Lord.

JULY 2012

JULY 1, 2012

The Lord Delights in Chastity

Jacob's sermon which touches on and condemns taking multiple wives includes this statement quoted from the Lord: "For I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women" (Jacob 2:28). In the same breath, and in connection with the topic of multiple wives, the Lord adds: "And whoredoms are an abomination before me" (*Id.*).

All those who think they are living a "higher law" by taking multiple wives should be extremely careful about their actions, in light of the Lord's overall caution about this subject. David fell from his exaltation as a consequence of offending this law, because it led to betraying Uriah, lying to protect against his immoral behavior, and ultimately taking life (D&C 132:39).

How often has violence been the product of polygamous groups? How many murders have happened while wicked and ambitious men struggle for control over followers who take multiple wives?

Joseph Smith, the recipient of the revelation which has led to these various claims by different pretenders also had something to say about chastity and adultery. The very same man through whom the revelation came also instructed the Relief Society with this advice:

Spoke of the organization of the Female Relief Society; said he was deeply interested, that it might be built up to the Most High in an acceptable manner; that its rules must be observed; that none should be received into it but those who were worthy; proposed a close examination of every candidate; that the society was growing too fast. It should grow up by degrees, should commence with a few individuals, thus have a select society of the virtuous, and those who would walk circumspectly; commended them for their zeal, but said sometimes their zeal was not according to knowledge. One principle object of the institution was to purge out iniquity; said they must be extremely careful in all their examinations, or the consequences would be serious. . . . [T]he Saints should be a select people, separate from all the evils of the world—choice, virtuous and holy. (*TPJS*, p. 201–202, March 30, 1842)

Joseph also said: “If a man commit adultery, he cannot receive the celestial kingdom of God. Even if he is saved in any kingdom, it cannot be the celestial kingdom.”

Inasmuch as the public mind has been unjustly abused through the fallacy of Dr. Bennett’s letters, we make an extract on the subject of marriage, showing the rule of the church on this important matter. The extract is from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and is the only rule allowed by the Church. “Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy; we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again. (*Times & Seasons* 3:909, Sept. 1, 1842)

Whatever you may think you know about Joseph's intentions and practice involving plural wives, his public statements cannot be reconciled with promiscuity or exploitation of women for the gratification or vanity of men.

This may seem a contradiction. As if Joseph were talking out of both sides of his mouth. It is not. The careful manner in which the Lord controlled and permitted taking additional wives to "raise up seed unto Himself" was covenantal, sacral, and did not involve indiscriminate breeding of multiple women. Other than his own, Joseph only sealed one plural wife to one man. For Joseph, the multiple wives were governmental, sealed to him to construct the family of God on earth. Tying together lines of what was to be a single family, with himself as the patriarchal father of a new branch of the Family of Israel. It was not, as the quote above demonstrates, a matter of lust and physical gratification.

Joseph's practices were carefully guarded, hidden from public view, and so discrete that still today there are those who think he never had plural wives. If this were something for public display and advocacy, then Joseph would have done so. He did not. To the contrary, he also delighted in the chastity of women and condemned adultery and fornication.

In contrast to Joseph's remarks, Brigham Young made a remark at the return of Thomas Marsh to the church in 1857. This is a reflection of President Young's attitude toward women. I end this series with Brigham Young's words. They were spoken immediately after Thomas Marsh addressed the Saints, pleading to be welcomed back after his apostasy. Brigham Young introduced him, and while Brother Marsh spoke he (Marsh) mentioned that he was "an old man" now. Following his remarks, Brigham Young added the following:

He has told you that he is an old man. Do you think that I am an old man? I could prove to this congregation that I am young; for I could find more girls who would choose me for a husband that can any of the young men. (*The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, Vol. 3, p. 1329, September 6, 1857)

Brigham Young added that the difference between his age and Brother Marsh's age was "one year and seven months to the day" (*Id.*).

Somewhere between Joseph's Nauvoo and Brigham Young's Salt Lake City, the idea of multiple wives transitioned from a carefully guarded, privately practiced, severely limited relationship requiring God's approval, word and the Holy Spirit of Promise, into a broadly advocated, openly practiced, publicly defended, and church authorized form of marriage which was said to be required for exaltation. In Brigham Young's form of the church a man could not be saved if he didn't fetch multiple wives: "Now if any of you will deny the plurality of wives, and continue to do so, I promise you that you will be damned" (*JD*, Vol. 3, p. 266). "The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy" (*JD*, Vol. 11, p. 269).

It is my view that the question of taking plural wives arises with Joseph Smith, and was through a revelation to him when he inquired about the topic. He treated it as a limited, carefully curtailed, private matter. His implementation of the practice was limited to sealing his own plural wives, and one other man to two wives.

With Brigham Young, however, taking more women became not only public, but it also became a topic used to prove his own virility. A comparison between Joseph's and Brigham Young's advocacy is stark, at least to me.

The subject could be discussed endlessly. I would discourage anyone from thinking this is something to advocate or practice. Even if you believe you are a well-read polygamist, you still don't have enough information. If you think you have enough understanding to know what the topic includes, then instead of acting like Brigham Young and "finding more girls who would choose you for a husband" focus instead on qualifying to preserve one marriage.

Any man whose wife is unhappy, who is exploited and treated like his property, whose behavior fails to mirror Christ's in the heart of the women who know him best, has not yet qualified for his marriage to be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise. That work should not be left undone, and certainly must precede any complication of life by introducing more women into a relationship. Stop this foolishness. Save yourself by approaching this with the caution required to avoid vanity, self-destruction, practicing an abomination, and reducing a relationship to whoredoms. You should never trifle with the souls of others.

JULY 2, 2012

Luke 1:8-9

Luke 1:8-9 refers to Zacharias (father of John the Baptist) officiating in the priest's office.

And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

Those who were outside knew how long it would take to burn incense and offer the morning prayer, therefore when too much time had passed they were troubled by the delay (Luke 1:21).

The prayer he offered was set, given each day as part of offering incense in the Holy Place, and is as follows:

True it is that Thou art Jehovah our God, and the God of our fathers; our King of our fathers, our Saviour and the Saviour of our fathers; our Maker and the Rock of our salvation; our Help and our Deliverer. Thy name is from everlasting and there is no God beside Thee. A new song did they that were delivered sing to Thy name by the seashore; together did all praise and own Thee as King, and say, Jehovah shall reign who saveth Israel.

Be graciously pleased, Jehovah our God, with Thy people Israel, and with their prayer. Restore the service to the oracle of Thy house; and the burnt-offerings of Israel and their prayer accept graciously and in love; and let the service of Thy people Israel be ever well-pleasing unto Thee.

We praise Thee, who art Jehovah our God, and the God of our fathers, the God of all flesh, our Creator, and the Creator from the beginning! Blessing and praise be unto Thy great and holy name, that Thou hast preserved us in life and kept us. So preserve us and keep us, and gather the scattered ones into Thy holy courts, to keep Thy statutes, and to do Thy good pleasure, and to serve Thee with our whole heart, as this day we confess unto Thee. Blessed be the Lord, unto who belongeth praise.

Appoint peace, goodness, and blessing; grace, mercy and compassion for us, and for all Israel Thy people. Bless us, O our Father, all of us as one, with the light of Thy countenance. For in the light of Thy countenance has Thou, Jehovah, our God,

given us the law of life, and loving mercy, and righteousness, and blessing, and compassion, and life, and peace. And may it please Thee to bless Thy people Israel at times, and at every hour with Thy peace. Blessed be Thou, Jehovah, who blesses Thy people Israel with peace. (Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*, pp. 128–29).

When the angel appeared and said, “Fear not, Zacharias; for thy prayer is heard” (Luke 1:13), the prayer asked for “the light of [God’s] countenance” to shine again upon Israel. The promised son (to be named “John” — Luke 1:13) was to “go before him in the spirit and power of Elias” (Luke 1:17). The One before whom John was to go was “the light of [God’s] countenance” or, in other words, Jehovah. John was to be Elias to precede and prepare the way for Jehovah.

Following his birth, John was

ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old unto this power, to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews, and to make straight the way of the Lord before the face of his people, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord, in whose hand is given all power. (D&C 84:28)

He prepared the way, was imprisoned and beheaded. Then he appeared with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration (JST-Mark 9:4; Matt. 17:2–3, 13). Moses opened, and John closed, the prior dispensation and met with Christ as the founder of the new dispensation.

John was as great a prophet as ever lived. The Lord said he was “more than a prophet” (Luke 7:24–28). Foretold in prophecy, born to bring “the light of God’s countenance” back to Israel, fulfilling an angel’s promise, named by heaven, ordained at eight days, sent

to close one and open another dispensation, slain for his testimony, and then called to minister as an angel to the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration, John was “more than a prophet.”

CHAPTER 9

Received of His Fullness

JULY 3, 2012

Received of His Fullness

When the heavens opened to Joseph and Sidney Rigdon jointly in 1832, they saw and heard many things. Among the many things shown them was the Father sitting on His Throne and the Son beside Him (D&C 76:23). The Vision included not just the final state of mankind in the various kingdoms of glory, but also included an explanation of the rebellion by an angel in a position of authority before God (D&C 76:25). They saw the heavens weep over this rebellious angel (D&C 76:26). They saw the terrible, inexpressible end to him, and all who follow him (D&C 76:44–48).

They saw the final state of mankind. They also beheld many things they were not permitted to write (D&C 76:114–115). Their knowledge exceeded what is lawful for man to know. Because of this knowledge, they were not like the others of their generation.

They entered into the Throne Room of the Father, and beheld Him in His glory. Because of this, both Joseph and Sidney “received of his fulness” (D&C 76:20). This is how the fullness is received. It can be symbolized, ritualized, or conferred by an ordinance,

but the fullness itself involves God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, personally. Therefore, when we speak of “fullness” through symbol, ordinance and ritual, we are speaking of the type. When we speak of the “fullness” itself, we are speaking of the real thing. There is a custom to accept the rites and symbols in place of the real thing. This is so much so that, today, some doubt the need for the real thing.

The “fullness of the Father” includes the “fullness of the priesthood.” It also includes more. Joseph and Sidney joined the holy angels who stood before God (D&C 76:21). Therefore, they would be among those who “came to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn” (D&C 76:67).

By 1841 the fullness of the priesthood had been forfeited by the church (D&C 124:28). Christ offered, on condition of the completion of the Nauvoo Temple, to come and restore that fullness again to the church. That required Him to come (D&C 124:28). If He came, then men would be redeemed from the fall and return to God’s presence (Ether 3:13).

To have Zion, God must come and dwell with His people (Moses 7:69). To have Zion is to have people who:

- are of one heart, and
- are of one mind, and
- dwell in righteousness, and
- have no poor among them (Moses 7:18).

There are many things which occupy the attention of Latter-day Saints. This short list, however, would seem to be the most important place to begin, assuming we were interested in having Zion return. We are not currently unified and for the most part are fragmenting. This is the inverse of what brings Zion.

JULY 5, 2012

Received of His Fullness, Part 2

It will only be when the gentiles begin to have faith like the Brother of Jared that the Lord will make the fullness known again (Ether 4:6–7). It was the plan to withhold the fullness from the gentiles, and not confer it upon them. The Lord told Moroni “they shall not go forth unto the Gentiles until the day that they shall repent of their iniquity, and become clean before the Lord” (*Id.*).

Joseph and Sidney “received of His fullness” in the vision (D&C 76:20). The Lord once offered it again. Joseph may or may not impress you as a valiant soul (he certainly does me), but almost no one looks at Sidney Rigdon and sees a great, valiant soul. There has been nearly two hundred years of disparaging of Sidney by those who voted to follow Brigham Young and the Twelve and their descendants. It would be well to remember that Sidney “received of His fullness” and Brigham Young died hoping the Lord would visit him if he lived to be 85 years old.

If Sidney, despite all you have heard and read concerning him, and despite his subsequent disaffection from the church, “received of His fullness” then you should recognize this is NOT so great a thing as to be impossible for you. Take heart.

What is it that the Vision tells us about the exalted hosts?

They are the “church of the Firstborn” (D&C 76:54). Meaning they are all sons and daughters of God.

The Father has given “into their hands” what is called “all things” (D&C 76:55). That is, they have handled something.

They have “received of His fullness and of His glory” (D&C 76:56). Both Joseph and Sidney recite this as having taken place (D&C 76:19–20).

Though it would not be until sometime in 1843 before Joseph began to unfurl in private the process of becoming a “king and priest” unto God, Sidney and Joseph were acquainted with this in the Vision in 1832 (D&C 76:56–57). This is the only way such kings and priests can be made; although you can have a ceremony which symbolizes it. Joseph and Sidney’s accomplishment was an invitation for others to follow. It was not intended to be the end of the restoration process, but a harbinger of what would follow.

If Joseph and Sidney were the only ones who were to “receive of His fullness” then the prophecies promising a return of Zion could never be fulfilled.

Why are we allowing the restoration to end? Why are we not looking to see a return of Zion?

Why are we content to trust others will bring it, when each of us has a responsibility to individually prepare to see it return? What good does it do to study the revelations if we are unwilling to do the works required by the revelations?

Is theoretical knowledge and symbolic ritual enough?

Will Zion only return as a distant symbol in this dispensation? Will the Lord only symbolically return? Will the world only symbolically end?

Will the wicked only be symbolically destroyed?

What is it that you find so compelling about your current plight that you won’t awake, arise and look into the matter of the fullness as set out in scripture? To receive it you only need to “love him, and purify yourself before him” and He will “grant this privilege of seeing and knowing for yourself” (D&C 76:116–117). But this must be “while in the flesh” and not after you leave here (D&C 76:118). This is the only way you can then be able to “bear his presence in the world of glory” (*Id.*).

JULY 6, 2012

Received of His Fullness, Part 3

The often quoted verses in Section 84 have an objective event that is consistently ignored. It is not merely “the ordinances” of the priesthood which are of value. The “power of godliness” (D&C 84:20) is inseparably connected with these ordinances (D&C 121:36). Without the “power of godliness” our rites are much like the apostate world Christ condemned in His initial visit with Joseph (*JS-H* 1:19).

D&C 84:20–22 tells us about:

- Power of Godliness
- Authority of the Priesthood
- Seeing the face of God the Father

These verses do not vindicate ordinances as an end in themselves. Far from it. Instead, they commend us to reach upward. If the ordinances alone were enough, there would be no mention of “power of godliness” and “authority of the priesthood” and “seeing the face of God, even the Father.” Therefore, how ought you to view the ordinances? If they have value, what value do they have? Why do we want or need them? What should they inspire within us?

Where and how did Joseph and Sidney “receive of His fullness?” (D&C 76:20).

Why, in speaking of “the power of godliness” and “the authority of the priesthood,” does it then connect with “seeing the face of God, even the Father?” (D&C 84:22).

Why, in the “oath and covenant of the priesthood” (as we have taken to identifying it), does it mention “receiving Christ?” (D&C 84:36). Is this to be taken as descriptive of receiving the priesthood, or as merely some future vague promise for the afterlife? If you

read it as the afterlife, where do you find support for that reading in the revelation? Is that reading consistent with mortals having priesthood? If the priesthood is gained in mortality, why then is “receiving Christ” only post-mortality? Or, does the priesthood then become post-mortal as well?

Why does the Lord say if we “receive Him” we will also “receive His Father?” (D&C 84:37–38). How is coming into Christ’s presence related to coming into the Father’s presence? Are these connected? How? And how does this connect with “priesthood” since that is the topic of the revelation? Is the priesthood proprietary, meaning that it belongs like a franchise to some group, institution or individuals? Or is the priesthood instead best viewed as a relationship between God and man? If a relationship between God and man, then is it based on trust? Personal trust between God and the specific man? If that is the case, what is required to receive priesthood?

Who are His “servants” He requires you to “receive?” (D&C 84:36). How would such a servant aid you in coming to God and receiving priesthood? What is the relationship between receiving a servant, then receiving Christ, then receiving the Father? How is Joseph Smith an example of this?

Does the statement given in 1835 in D&C 107:1 describe the condition of the church at that time? Or, does it describe a continuing presence of priesthood forever thereafter? Can priesthood be lost? (D&C 121:37).

Do you have His fullness? Why not? How do the scriptures say you receive it?

Is this what Nephi said he did in his record? Why does he walk us through his own experience? Is he bragging, or is he instructing and inviting us to do likewise?

Are ordinances enough? Do they testify to an underlying truth? Why receive the testimony of the ordinances and ignore the underlying truth?

No matter what we have received, retained or discarded from Joseph Smith, doesn't his entire ministry come down to affirming James 1:5? Can you ask of God also? Will He not "give liberally" to you? Then it is not lack of faith in Joseph's ministry or your personal lack of keys held by those in higher priesthood offices that keeps you apart from God. Instead it is your unwillingness to do as James instructs, and your failure to ask God in faith.

Moroni told Joseph that Joel had not yet been fulfilled, but would be soon. He linked this to the "fulness of the Gentiles" which signals their end (*JS-H* 1:41; see also Joel 2:28–32). Is that time upon us?

Is the reason so few are "chosen" even though many are "called" related to this very subject? (D&C 121:34). Would you be better off trying to please God rather than getting noticed by other men?

Does it occur to you that this process in these revelations is the fullness of the Gospel in action? That the fullness of the Father, as well as the fullness of the priesthood, are part of the relationship which you are required to develop with God? Directly between you and Him, and not between you and someone else? If this is so, then what light is shed when the open vision given to Joseph and Sidney where the past rebellion of an angel in a position of authority is revealed, and the future final destiny of man is shown to them? Why is a man saved no faster than he gains knowledge? (*TPJS*, p. 217).

Why did Joseph comment on the vision (in Section 76) by stating: "I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were

I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them” (*TPJS*, p. 304).

JULY 7, 2012

Faithfulness to the Church

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was established by the Lord through Joseph Smith to deliver more information/revelation to mankind. The institution was authorized, or commissioned, to perform a variety of ordinances.

It was this church that baptized me. I’ve never belonged to another church. It was this church that delivered the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine & Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price to me. It offered the temple rites, and other blessings which I received willingly.

For all of those who are similarly situated, it seems to me that we all have an obligation to remain faithful to the church. Jesus was faithful, even observing the rites of the Passover in Jerusalem with His disciples on the week of His atoning sacrifice. He admonished His followers to respect those who “sat in Moses’ seat” even though they would ultimately crucify Him.

I believe covenants should be honored. We do not have the right to discard them. Therefore, we proceed with honor to follow what we agreed to follow.

The Lord wanted the church to remain together. The splintering began even before Joseph’s death. When he died the splintering accelerated, but there was and is an obligation to remain together. No matter what you learn, how far you progress, or what great blessings you obtain from the Lord, there is an honorable obligation to remain ‘gathered’ with the saints.

There is still a great deal left to restore. The work is terribly incomplete and when it resumes it will be among the saints, not among the Methodists, or the Hindus. The restoration will add to the Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. It will not begin over again with people unacquainted with this latest body of revelation from the Lord.

I intend to remain faithful to the church, no matter what the issues are that exist because of human failings or errors.

Because I respect the order of the church, I refuse to get out ahead. No matter what I know, I am unwilling to step outside of my narrowly confined role. This confined role allows me to elaborate on existing scripture, and still limit what I say and do. I am forced to study the existing scriptures and our history to be able to confine what I do inside the existing order, while still explaining what I may be required to explain or declare.

I do not believe I would be of any benefit to the Lord or my fellow man if I were to rebel, abandon covenants I have made, or try to become something separate and independent. The Lord requires us to be meek, to respect authority, and to submit to others. It helps us to understand Him more fully. For me, respecting the order of things inside the church is also a matter of wisdom. It keeps all of us from becoming too much or too little as we follow the Lord.

JULY 9, 2012

Lehi's God

When Lehi first saw the Father sitting upon His throne, the description is as follows: “he thought he saw God, sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising their God” (1 Ne. 1:8).

After being ministered to by Christ, (1 Ne. 1:11) the description changes as Lehi reacts to his endowment of knowledge from the Lord. The record says: “And after this manner was the language of my father in the praising of his God” (1 Ne. 1:15). God the Father has ceased to be the impersonal “God” of verse 8, and has become Lehi’s God by verse 15.

It is in this sense that God becomes “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” (Matt. 22:32). God established His covenant with Abraham. Then He renewed and established His covenant again with Isaac. Then He renewed it again with Jacob. He was each of their God, by covenanting with each of them. None relied on a covenant given to their father, or grandfather, but each received directly from God a covenant in their own name.

Lehi also covenanted with God. He also knew the Father as “his God.” If you read what happened between verses 8 and 15, you will see how Christ ministers to a man and brings them into a relationship with the Father.

Compare 1 Ne. 1:11–14 with Revelation 5:1–8. In both there is a book, and it is Christ who is able to access the book. In both, a prophet, (Lehi and John) are able to then get access to the information which would be otherwise hidden from the world.

Lehi, as a recipient of the covenant directly from God, joined those who could call God “his God.”

It is the God of Lehi in the same way it is the God of Abraham; and the God of Isaac; and the God of Jacob; and the God of Nephi; and the God of Joseph.

Look at 2 Kings 2:14 and you will see Elisha acknowledging that Elijah also knew God; and Elisha wanted to likewise come to know Him.

Is He also your God? If not, why will you not have Him to be your God? (1 Ne. 17:40).

JULY 10, 2012

Lehi's Priesthood

There is a key verse which passes by quickly. It establishes an important identity for Lehi. The verse confirms that Lehi saw God the Father sitting on His throne (1 Ne. 1:8). In other words, Lehi beheld the face of God, the Father. This key verse identifies Lehi's authority.

Following immediately after this view of the Father, sitting on His throne, Christ descended in His glory and ministered to him. His glory was above the brightness of the sun (1 Ne. 1:11-13).

After Christ ministered to him, Lehi put the Father's activities into perspective, declaring "unto the Lord: Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty!" (1 Ne. 1:13).

He saw the face of the Father. He was ministered to by the Son. This cannot occur unless Lehi had the highest form of priesthood. This is required for a man to see the face of the Father and live (D&C 84:19-22).

Lehi required priesthood: "without...the authority of the priesthood, and the power of godliness...no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live" (D&C 84:21-22). Lehi saw Him. Therefore part of the ministry of Christ to him necessarily included conferring priesthood.

Joseph Smith explained it like this:

All Priesthood is Melchizedek, but there are different portions or degrees of it. That portion which brought Moses to speak with God face to face was taken away; but that which brought

the ministry of angels remained. All the prophets had the Melchizedek Priesthood and were ordained by God himself. (*TPJS*, pp. 180–81)

In Lehi we have an instance of an Old Testament era prophet being “ordained by God himself” in the very first chapter of the Book of Mormon.

The phrasing in verse 8 (“he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne”) is an art form, or a formula. Alma would later use the same phrasing (*Alma* 36:22). The best way to understand this formulation is found in Paul’s writings: “whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth” (2 Cor. 12:2). Similarly, Joseph Smith’s encounter in the First Vision was either in the body or not, and during the vision he became physically incapacitated (*JS-H* 1:20: “When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up into heaven.”) Daniel also physically collapsed when the Lord visited with him (*Dan.* 10:5–19).

How much that book teaches us! It is only our neglect which renders it unable to teach us the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is only the first chapter of the book (1 Ne. 1) and it has an example of a vision of God the Father sitting on His throne, and the Lord Jehovah ministering to and strengthening a prophet of God! What great promise this book holds indeed if that is only the first chapter! Perhaps we should take it more seriously (*D&C* 84:54–57). No wonder President Packer can lament in General Conference about the absence of priesthood power in the church (“The Power of the Priesthood” — link: <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2010/04/the-power-of-the-priesthood?lang=eng>)

JULY 11, 2012

Lehi's Commission

When the first chapter of Nephi opens, Lehi is among those who listened to “many prophets prophesying” about the coming judgments against Jerusalem (1 Ne. 1:4). Their message was not Lehi's. Their message was apparently upsetting to him because he responded by praying on behalf of Jerusalem (1 Ne. 1:5). His prayer is interesting. He offers it on behalf of what he regarded as “his people” (*Id.*).

The result of his compassionate prayer for others was a calling by God the Father, delivered by His Son, Jehovah (1 Ne. 1:8–13). God takes note of those who have compassion for others and whose charity seeks the best interests of their fellow-man. Such people possess love, and it is “unfeigned” (D&C 121:41). It is precisely because of their love of their fellow man that they are called to render priestly service (*Id.*).

Lehi was a man like Christ. Just like Christ, Lehi would intercede on behalf of “his people” and did so “with all his heart” (1 Ne. 1:5).

In response to this, Lehi's vision endowed him with knowledge about the Lord's great plan of mercy. He knew that the Lord would overrule everything for the good. Even the suffering that would be inflicted on the inhabitants of Jerusalem would be merciful, and would be predicated on the “goodness” of God (1 Ne. 1:14). Lehi understood. Because he had this knowledge, he was able to see how God's plans were always done for the benefit and ultimate salvation of man.

Before this encounter with God, Lehi was in the audience listening to the prophets cry repentance. After this encounter

with God, he joined the prophets and also “began to prophesy and to declare” a message to Jerusalem (1 Ne. 1:18). He could not “begin” to prophesy if he had been among the prophets previously. If that were the case, he would have “resumed” or “continued” to prophesy. He “began” only after encountering God. Therefore, we can know Lehi’s ministry to call others to repent did not start before encountering God and receiving his commission from the Lord.

This is what true prophets do. They do not advance their own agenda. They do not volunteer. They do not deliver a message of their own. They don’t look for witty quotes, or clever stories to retell. They receive a commission from God, and the result of their work is to offer those who will listen a chance to repent and return to God.

These individuals do not take the Lord’s name in vain. They cannot. They have been authorized to speak in the Lord’s name, and therefore their words are His (D&C 1:38). He will vindicate the words of His servants because they do not speak an idle thing in their own behalf. They speak with His authority, and deliver His message.

So with the first chapter of the Book of Mormon we also get an example of how prophets are called: alone, in God’s presence, with an endowment of knowledge of God’s ways sufficient to enable them to deliver a message of repentance.

And this is only the first chapter! Imagine if we took the entire book to heart what we might find!

JULY 12, 2012

Lehi’s Message

Lehi delivered two separate messages to his generation at Jerusalem. These two messages provoked two separate reactions.

The first message was that they were wicked, and were engaged in abominations before God (1 Ne. 1:19). In other words, these were sinful people needing to repent and return to God.

When the people heard “the things which he testified of them” their reaction was to mock and ridicule him and his message (*Id.*). They had the scriptures, the priesthood, the Temple, the ordinances, and they were absolutely certain they were living their religion just as God wanted them to. They were “chosen” and were holy people. This idea of being “wicked” and engaging in abominable practices while they lived devoted lives seemed ridiculous to them. Lehi could not be taken seriously. If there was anything to this message, then they would expect it would come from the established hierarchy, not some obscure trader living in Jerusalem. He wasn’t even a Levite for that matter.

The second message was much more serious. He spoke “plainly of the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world” (1 Ne. 1:19). Since this was an idea the Jews of that day had rejected, Lehi’s testimony of Christ was too much. He was accusing them of apostasy. This aroused anger and even fury. The idea that these holy people, devoted to their religion, practicing the ordinances and preserving the Temple rites could be in a state of apostasy was too much for them to brook.

In response to this second message they had a second reaction: they wanted to kill him (1 Ne. 1:20). They knew what to do with this kind of message. They would excommunicate, or “cast out” anyone who dared to preach this message. It threatened the pretenders who presided. It threatened the order of their day. It challenged the authority of the faith. It was too much.

Lehi would be either cast out (excommunicated). Or he would be “stoned” (an officially sanctioned religious punishment). Or he

would be “slain” (a mob reaction not sanctioned by the religion) (*Id.*). The first two were to be imposed by the religious leaders. The third, however, would be popular reaction. An uncontrolled mob, showing spontaneous religious zeal, having been indoctrinated by their leaders to react in this manner. The leaders would prefer the third remedy. That would show their teaching was having the desired effect. If not, then the first two would be imposed.

Two messages, and two reactions. The popular practices of religion of Lehi’s day were condemning souls. No one was being saved. No leadership existed which would lead men back to God’s presence.

Lehi listened to the “many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent” (1 Ne. 1:4). He learned for himself, directly from God that this was a true message. He took up the message and he delivered his own testimony.

This was a message from God, whom He had met. This was authorized and, whether the Jews of his day would acknowledge it or not, it was binding upon them. Therefore, when they rejected his testimony against them and his message requiring them to repent, they rejected God’s word.

These deeply religious peers of Lehi’s were astonished at the idea an obscure merchant could speak with and for God. Once again the first chapter of the Book of Mormon introduces us to a world where God alone decides who He will call. Then, after a private audience with the Lord, the commissioned spokesman proceeds to cry repentance. These are radical ideas, and prove the Book of Mormon is no ordinary text. It is a warning from God, and its precepts will bring mankind closer to the truth than the precepts you will find in any other volume of sacred text.

JULY 12, 2012

Mormonism and the Temple

I have been working for some months with a group of scholars on a project which I believe to be of value to faithful Latter-day Saints. Today I am pleased to be authorized to provide the following announcement (which will be made through a variety of outlets simultaneously):

2012 Conference

Mormonism and the Temple: Examining an Ancient Religious Tradition

The newly-formed Academy for Temple Studies and the Utah State University Religious Studies program announce an important conference, to be held Monday, October 29, 2012, on the campus of Utah State University, in conjunction with the USU Religious Studies program, and hosted by Professor Philip Barlow

Throughout the history of civilization, diverse societies have used temples and temple-places to both worship, and to commune with deity. This conference examines that tradition and its links with the temple tradition of the Latter-day Saints.

The academic field of Temple Studies has grown in interest and importance among scholars in recent years, with thousands of articles and books focusing on the temple traditions of the Judeo-Christian religions alone. This conference will interest both academic specialists and other informed students of the ancient temple—as typified by the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem—and its modern significance for and links to Mormonism.

Featured speakers (whose personal religious traditions include Methodism, Catholicism, and Mormonism) are noted for their expertise in these domains. The creative research of keynote speaker

Dr. Margaret Barker has drawn attention both of critics and admirers in temple studies in England and the United States during the past generation. Additional speakers include the Reverend Dr. Laurence Hemming, Gary N. Anderson, Frederick M. Huchel, Danel Bachman, John W. Welch, and Drs. Le Grande Davies, John L. Fowles, John F. Hall, and Daniel C. Peterson.

Registration for the day-long conference will be \$50.00. Students with a valid student ID will be admitted for \$20.00.

This conference marks an important milestone in Temple Studies in the United States. Seating will be limited.

Call (435) 797-1300, to reserve your seat.

More detailed information on the conference will soon be made available.

JULY 13, 2012

A Question About “Seeds of Doubt”

This comment was a question I received this week: “You are hinting that we have ‘strayed from mine ordinances’ and broken the covenant as a people. Does this encourage faith in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints? I would argue that it does not. You appear conflicted. You appear to be trying to plant seeds of doubt because of changes to the temple ceremonies over the years.”

This is a question only an idolator could ask. The question presumes the object of faith should be an institution. That is idolatry.

To the extent that the church teaches faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is of value. To the extent it teaches faith in itself, it will damn you.

Those who inherit the Telestial Kingdom, or the lowest condition in the afterlife apart from outer darkness, will keep

company with liars, thieves and adulterers (D&C 76:103). These damned folks, who are cast down to hell and suffer the wrath of Almighty God, (D&C 76:106) are the ones who worship the church, but not Christ. They prefer the institutional leaders (D&C 76:99–100) rather than receiving the testimony of Christ (D&C 76:101).

These people are those who “love and make a lie” because the truth is not in them (D&C 76:103). They lie about the terms of salvation. They substitute the commandments of men for faith in Christ. This is the heart of lying—to deceive on matters affecting the souls of mankind.

Let me be as clear as I possibly can: I am not trying to “encourage faith in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” That would damn anyone who would listen to me. I have tried to encourage activity in the church; to encourage payment of tithes, support of leadership, serving in callings, and living its standards. But NOT faith in the church.

I am trying to encourage faith in Jesus Christ. The Articles of Faith clarify who we are to have faith in: “We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ” (Article of Faith 4).

It is incidental to that faith that we believe in a church organization (Article of Faith 6). Nowhere in the Articles of Faith, nor in the scriptures does it require anyone to have “faith in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” for salvation.

The person (or committee) who posed the question should repent. They suffer from a damning form of idolatry, denounced in scripture, which will condemn them to hell unless they repent—if the revelations from Jesus Christ can be trusted. If they teach this as doctrine to others, they are leading them astray.

As to the other part of the question—that the temple ordinances have been changed, let me be clear on that also. Yes, they have been changed. Your question admits it. We all know that is true. They have been substantially reworked, deleted, portions eliminated, whole characters removed from the presentation, and even the parts that are identified as “most sacred” have been altered. They certainly have been changed. I leave it for each person to decide the extent to which these alterations are or are not important to them.

I will add, however, that when a Dispensation of the Gospel is conferred on mankind through a Dispensation head (like Enoch, Moses, Joseph Smith) then those who live in that Dispensation are obligated to honor the ordinances laid down through the Dispensation head by the Lord. For so long as the ordinances remain unchanged, the ordinances are effective. When, however, the ordinances are changed without the Lord’s approval [THE critical question], they are broken. At that point, the cure is for the Lord to bestow a new Dispensation in which a new covenant is made available.

IF (and I leave it to you to answer that question) you decide the ordinances are now broken by the many changes, then you should look for the Lord to deliver them again. IF (and I leave it entirely to you to decide) the many changes were authorized by the Lord and approved by Him, then you have no concerns. The covenant was not broken. Everything continues intact. It would be curious to know why He changed them. Particularly when Joseph (the Dispensation head) said that couldn’t be done. But if your confidence is in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the instrument of salvation, then you should not trouble yourself with this question. If your faith is in Christ, then take the matter up with Him and let Him explain to you what your state

and standing is before Him. I know what mine is. I have no fear of His judgments.

I don't know if I could be any more clear. Maybe I should add that if I were a church leader, I would never have agreed to any change ever to any of the ordinances. But I was not a church leader, and when the great changes were made in 1990 no one asked me to even sustain them. Those in charge imposed them. As a member, I wasn't even afforded the chance to give a sustaining vote on the question. I have never been required to take a position, either by the church or the leaders or common consent. The church just DID it. To the extent that anyone is accountable for this, it cannot be me. That leaves everyone the freedom to decide individually what these things mean to them.

I would also add that if I'd been asked to vote I would have voted against it. Today, if the church provided periodic sessions using the earlier form, I would make it a practice to always attend only those sessions. I wish I could provide those for my own ancestors as I attend sessions now. I attended so frequently before the changes that, even today, when attending I still recite in my own mind missing portions of the ceremonies. I cannot avoid it. They are embedded and remain, despite not being present in the temple ceremony any longer.

Have faith in Christ. He doesn't change (1 Ne. 10:18; 2 Ne. 27:23; Moroni 10:7, among many others). I concede that it's weird an unchanging God has a predilection in this Dispensation of changing His ordinances. He, at least, doesn't change. If you lose your idolatry and anchor faith in Him, you will be fine.

So, where does that leave us with the issue of "seeds of doubt?"
I doubt:

- men
- institutions
- lies
- foolishness
- vanity
- error
- pomposity
- arrogance
- ignorance
- good intentions
- the value of sincerity
- the commandments of men
- the present generation
- the popular solutions to most problems
- Hollywood
- opposing attorneys
- Chief Justice Roberts' reasoning
- quantitative easing as a long term solution
- quantitative easing as a short term solution
- the assumptions contained in the question I have answered in this post.

But I do NOT doubt Christ.

JULY 14, 2012

Clearing Off Some Pending Questions

Do I consider myself “a prophet?”

The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy (Revelation 19:10). I have the testimony of Jesus.

What if someone has prayed and “still not been visited” by The Second Comforter?

The problem is in the word “still.” What makes you think you control timing? What makes you think you are prepared? The Lord alone determines timing. And the Lord alone judges preparation. The Lord does not come to cause faith, but in response to existing faith. If your faith would be increased by such a visit, it will not occur. The faith necessary requires the sacrifice of all things. You must develop that. That is why I wrote *The Second Comforter*.

Which version of the ordinances, 1870’s, 1920’s, post-1990, or current, would I prefer to see in the Temple?

Brigham Young’s effort to “complete” the endowment was entrusted to him by Joseph. I have to admit, there are some things he did that were excessive, but nevertheless he completed the charge. They weren’t reduced to writing until the 1870’s. There are steps that needed to be taken. Joseph understood what was needed, and Brigham Young likely did not. Nevertheless, Brigham Young was tasked with the job and therefore, he operated under Joseph’s charge. Details matter. Not merely in the rites but in how the rites came into being. When the Lord allows something, then what the Lord allows (and only what He allows) is permitted. When we go beyond that mark, we lose the commission and we are on our own. I’m acquainted with all the changes. I have found them all and studied them all. I know all of the many differences. In the context of the previous post, it was not important to distinguish between the original, incomplete rites above the Red Brick Store and the later developments. Nor was it necessary to suggest there were other changes between the final version written in the 1870’s and those made most recently. It is the issue of changing, not which changes, that I was responding to in the post. The answer did not attempt

to give information beyond the narrow issue. To parse through the history of the temple is a task which I've not attempted in writing, and I have no intention of undertaking such a thankless job. Those who would be most benefitted from it resent the discussion. Others revel in the information and have no benefit from it.

What can you do if you're not acquainted with the pre-1990 endowment?

I don't think that's the issue. The issue is whether you will take your present covenants seriously and live true and faithful to them. Treat them as a matter between you and God, and look to Him for the further light and knowledge which He promises to send to those who are faithful in all things. If you remain true and faithful, then you should expect to receive further light and knowledge by conversing with the Lord through the veil. He employs no servant there. He will meet you and will give you such information as you need to then enter into His presence. The rites are a symbol. Treat them as such. The confirmation of the Lord's intention to preserve you as His will come from Him, not some ordinance worker practicing altered rites. What remains is still enough to inform you of the Lord's ways. Walk in those ways.

You disagree with submitting to authority as I have suggested:

Then don't. See what your rebellion gets you. As for me, I trust the Lord was sincere when He admonished following Annas and Caiaphus because "they sit in Moses' seat." But, He added, we are not expected to "do as they do." The tradition has been handed down, and we fit into that tradition. We study the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine & Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and we thank the institution which prints and distributes them. However, we look to the contents of those for the Lord's word and will. Even the church's authorities tell us consistently the measure of truth is found in

the scriptures, and the president of the church cannot contradict them. The church doesn't require much of us. Tithing, fasting, serving, supporting leaders, etc. These are nothing compared with overcoming our hearts and minds and living as a sacrifice to God.

Where do women fit into The Second Comforter?

The first person to receive the risen Lord was a woman. More women saw Him before ANY of His apostles following the resurrection. The apostles were rebuked because they didn't believe the women's testimony. The requirement for priesthood is related to the man. For women, their condition and covenant with the Lord from the time of Eve is different than the condition and covenant of Adam. Male and female relationships with the Lord are not governed by the same terms. It is the partnership of those two different roles which produces the image of God. When viewed from God's perspective, woman completes the man. Without her, his condition is "not good" because he remains incomplete.

Wouldn't membership in an apostate branch of the restoration do more harm than good?

No. The Lord will gather primarily from those who already accept the restoration. Those who accept the restoration as far as it got, who honor Joseph Smith's status as a Dispensation head, who accept the Book of Mormon, D&C, PofGP and the temple rites are far better off and more able to receive what will come before Zion is built than the rest of this world. The Lord's gathering at the last will be composed, primarily (although not exclusively) from among these people.

As to Zion:

Just because you have the idea in front of you doesn't mean you have any concept of what will be required to have the angels gather you into that company. It is like the notion that you're

going to be “exalted” without any idea that the eternities are completely isolated from the unworthy. No one will or can be “exalted” who is not adequately prepared. Anyone who attains that status will be required first to suffer what is suffered, minister what is required to be ministered, to prove here their fitness. How could a selfish soul ever provide to their ungrateful and abusive offspring everything necessary for them to develop? Exalted beings sacrifice themselves, and endure punishment on behalf of the guilty. They take upon themselves burdens which they do not deserve. They forgive, they succor, they uplift the unworthy. Pride is incompatible, and selfishness utterly disqualifies a soul from “exaltation.” The principles which govern there are hardly understood here. Most of the faithful Latter-day Saints imagine they will be able to employ means much like Lucifer’s to accomplish their expected outcome. They have no concept of the sacrifices and selflessness required to be trusted by the Lord. He is the prototype of the saved man. He lived His entire existence as a sacrifice. Read 3 Ne. 11:11 and you will find in His introduction of Himself what a saved man must do. There is no other way. The prideful expectation that someone here is going to attain that status hereafter is based, for the most part, on foolishness and vanity, uninformed by the great things required to become like our Lord. Only those who are exactly like Him will be given that status in the eternities. Zion will be formed from people who are willing to endure His presence. That is no small thing.

If Christ doesn’t change why aren’t we living the Law of Moses?

Because He fulfilled that law. It was “added” and then fulfilled. It was added because the Dispensation intended to be delivered through Moses was rejected by Israel (D&C 84:19–24). Much like what happened with us. The dispensation the Lord wanted to

hand us was not received (D&C 124:28). Therefore, something less was added. We get to partake in what we were willing to receive, but we were not willing to receive what we might have been given (D&C 88:33). Now that about four generations have passed, at some point the Lord will open the heavens again, and we will see His hand moving to allow another opportunity. When that happens, things will be finished. It will be different from what we got through Joseph. It will reflect what might have been given anciently through Moses, and what was offered and rejected through Joseph Smith. It will make possible the establishment of a city of refuge where the Lord can come and dwell with His people (D&C 101:16–18). You should note, however, that the Law from Moses till Jesus Christ did not change. Dispensations mark changes, like the great dance in the sky moves from constellation to constellation. The turning shows change, the Dispensations here reflect it, the heavens testify the Lord knew the end from the beginning. This is why the stars testify of the Lord's plan and move to bear that testimony (D&C 88:45–47). But inside Dispensations, ordinances have traditionally been respected and kept unchanged. The only notable exceptions being the one given through Christ and the one given through Joseph Smith. In the case of Christ, the changes marked the apostasy, not the Lord's approved course of conduct. We claim our changes have been made with the Lord's approval. I would note, however, that the explanation given with the changes NEVER claimed the alterations of the Temple rites were because of revelation. They were made based on the claim that the church leaders "held the keys" which allowed them to make the changes. There has never been any claim made contemporaneous with any of the changes that attributed the altered ordinances to revelation from the Lord.

A general note:

Some issues would require a book to lay out the information. They are unsuitable for a blog post. Never conclude that some brief mention is all that is required to set out a matter. I've avoided some subjects because it is misleading to give a brief comment about them. As I contemplate the subjects which require some explanation, I realize it would take another book. Don't presume a comment is more than an allusion to a subject. I try to be helpful., but there is so much more that needs to be understood. I hope the answers illustrate the need for you to devote years of study. Study and prayer are the only way to unlock the mysteries of God. I cannot substitute for that, and do not attempt to provide a shortcut for you. You must engage the Gospel yourself. If you are unwilling to do that, then you will never profit from what I offer. I only refer to the least part of these matters. I raise topics. These are important. You need to investigate them. They are vast. They are hardly understood anymore. They are no longer taught. If you want to understand God, you will have to accomplish that in the same way as all who went before. Take Enoch and Abraham as examples. They studied everything they could find before asking God to show them more. God refused to move their intelligence upward until after they had first obtained a sound understanding, by study, of what He had previously revealed to the fathers (See Abr. 1:28, D&C 107:57, for example). These past saved men were not merely simpletons like us, surfing the web and looking to the blogosphere to provide them shortcuts. You will delude yourself if you are not spending hours each day studying the scriptures to see what they contain. Sometimes I think the Lord has me on a fool's errand doing more harm than good. Many of you think that this is a hobby of mine; or that my opinion is just as ill-conceived as your

own; or that you can get what you need by what little I post here without the effort of approaching God yourself. I think the harm from that is enough the Lord ought to just let me withdraw from this endeavor and finish the rest of what needs doing in private. He has higher regard for your potential than I have on days like today. But, then again, there are other days when I am filled with hope for all of you. Today is just not one of them.

What is the “Abrahamic test?”

The Lord adapts the test required to prove a person to their unique circumstances. The test given to Abraham was adapted perfectly to him. To understand how great the sacrifice was, the account needed to inform us of the difficulty encountered by him and Sarah to obtain this child of promise. We needed to know the promised future inheritance of a posterity as numerous as the sand or the stars was tied directly to this son’s survival. It was, in the context of Abraham’s life and promises from God, the sacrifice of everything. All his hopes, all his promises from God, all his joy with Sarah, all his future descendants were to be laid on the altar and sacrificed. His heart could only be proven through this means. The Abrahamic Test, therefore, will ask the same of you. It will be adapted to what you hope to receive, or have been promised to receive from God. It will end the work of years, and will require you to sacrifice all to God. What one person prizes is never the same as another. What would be easy for one will be nearly impossible for another. The test is adapted to each person. But it will be equally painful, equally difficult and equally proving of the person. Until the heart is tried in this manner we can never know we will submit everything to the Lord. If such a test has not been given you, then it is because the Lord knows you are not prepared to face it. As soon as you are prepared, you will encounter it. For most people

they will likely be in their 50's, after having spent many years preparing to overcome themselves. There are notable examples who were much younger, namely Samuel or Joseph Smith. Those are exceptions. Abraham was between 70 and 100, depending on how you reconstruct the chronology. Moses was 80. Those are not atypical examples. Until you know your own heart is purified before God, you cannot bear Him nor have the required faith in Him. This is not an avoidable option, but an essential ingredient in knowing Him. This is why there are years of preparation generally required, and warnings given about continuing forward. The recipient must volunteer. And they must be warned beforehand.

What was the difference between Korihor's claims and Lehi's?

Lehi followed Christ. Korihor did not. Lehi was a disciple of the Lord's. Korihor was an enemy of His. Lehi propounded a true message, Korihor a false one. Lehi was Christ-like. Korihor was an anti-Christ. Lehi spoke the truth. Korihor was a liar. They were polar opposites. But the question illustrates that the god of this world is imitative. The difference between truth and error does not lie in the difference between religion and irreligion, but instead between true religion which will save, and false religion which cannot save. If it were any less a test, the very elect would not be deceived in the last days. Unless there are false prophets claiming they are authorized by God to preach false and idle messages, God cannot send true ones to declare the truth. The opposition of the one is required for the other. The enemy of your soul does not create a new religion, but imitates the true one. The Lord's messenger will be mirrored by the adversary's, but the reflected image will be reversed. Those who follow the image will find themselves descending, while they think they are ascending to God. Hence the name: "the Deceiver." He deceives, and even

mirrors God's angels by the claim to be an "angel of light" while spreading darkness. The Deceiver's false prophets will point you to themselves, to their great works, wonderful accomplishments, and the pride you should take in following them. The Lord's will point you to Him and preach repentance. The false prophets will speak of riches here, and suggest God's favor can be measured by success in this world. The Lord will speak only of riches in another world which are only obtained through the sacrifice of all things here.

One comment said I don't know what I'm talking about, because all the temple ordinance changes have been through revelation. The people in charge are prophets, seers and revelators, and therefore they invariably operate through revelation. So I'm misleading people because I'm not well informed.

When the changes were made, for at least a week, sometimes longer, a letter was read to temple patrons explaining there had been changes made. Those letters invariably referred to the "keys" held by church leaders as the source to justify the changes. I listened closely. There was never any mention made of a revelation requiring the change. Further, there are obligations imposed by Acts, the Book of Mormon, and the D&C which require church leaders to provide testimony to the church of any visit from Christ, or from an angel, or declaration from God to them. That is the role of the "prophet" and the "seer" and the "revelator." Therefore when a change is made because of an angelic visit, they should testify or witness of it (Moroni 7:29–32). They should also testify if the Lord visited (Acts 1:22, D&C 107:23). Given the absence of that explanation in the letters read to Temple patrons, and the clear statement in the letters from the First Presidency when changes were made, that holding "keys" entitled them to make the change, it is curious to me that a revelation from God would be ignored in the statement.

It seems unlikely that in a Temple setting involving changes to Temple rites the fact it was changed because God revealed the change would be something “too sacred” to be stated. Accordingly, unless you impose something which those responsible never put into their statement, they have never received a revelation requiring the changes. If they wanted me to conclude the Lord revealed the change, all they needed to do was to state that. The difference between your view and mine is that I trust these leaders are fully able to say exactly what they mean. Therefore I take them at their word. You, on the other hand, think they lie incessantly and conceal some of the most important information required for their callings. I do not think they are liars.

JULY 16, 2012

Another Inquiry About Adam-God

In response to several comments (actually complaints) about my mention of Adam-God doctrine as taught by Brigham Young. Rather than remaining silent and inviting further comment I'll add this and then leave it alone.

Brigham Young is presumed by almost everyone to have been closer to Joseph than he was. He is presumed to have understood Joseph's teachings better than he actually did. He was not with Joseph during most of the years of his Apostleship when Joseph was alive.

The question to me is not what Brigham Young taught. That does not clarify the matter to my understanding. The question is what is true? Whether Brigham Young understood it or not, or whether he was able to explain it or not, what is true?

The answer to that question is best solved by going to the scriptures. I've tried to address the question in the paper: The First

Three Words Spoken in the Endowment. You can download it from the blog. In it I go through the scriptures showing that the group called “noble and great” were also called “the Gods” in Chapter 4 of the Book of Abraham. Also, that Joseph referred to this group as “sons of God, who exalted themselves to be gods, even from before the foundation of the world” (*TPJS*, p. 375). Joseph mentioned the word-name “Elohim” is plural. “El” is the singular, Elohim is the plural. The identities of the “Elohim” is best understood in Abraham Chapters 3 and 4.

Joseph was excited about this in the last sermons he gave in Nauvoo. That is why the paper focused on Joseph’s treatment of the Book of Abraham material.

The problem is not that I haven’t studied Brigham Young enough, but that I do not draw my conclusions from him. He is not consistent in his comments. Furthermore, he was trying to repeat what he thought Joseph was teaching. You can by-pass him and go to the scriptures and figure it out for yourself, without straining the truth through Brigham Young’s effort to explain something.

There is something to the doctrine. But I’m not persuaded that Brigham Young understood the matter as well as I do. Further, I am quite confident that Brigham Young did not understand Joseph Smith as well as most Latter-day Saints presume.

The question is answered using scripture.

Also, for those who think they are better read on some questions than I am, I’ve spent decades studying Mormon history and doctrine. Recently, I’ve been studying Brigham Young’s statements now available for the first time in a single comprehensive collection. This five volume collection has become the best single work on the words of Brigham Young. After reading thousands of pages of

his talks, I have reached a number of conclusions about Brigham Young that I will eventually write about.

Brigham Young claimed there was only one “Father” of all mankind, both as the first man and again in the pre-existence. There is more to that story than this simple reduction. But the push by the church to be more like other “Christian” faiths, along with the criticism this doctrine has brought to Mormonism, has made it a matter the church would like to leave alone. Once President Kimball denounced the matter as a “false theory,” it was over as far as the church was concerned. The greatest interest in this question exists now only among fundamentalists. They have suffered greatly because of the credibility they have given to Brigham Young.

To the extent that I have felt any need to touch on this matter, it is in that paper. As to Brigham Young, however, I intend to write more about him, but not here.

CHAPTER 10

Hyrum Smith

JULY 17, 2012

Hyrum Smith

Hyrum Smith would eventually replace Joseph Smith as the prophet of the church. However, in 1829 he was given a revelation through his younger brother, Joseph. This was given before the Book of Mormon was published, before a church was organized, and while the work of the new Dispensation was in its very first stages. The content, however, is important. Not just for Hyrum, but for all of us.

Just like others, Hyrum was reminded of what it took to be called to the work: “whosoever will thrust in his sickle and reap, the same is called of God” (D&C 11:4, see 3 also). It wasn’t an extensive application and approval process, but it was based on the willingness to do what God wanted that created “the call of God” to the laborer. Without ordination, or setting apart, the relationship was between the individual and God. It is an interesting series of revelations at the beginning of the work which uniformly leave God’s calling to the individual, based on their desire (See, e.g., D&C 4:3; D&C 12:4; among others).

The first stage, however, was limited to crying repentance. Hyrum was to “say nothing but repentance unto this generation” (D&C 11:9). The potential for Hyrum doing more later was certain, provided he would follow the Lord’s counsel (D&C 11:10).

Hyrum was instructed on how to know he was proceeding in the right way: “put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit” (D&C 11:12).

Then, despite his desire and the call, Hyrum was told to temporarily stand down. The Lord instructs him:

Behold, I command you that you need not suppose that you are called to preach until you are called. Wait a little longer, until you shall have my word, my rock, my church, and my gospel, that you may know of a surety my doctrine. (D&C 11:15–16)

The Lord told Hyrum essentially to ‘stand down’ and not do anything, even if he were “called” to the work. There was more needed before he could be of use to the Lord. He needed to accomplish one work: “Behold, this is your work, to keep my commandments, yea, with all your might, mind and strength” (D&C 11:20).

Then, one of the great voices of the Restoration was told: “Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed” (D&C 11:21). Hyrum needed to study. He needed to fill himself with information before he began his work.

Hold your peace; study my word which hath gone forth among the children of men, and also study my word which shall come forth among the children of men, or that which is now translating, yea, until you have obtained all which I shall grant

unto the children of men in this generation, and then shall all things be added thereto. (D&C 11:22)

Hyrum had homework to do. He needed to “study” things.

Hyrum would become the church prophet and Patriarch. He would be co-president and co-testator with his younger brother, Joseph. Joseph had several other brothers, but it was Hyrum who followed the formula given him by the Lord. It was Hyrum who qualified himself to the work by his diligence and heed.

Hyrum was the designated successor to Joseph as the head of the church. But Hyrum fell first, and he and his younger brother died martyrs.

JULY 18, 2012

Hyrum Smith, Part 2

In order to have a meaningful discussion about Hyrum, it is necessary to provide background information that may seem strange to most modern Latter-day Saints. We have a much different story today than the story told in the beginning. To communicate across the barrier of mistaken and incomplete understanding, there are some ideas that seem strange that are required as background to begin to explain why Hyrum was so significant.

Hyrum was given the calling of “Priesthood and Patriarch” in a revelation in January, 1841 (D&C 124:91). That seems a curious statement to us, since everyone is presumed to have held the “priesthood” as soon as they were “elders” in the church. In the beginning, however, it was not understood the same way it is now. The offices of “elder,” like other offices, (priests, deacons, teachers) were offices in the church (D&C 20:38). They were not coincidental to having priesthood. They were “offices...in the

church of Christ” (This was the original name of the church.) These offices were elected, approved by common consent, and then filled by those elected. After Section 107, the two things (church office and priesthood) were conflated to mean the same thing. The office belongs to the church, and whether there is priesthood present or not, the right to preach, teach, expound, exhort, baptize, lay on hands for the Holy Ghost, bless and pass the sacrament, are all things which the Lord commissioned the church to perform. This is also why, at the time Joseph and Oliver received only the Aaronic Priesthood, (*JS-H* 1:69) they began to call one another the First and Second “elder of the church” (*JS-H* 1:72). This is also why Joseph and Oliver received the Holy Ghost when baptized (*JS-H* 1:73) even though the angel said the priesthood given did not have “the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost” (*JS-H* 1:70). They had the right to baptize, they were called the “First and Second elders of the church,” but they did not have the “power of laying on hands” for the Holy Ghost. This is not inconsistent, but it is different from what we now overlay onto the idea of priesthood. Today we are more confused than ever even when we think ourselves in possession of the truth.

In any event, when the January 1841 revelation came, Hyrum had already proven valiant. The time arrived when the Lord wanted Hyrum to be ordained to “Priesthood” and “Patriarch” so that he might “hold the keys of the patriarchal blessings upon the heads of all my people” (D&C 124:93). This same revelation appointed another “prophet, and a seer, and a revelator unto [the Lord’s] church” (D&C 124:94). This was the word of the Lord establishing this status and entitling Hyrum to claim this position.

He was then to “act in concert also with my servant Joseph” as co-president of the church (D&C 124:95). Joseph had restored to

him “all things” and could ask and the Lord would “make all things known unto” him (D&C 132:45). Hyrum was likewise able to “ask and receive” answers from the Lord (D&C 124:95).

Because of this ordination by the word of the Lord, Hyrum was given the power to seal:

Whoever he blesses shall be blessed, and whoever he curses shall be cursed; that whatsoever he shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever he shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (D&C 124:93)

These rights made him co-equal with Joseph, though Hyrum always acted only in concert with Joseph. He was meek, like Moses (Numbers 12:3) and like Nephi, son of Helaman (Helaman 10:5). They could be trusted by the Lord because they would do what the Lord wanted, not what they wanted (See also Alma 14:10–11).

This is the kind of man Hyrum was. He was trusted by the Lord, and chose to die with his brother. Had he lived, He would have been Joseph’s successor. Brigham Young said this during the debates over who should succeed Joseph as the president: “Did Joseph Smith ordain any man to take his place? He did. Who was it? It was Hyrum” (*Times & Seasons*, October 15, 1844, Vol. 5, p. 683).

This is an interesting fact because Hyrum was not a member of the Quorum of the Twelve at the time he was killed. However, even Brigham Young, who won the initial debate having argued that the twelve should lead, and then ultimately won an election in December 1847 to become the president of the church, acknowledged it was Hyrum’s right to succeed Joseph. With Hyrum gone, and without any clear direction to follow, the church elected first the twelve, and then Brigham Young.

Brigham Young was never ordained to be church president. He was elected. The initial offices of Elder, Priest, Teacher, Deacon

were elected positions. Brigham Young viewed the office of church president as similarly elected.

He explained how he thought this should operate. Anyone could lead the church. All that was required was an election, then the prayers of the members. Here is the system:

Take any man in this kingdom, and if the people say that they will make him a President, or a Bishop, or elect him to fill any other office, and the faith of the people is concentrated to receive light through that officer or pipe laid by the power of the Priesthood from the throne of God, you might as well try to move the heavens as to receive anything wrong through that conductor. No matter whom you elect for an officer, if your faith is concentrated in him through whom to receive the things which he is appointed to administer in, light will come to you. Let a presiding officer or a Bishop turn away from righteousness, and the Lord Almighty would give him the lock-jaw, if he could not stop his mouth in any other way, or send a fit of numb palsy on him, so that he could not act, as sure as the people over whom he presided were right, that they might not be led astray. (*Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, Vol. 3, p. 1379, November 29, 1857; the talk can also found at *JD* Vol. 6 beginning on p. 93)

In this system, the power of being elected coupled with the members' prayers were enough to always insure the answers you got through that leader were exactly perfect.

This was in the early days when church leaders were elected to office. Church authorities may offer names, but the congregation, stake, or church members elected them to office.

With Hyrum's death, we lost something of great value. If he had outlived Joseph, he would have been the unchallenged church

president. His succession would have set the pattern for later church presidents. They each would have chosen their own successors before they died (See D&C 43:2–5).

By the time Brigham Young established the twelve as the seat of power, the pattern was set. Instead of the replacement being chosen by the sitting president through revelation, the senior apostle was presumed to be the next in line. Today's legal structure using the Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints the succession is automatic. The corporation's sole member is the longest tenured apostle. This is in place because Hyrum did not outlive Joseph. So we are all affected by the loss of Joseph's brother.

JULY 19, 2012

Hyrum Smith, Part 3

In November 1842, Hyrum Smith wrote the following letter to the church. I reprint it in whole, without comment. Joseph was irritated because the church did not seem to realize Hyrum was entitled to lead the church. William Clayton's Journal records on July 16, 1843 that Joseph said the following:

“Hyrum held the office of prophet to the church by birthright... the Saints must regard Hyrum for he has authority.”

The letter (reproduced below) probably should have been included in the D&C. It tells a great deal about the kind of leader Hyrum Smith would have made had he survived Joseph's death:

To our well beloved brother Parley P. Pratt, and to the elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in England, and scattered abroad throughout all Europe, and to the Saints—
Greeting:

Whereas, in times past persons have been permitted to gather with the Saints at Nauvoo, in North America—such as husbands leaving their wives and children behind; also, such as wives leaving their husbands, and such as husbands leaving their wives who have no children, and some because their companions are unbelievers. All this kind of proceedings we consider to be erroneous and for want of proper information. And the same should be taught to all the Saints, and not suffer families to be broken up on any account whatever if it be possible to avoid it. Suffer no man to leave his wife because she is an unbeliever. These things are an evil and must be forbidden by the authorities of the church or they will come under condemnation; for the gathering is not in hast nor by flight, but to prepare all things before you, and you know not but the unbeliever may be converted and the Lord heal him; but let the believers exercise faith in God, and the unbelieving husband shall be sanctified by the believing wife; and the unbelieving wife by the believing husband, and families are preserved and saved from a great evil which we have seen verified before our eyes. Behold this is a wicked generation, full of lyings, and deceit, and craftiness; and the children of the wicked are wiser than the children of light; that is, they are more crafty; and it seems that it has been the case in all ages of the world.

And the man who leaves his wife and travels to a foreign nation, has his mind overpowered with darkness, and Satan deceived him and flatters him with the graces of the harlot, and before he is aware he is disgraced forever; and greater is the danger for the woman that leaves her husband. The evils

resulting from such proceedings are of such a nature as to oblige us to cut them off from the church.

And we also forbid that a woman leave her husband because he is an unbeliever. We also forbid that a man shall leave his wife because she is an unbeliever. If he be a bad man (i.e., the unbeliever) there is a law to remedy that evil. And if the law divorce them, then they are at liberty; otherwise they are bound as long as they two shall live, and it is not our prerogative to go beyond this; if we do it, it will be at the expense of our reputation.

These things we have written in plainness and we desire that they should be publicly known, and request this to be published in the *STAR*.

May the Lord bestow his blessings upon all the Saints richly, and hasten the gathering, and bring about the fullness of the everlasting covenant are the prayers of your brethren.

Written by Hyrum Smith, patriarch.

JULY 19, 2012

Posted Essays

We have had continued requests for the essays Denver has written. The requests have increased since he mentioned “The First Three Words of the Endowment” in a recent post. Here are the links:

“The First Three Words”

“Elijah Talk”

These links will take you to the Scribd website. You don't need a Facebook account to access Scribd, but you do need a Scribd account. They are free and registering is simple and doesn't obligate you to anything.

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JULY 20, 2012

Standing Offer

I have made this offer on several occasions through the church leaders, but will repeat it again here:

If there is someone who claims they have become dissatisfied with the church because of something I have written, I am willing to meet with them to discuss why they should remain faithful and active in the church. I would want to meet with them in the following setting:

First, their Bishop and Stake President would need to be present. If one or the other could not attend, then I would meet with the person and their Bishop or their Stake President, but I would prefer to meet with both present.

Second, I would want it to be in the church office of either the Bishop or the Stake President, and not in a home.

Third, I can only make this offer for those living in Utah, and I could travel within reason. (I will decide what is reasonable.) Fourth, all arrangements need to be made by email communication through this email address dssnuffer@gmail.com.

This is a matter I mean sincerely. If there is someone you know who would benefit from this offer, talk to the Bishop and Stake President and if they want to have me come and have that discussion I would willingly do so. I can come most any evening of the week and could even meet on Sunday. These local leaders need to be present so they will know what I say, what I stand for, and that any suggestion that I want people leaving the church is exactly opposite of my intention.

The church deserves our gratitude and our faithful service. It is not perfect, but it is the best venue for coming to know God existing in any organized body on the earth today. You will only do yourself a disservice by walking away from the church.

I love my ward. Presently, I help the priests getting ready for their missions prepare for their endowment. This is the same group of priests I used to teach. The work used to be done by a member of the Draper Temple Presidency living in my ward. He and I have spoken several times about this calling. It is a wonderful opportunity. I serve in this capacity with the best efforts I can. I do my best to serve in all my callings. Church service is important and we should all render that service willingly and to the best of our abilities.

We all struggle to understand the restoration. This is a work of patience and devotion. It requires us to carefully study all the revelations, the Book of Mormon, and our history. It should be a labor of love. As we work to find truth while preserving faith, we must have the maturity and patience to allow the truth of our situation to unfold before us in humility and gratitude. The work of God is greater than we can grasp with haste. Time, and patient and ponderous thoughts are required if we are going to obtain the promises offered us. Haste and impatience will cause us only regret.

There are those who are quick to judge. They are fools. Deciding you are discouraged by some of the things men have done or failed to do makes you no better than their worst failure. Even with their shortcomings, men have rendered devoted service. If you think you see a matter more clearly, then rejoice and thank God for that clarity, but do not condemn their failure or mistakes. Studying errors should be with an eye toward avoiding them. We learn to do better, to become better, to reach higher by looking at the mistakes of the past. This should be a journey of discovery solely for the

purpose of improving your own relationship with God, not to let you lose faith, become embittered, or harshly judge others.

Recognizing mistakes is only useful if it improves your understanding of, and relationship with God. If you cannot do that, then leave it alone and do something else.

Two quick asides:

First, if Hyrum's letter to the church (posted yesterday) had been followed, Parley Pratt would not have been killed. He never would have given assistance to Eleanor McLean, which motivated her husband Hector to kill Parley.

Second, don't substitute one idol for another. I'm not going to save you. Just like no other man will. That is the role of the Lord, and the Lord alone. Follow Him.

JULY 21, 2012

Miscellaneous

In response to comments:

The deaths of Joseph and Hyrum were necessary. The older brother as prophet-priest died first, and the younger brother as priest-king died second. The prophecies, including many of Jesus' parables about the end times, lay out two incompatible processes that were to happen.

In one, the gospel "net" extends to catch anything it can. This requires an aggressively marketed latter-day church whose sweep is non-exclusive and non-exclusionary. It must gather into itself "all manner of fish," some are good and some are bad.

In the other, the angels will pick through the "net" and gather out of it "the good" fish to be kept. It is exclusive and it is exclusionary. It comes only after the widely cast net has first gathered.

Doesn't matter if you read the parable of the Ten Virgins, or the vineyard, the theme is the same: There are two latter-day processes. If you didn't kill Joseph and Hyrum, and you left intact the process which would have created Zion, then the larger, public outreach seeking to gather anyone into the "net" would have ended. The smaller, more restrictive gathering by the angels of only "the good" would have been confined to so small a sample of humanity that the world could complain there wasn't enough of an opportunity given them.

The world was not ready for Zion. The angels were willing to begin the harvest, but then again, they would have been willing to do that in the New Testament times (Matt. 13:28).

The reason for the "offer" put up yesterday is to disabuse the notion I am an enemy to the church. I am not. I am its greatest friend. But the "Sunday School" educated saints, who long ago surrendered their minds to others to be controlled, find any effort to deal with the depth, height, width and breadth of the gospel to be frightening. These insecure folks want to complain, rather than stretch or stress themselves by searching into the things required to understand our faith and our faith's history. Church leaders are very understanding—until they get alarming reports about people losing faith because of something someone has said or written.

I've thought about publishing a sample of the comments that come to me from those whose faith and church activity have been strengthened by what I've done, but that seems self-serving and offensive even to me; so I won't do that. Far, far more people have been helped than harmed by what I've written. But even if there is one, I'm willing to help to assist them in their crisis of faith. They deserve to be helped, and if I can help I'm willing to do so.

I got several reports about some of the “often in error but never in doubt” crowd of ‘Mormon experts’ who think I need to be “handled” by the church. At least one with a name you’d all recognize. The offer to meet with others was made to leave no doubt about my sincerity, faithfulness and willingness to do what I can to help keep people active, and inside the church.

The “awful situation” in Ether 8:24 certainly has a political, governmental and economic component. But these are all Babylon. They will fail. Fixing them is temporary. Focusing on them can be distracting. What will endure are the souls of men. They need to be reclaimed. That happens through repentance. If they will repent, then as a natural result they will end their involvement with the many political and economic conspiracies presently underway. Attacking them without saving men’s souls is an exercise in futility. This is why I do not bother spending any time writing about them.

God sees their doings. Their secrets are not hidden from Him. To the extent that they revel in their great gains and well laid plans, they are destined for disappointment. We should not be trying to join them, nor to become part of their great system of benefits. Too much of that has distracted the church and its members already.

The cure lies in repentance. Not in politics. We aren’t going to legislate or regulate salvation. The coming violence and captivity will help save men’s souls.

Prophecies are not given to enable us to understand details of the Lord’s plans in advance. They are not designed to allow you to parse apart God’s plans and know what He plans beforehand. They are only meant to be understood after they have happened.

Then, when they have happened, you will understand what God was saying and that He was in control all along.

You should be very careful about settling on a final interpretation of any prophecy because they were not given with that in mind.

Mortal man is responsible for fulfilling the Gospel. Until they rise up, everything remains unfulfilled. The “Davidic King” is not an identifiable person, nor will he be, until he has accomplished the tasks assigned to the role. Whether anyone will ever rise up to accomplish that is not a matter of destiny, but it is rather a matter of finally accepting and acting consistent with the Lord’s will.

Every dispensation of the Gospel is the “last Dispensation” until it fails. Then another is sent and it is the “last” until it fails. This will continue for so long as man continues to fail. God is in no hurry. Apparently we are not either.

JULY 22, 2012

Responses and Response

Just because I respond to a question does not mean I associate importance with the topic. Those who were unaware of the “Davidic king” topic needn’t trouble themselves to read about it. For the most part those who claim to understand the topic are not going to help you. I would leave it alone.

For the woman who has become ostracized because she has “read my books” I would suggest that reading them does not require you to talk about them. No one needs to be told what they aren’t willing to hear. I stay on-topic in church meetings and discussions. I teach from the church provided materials, and participate by

contributing in the context of lessons being taught by others. I do not impose my views on someone else. They either must search for it independent of the church's programs, or buy the books and read them for themselves. Until asked a question, I leave others alone. Those who want to know more are actively searching and can be assisted. Those who are completely content would not be interested in anything contrary to their understanding, and you invite arguments when you try to "convert" them.

As I said, the church is the current program of the Lord. The broad net is spreading worldwide and gathering all manner of fish. Angels will one day sort through them. But for now, we should all work with this organization to fulfill the Lord's assignment.

The "awful situation" among us Latter-day Saints IS the primary topic I discuss.

The specifics of what one person does/did will never apply to what another must do. This is individual. There are no rules. What will break your heart is different from what broke Abraham's, which in turn was different from what broke the Lord's, and what broke Joseph's. Therefore the examples we have in scripture are all you need study.

CHAPTER 11

Sorting Things Out

JULY 22, 2012

Sorting Things Out

We should be more interested in the truth than in just inspiring one another with stories that flatter us, or make us feel we are better than others. We cannot afford the luxury of thinking ourselves right when we believe an error. Promoting “faith” in errors is what the Book of Mormon calls “unbelief.” When we prize our errors and hold them as true when they are not, we dwindle in unbelief. This is a frequent occurrence throughout the Book of Mormon, and results in the inability to understand God’s word (Mosiah 26:1–3).

We cannot afford to be popular. The price is too high. We cannot turn away from truth even when it causes us painful and difficult repentance. We must not shrink away from what is required to remove the scales from our eyes.

I thought I had said all I needed on the topic of plural marriage, but a friend has loaned me a copy of the multi-volume work of Arnold Boss on the history of plural marriage. It is apparent more needs to be said to make the matter clear. Therefore, I am going to return to the subject and history to clarify some things.

As far as I can determine, Arnold Boss is an honest man. I do not question his ability to record and report what he has recorded in his account. I accept his account of the interview in 1929 of Lorin C. Woolley, meaning that I trust the interview took place and that Arnold Boss accurately reported the contents of that interview. The defect does not lie with Arnold Boss, but in the account told by Lorin C. Woolley.

Assuming they are interested in the truth, I will lay this matter out in a series of posts that I think will be helpful to the Fundamentalist community. I have been acquainted with this event for over twenty years.

Here is the account given by Woolley in the interview recorded by Arnold Boss on September 22, 1929. I leave the punctuation and spellings as in the original. The “guard” speaking in the narrative is Lorin C. Woolley. He is relating to Arnold Boss the events that took place on the night of September 26–27, 1886 involving church president John Taylor. This is what purportedly occurred during the night of September 26–27, 1886:

That evening I was called to act as guard during the first part of the night, notwithstanding the fact that I was greatly fatigued on account of the three days trip I had just completed.

The brethren retired to bed soon after nine o'clock. The sleeping rooms were inspected by the guard as was the custom. President Taylor's room had no outside door. The windows were heavily screened.

Sometime after the brethren retired and while I was reading the Doctrine and Covenants, I was suddenly attracted to a light appearing under the door leading to President Taylor's room, and was at once startled to hear the voices of men talking there. There were three distinct voices. I was bewildered because it

was my duty to keep people out of that room and evidently some one had entered without my knowing it. I made a hasty examination and found the door leading to the room bolted as usual. I then examined the outside of the house and found all the window screens were intact. While examining the last window, and feeling greatly agitated, a voice spoke to me, saying, "Can't you feel the spirit? Why should you worry?"

At this I returned to my post and continued to hear the voices in the room. They were so audible that although I did not see the parties I could place their positions in the room from the sound of the voices. The three voices continued until about midnight, when one of them left, and the other two continued. One of them I recognized as President Taylor's voice. I called Charles Birrell and we both sat up until eight o'clock the next morning.

When President Taylor came out of his room about eight o'clock of the morning of September 27, 1886, we could scarcely look at him on account of the brightness of his appearance.

He stated, "brethren, I have had a very pleasant conversation all night with brother Joseph." (Joseph Smith) I said, "Boss, who is the man that was there until midnight?" He asked, "what do you know about it Lorin?" I told him all about my experience. He said, Brother Lorin, that was your Lord."

We had no breakfast, but assembled ourselves in a meeting. I forgot who opened the meeting. I was called to offer benediction. I think, my father John W. Woolley, offered the opening prayer. There were present at this meeting, In addition to President Taylor, George Q. Cannon, L. John Nuttal, John W. Wooley, Samuel Bateman, Charles H. Wilkins, Charles Birrell,

Daniel R. Bateman, bishop Samuel Sedden, George Earl, My mother Julia E. Woolley, my sister, Amy Woolley, and myself. The meeting was held from about nine o'clock in the morning until five in the afternoon without intermission, being about eight hours in all.

President Taylor called the meeting to order. He had the manifesto, that had been prepared under direction of George Q. Cannon, read again. Then he put each person under covenant that he or she would defend the principle of Celestial or Plural marriage, and that they would consecrate their lives, liberty and property to this end, and that they personally would sustain and uphold that principle.

[I skip several pages to get to the part most important to the Fundamentalist movement:]

John Taylor set five apart and gave them authority to perform marriage ceremonies, and also to set others apart to do the same thing as long as they remained on earth; and while doing so the prophet Joseph Smith stood by directing the proceedings. Two of us had not met the prophet Joseph Smith in this mortal life, and we, Charles H. Wilkins and myself, were introduced to him and shook hands with him.

Because of what I know and what the scriptures relate, this account, though I believe faithfully recorded by Arnold Boss, is riddled with errors. Lorin C. Woolley has embellished the account, and his additions reveal the fraud. We will go through some of the many errors in a series of posts to show why it is false.

There is a principle important and binding on all of us: The things given us by the Lord should never be overstated. They should be given without embellishment, additions, or interpolations. They

are not ours, but the Lord's. When He entrusts us with something (or anything), then it is our duty to faithfully perform and to keep everything within the bounds the Lord set. Our additions detract from the Lord's work. Joseph constantly understated his experiences. This is one of the signs he is telling us truth. It is in the embellishment that Lorin C. Woolley reveals this is a dishonest account. And this event is critical for those who want to claim they can still practice plural marriage, because the authority has remained in the Fundamentalist groups.

JULY 24, 2012

Sorting Things Out, Part 2

This incident was to have occurred on September 27th of 1886, and L. John Nuttal was in attendance. He was the Secretary to the First Presidency at the time. His journal records the following for that date:

President Cannon still improving in his health. The rest of the party all well.

President Taylor signed several recommends. A letter was received from Elder F. D. Richards, enclosing one from Bro. E.

W. Davis of the 17th Ward, in regard to his call as a missionary and needing help.

A letter was received from Bro. A. Miner dated Sept. 20th stating that he had perfected the reincorporation of Toole Stake Corporation.

A letter was received from Bro. Wm. M. Palmer at Council Bluffs September 22, 1886, giving an account of his labors to that time.

A letter was received from Sister Ellen Norwood Billingsley of Orderville.

A letter was written to Elder Enoch Farr, President, Sandwich Islands Mission, in answer to his letter received September 7th.

A letter was also sent to Bro. Thos. G. Webber of Z.C.M.I.

A letter was written to President W. Woodruff in reply to his letter received September 25th. President Taylor pitched quoits a while this morning, also in the afternoon.

President Cannon in the home most all day; he sat out of doors awhile in the after part of the day. Brother S. Bateman carried in our mail matter.

The reference to “pitching quoits” means a game. The game was much like horseshoes, where you throw a ring made of rope or metal trying to ring it around a stake. In other words, the purported meeting on this day, if it happened at the times reported in the Woolley interview, would have been outdoors, and would have included both morning and afternoon games played by president Taylor. There is no real harmony between the account retold in the Woolley interview and the Nuttall record for that date. The hours’ long meeting in the one and the morning and afternoon games in the other are not describing the same day.

George Q. Cannon’s diary for the same day likewise makes no mention of the purported meeting which Lorin Woolley describes.

On the chance the meeting occurred the day before and was misremembered, again, the diary of L. John Nuttall is void of any reference. The meeting that day is referred to as “our usual meeting” and did not begin until 2:30 in the afternoon. Thus the dating cannot be correct. Both George Q. Cannon and L. John Nuttall were faithful reporters, and would have taken note of anything like the incident which is described by Lorin Woolley.

What that means is the account in the interview has at least one error. When relying on something for so important a matter as holding “authority” to proceed with plural marriages, these details matter a great deal. So, it appears to me the memory of Lorin Woolley is not altogether reliable, but that is a small matter. An event absent from the records of the faithful recorders (First Presidency Secretary and Councilor) does not prove that nothing happened. To be clear, I do think something happened, but what happened was far less than the event as reported by Lorin C. Woolley.

The next matter I think inaccurate in the account is the “light appearing under the door leading to president Taylor’s room.” This is contrary to the way these things happen.

First, from scripture, the presence of a heavenly light is not visible to unintended third-parties. An audience with one man will leave another man standing right next to him without any notice or visible exposure to the heavenly light. This is true of Daniel, who alone saw the vision and his companions did not: Daniel 10:7. It is true of the vision in Joseph Smith’s childhood bedroom, where others were also sleeping when the angel Moroni appeared. See *JS-H 1:30*.

Second, this is not how the Vision of the Three Degrees of Glory was received. Section 76 was an open vision to Joseph and Sidney Rigdon, seen in the same room where about a dozen visitors were present. They did not see any light, or any portion of what Joseph and Sidney saw.

The best account was given by Philo Dibble, reproduced in the *Juvenile Instructor* 27 (May 15, 1892) 303–04, which states in relevant part:

The vision which is recorded in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants [D&C 76] was given at the house of “Father Johnson,” in Hiram, Ohio, and during the time that Joseph and Sidney were in the spirit and saw the heavens open, there were other men in the room, perhaps twelve, among whom I was one during a part of the time—probably two-thirds of the time,—I saw the glory and felt the power, but did not see the vision.

The events and conversation, while they were seeing what is written (and many things were seen and related that are not written,) I will relate as minutely as is necessary.

Joseph would, at intervals, say: “What do I see?” as one might say while looking out the window and beholding what all in the room could not see. Then he would relate what he had seen or what he was looking at. Then Sidney replied, “I see the same.” Presently Sidney would say “what do I see?” and would repeat what he had seen or was seeing, and Joseph would reply, “I see the same.”

This manner of conversation was repeated at short intervals to the end of the vision, and during the whole time not a word was spoken by any other person. Not a sound nor motion made by anyone but Joseph and Sidney, and it seemed to me that they never moved a joint or limb during the time I was there, which I think was over an hour, and to the end of the vision.

Joseph sat firmly and calmly all the time in the midst of a magnificent glory, but Sidney sat limp and pale, apparently as limber as a rag, observing which, Joseph remarked, smilingly, “Sidney is not used to it as I am.”

If Woolley was not invited into the vision (and his account makes clear he was not invited to participate), then this detail of seeing the heavenly light does not belong in an authentic narrative.

It is a detail that, in my view, has been added to embellish the account and make it seem more believable. However, to me it makes the account less believable.

My own experience also tells me it is not trustworthy. The Lord was with me in the Draper Temple recently, and no one present had any idea what transpired nor beheld a thing of what happened there. An interloper does not behold glory, nor participate in such things. The retelling by Woolley, however, makes the mistake of embellishing with the very kind of detail that is incorrect.

This detail, therefore, makes the account less authentic to me, not more. Whatever happened with president Taylor involving the claim he gave the power to seal plural marriages to the “five men” did not, could not, have involved an interloper beholding a heavenly light shining under a closed door. The light of heaven is not natural, coarse or physical. To behold it you must be invited in, and if not invited in you are left without any vision, or knowledge of its presence.

Be careful what tales you trust. There are more problems with Lorin Woolley’s account, which we will continue to discuss...

JULY 25, 2012

Sorting Things Out, Part 3

In addition to the “light” there is the problem of the “three voices.” The fact is that angels do not vibrate the air with vocal chords in order to communicate. They “speak” into the mind of the person they address. This is why there are two different quotes of the John the Baptist by Joseph and Oliver. Both of them “heard” him speak. But the “speaking” was into the mind of these two individuals. The communication “spoken” by John the Baptist was of intelligence, conveyed from the mind to the mind.

Joseph quoted John the Baptist as saying:

Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness. (*JS-H 1:69*)

Oliver quoted John the Baptist as saying:

Upon you my fellow-servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer this Priesthood and this authority, which shall remain upon the earth, that the Sons of Levi may yet offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness. (*JS-H footnote*)

For Joseph it was “the Priesthood of Aaron” and for Oliver it was “this Priesthood.” The concept is identical, the words, however, are not.

For Joseph it was “which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for remission of sins” and for Oliver it was “this authority.” Again, these are the words they used to convey the communication which came into their minds. Identical in substance, different in language. It is one of the evidences they were telling about an authentic event.

For Joseph it was “this shall never be taken from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness” and for Oliver it was “which shall remain on the earth, that the Sons of Levi may yet offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.”

These differences are the result of each converting into our language the thoughts or intelligence which came from the

angel. Angels do not vibrate the air. They “speak” otherwise, in thought—mind to mind.

Similarly, none of those who occupied the same room, even the same bed as Joseph the night of the Angel Moroni’s visit heard anything. No one was awakened during the all-night repetitious lectures to Joseph by the Angel. No one else in the room heard anything. Only silence.

So in the embellished and untrue account of Lorin Woolley he adds a detail about the “voices of three men” coming from inside the room in an attempt to add credibility to the account. It doesn’t. It shows something has been added that did not happen. Details matter. From this I can say he lacks knowledge and experience in contact with angelic ministers.

Putting Joseph Smith into this setting as one of the “three voices” is additionally problematic.

It is also a questionable detail that the guard placed for the inside door would abandon his post and go outside to inspect the window screens. I assume he added this detail to insure the “credibility” of the appearance inside the room through miraculous means. Apparently the creator(s) of the account did not want to trust the lighting effect alone, but wanted to add a miraculous component to the arrival of Christ and Joseph Smith as well. Because as any skeptic would conclude, if they had broken open the exterior window screens to enter, I suppose we would not believe it was Christ or Joseph Smith.

I also note the morning-time glow of president Taylor in the account. This brightness which was difficult to look upon is akin to Moses’ descent from the mount, and designed to furnish that same sense of awe and holiness to the affair. I would think if that

were the case, we would have something in the George Q. Cannon or L. John Nuttall diaries about the incident.

JULY 26, 2012

Sorting Things Out, Part 4

The part of the account where President Taylor puts those who were present under covenant to obey the principle of plural marriage seems authentic. That was why he was in hiding, after all. He left public view and presided over the church in exile, risking arrest if found.

He sacrificed a great deal to retain the principle of plural marriage. I think that did happen, or could have happened because it is entirely consistent with the events underway at the time.

His denunciation of the “manifesto” also seems authentic to me. His motto was “the kingdom of God or nothing” and he proved himself willing to suffer for a cause he believed to be true. He refused to compromise with the Federal Government, and his refusal was known, public and held to his core. So putting people under a covenant to recommit them to resist, as he was doing by example, seems authentic. It requires no embellishment.

But there is a part of the story I left out of the account. I will mention it only in general terms, as I consider the specifics sacrilege. Those who are Fundamentalist are familiar with it. It involves President Taylor, while denouncing the manifesto, rising from the floor, levitating in the air about a foot off the ground, making certain gestures, and reciting an oath very similar in content to the first Temple covenant penalty in place in 1886.

This addition is designed to add terrible significance to the denunciation. It is to inspire awe and terror in the mind of the

listener/reader, but it is entirely out of place. The idea that you needed to add a Temple sign and penalty component to the denunciation of the manifesto is too strange to attribute to President Taylor. It doesn't fit. It seems to me altogether as an embellishment put into the account in order to make the event seem more holy, more sacred and therefore more trustworthy. It does the opposite. Details like these do not belong in the account. They detract. They suggest someone is afraid they won't be believed if they tell the story the way it was. It falls apart to my mind because it takes far too much upon itself.

This leads in turn to another addition to supplement the account which also lacks scriptural support: The appearance of Joseph Smith as the slain, hand-shaking, disembodied Prophet. This detail is added, I assume, because there was concern that unless the event was tied directly to Joseph Smith some people would resist acknowledging the authority.

However, disembodied spirits do not “shake hands” (D&C 129:6–7). Joseph's presence and hand-shaking, like the other added embellishments, are necessary to put the whole thrust of the story over. The purpose is to put into the hands of five men the ability to freelance in sealing plural marriages.

Here, then, is the nub of the whole story: “John Taylor set five apart and gave them authority to perform marriage ceremonies, and also to set others apart to do the same thing as long as they remained on the earth[.]” This is critical for what the Fundamentalists want to justify. They must have this in order to be able to claim post-John Taylor and post-Manifesto marriage sealings were authorized and authoritative.

First, to be clear: I think John Taylor did give authority to these five men to seal other plural marriages. In the time and

setting, it makes absolute sense. They were sealing outside of the Temples, and this was being done by the highest church authorities. There is every reason to believe the difficulties of avoiding Federal prosecution tipped in favor of giving authority for others to move plural marriage sealings forward. Just like today there are others who seal marriages in addition to the church President.

HOWEVER,—and this is the problem in the account which nagged the telling of this tale and required its embellishment—this kind of delegation won't work to perpetuate the practice indefinitely. Even if President Taylor wanted to extend his reach and allow other men to be sealers during his underground days, it won't work once President Taylor died. Their commission is entirely dependent upon the delegation by President Taylor, and cannot run independent from him. When he died, their commission needed to be renewed by President Woodruff. When it wasn't, then their commission ended.

This is because of the very revelation upon which Fundamentalist doctrine is grounded: Section 132. In Section 132 the power to seal is consolidated in but one man at a time, “and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred” according to the revelation establishing the very doctrine they defend (D&C 132:7). If this was John Taylor when the sealing authority was given, then the one man who could authorize it was John Taylor. When he died, the one man would have been Wilford Woodruff. You can't, in any event, have “five set apart and given authority” who would later rival Wilford Woodruff's claim to the position. That alone is contrary to the order in Section 132. This has been discussed in *Beloved Enos*. The claims are unscriptural and indefensible.

This scriptural impediment to the claim is the very reason we see added the light under the door, the three voices, the levitating and sacrilegious oath pronouncing President Taylor, and the disembodied Joseph Smith shaking hands and presiding over the affair. They are added, though they could not possibly have happened in that way, precisely to overcome the scriptural impediment to the authority claimed by Fundamentalists to be able to continue to seal plural marriages.

I disbelieve the account, though I do not question whether President Taylor gave the ability to seal to other men in order to overcome Federal harassment at the time he was president. But that delegation ended with his death.

To now have various pretenders all claiming they can track back to John Taylor and one of these five men their “line of authority” to seal plural marriages is a deception. There is only one man at a time who can do this. Even the church now disclaims they can perform such rites.

JULY 27, 2012

Sorting Things Out, Part 5

The reason this whole topic of plural marriage has assumed cosmic meaning in the minds of our Fundamentalist brothers and sisters is because of Brigham Young’s advocacy of this while leading the church. Brigham Young is a pretty thin reed to lean upon when it comes to doctrine, and I mean any doctrine. His utility to the Lord did not include his ability to teach, but his ability to lead, colonize and organize. He was a genius in these areas. Doctrinally, however, he has proven to be problematic.

Inside the church, he has been referred to as a man whose statements were “made in the absence of revelation” (link: <http://>

www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/race-church)” His position on priesthood ban for those of African blood has been denounced (link: <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/racial-remarks-in-washington-post-article>) and abandoned (link: <https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/od/2?lang=eng>). His teachings on plural marriage have been abandoned (link: <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/racial-remarks-in-washington-post-article>). His doctrine of Adam-God has been called a “false theory” (link: <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1976/10/our-own-liahona?lang=eng>) His doctrine of annihilation of the spirits of evil beings has been renounced. However, Fundamentalists do not respect the same tradition as those who are faithful LDS members. Therefore, for those who stake their salvation on his teachings, I want to use Brigham Young’s own words to help them see how thin a reed they lean on for establishing the central importance of plural marriage for exaltation.

Brigham Young’s ordination to the apostleship was “not complete” according to those who ordained him,

till God has laid His hands upon [him]. We require as much to qualify us as did those who have gone before us; God is the same. If the Savior in former days laid His hands upon His disciples, why not in the latter days? (*DHC* 2:196)

Twenty-four years later he informed the saints this had not happened. He thought that perhaps “when [he] had lived to be as old as was Moses when the Lord appeared to him, that perhaps I then may hold communion with the Lord” (*JD* 7:243). In 1863 he reaffirmed that no such visit had taken place, but he still hoped if he lived to be eighty it might (*JD* 10:23). So, although he held the apostleship as an office in the church, his ordination to that

office was conditioned on an event he explained had not been consummated by the Lord's confirming ordination. How much confidence should that give you when considering his teachings?

He hesitated to call himself a "prophet, seer and revelator," but allowed others to associate those titles with him:

[After putting the motion for himself to be sustained as 'Prophet, Seer, and Revelator,' the President remarked:] I will say that I never dictated the latter part of that sentence. I will make the remark, because those words in that connection always made me feel as though I am called more than I am deserving of. I am Brigham Young, an Apostle of Joseph Smith, and also of Jesus Christ. If I have been profitable to these people, I am glad of it. The brethren call me so; and if it be so, I am glad. (*The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, Vol. 3, p. 1347)

He explained he was not a visionary man: "I am not going to interpret dreams; for I don't profess to be such a Prophet as were Joseph Smith and Daniel; but I am a Yankee guesser[.]" (*The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, Vol. 3, p. 1306). He considered himself "called of Joseph" and not of the Lord:

I do not want to skip Joseph, Peter, Jesus, Moses and go to my Father in Heaven. All I ask for is to be guided by the spirit of Joseph, then let others be governed by their head, or priesthood. Joseph enjoyed the priviliges which I never thought I had. Joseph was called of God. I was called of Joseph. (*The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, Vol. 2, p. 1108)

Is being "called of Joseph" a sufficient basis for you to trust the man with your eternal salvation?

Even when Joseph gave him the assignment to finish the Temple rites, he remained uncertain about how this would be accomplished.

Ultimately, he concluded that whatever he did would be fixed by the resurrected Joseph Smith during the Millennium:

After Joseph comes to us in his resurrected body he will more fully instruct us concerning the Baptism for the dead and the sealing ordinances. He will say be baptized for this man and that man and that man be sealed to that man and such a man to such a man, and connect the Priesthood together. I tell you their [sic] will not be much of this done until Joseph comes. He is our spiritual Father. Our hearts are already turned to him and his to us. This [is] the order of the Holy Priesthood and we shall continue to administer in the ordinances of the kingdom of God here on Earth. (*The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, Vol. 2, p. 1034)

Temple rites would require Joseph, not President Young, to fix the seals.

On matters affecting eternal salvation, I would not rely on a “Yankee guesser” who considered himself “called of Joseph” and not called of Christ, to give you what you need for salvation. As I have explained in *Passing the Heavenly Gift* and this blog, his insistence on plural marriage as a condition of being saved is not warranted by the language of Section 132.

Brigham Young explained how church leadership was not affected by who held office. His theory was that anyone could be elected, and as long as the followers prayed for them things would go perfectly:

Take any man in this kingdom, and if the people say that they will make him a President, or a Bishop, or elect him to fill any other office, and the faith of the people is concentrated to receive light through that officer or pipe laid by the power of the Priesthood from the throne of God, you might as well

try to move the heavens as to receive anything wrong through that conductor. No matter whom you elect for an officer, if your faith is concentrated in him through whom to receive the things which he is appointed to administer in, light will come to you. Let a presiding officer or a Bishop turn away from righteousness, and the Lord Almighty would give him the lock-jaw, if he could not stop his mouth in any other way, or send a fit of numb palsy on him, so that he could not act, as sure as the people over whom he presided were right, that they might not be led astray. (*Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, Vol. 3, p. 1379, November 29, 1857; the talk can also found at *JD* Vol. 6 beginning on p. 93)

Of course, this theory did not work. As an example, Bishop Warren Snow was elected to be Bishop in Manti, but was involved in stealing tithing. Brigham Young sent traveling Bishop A. Milton Musser, then also Orson Hyde, to review records. They found between \$5,000 and \$8,000 of tithing missing, a substantial sum in those times.

Though he explained this theory, I do not think Brigham Young believed it at all. Had he believed it, he would not have challenged Sidney Rigdon's claims to lead following the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum. If "any man in this kingdom" could lead, then why not Sidney? If "light will come to you" through any such man, then why not Sidney? The argument was between Sidney (who claimed revelation) and Brigham Young (who claimed to have "keys"). As a result, the debate required the church to choose between Sidney's claims based on revelation and accept Brigham Young's administrative "keys" as the source. Brigham Young's leadership theory (that anyone could lead if prayed for by

the membership) would have allowed the church to have both if Sidney were sustained. But Brigham Young's insistence on having control in his quorum forced a vote by the Nauvoo Saints. The vote resulted in abandoning revelation in favor of administrative "keys" — a choice which has affected church history ever since.

This initial vote established power in the Twelve, but within three years Brigham Young found it cumbersome. He had trouble getting consensus, and John Taylor and Parley Pratt opposed him on many issues. On December 1849 he got another vote making him church president and allowing him to organize the First Presidency, an easier administrative group to control.

Once Hyrum and Joseph died, and Brigham Young succeeded in getting elected as church President, the church operated under his leadership for nearly three decades. President Taylor's entire presidency was in exile, avoiding Federal prosecution. Wilford Woodruff compromised on the plural marriage teaching for statehood, and his presidency was thereafter affected by debate about the propriety of that decision and what it meant for the church.

It was not until the 1900's that the church was not in the grip of a conflict brought about by Brigham Young's presidency and teachings. By that time the mold had been set, and the form put into that mold had hardened. It doesn't matter whether you consider yourself "Fundamentalist" or mainstream, we are all caught inside the pattern established by the Yankee guesser and the immediate aftermath. Do you want to trust your eternal welfare to him? Do you trust that man so much that you will allow his pattern to control your belief in the restoration?

I think the church has reacted poorly to the dilemma created by this man's teachings. They have denounced his major contributions,

and have cast aside many other of his teachings and practices. Those who have remained devoted to these doctrines believe what they hold dear came from a reliable source. But remember, even he rejected the idea he was a “Prophet, Seer and Revelator” because he was only an apostle of Joseph’s. The church was right to say recently that he spoke “in the absence of revelation” because that is what he did.

The mistake Fundamentalists have made is not in believing in the system, but in trusting a man. He is no more worthy of your confidence than Lorin C. Woolley. The revelation you trust is carefully composed, and defines “the eternal marriage covenant” as between one man and one wife. That is all you need for exaltation. Brigham Young’s excesses on this matter are no more trustworthy than the value of another Yankee guesser. He did what he understood. But his understanding is and was flawed. This is why the church has rejected his teachings on the core of his beliefs: plural marriage, Adam-God, priesthood ban, potential annihilation of damned souls, blood atonement, kingdom of God as earthly institution, etc. There are good reasons for the doctrinal disfavor between him and the same church he led for three decades. Turning to Lorin C. Woolley to preserve Brigham Young’s legacy is not improving your state. It is modeling a flawed model.

Despite this, to his credit, Brigham Young never invented visitations, claimed more for himself than that he was a “good hand to have around” and denied he was visited by the Lord. These statements reflect a great deal more credit on Brigham Young than the embellishments made by Brother Woolley reflect on him.

I do not fault Fundamentalists for these problems. They were created by the elected President successor to Joseph and Hyrum. He held the office, and he taught what he taught. But that does not

make him right before God. Members of the LDS church should be the first to have charity for this circumstance. We should be willing to forgive this devotion to Brigham Young's teachings because they originated with a man who was, after all, elected to lead the church for three decades. The church refused to abandon wives when it abandoned plural marriage, and Fundamentalists who would return should not be required to tear apart their families. They should reject the doctrine, and stop teaching it to their children. But the church is so very sensitive about this issue that we don't share the same attitude.

I personally believe this problem is cured by ceasing the practice, but leaving existing families intact. I believe those who do this will be welcomed in Zion., but those who continue to advocate and insist this is fundamental to salvation itself, I don't think will be welcomed. The conditions that are required to allow it are not met, and cannot be met by the Fundamentalists. They should recognize this and repent.

JULY 28, 2012

Brigham Young's Telestial Kingdom

I have completed an essay about Brigham Young and his Telestial Kingdom. The paper is available for download on Scribd. You do not need a Facebook account to access Scribd, but you do need a Scribd account. They are free and easy to set up.

As always, I suggest you read the footnotes.

Link: [Brigham Young's Telestial Kingdom](#).

We have received some comments regarding inability to download the Brigham Young essay on Scribd. I have spent some time looking into this. I can access it from all computers, multiple

browsers and an iPad. I can read it from the site, I can download it. the only thing I didn't try is printing it. However, on the Scribd website there is a possibility that it will show an occasional blank page. If you close Scribd and open it up again the pages will be there.

JULY 29, 2012

A Few Details

The following excerpt comes from an article by Susan Easton Black, published in *BYU Studies*:

After the death of Emma Smith in 1879 and the demolition of the bee house that had once sheltered the graves, conjecture arose over the exact location of the martyrs' burial site. Family members could not point with confidence to where the bodies were laid. Joseph Smith III reported, "I didn't see the bodies buried. I saw them dig them up. I saw them take a knife and cut a lock of hair off of Joseph and give to Emma, but I didn't follow over and watch them bury them." David Hyrum Smith, youngest son of Joseph Smith Jr., composed "The Unknown Grave":

There's an unknown grave in a green lowly spot,
The form that it covers will ne'er be forgot.
Where haven trees spread and the wild locusts wave
Their fragrant white blooms over the unknown grave,
Over the unknown grave.

* * *

The prophet whose life was destroyed by his foes
Sleeps now where no hand may disturb his repose,
Till trumpets of God drown the notes of the wave
And we see him arise from his unknown grave,

God bless that unknown grave.

When the waters of Lake Cooper threatened to flood the area where the graves were thought to be, leaders of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints decided to locate the bodies and remove them to higher ground and to place an appropriate monument over their graves. W. O. Hands was appointed to direct a small group of surveyors and engineers to search for the missing graves. They began digging on 9 January 1928, and on 16 January they found them. The remains of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum, as well as those of Emma, were exhumed from their resting place. The remains were arranged in silk-lined wood boxes that were placed side-by-side seventeen feet north of where the bodies of Joseph and Hyrum had been exhumed. Then the bodies were reburied on Friday, 20 January 1928, and the graves were marked.

On 21 January 1928 Samuel O. Bennion, president of the Central States Mission, wrote to President Heber J. Grant and his counselors about the “exhuming of the bodies of the Prophet and his brother Hyrum.” In his letter he reported asking Frederick M. Smith, president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, “Why didn’t you let the bodies of these men rest where they were?” In response, he was told, “[I] wanted to find out if the graves of these men were down by what was once called the Spring House.” President Bennion wrote, “It is my impression brethren that he had heard reports that Brigham Young took the bodies of Joseph and Hyrum to Utah and that he wanted to prove it untrue.” Bennion stated, “I could hardly keep the tears back.”

In 1991, under the joint direction of leaders from the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and

leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, new tombstones marking their remains became the focus of a gardenlike cemetery near the Homestead in Nauvoo. On 4 August 1991 the newly renovated cemetery was dedicated by Wallace B. Smith, great-grandson of Joseph Smith and president of the RLDS Church. Elder M. Russell Ballard, a great-great-grandson of Hyrum Smith, represented the LDS Church.

If Joseph was resurrected in 1886, his body could not have been relocated in 1928.

Lorin C. Woolley spoke throughout as an interloper. He was spying and overhearing, but wasn't invited into the events. Therefore, his statements should be viewed from that vantagepoint. On the Mount of Transfiguration Peter, James and John were invited by the Lord precisely so they would witness what took place. They saw and heard as invited participants, not interlopers. If Lorin C. Woolley was invited to witness the events, the description would have been otherwise and read much differently.

When Philo saw Joseph “in the midst of a magnificent glory” that was Joseph experiencing the glory, not Philo. Joseph was in the midst of this experience, seeing the Father and Son at the Throne of God. But that description is of Joseph's being in the “midst” of the experience. Others understood what Joseph was undergoing from the words being spoken.

When he states he “saw the glory and felt the power, but did not witness the vision” he is referring to the same thing any of us witness when reading Section 76. It was this section which got me serious about considering Mormonism. It is glorious. It radiated power to me the instant I first read it. But seeing the glory of that

great vision as I read it, like Philo Dibble's experience hearing it dictated by Joseph, did not involve blinding light—nor seeing light from under a doorway. It was and still is a glorious document and vision. You can still feel the power of it today.

Brigham Young was a necessary preserver of the faith. Without him the church would have stumbled. Sidney Rigdon was impaired, and we would not have done as well, and may have done much worse, with him at the helm. The point is that the church was faced with a dilemma with the loss of BOTH Joseph and Hyrum. We had no good alternative. We took the one which was probably the most practical. We have to live with it.

But that does not mean we should avoid understanding the full implications of the choice. Every choice has consequences. Until we gather together our best understanding of what happened, and sort out what was going on, we can't know much of God's dealing in our day.

We should not just bury our heads and trust happy stories. We are responsible for our own salvation or damnation.

I am the best kind of church member: I willingly accept full responsibility for the eternal outcome. As God is my witness, I will never point to Brigham Young, or Spencer W. Kimball, or Bruce R. McConkie, or Boyd K. Packer, or Thomas S. Monson in the afterlife and blame them for my own condition. I will accept sole responsibility for my eternal state. No man is my leader. No man is responsible for my understanding. I alone will blame myself for any failure, and accept no credit for what I got right. I trust only in the grace and mercy of Christ and rely utterly on His power to

save me. The general authorities and local leaders ought to want every church member to be like that.

If a Fundamentalist were to return to church, they would not be welcomed by the institution. They wouldn't have membership records, nor receive callings, nor be able to pay tithing. But they could worship there, and in many wards would be fellowshipped by the members even if the institution excluded them. They would be "visitors" and not members. But that shouldn't deter them. In fact, if enough of them began this practice, the institution would not be oblivious to their presence. When a significant number of people were doing this, policies would be adapted to allow sincere people to repent and return. The leadership of the church would respond. But faithful return will have to precede that even being possible. It would require humility, to be sure.

CHAPTER 12

Forgiving and Charity

JULY 31, 2012

Time Required to Repent

Repentance does not require a time period. Look at Alma the Younger, the sons of Mosiah, and the Apostle Paul. Now these were encounters with God, but so were the conversions of many of the Lamanites (Alma 18:40–42; 22:18, among others).

The Lord tells you to repent. If you do, He remembers your sins no longer. Confess and forsake them, and you will be forgiven (D&C 58:42–43). Or, in other words, change. Turn away from your sins and face God instead.

All those labors performed by Alma the Younger, the sons of Mosiah, and the Apostle Paul, after repentance, were not to obtain forgiveness. They were the “fruit” of repentance, or the result of the new direction that they were heading (See Matt. 3:8; Luke 3:8; Alma 5:62; 13:13; Moroni 8:24–26).

God alone forgives. His forgiveness is not dependent on your good works; your good works are proof of His forgiveness (Helaman 12:24; Gal. 5:22–25).

AUGUST 1, 2012

Freedom from Sins

The reason “confession” of sin is required, is to free the victim (D&C 58:43). Confession robs the accuser of his power to accuse (Rev. 12:10).

Once the sins of Alma and Younger and the sons of Mosiah were known, confessed and public, the sins no longer had any control over them. They felt no shame for these sins because confessing and admitting they were sinful robbed sin of its power. Similarly, the Apostle Paul’s admission of his sinful past allowed him to move on to accepting and celebrating God’s grace (1 Tim. 1:12–16).

There is power in confessing. It puts the confessor above his sin (James 5:16). We confess to celebrate God’s great deliverance of us. We are all weak. It is part of worshipping Him (D&C 59:12). This is why the testimony of God’s redemption by Alma the Younger included confession of his own sins (Alma 36:6, 12–14).

Those who claim they are holy men, without sin, and thereby cover their weaknesses while courting the praise and admiration of others, have no truth in them (1 John 1:8). But if we confess we are sinful and weak, God is faithful to forgive us (1 John 1:9).

Freedom from sin can only come through admitting your sinful nature. When we confess, He forgives (D&C 64:7).

AUGUST 2, 2012

Weakness and Repentance

We are all given weakness as part of life here in mortality. It is a gift from God. (Ether 12: 27). Repentance requires us to turn away from sin, and to face a new direction where God is found.

Despite our hopes, and our desires, and our best efforts, we are confined to a place and occupy circumstances where we are “weak” (*Id.*). The Lord promises, however, that He will “make weak things strong” (Ether 12:27). What does that mean? How does our “weakness” become “strong?”

It does not involve any magic. We do not get some easy and effortless cure to our weakness just because we desire to change. We must actually change. How do we change? The Lord explains that to Moroni in the same conversation: “I will show unto them that faith, hope and charity bringeth unto me—the fountain of righteousness” (Ether 12:28). Or, in other words, the “strength” we hope to receive comes from “faith” in Christ. Our “hope” is found through Him. Our “charity” is a gift also.

The “strength” is entirely borrowed. We are only as strong as our dependence on Him. Our “weakness” is strength only as we depend on Him and His rescue.

For some of us, that “strength” will involve longsuffering and continual reminders through our failure that we have been “given weakness” for a purpose—that we may be humble. As we struggle, we find exposed to our view the weakness we despise in ourselves, long to overcome, and struggle with daily, like a thorn in our flesh tearing at us. Paul begged the Lord to remove his, and was told repeatedly this weakness would remain there to afflict him so he might be humble (2 Cor. 12:7–9). Therefore, Paul took consolation in the knowledge this struggle was godly (2 Cor. 12:10).

Why should you be spared the struggle? Why should you not be kept humble by the weakness you have within? Why should you not take up your cross and follow Him? (Mark 10:21). Should your cross be anything other than a revelation to you of your own dependence on God, and need for Him?

Repentance is the start of a journey undertaken between you and your Lord. He will reveal you and Him to you through that journey. Hence the requirement for repentance in order to enter into His kingdom.

AUGUST 3, 2012

Forgiving to be Forgiven

Once you begin to repent the real work commences. God forgives, but retaining forgiveness requires that we follow Him.

We are not going to develop into His children until we have become acquainted with His way. He tells us what we must do to learn of Him. We must do His work, join in His labor to save souls:

And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. (Luke 6:31-38)

Once forgiven, we forgive. We take on ourselves the role of the intercessor by accepting the shame and abuse of this world, and both forgive and pray for those who give offenses. Through this, we come to understand our Lord because we are like Him.

This is what we see in Lehi. After learning of God's impending judgments against Jerusalem, he prayed on behalf of "his people" (those who were condemned) with "all his heart." 1 Ne. 1:5. His example can be found mirrored in all who repent. They display His grace by what they suffer for His cause.

Christ taught who He was, then lived the example of what a redeemed life would be. He sacrificed Himself. Similarly His followers sacrifice themselves. Perhaps not by dying, as He did and as Joseph did, and as Steven did, and Paul, and Peter, and Abinadi and Hyrum. But by the way they live—taking offenses and forgiving. This is how we obtain broken hearts and contrite spirits, because this world is always at war with the Saints of God. Here the Children of God are strangers and sojourners.

AUGUST 4, 2012

When

When will there ever be a generation willing to learn from the mistakes of the past? Why are the patterns and errors endlessly repeated? Will there never be people willing to let the Holy Spirit guide them rather than relying on their own conceit?

AUGUST 6, 2012

Charity

I've written about how uncharitable it is to offer truth before a person is ready for it. Choking them with information they are not

ready to receive it is a technique used with some success by Mormon critics. It works. There is no need to resort to distorting things, only to tell truths before someone is prepared to receive them.

The opposite is also true. When someone needs to hear more, then to withhold it from them is equally uncharitable. We starve them, and leave them to wither and die in their faith when we tell them the longing they have to know more cannot be satisfied by the Gospel. It is unkind, uncharitable and an offense to the Lord to tell someone their endowment from God of natural curiosity should be suppressed. This longing to know more is righteous. We are supposed to hunger and thirst to know more. Some people have quenched this desire and killed the child-like attribute to search deeply and long for answers. This does not mean we all have.

No one should be left disappointed by the reply that “you don’t need to know that.” Joseph asserted the Gospel included “all truth.” Brigham Young did as well. Joseph said,

Mormonism is truth; and every man who embraces it feels himself at liberty to embrace every truth: consequently the shackles of superstition, bigotry, ignorance, and priestcraft, fall at once from his neck; and his eyes are opened to see the truth, and truth greatly prevails... (See *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, chap. 22).

Brigham said,

Mormonism,” so-called, embraces every principle pertaining to life and salvation, for time and eternity. No matter who has it. If the infidel has got truth it belongs to “Mormonism.” The truth and sound doctrine possessed by the sectarian world, and they have a great deal, all belong to this Church. As for their morality, many of them are, morally, just as good as we are. All

that is good, lovely, and praiseworthy belongs to this Church and Kingdom. “Mormonism” includes all truth. There is no truth but what belongs to the Gospel. It is life, eternal life; it is bliss; it is the fullness of all things in the gods and in the eternities of the gods. (*DBY*, p. 3)

We have yet to figure out some of the things restored to us from Abraham. We have not plumbed the depths of the Doctrine and Covenants. To shut down inquiry because “we don’t need to know about that” is not only bad doctrine, it is a rejection of what the Restoration was intended to bestow on us.

Of all the people on earth, Latter-day Saints ought to be the most open, most inquisitive, and most interesting people of all. We should be creative, and filled with new ideas and thought. Our church meetings were once places where exciting and interesting gospel material was openly discussed.

When our time is spent discouraging inquiries, asserting we have no business knowing about our history, and shutting minds, we run open the door for a repeat of the Dark Ages. It will be locally confined to the dogmatic and intolerant believers in the most reactionary form of Mormonism; the brand utilized by the correlating of materials. Ideas are impossible to control, but the attempt will discourage and alienate the very best minds we have among us.

Differing views are not evil. Skepticism is not vile. An honest soul struggling with our faith deserves the compassion and kindness of being allowed to express themselves without feeling like something is wrong with them. All the useful questions raised should be considered, studied and answers should be sought. We need to have the confidence to believe there are answers. Even if

we haven't discovered them yet, there are still answers. And those answers can include information that requires us to rework our understanding.

Charity flows both ways: from telling too much without preparation, to hiding information from those who are ready to hear more truth. Charity also requires us to accept and fellowship with people who are scattered along a broad spectrum, from immature faith to mature understanding. How often could we benefit from hearing from others about issues which they have struggled to understand, but who remain silent because they fear our reaction?

AUGUST 7, 2012

Early Church Priorities

In 1836, Parley Pratt went to Toronto, Canada to continue his missionary work. He took a letter of introduction for John Taylor, who had been active in a religious reform movement. On May 9, 1836 Parley Pratt baptized John Taylor. That conversion was instrumental in bringing a number of others into the church who had respected John Taylor as a religious figure before his conversion.

By November, Parley Pratt was back in Kirtland and wrote a letter to his friend and recent convert. John Taylor was a new member when the letter was written, having been baptized only 6 months earlier. The content of the letter shows what was considered appropriate for even the newest of Latter-day Saints in 1836. Parley wrote:

For my part I never can rest until my eyes have seen my Redeemer. Until I have gazed like Nephi upon the glories of the Celestial world. Until I can come into full communion and familiar converse with the angels of glory and the spirits of just

men made perfect through the blood of Christ. And I testify to all, both small and great, both male and female, that if they stop short of the full enjoyment of these things they stop short of the blessings freely offered to every creature in the Gospel. (Parley Pratt letter to John Taylor, November 27, 1836; spellings and punctuation corrected)

This was once fundamental, even basic teaching offered even to new converts. It did no damage to John Taylor.

AUGUST 8, 2012

Signs

Signs do not produce faith (D&C 63:9). Signs follow faith (*Id.*).

Those who “seek signs” are wicked, often adulterous (Matt. 12:39, Matt. 16:4). Those who want a sign before they will believe cannot develop faith (Ether 12:6).

Signs which follow faith do not come as a result of what men seek, but come as a result of what God wills (D&C 63:10).

Signs, given by God, according to His will, create mighty works by men (D&C 63:11). However, God’s mighty works are often accomplished by small means. Events that are “mighty even unto the power of deliverance” (1 Ne. 1:20), can be accomplished by so little a means as God warning a family to flee (1 Ne. 2:2).

God preserved His Son through “small means” (Matt. 2:13–14).

The Lord preserved mankind through the destruction at the time of Noah using only a small family (Gen. 7:23).

There will be “signs” and “small means” and “mighty works” still, but they will seem as nothing to those who do not believe. But to people of faith, they will be the power of God unto salvation.

AUGUST 9, 2012

Nephi on Holy Spirit

Nephi explained that many people harden themselves against the influence of the Holy Spirit, and consequently were unable to determine what was worth keeping and what should be cast away. He wrote:

But behold, there are many that harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit, that it hath no place in them; wherefore, they cast many things away which are written and esteem them as things of naught. (2 Ne. 33:2)

What does it mean to “harden your heart?”

How does “hardening your heart” affect the influence of the Holy Spirit?

Why does the Holy Spirit equip you to decide whether something is to be valued or to be “cast away?” Can you decide on your own what is of value?

Do you need to receive influence from the Holy Spirit in order to understand something is from God? To understand something is of value?

What does it mean to “cast away” the things found in scripture?

Can you read them, even associate meaning with them, and still cast them away?

Can you support your own view using scripture and “cast them away” at the same time? How do you turn scripture into “things of naught?”

Are distracting, inspirational stories that do not teach true doctrine capable of hardening your heart? Are flattering words that do not call you to repent likely to harden your heart?

Can scriptures which were written under the influence of the Holy Ghost become a “thing of naught” when read by someone who has hardened their heart?

Can true doctrine become a “thing of naught” even if taught by the power of the Holy Ghost, if the listener hardens their heart?

The measure of the importance of this verse is found in a revelation given to Joseph Smith about the destruction of the wicked:

For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day. (D&C 45:57)

What is the difference between “taking the Holy Spirit for your guide” and “hardening your heart against the Holy Spirit?”

How does the Holy Spirit guide so you cannot be deceived?

How does a person become “wise” and “receive the truth?”

What does it mean to be “hewn down and cast into the fire?”

What does it mean to “abide the day?”

How does the Holy Spirit figure into surviving the coming judgments of God?

Can you trust your own wisdom, intellect and abilities? Can any person, no matter what their IQ, be guided by the Holy Spirit? Does education, position, social status or qualifications equip you to know as much as the Holy Spirit?

AUGUST 10, 2012

Holy Ghost and Holy Spirit

Are the “Holy Ghost” and the “Holy Spirit” the same? When Nephi refers to the “Holy Ghost” in 2 Ne. 33:1, but then uses “Holy Spirit”

in the next verse (2 Ne. 33:2), does he have two different things in mind?

Joseph Smith defined the “Holy Spirit” as the “mind of the Father and Son” in The Lectures on Faith. Here is an excerpt:

There are two personages who constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme power over all things—by whom all things were created and made, that are created and made, whether visible or invisible: whether in heaven, on earth, or in the earth, under the earth, or throughout the immensity of space—They are the Father and the Son: The Father being a personage of spirit, glory and power: possessing all perfection and fulness: The Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle, made, or fashioned like unto man, or being in the form and likeness of man, or, rather, man was formed after his likeness, and in his image;—he is also the express image and likeness of the personage of the Father: possessing all the fulness of the Father, or, the same fulness with the Father; being begotten of him, and was ordained from before the foundation of the world to be a propitiation for the sins of all those who should believe on his name, and is called the Son because of the flesh—and descended in suffering below that which man can suffer, or, in other words, suffered greater sufferings, and was exposed to more powerful contradictions than any man can be. But notwithstanding all this, he kept the law of God, and remained without sin: Showing thereby that it is in the power of man to keep the law and remain also without sin. And also, that by him a righteous judgment might come upon all flesh, and that all who walk not in the law of God, may justly be condemned by the law, and have no excuse for

their sins. And he being the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and having overcome, received a fulness of the glory of the Father—possessing the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit, that bears record of the Father and the Son, and these three are one, or in other words, these three constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme power over all things: by whom all things were created and made, that were created and made: and these three constitute the Godhead, and are one: The Father and the Son possessing the same mind, the same wisdom, glory, power and fulness: Filling all in all—the Son being filled with the fulness of the Mind, glory and power, or, in other words, the Spirit, glory and power of the Father—possessing all knowledge and glory, and the same kingdom: sitting at the right hand of power, in the express image and likeness of the Father—a Mediator for man—being filled with the fulness of the Mind of the Father, or, in other words, the Spirit of the Father: which Spirit is shed forth upon all who believe on his name and keep his commandments: and all those who keep his commandments shall grow up from grace to grace, and become heirs of the heavenly kingdom, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ; possessing the same mind, being transformed into the same image or likeness, even the express image of him who fills all in all: being filled with the fulness of his glory, and become one in him, even as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one. (Lecture 5, Paragraph 2)

The forgoing was published in 1835.

In a lecture given in 1843, Joseph stated the following (which can be found in D&C 130:22):

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

If the Holy Ghost is a “personage of Spirit” and it can “dwell in us,” and the Holy Spirit is “the mind of the Father and Son” then are they the same thing?

The scriptures have explained that the “Holy Ghost” which dwells in you—this personage of Spirit—has the following other descriptions, or attributes:

- the Comforter
- the record of heaven
- the truth of all things
- the peaceable things of immortal glory
- that which quickeneth all things
- that which knoweth all things
- that which has all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice and judgment (Moses 6:61).

This is a description of the personage of Spirit which dwells inside you. This is the Holy Ghost. This is something that can be in contact with the Holy Spirit, or the “mind of the Father and Son.”

Perhaps you should look into this topic. Perhaps there is something to be found in this review.

There are many times when the term “Ghost” and the term “Spirit” are used interchangeably. The distinction is not appreciated by some translators. Therefore, if there is a difference between these two, you will need to be careful about trusting different translator's use of the terms. They may not have any distinction in mind.

If there is a difference, then what does that say about revelation? What does that say about you? And, keeping in mind yesterday's post, what does that say about 2 Ne. 33:1-2?

AUGUST 11, 2012

Clarification About Method

For new readers, I want to clarify the methods used in this blog. Comments are for me to read. If they raise a question needing a response, they provoke a response. They are not for dialogue.

New readers can go back to the beginning of the blog and read through the comments when they were posted and included. Whether critical or supportive, they were all put up. The results were distracting, and hindered my intentions. The debates and distractions ultimately proved to be too much, and comments were eliminated altogether.

We recently turned the comment feature back on, NOT to publish comments, but so readers could make comments that I would read. I do read all comments that come in, but they are never posted on the blog, and they won't ever be posted on the blog. If you are anxious to comment, debate, criticize or offer your own opinions you are welcome to do so. Use the Internet and put whatever you want up for the world to read. This is not the entire universe of opportunity to discuss. It is a small, privately written, publicly viewable blog written to explain what I think important.

Some topics are impossible to explain in this medium. They require much more. As a result there are either books or essays that deal with those topics.

I am interested in doctrine. When I write about history, it is in the context of explaining doctrine. I do not attempt to give a

complete history of the restoration. I focus only on those examples taken from our history which illustrate doctrine, or the transition from one understanding of a doctrinal matter early in the restoration to how the understanding of the doctrine has changed. I provide a guideline or outline, and leave it for historians to work out the details. Almost everything I have written about history has been skeletal, and would require many more words to finish the picture. But once the outlines have been set, any historian can work to fill in the missing details. In my view, what is needed is a new outline. To me, this is for the sole purpose of understanding doctrine.

In “Brigham Young’s Telesstial Kingdom”, as in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, if you read it as an exposition about doctrine you will find it more helpful than if you read it merely as history. Nephi explained his method, which was to use examples from history to preserve the truth (1 Ne. 19:3–6). I focus on the doctrine, or sacred teachings in an effort to preserve the memory of the Lord’s original dealings as they relate to the restoration. This will allow those who are interested in understanding the restoration to see again the missing elements.

It is not my desire to debate anyone. I’ve not been asked by the Lord to do that. I’m also not interested in obtaining a following, undermining the church authorities, or to create unease among faithful Latter-day Saints—which I consider myself. What I write is for the sole purpose of preserving what was restored. To do that, like Nephi, it is necessary to touch upon excerpts from our history.

There is no reason for you to read this blog if it upsets or offends you. There are many, many other blogs, books, entertainers, authors and resources where your views can be reinforced.

Next week will be spent dealing with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost, and the different statements made by Joseph Smith on these

topics. It was introduced in two posts last Thursday and Friday. That will continue next week. If it interests you, read it. If not, don't. But there will be no debate. I am not interested in contention.

Finally, my purpose is very limited. I want to discharge an obligation, not entertain. When judged by my words and works, I wish the Lord to vindicate me for having said what needed to be said, rather than to be praised by others. I appreciate contrary views, but that is all. Criticism can help me understand someone's confusion or opposition, and I read it with that in mind. But if the criticism is merely intended to say there is another way to understand our history and doctrine, then I readily concede much of what I write is different and out of sync with popular opinion in the church today. The mainstream is where I began. I have read and was persuaded by the doctrinal work of President Joseph Fielding Smith and his son-in-law Bruce R. McConkie's. I was uber-orthodox in the beginning. I continue to read what is put into print by the Brethren. I am an admirer of Boyd K. Packer. I understand the mainstream arguments and teachings, and keep myself informed by them continually. I attend church every week, read the Ensign and Church News, and speak often with people in positions of authority as well as employees inside the Church Office Building. I am as "active" as any faithful Latter-day Saint. I am as informed as you are about any recent talks, issues or concerns propounded by the church. I have an obligation to keep and that is what I work to accomplish.

Finally, I am not concerned about reputation or praise. No one need defend me. If I cared about looking good in the eyes of others, I could never have been trusted by the Lord. Long ago I left that on the altar. Therefore, if I have no need to defend myself from criticism, you need not take up that cause.

CHAPTER 13

God's Many Works

AUGUST 13, 2012

God's Many Works

When trying to understand how God touches us, it is better to start with His many works instead of a vocabulary. In fact, we often are misled into believing that once we know a vocabulary term we then understand what the term means. Last week the “Holy Spirit” and the “Holy Ghost” were used both in selected scriptures and in my comments. Forget for a moment what term applies to what attribute, and focus on attributes first.

God's many works are held together and organized by His power. A description of this is given in Section 88, which states the following about Christ:

He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth; Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; As also the light

of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made; And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. (D&C 88:6-10)

This describes Christ. He both ascended and descended to enable Him to be “in all and through all things.” What does that mean? Why would He necessarily need to ascend above and then descend below in order to be “in all and through all things?” How is this related to being Christ? How does this activity stretching Him above and below relate to Him becoming “the light” to all?

How does this description relate to Christ’s introduction of Himself (containing His definition of who He is) to the Nephites, which states:

Behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning. (3 Ne. 11:11)

Is there a direct relationship between ascending, descending, and becoming “the light and the life of the world?” In other words, must Christ move into all the realms to bring the truth throughout in order to become the “light and life” throughout?

Is there a connection between these requirements and Christ becoming “the power thereof by which it was made?” The things listed above in Section 88 are physical objects. The sun and its power, the moon and its power, the stars and their power and the earth upon which we stand are all physical things. These things rely on Christ’s “power” to have been “made.” If Christ’s stewardship required Him to be above and below, and throughout all in order to become “the light” unto all, then does Christ’s “power” extend

beyond just redeeming them all? How does Christ's ministry also relate to the "power" to bring these things into existence? How does Christ become "the light of Christ" which spreads throughout all creation? If His power extends to make the sun, moon, stars and the earth, how far does the "light of Christ" extend? Is it merely a moral force for good? Does it also include physical creation and power? What does the "light of Christ" have to do with "the power of the sun?" How dependent is all life, including plant, animal and human, upon the power of the sun? Without sunlight, what happens to this world?

How literally should we take "the light of the sun" to be a product of Christ's light? What does it mean if Christ is "the power of the sun?"

AUGUST 14, 2012

God's Many Works, Part 2

Section 88 continues the explanation with the following:

"And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings" (D&C 88:11).

This is not just environmental. This is now touching you. It is the "light of Christ" which "enlighteneth your eyes." What does that mean? Could you see if this were withdrawn?

What does it mean that the "light of Christ" is what "quickeneth your understandings?" Without the light of Christ would you be able to understand anything? How intimately are you connected to the "light of Christ?" How dependent are you on His light?

It continues:

Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space— The light which is in all things,

which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. (D&C 88:12–13)

We have been reading about Christ and the “light of Christ” which empowers all of this creation. But now the source from which it proceeds is being identified. This “proceedeth forth from the presence of God.” Who is this referring to? Is this Christ still?

Who “sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity?” Who “is in the midst of all things?” Is this still Christ?

Steven saw Christ in heaven standing beside the Throne of the Father (Acts 7:56). Joseph and Sidney saw Christ on the Father’s right hand (D&C 76:21). John received the testimony of Jesus where Christ affirmed that all who overcome will be able to also sit on the Father’s Throne, just as He (Christ) had overcome and could sit on the Father’s Throne (Rev. 3:21). If Christ had to first “overcome” and complete the descent and ascent, then whose throne (the Father’s or Christ’s) is referred to in D&C 88 verses 12–13 above?

Assuming it is the Father’s Throne, and the Father is the one who has been sitting on it from the beginning, then what harmony is there between Christ and the Father? How can the Father’s power proceed forth in all directions, but Christ be the one who is “the light and life of the world?” How complete is the harmony found in the relationship between Christ and the Father if the power originates from the Father, but is given to the Son to become “the light and life of the world?”

What does it mean that this light “giveth life to all things?” How dependent are you on this “light” for your own life? What does it mean that “Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence,

or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (D&C 93:29). If “the light of truth” cannot be made or created, then what does it mean that the light “proceeds forth from the Throne of God?”

What source flows from God and proceeds throughout all creation? What is the “power” behind all creation?

If this power bestows “life” upon its recipients, then can it also bestow something else?

We tend to view “the light of Christ” as a moral source. That is, the “light of Christ” is most often spoken of as a moral conscience. From these verses, however, that view is too limited for this force or power. It is something much greater.

AUGUST 15, 2012

God’s Many Works, Part 3

This brings us to King Benjamin’s explanation of our relationship with God. He explained our utter dependence in these words:

I say unto you, my brethren, that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess, to that God who has created you, and has kept and preserved you, and has caused that ye should rejoice, and has granted that ye should live in peace one with another—I say unto you that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants. (Mosiah 2:20–21)

Is God the one who “created you?” If He “created you” then what of mankind is co-eternal with God? (D&C 93:29; see also *TPJS* p. 353: “The mind or intelligence which man possesses is co-equal with God himself.”) But what is “intelligence” or the mind of man? Intelligence is co-equal with the Father because it flows from Him in His exalted state. It is His glory. “Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made” because it exists as a part of the Father’s existence (D&C 93:29).

Intelligence is God’s glory or His power. “The glory of God is intelligence” (D&C 93:36). This glory is also called “light and truth” (*Id.*). Or, in other words, light and truth emanates from God the Father, and is co-extensive with Him. This light and truth is also called intelligence. This is what conscience is made from. This is the power by which man comes into existence. It is as eternal as the Father Himself because it exists as part of His glory.

According to King Benjamin, God the Father created you “from the beginning.” What does it mean to have created you “from the beginning?” Whose beginning? Ours? What does it mean that He has “kept and preserved you?” What does it mean that He has “granted that ye should live?” Without the Father’s power would we no longer live?

What does it mean that God is “preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath?” Could we not breathe without borrowing the power to do so from God?

What does it mean that we are able to “live” because of God’s power? How dependent on God are we if we use His power to “live and move?” How utterly reliant are we on His power if it is Him who is “even supporting you from one moment to another?”

What is this relationship between God's power, which proceeds forth from Him, and sustains not only planets, stars and our sun, but also us so that we live?

This power is:

- preserving us,
- comes from the Father, and
- causes everything to exist by its power.

Therefore, the "light of Christ," which is in and through all things, is co-extensive with the Father's "glory," or "intelligence," or in other words "light and truth" (D&C 93:36).

This "light of Christ" or Holy Spirit, or intelligence, or glory of God, or power, or light and truth, or mechanism is important to recognize. But until you recognize it is the power by which you exist, that sustains you from moment to moment and lends you the power to live and breathe, you haven't yet appreciated the concept you are trying to assign a word. It is only vocabulary. The underlying idea remains hidden even if you have a vocabulary for it.

Coming next is the other part of the equation.

AUGUST 16, 2012

God's Many Works, Part 4

Peter explained the means by which Old Testament prophets received messages from God: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). This Holy Ghost has been with mankind since the time of Adam:

And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth

and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will. (Moses 5:9)

Adam prophesied that the same Priesthood which he received from God in the beginning of the world would again return to the earth at the end of the world (Moses 6:7). This prophecy was given through the power of the Holy Ghost (Moses 6:8).

From Adam till Christ, the Holy Ghost was the primary voice by which revelation was delivered from God to mankind. It is active and has been active in delivering the words of prophecy to “holy men” throughout history.

Then what is this voice of truth? Joseph Smith said, “No man can receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelations. The Holy Ghost is a revelator” (*TPJS*, p. 328).

He also said “The Holy Ghost is a personage, and is in the form of a personage” (*TPJS*, p. 276). He also said “the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit.

Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us” (D&C 130:22).

He also taught that

All sins shall be forgiven, except the sin against the Holy Ghost; for Jesus will save all except the sons of perdition. What must a man do to commit the unpardonable sin? He must receive the Holy Ghost, have the heavens opened unto him, and know God, and then sin against Him. After a man has sinned against the Holy Ghost, there is no repentance for him. He has got to say that the sun does not shine while he sees it; he has got to deny Jesus Christ when the heavens have been opened unto him, and to deny the plan of salvation with his eyes open to the truth of it; and from that time he begins to be an enemy. (*TPJS*, p. 358)

This last quote is very helpful to understand the concept of the Holy Ghost. It equates this kind of knowledge and experience with having the heavens opened, knowing God, and seeing the sun shine with the Holy Ghost. In another place Joseph's revelation explained that heirs of Celestial glory will be sealed up to eternal life "by the Holy Spirit of Promise" (D&C 76:53). These individuals who receive this "seal" are those who received from Jesus the testimony that He has saved them (D&C 76:51). They have become part of "the Church of the Firstborn" as a consequence of promises given to them by the Father and the Son (D&C 76:54-57). They have become "sons of God" by the decree of the Father (D&C 76:58-59).

These individuals have received the testimony of Jesus, and the promise of eternal life which is the Holy Spirit of Promise (D&C 88:3).

So we now have several different concepts found in scripture and Joseph's teachings:

- A power which sustains all of creation.
- A "light of Christ" which is given to all mankind.
- A power which animates the sun, stars and even this earth.
- A power which lets man live, breathe and move, which sustains man from moment to moment.
- A source of revelation.
- An open vision of God the Father and His Son, which includes the promise of eternal life.
- A light or intelligence which proceeds from God's Throne.

These are two distinct beings who are responsible for these various sources affecting mankind for the good: Christ, who has descended and then ascended throughout all of creation to bring the light to everything and everyone. The Father, who is the source from whom flows the power which Christ has brought into creation.

In addition to these two distinct beings, we also have something that can be called: “the record of heaven;”

- “the Comforter;”
- “the peaceable things of immortal glory;”
- “the truth of all things;”
- “that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things;”
- “that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice and judgment” (Moses 6:61).

Therefore, it can be truly said, just as Joseph Smith taught in The Lectures on Faith, that the Holy Ghost represents the “mind of the Father and the Son.”

I had hoped to finish this tomorrow. However comments have made it apparent I will need to take two more days to complete this. So there are two more installments left in which we will draw together some of these various truths found in scripture.

AUGUST 17, 2012

God’s Many Works, Part 5

The power of God and His many methods of accomplishing His will are not conveniently reduced to a simple vocabulary. The Father and the Son are clearly able to accomplish all their works using the power which originates from the Father, in the midst of eternity, to build all creation. Not only to build, but to sustain all creation. It is the power which causes creation to exist in an organized and functioning order.

But when it comes to identifying something by the title of “the Holy Ghost” or “the Holy Spirit” or “the Holy Spirit of Promise” there are underlying concepts associated with each of these.

Titles and proper nouns are inadequate.

For example, look at the following statement from Alma as he recounts the many blessings the Nephites had received in their generations:

Having been visited by the Spirit of God; having conversed with angels, and having been spoken unto by the voice of the Lord; and having the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and also many gifts, the gift of speaking with tongues, and the gift of preaching, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the gift of translation. (Alma 9:21)

According to Alma, these many blessings come from “the Spirit of God” and include “the gift of the Holy Ghost.” What are these two different blessings? Why does Alma see them as distinct enough to mention them separately and by different names? Is the “Holy Ghost” a function or part of “the Spirit of God?” Can Alma accurately describe it in this manner? If he can, then what is the underlying truth that connects them together?

Why is the “Holy Spirit of Promise” the topic Joseph Smith had in mind as he described the sin of “denying the Holy Ghost?” Is there a relationship between the Holy Spirit of Promise and the Holy Ghost? Are they the same? Are they different? Do they both come from the Holy Spirit of God? If so, then are they different in nature or only different in degree? Can something be different in degree and be called by a different name?

It should be clear to you that the use of the terms are in some respects inexact, even in scripture. They are referring to ideas. You need to understand the underlying concepts rather than to focus on just the words. If you are going to understand exactly what is being discussed, then relying only on vocabulary will be insufficient.

What, then, does “baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost” consist of? The effect (fire purges and removes sin) is to permit you to

Speak with the “tongue of angels” (2 Ne. 31:13). But Nephi also cautions that once this gift has been conferred, if you then “deny Christ” you would be better off having never known Him (2 Ne. 31:14). This process will come to you after repentance, baptism, and comes to “show all things” and to “teach the peaceable things of the kingdom” (D&C 39:6. Compare to Moses 6:61). These scriptures, baptism of “fire and the Holy Ghost” teach you and show you things, just like Joseph’s remark that the Holy Ghost is a revelator and you cannot receive it without also receiving revelations. But to “speak with the tongue of angels” means you are elevated, your knowledge and your inspiration reckons from heaven itself. You have been elevated by “fire” which purges sins and purifies. In effect, you receive holiness through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. This in turn makes your own spirit holy. Your spirit or your ghost is within you, connected to heaven to such a degree through this process that you are in possession of a “holy spirit” or a “holy ghost” within you.

Does this “baptism of fire” come from a personage, or from the “mind of God the Father and Christ,” or from the “light of Christ,” or the “Holy Spirit” or some source you can clearly define or describe. Or does it come from God, sitting in the midst of eternity as He sustains all His creations through His power? And if that is the source, can it be described in a specific term? What is the name of that term?

What do these terms mean:

- Holy (Who provides this to man?)
- Spirit (Whose? Yours? God’s? Both?)
- Promise (What promise? Given by Whom? Who receives this promise?)

We need to consider language and terms, but more importantly we need to think about concepts that words alone can never convey adequately. Move beyond the limits of vocabulary and try to find a connection to the underlying concepts these words are attempting to convey. For in these are found connections which run from inside you back to the presence of God Himself. Or, more correctly, the Gods Themselves, for the Father and the Son are two distinct beings. They are sustaining you from moment to moment right now. You are more directly connected with Them than you can imagine. You are borrowing their power to exist at present.

AUGUST 18, 2012

God's Many Works, Conclusion

Perhaps what we have been discussing should be understood in a different context than the one we normally use. What if instead of viewing it as a description of something outside or external, you view it as something internal or inside you. Perhaps the kingdom of heaven is within us after all (Luke 17:21).

From that vantage point can it be said:

- If you ignore the presence of this Spirit you still receive the Holy Spirit, or Light of Christ because that is what allows you to live, move, breathe and exist. It is a gift from God to everyone.
- If you allow this Spirit to enter into your thoughts from time to time you “receive” the Holy Ghost within you. It has affected your thoughts. It has been “received” into your conscience.
- If you allow this Spirit to continually guide you, then you have the “gift” of the Holy Ghost. It has become your companion.
- If you open yourself to receive the visions of heaven, and behold the Father and Son, then you have received the Holy Spirit of Promise.

This last Holy Spirit of Promise is given its name because when you have received the Father and the Son you become Their child of Promise, the inheritor of all the Father has, a member of His family. To reject this, as Joseph described it, is to deny the sun at noon day. For to have been given the Holy Spirit of Promise you have seen God and received from Him a Promise. [There is always more to a subject, but for the present, I'll leave it there.]

If God sustains everything through His Holy Spirit, which is also sometimes called the Light of Christ, then is it not already within you? If it is already within you, then you can decide to “receive” it by opening yourself up to its influence. If you decide to “receive” it by opening yourself up to its influence, then you may be able to take it into yourself as a gift from God? If that gift becomes a permanent source of influence within you, then have you received the “gift of the Holy Ghost?” If this is within you, then is it your own? If your own, then do you have the Holy Ghost as your constant companion?

When you have received this, are you in touch with God? If you are in touch with God, are you also able to become “one” with Him? Is this what Christ was teaching in John 17:20–23?

With this in mind, consider what this passage from Deuteronomy tells us:

And the Lord thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the Lord will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers:

If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.

It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. (Deut. 30:9-14)

If your spirit has become sanctified, and you have received the presence of both the Father and the Son such that you (as Joseph described it) stand in the “noon day sun” in your understanding, then you have received the Holy Spirit of Promise. Does this mean that your own spirit reflects the promise of eternal life? Are you then a Spirit of Promise, assured of eternal life? If so, then does “denying the Holy Ghost,” as Joseph described it, actually involve taking what has become sacred within you and polluting it with deliberate rejection of the God you have received and who now dwells within you?

Related to this are many questions that have come in from readers during this week. One of the greatest impediments for some people is that they rely on the explanation given by Cleon Skousen about “intelligences” and how the universe is organized using this building block. You cannot reconcile his views with scripture. Therefore, if you choose to accept Skousen’s definition of “intelligences” as the building blocks of all creation, you will not understand the subject. If that is your framework, you will need to discard what the scriptures teach.

[Please understand I am not condemning Cleon Skousen. He was a good man. But I believe he erred in this subject. He confuses “intelligences” in the plural with the “intelligence” in the singular, from which man was organized. The plural of the word refers to organized spirits. They, organized spirits, have been created and exist as beings (Abr. 3:22–23). Man (or the spirit within him) was organized from “intelligence” which is singular. It is co-eternal with God. It is called “intelligence” and also “light and truth” (D&C 93:29). It is also called “the glory of God” (D&C 93:36). Cleon Skousen supposed that man was made from something else called “intelligences” when, in fact, once intelligence or light and truth is organized into a being and assumes a separate existence it is called “intelligences” which is plural and refers to spirits. Until then, it is only “intelligence” which is singular. Read the beginning of *Beloved Enos* where I have tried to explain this subject. I think it will help.]

The scriptures have a lot to say about this matter. I’ve only put together a sketch. Look at the scriptures and sort through it. I’ve tried to give only a skeleton. The whole picture can be hung on that skeleton. You need to do the work of finishing the search. I don’t want to rob you of that wonderful experience. Let the scriptures speak to you without you bringing an interpretation with you in advance.

Christ said His words were “Spirit” (John 6:63). What does this mean? How can Christ’s words, whether spoken by Him or given to another to speak on His behalf, be “Spirit?” If you can answer that you are in possession of a great truth.

In response to several questions, I’ll add the following to conclude this week’s posts:

At one time the Father was called “a Spirit” by Joseph, and at another time He was said to “have a body as tangible as man’s.” Similarly, Jesus Christ was resurrected and unquestionably had a tabernacle consisting of “flesh and bone” which could be handled (Luke 24:39–40). He ate fish and broke bread with His disciples (Luke 24: 42–43; John 21:9–14). These were physical acts. Yet He also appeared in the upper room on the day of His resurrection without entering through the shut door (John 20:26). He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9–11) and then descended from heaven in the sight of a multitude (3 Ne. 11:8). These are not typical of physical bodies as we encounter them. When it comes to resurrected and glorified beings, the bodies are not the same as our own physical, coarse constitutions. Nevertheless, God is composed of matter:

There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; We cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see it is all matter. (D&C 131:7–8)

Therefore, it is equally true that God is a Spirit, and that He also possesses a body “as tangible as man’s.” How “quickened” is the body when He shows Himself? Or, in this coarse environment, how great a glory has He set aside to show Himself here?

God’s glory exceeds man’s comprehension. We can see Him in His glory only if we are transfigured (Moses 1:14). Even then we cannot behold all of His glory unless we become like Him (Moses 1:4–5). Therefore, to behold Him in His glory while we are mortal, we must be transfigured, but the full measure of God is not given for mortal man to behold.

AUGUST 19, 2012

Ill-Prepared Readers

It is apparent from comments there are many who have been studying their scriptures and who can benefit from this blog. Their diligence has prepared their minds and their hearts.

It is also apparent that some who read are ill-prepared for the content here. This material is more confusing than edifying. They should turn off their computers and take up their scriptures. They should spend their time studying the scriptures and not devote any more time to this blog. It will not do such readers any good at all.

If this edifies you, then you belong here. If you are confused, then study scripture and leave this site alone. The process of developing understanding begins with the scriptures. No matter how much you believe you understand, the scriptures will always have language that can be adapted to set out the truth. The difference between seeing what is there and being blind to the words of prophecy consists primarily in how diligent you have been in preparing your mind through study of scripture. Do that first.

For the ill-prepared, I apologize for being unclear. However, I cannot discuss some topics in any other way. Therefore, I cannot make it clear to you. You will have to search through these things yourself. But if you are sincere, the Lord will help you get there. You must take the scriptures seriously. They will tell you how to lay down your prejudices, ignorance, traditions and errors, and repent. Repenting is to turn and face God. Until you face Him, the direction you are headed will never bring you to understanding.

CHAPTER 14

Baptism of Fire & the Holy Ghost

AUGUST 20, 2012

Baptism of Fire and the Holy Ghost

Last week's discussion leads to this week's. For the next few days we turn to the matter of "baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost" as a doctrine. The discussion last week will help to set up the framework for understanding this topic. When I mentioned this before on this blog it was in response to a specific question, and did not attempt to lay the matter out.

The most interesting passage referring to this is in 3 Ne. 9. The Nephite destruction has happened, there is darkness covering the land, and Christ speaks to the survivors. He tells them many things, but this is the important statement:

And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not. (3 Ne. 9:20)

This statement from the Lord clarifies that it is possible for the event to occur and those who receive it do not know what it is.

The Lamanite conversion incident referred to by the Lord is not explained. Christ's words begin in verse 2 of Chapter 9, and deal entirely with the events of that generation leading up to the destruction of the land. Among those who would have been living at the time of the destruction would have been the Lamanites who underwent a conversion to the Gospel through the missionary efforts of Lehi and Nephi. These two were put into prison for preaching (Hel. 5:21), kept without food for many days (Hel. 5:22), and when they came to kill them Nephi and Lehi were encircled about by fire (Hel. 5:23). There was a great earthquake, similar to 3 Nephi when Christ's voice was heard. There was a great darkness in the prison, similar to 3 Nephi when Christ's voice was heard (Hel. 5:27–28). These events involving Lehi and Nephi are a type of the events in 3 Nephi when Christ was speaking.

With Lehi and Nephi still in the prison, the Lamanites in the prison experienced the following:

- A voice speaks to them telling them to repent (Hel. 5:29; compare with 3 Ne. 11:3).
- The voice is not thunderous, but nevertheless pierced them to their core (Hel. 5:30; compare with 3 Ne. 11:3).
- The voice repeats again a second time (Hel. 5:32; compare with 3 Ne. 11:4).
- The voice repeats again a third time (Hel. 5:33; compare with 3 Ne. 11:5–7).
- The communication includes such marvelous information man is unable to communicate it (Hel. 5:33; compare with 3 Ne. 17:16–17).
- The Lamanite observers saw Lehi and Nephi in a pillar of fire with angels ministering to them (Hel. 5:36–37; compare with 3 Ne. 17:23–25).

These Lamanites asked how they could be delivered from the darkness and come into the redeeming light as Lehi and Nephi (Hel. 5:40) and were told they must repent to be delivered (Hel. 5:41). All of them cried out to the Lord, and were delivered from darkness (Hel. 5:42–43). They then were filled with joy and found themselves likewise encircled with that same fire in which Lehi and Nephi previously stood (Hel. 5:43–45).

After last weeks' posts, the following statement should now alert you to something: "And behold, the Holy Spirit of God did come down from heaven, and did enter into their hearts, and they were filled as if with fire, and they could speak forth marvelous words" (Hel. 5:45). Once again, it is the "Holy Spirit" which causes the effect. The effect upon them is called the "Holy Ghost" by Christ (See 3 Ne. 9:20).

The reason these recipients "did not know" it was "the Holy Ghost" now within them was because they did not know the vocabulary, nor understand the process. But there was an experience, and the result was conversion and a new life thereafter (Hel. 5:46–50).

This is one instance of the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost.

AUGUST 21, 2012

BFHG, Part 2

At the time Joseph and Oliver were baptized, they had no authority from heaven with which to confer the Holy Ghost (*JS-H* 1:70). They had no ordinance available to them other than baptism (*JS-H* 1:70–71). They performed the ordinance as instructed. But afterwards, without any authority to confer upon one another the Holy Ghost, they nevertheless had the gift of the Holy Ghost

poured out upon them (*JS-H 1:73*). This was not merely a temporary visit. It lingered thereafter with them so they could understand the scriptures in the manner they were intended to be understood when these scriptures were first inspired by the Holy Ghost in the minds of the prophets who wrote them (*JS-H 1:74*).

The Holy Ghost can come and visit with a person, but not tarry with them (*D&C 130:23*). If it comes and visits with them, then it is said the person has "received" the Holy Ghost. This kind of visit is conditional. It is dependent upon the worthiness and desire of the recipient. If they "grieve" the spirit by misbehavior, it will depart from them. If you read general conference talks discussing this issue, you will find this is the form of Holy Ghost received by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For the Holy Ghost to become a constant companion which tarries, it is said to be "the gift of the Holy Ghost." Because the one with this endowment has received a gift from God, and it is given to them by God to be theirs.

The ordinance given when converts are confirmed members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints includes these words: "And I say unto you, receive the Holy Ghost." This is the formula given in the priesthood manuals of the church, and is included in the General Handbook of Instructions. It is an admonition from the church elder to the convert. The obligation to then search for and obtain a visit from the Holy Ghost is imposed on the convert.

When Christ was speaking of the Lamanites and their baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost (*3 Ne. 9:20*), He was speaking not merely of the Holy Ghost descending and not tarrying with them (*D&C 130:23*), but of their possession of the gift which endured thereafter (*Hel. 5:48-50*).

I was baptized on September 9, 1973 at Kittery Point Beach on the Atlantic coast by Elder Brian Black. The service was presided over by Brother Jim Mortenson, a counselor in the Portsmouth, New Hampshire Ward. After baptism, as I knelt on the sand, the missionaries confirmed me a member of the church and admonished me to “receive the Holy Ghost.” The service was in the evening. Just prior to the laying on of hands, Elder Black spoke about the symbols in the sky. The sun was setting, but still visible. The moon was also out, and the first “stars” were also faintly visible. [The “stars” we could see included Venus, hence the quotation marks.] Elder Black remarked that “all the signs of heaven were visible; the sun, symbolizing the Celestial; the moon, symbolizing the Terrestrial; and the stars, symbolizing the Telestial.” His beautiful remarks affected my thinking so much I can still recall them nearly 40 years later.

As the admonition was given to me, I felt a warmth begin at the top of my head where the hands were touching me. It proceeded downward through my entire person as if something was descending and filling me. The North Atlantic water was cold, particularly at that time of year, and the sand I knelt on was also cold. But I felt a warmth which came from within that filled my entire body.

When we finished at the beach, we all went to Jim and Monte Mortenson’s house for a gathering. It was dubbed a “birthday party” in reference to my baptism. When we arrived, Jim asked me to say the “opening prayer” before we ate. I was perfectly willing to say the prayer, but I hesitated for a few moments before doing so because I sensed the “spirit” wasn’t quite right yet. So rather than immediately interrupt the laughter and loud voices, I tried to bring the group spirit around to something more reverent. As I hesitated, I think Jim assumed I was not yet ready to pray in public (as many

new converts are), and moved on to ask another to pray. She did, and we ate.

The boisterous spirit was still there after the prayer, and as the group of us sat in the Mortenson's living room the spirit of the evening became more and more divisive. At a point there was contention between some of the group, and the evening was taking a turn downward, grieving the spirit altogether. At that moment I stood and got everyone's attention. When silence settled in, I started with one end of the gathering, and spoke in turn to each person there. I began by saying, "whatever ambition the Adversary has for tonight, I intend to resist it." I then spoke to their hearts, prophesied and let the love I felt within me pour out. The effect upon those who were there softened their demeanor, brought a spirit of friendship back into the gathering, and although none of them may remember it today, it is to me as clear as if it happened minutes ago. Jim Mortenson spoke up when I finished and said he was confident I would one day be a church patriarch—a remark that meant nothing at the time because I knew nothing about such a position.

You must remember that before conversion I was not even a likely candidate to become Mormon. When the elders were teaching me they asked that I read the Book of Mormon. I agreed. After I had read some of it, they asked me what I thought of it. I replied: "It's got to be scripture. It's every bit as boring as the Bible." I meant it. Neither the Book of Mormon or the Bible meant much to me. I couldn't sense any Spirit or depth to it. Nothing in it thrilled me or touched my heart.

After baptism, however, it all changed. Like Joseph and Oliver I could say,

my mind now being enlightened, I began to have the scriptures laid open to my understanding, and the true meaning of their more mysterious passages revealed to me in a manner which I never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of. (Compare *JS-H* 1:74)

What I found was that the scriptures were now written for me. They were the means through which God could lay out His mind and His will and His voice in a way I had never dreamed possible before.

The journey back to Him begins with all He has provided and preserved of His word. It begins for each of us in the scriptures. One of the immediate effects of baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost is to have the scriptures come alive; to have them overwhelm you with revelation, light and truth. It is not you doing this. It is you experiencing it, but the Holy Spirit opening and lighting them so the same Spirit which gave them at first now receives them in you.

This subject (baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost) is variegated. It is important to avoid reducing it to a single, simple explanation and ignore other important features of this great gift from God.

AUGUST 22, 2012

BFHG, Part 3

There is a balance of light and darkness. There is an opposition necessary in all things (2 Ne. 2:11–12). Moses was not able to encounter the Lord without also experiencing the adversary (Moses 1:12). Joseph, likewise, felt the destructive power of our common enemy before understanding the Lord (*JS-H* 1:16). Some days before baptism, and then about a week after, I encountered the murderous rage of the enemy who seeks to destroy us all. I do not speak or write about this, because fools are prone to give the

wrong attention to such matters and thereby surrender unnecessary power to our enemies. Therefore, I leave it to others to confront this subject and only declare I know who and what my enemy is. I have rarely spoken in any detail, and do not recall providing any written account of these experiences.

I make mention of this because there are some critics who suggest I may be sincere, but I have been misled. I know the difference between the Lord and the Adversary. I've met both.

These two extremes aside, the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, in both Helaman and 3 Nephi, include ministering by angels. The first time I beheld an angel I was caught up to an exceedingly high place. From that vantage point I could see the curvature of the earth below. It was above, high and lifted up. In an instant I understood Nephi's description of an exceeding high mountain (1 Ne. 11:1). When I wrote *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*, I included a description of this. I was told by those who reviewed it before publication that the explanation seemed arrogant; as if I were comparing myself to Nephi. Therefore, it was removed from the book. There is always tension between the obligation to declare the truth of a matter on the one hand, and the misperception of motives on the other. The truth can be opposed either by lies or by questioning the speaker's intention or motive.

Either will do, because people are so easily removed from the truth.

To explain this subject, however, the remainder of the account needs to be told. Therefore, I include here what was removed from the text of *The Second Comforter*.

As I stood before this angel I noted that he was old, as tall as I am, with a beard, a full head of hair. It was long, but not

quite to his shoulders. He spoke with authority, accustomed to declaring messages with efficiency and clarity. His demeanor was somber, as if the weight of eternity rested upon him. Although there was nothing vocal, he spoke with the clarity of a voice which settled deep within me as he said: “On the first day of the third month in nine years, your ministry will begin. And so you must prepare.” Nearly 40 years separate me from that moment, but I can close my eyes and see it still. When an angel speaks to you, you never forget. Through all that has come and gone since that day, I am still transfixed by that moment.

After he spoke to me, he stood and gazed at me saying nothing further. Thinking that was all he had for me, I began to look about. I was impressed by the blue curvature of the earth below. I noticed there were walls, but they were transparent. I wondered why walls would be built if they were transparent, because if you can see beyond them then there was no purpose. I noticed a painting on the wall and wondered why it was there. It made me curious as to why there would be any effort made to paint a portrait here in this setting. Though I had no idea why I recognized him, the painting was of Moses. I also wondered at his baldness since the High Priest could have no blemish and serve before the Lord (Lev. 21:16–23) I assumed he would have a full head of hair. He did not.

As I stood there reflecting on the scene, I asked nothing. Eventually I was compelled to depart and I left this scene behind. It was some time before I wondered “what ministry?” “How was I to prepare?” These questions could have been asked, but I was so distracted by the circumstances that I gave them no thought at the time. When I later inquired in prayer to know these things, I received no answer. As I persisted in asking for

many months, at length I was asked why I hadn't inquired of the angel at the time I was told of the ministry. It was a hard lesson, but perhaps the only way I would learn it.

It was many months later that I heard the instruction about keeping a journal. By that time I had no way of knowing the date of the visit, and therefore assumed it reckoned from the year I was baptized in 1973. I wrote it down.

I lost track of time as the years came and went. I'd finished serving in the military, had graduated from law school, and had a family. When I remembered and reconstructed the events, I renewed my anticipation early in 1982, waiting for March 1st. That day came and went and nothing happened.

I concluded I hadn't prepared for the ministry, and therefore lost the opportunity. I felt rejected and mourned at my failure. I tried to renew my devotion, and wondered what would have been given if I'd met the standard I was supposed to meet. But then again, I also thought that if the Lord had been more clear, perhaps I could have met the standard. I wanted to blame the Lord for my failure. He hadn't answered the questions about what it was I needed to do. At a minimum, I wanted the Lord to share in the blame for my failure. I also wanted to conceal it. I went to my journal and took out the pages dealing with this and destroyed them. This is why the journal now begins on page 14. But with the passage of time, I let it go and gave it no further thought. There was so much to do in life with family responsibilities that unpleasant thoughts of personal failure can be abandoned if you want.

On March 1st of the following year I was visited by President Tolman (the Sunday School President and at the time a Seminary Teacher in the Pleasant Grove High School

Seminary program) and Bishop Harris. They called me to be the Gospel Doctrine teacher. It was not until after they left that I remembered the significance of “the first day of the third month” and rehearsed it all again in my mind. I realized that the visit must have happened in 1974 and not 1973. I had the chronology wrong.

It was many years later that I remembered destroying those pages from my journal. I had to explain all these errors in a re-creation of the events. From this I have learned to leave all the failures, all the mistakes, and any hard lessons which I have had to endure and suffer complete and recorded. There can be no attempt to shield myself from criticism in these journals. The truth of matters should be left, and my pride should be abandoned. No man elevates himself by pretensions to being more than they are.

Once called as Gospel Doctrine teacher, I remained in that position in Pleasant Grove, Alpine and Sandy, Utah for over two decades, only moving to teach Priesthood lessons when not in Gospel Doctrine. After decades of this, I was called as the Ward Mission Leader for two years, then onto the Stake High Council, then to teach the Priests’ Quorum. I now do Temple Preparation for those Priests who are awaiting their mission calls.

These many years of teaching required me to study the scriptures daily, to be able to give lessons that would edify. There was not a day that went by when I did not study the scriptures for these decades.

This background is required for you to understand how I have come to my understanding on this subject. Not that it matter at all, but the doctrine does. It is the doctrine that will

save you, not man. But you may want to understand better the background of the man who is writing about this doctrine.

If the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost is viewed as conferring revelation and opening the scriptures to your mind (as Joseph and Oliver recount in the *JS-H*), then I have received this endowment. If it is viewed as requiring ministering of angels, then I affirm I have received this endowment, also; not to make any personal claim, but to testify and affirm these things are not ancient, or distant. They are intended to continue in our own day. They are meant for all—including you.

AUGUST 23, 2012

BFHG, Part 4

The experience of Joseph and Oliver at their baptism, months before they would receive priesthood with authority to lay on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, requires you to ask yourself:

- Can this experience be regarded as a form of” baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost?”
- If so, then what are the essential elements of the experience?
- If not, then what more is required?

We want to have absolute events; for the light to be either on or off. However, the scriptures use the experiences in the lives of disciples following the Lord to illustrate and teach the doctrines. Nephi in particular, is a gifted composer of experience-based doctrinal teaching. He focuses his narrative entirely on doctrine, but uses his personal experience to draw from to teach the doctrine.

Christ declared the Lamanites experienced “baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost” (3 Ne. 9:20). This week we have compared that

event with the Nephites' experience in 3 Nephi. The following is a list of what was similar between the two:

- A voice speaks to them telling them to repent (Hel. 5:29; compare with 3 Ne. 11:3).
- The voice is not thunderous, but nevertheless pierced them to their core (Hel. 5:30; compare with 3 Ne. 11:3).
- The voice repeats a second time (Hel. 5:32; compare with 3 Ne. 11:4).
- The voice repeats a third time (Hel. 5:33; compare with 3 Ne. 11:5-7).
- The communication includes such marvelous information man is unable to communicate it (Hel. 5:33; compare with 3 Ne. 17:16-17).
- The Lamanite observers saw Lehi and Nephi in a pillar of fire, with angels ministering to them (Hel. 5:36-37; compare with 3 Ne. 17:23-25).

As the account continued, they repented, were wrapped in fire and were able to speak inspired words (Hel. 5:44-45). These are additional events, so you must decide:

- Do all these things need to occur before there has been “fire and the Holy Ghost?”
- Are they things that will unfold as a result of receiving “fire and the Holy Ghost?”
- Can you receive “fire” and have your sins purged without all of this accompanying the event?
- Can you receive the “gift of the Holy Ghost” as your companion without a visible pillar of fire?

Joseph received an audience with the Father and the Son, stood in a pillar of fire, and was commissioned to do a great work. BUT

this happened before he was baptized, before any priestly authority was conferred by John the Baptist, before a church existed, temple rites were restored, before marriage, sealing, etc. If you reflect on that for a moment you will see the order of events does not control. There is an order, and it is generally followed, but it is the fullness of this endowment that is important and not the order it is given.

In Nephi's explanation of this gift, he refers to another, much shorter list. It includes:

- Repenting of your sins.
- Witnessing your repentance by baptism in water.
- Receiving the power to "speak with the tongue of angels" (See 2 Ne. 31:13-14.)

Joseph and Oliver did these things. And, as they experienced it,

No sooner had I baptized Oliver Cowdery, than the Holy Ghost fell upon him, and he stood up and prophesied many things which should shortly come to pass. And again, so soon as I had been baptized by him, I also had the spirit of prophecy, when, standing up, I prophesied concerning the rise of this Church, and many other things. (*JS-H 1:7*)

The Lamanite experience in Helaman 5 does not include baptism by water before this baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, but it did require repentance. We can know from subsequent missionary work they performed that they preached, and undoubtedly did receive baptism (or rebaptism). But the order is changed. A change in order, however, is not a change in requirement. To fully repent, they needed to witness it by baptism. Therefore, the ordinance may have followed, but it was a necessary part of the process.

The most consistent and the minimum description of this baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost includes these elements:

- repentance,
- baptism by water,
- baptism by fire and the Holy Ghost,
- evidenced by speaking with the tongue of angels.

One proof of baptism of fire is the gift of prophecy. Both Joseph and Oliver experienced the gift. So did the Lamanites, which they used to preach and declare repentance. I also experienced it after baptism in water. The gift follows as a sign to confirm baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost (D&C 63:9).

This “gift,” like other signs, is designed to confirm in the one who receives it a witness to them, from God, that this baptism has occurred. It is one of the essential elements, and is present in all the accounts. It appears on Nephi’s list also.

Beyond this minimum list, however, there are these other events that the Nephites and the Lamanites also experienced. There are many facets to understanding the Holy Spirit and the Holy Ghost, and there is a host of things which can be associated with baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost. There is a continuum.

It is in this sense that Nephi’s and Joseph Smith’s experiences provide us the best blueprint. The Book of Mormon accounts (with the exception of Nephi) are often sudden and compressed.

Both Nephi’s and Joseph’s were unfolding, growing and spreading to include ultimately comprehending both God and the eternities.

AUGUST 24, 2012

BFHG, Part 5

The work of this “baptism of fire” is always sanctification. It brings the recipient into greater contact with God. The end of that

increasing contact is to receive the Son, through whose blood you are sanctified (Moses 6:59–60). Once sanctified you are prepared for the presence of the Father (Alma 45:16; 1 Ne. 10:21). Therefore, this is how you receive “the fullness” (D&C 93:19–20) and are able to join the “general assembly and Church of the Firstborn” (D&C 76:66–67).

In the Lamanite experience and in the Nephite group who Christ visited in the 3 Nephi account, there came a point at which the heavens opened, a pillar of fire descended, and angels came and ministered to them all. Each were endowed with knowledge of mysteries belonging to God. There was a connection forged between them and those on the other side of the veil. These others are the “general assembly and Church of the Firstborn.”

There is a significant difference between the Lamanite experience and the 3 Nephi experience. The latter one began with Christ ministering to the recipients. This point should not be lost. Joseph Smith’s experiences likewise began with the Father and Son appearing to him. As pointed out yesterday, the sequence is not important and does not control. Even with the Lord’s personal ministry, you can still read in the account a similar series of events, steps and milestones. This means something. Events can and will vary in order, but do not vary in content. As explained in *Beloved Enos*, the Lord’s work is consistent with all who receive redemption.

This kind of conversion is required for Zion to return (D&C 76:66) because those who will be in Zion must dwell with God (D&C 29:11; D&C 45:66–71). The first Zion was brought through the ministry and teaching of Enoch (Moses 7:20). As a result of this the priesthood was renamed for him. When Melchizedek, by teaching righteousness brought about the City of Peace, the priesthood was again renamed for him (D&C 76:57). Joseph Smith

could have brought again Zion, but he was betrayed by his own people, surrendered to arrest, and was killed.

When Zion returns again, the priesthood will be renamed (Moses 6:7). It will no longer be called the priesthood “after the order of Melchizedek” (D&C 76:57), nor the priesthood “after the order of Enoch” (D&C 76:57), but will again be called the priesthood “after the Order of the Only Begotten Son” (D&C 76:57). The one whom our Lord uses to accomplish this last gathering will refuse to allow the priesthood to be called after his name; respecting instead the prophecy of Adam rather than claiming such an honor for himself (Moses 6:7). He will want it to return to the Lord. The city will likewise be the Lord’s. Men must finally return to Him, and He to them.

There is a progression of blessings conferred through the fire and Holy Ghost. Even if there is a mere beginning, there is a glorious ending. As with the Lamanites, it leads to an open vision into heaven, ministering of angels, and an endowment of unspeakable learning. It brings to the initiated the knowledge of the mysteries of God.

This more distant end of the endowment also involves priestly rights. Priesthood ordination is required before entering into the ceremonial presence of God in His Temple rites. Priesthood conferral is required to enter into His actual presence. The revelations are clear in connecting baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost with knowledge of God’s mysteries (3 Ne. 11:35–36; 3 Ne. 19:13–14). They are equally clear in connecting this knowledge of God with priesthood (See D&C 84:19; D&C 107:19).

The fullness of the Gospel, the fullness of the Priesthood, and the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost all have as their object to reconnect man to God and God to man. Man is unworthy to enter

into God's presence, and therefore, requires a power higher than their own from which to borrow purity. This purifying agent is the Holy Ghost (3 Ne. 19:22, 28). Christ will administer the final rites and confer the final blessings only upon the pure (3 Ne. 19:29–33). The reference to “blood” as sanctifying is a reference to the Lord (Moses 6:59–60). He alone sanctifies.

The Lord is directly involved in the final endowment of fire upon the Holy ones. This is what He explained in January, 1841 to the Saints when He explained to Joseph:

For there is not a place found on earth that he [meaning Christ] may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fulness of the priesthood. (D&C 124:28)

The Lord can confer this upon a single man in any location (See, e.g., D&C 132:45–50, when Joseph Smith received it long before the first Temple was built.) But to confer it upon a group intended to become His people, He requires His House to be built for Him to meet with and confer these final rites upon them (D&C 124:39). Only there will these things take place (D&C 124:40–41). People can gather and build a Temple. A single man cannot.

When the Lord establishes Zion, He will come dwell with His people there and complete the process of endowing them with His knowledge and power. The power of God will protect these people (D&C 45:66–70). They cannot be moved because the Lord will not permit it (D&C 124:45). While man does not have the power to do so, the laws of the Celestial Kingdom must be lived for Zion to be established (D&C 105:5). The power to do so comes from God, delivered through His Holy Spirit, making men's spirits Holy. Baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost are necessary parts of bringing mankind back to redemption and into God's presence.

AUGUST 25, 2012

BFHG, Conclusion

The “third member of the Godhead” is still in a probationary state. “The Holy Ghost is now in a state of probation which if he should perform in righteousness he may pass through the same or a similar course of things that the Son has” (*WJS*, p. 245, 27 August 1843). Perhaps you understand that now.

The Holy Ghost is “a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us” (D&C 130:22). It is “the testator” of the Father and the Son (*TPJS*, p. 190). Perhaps you understand that now.

The baptism of water is unto repentance. It is done upon the body you occupy. You no doubt should understand that.

The baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost is unto sanctification. It is done upon the body and Spirit within you. Perhaps you understand that now.

There is “power” which sustains everything, as we have discussed over the last two weeks (D&C 88:13). That power is called the Holy Spirit. Among its many attributes is the Holy Ghost. But no matter what you think you know, there is always more to learn. The responsibility to teach what cannot be said is reserved for God. God teaches, or “reveals” to man through the Holy Ghost the deep things of God. Hence the saying by Joseph that “the Holy Ghost is a revelator” and “you cannot receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelation” (*TPJS*, p. 328).

Man was made in the image of God (Moses 2:27). Man’s destiny is to be redeemed. God’s work and glory is to bring to pass the eternal life and exaltation of man (Moses 1:39). That work is not completed until you sit upon the same Throne as Christ and His Father (Rev. 3:21–22).

Nothing here is static. Things in this sphere are either growing or decaying. There is either increase or decrease. These two opposing forces bring new life into this world and then decay and destroy it. Then it is recycled as another life rises from and uses the elements of the prior, deceased plant, animal or man. The purpose of baptism of “fire and the Holy Ghost” is to preserve and to purge a living being. It is to render indestructible the organism upon which it descends. It is not to prevent earthly death, but to allow eternal life. Christ’s Gospel is to bring eternal life so that those who die may live again eternally (John 11:25). These people never die, because they live eternally through the fire bestowed upon them (John 11:26). Such eternal life begins now, while still in the flesh. They live here as members of another assembly, and then pass from here to join them again (D&C 76:67). Though they are men in the flesh, they are gods, even the sons of God, and all things are given unto them (D&C 76:58–60).

Yet in all this man cannot glory in man, but must glory in God. The victory is His alone (D&C 76:61).

This topic cannot be adequately explained by man to another man, but it can be known to any man through God. It is intended that all should be converted and experience this, including you. Be believing. Ask. Seek. Knock. It will be opened to you, as it has for all those who are faithful and trusting of God.

The Holy Ghost is not only “the Comforter” but also:

- the record of heaven.
- the truth of all things.
- that which quickeneth all things.
- that which maketh alive all things.
- that which knoweth all things.

- that which has all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice and judgment (Moses 6:61).

Therefore I say unto you: “receive the Holy Ghost.”

AUGUST 26, 2012

Temple Conference/Sundries

Here is an update on the Temple Conference. There will be a more formal announcement that will include some additions. However, since some will be traveling to attend, here is some information to help you plan.

For those who are registered

All those who registered for the Conference will be invited to a reception on Saturday evening, October 27th. The presenters will be there and available for you to meet during that evening reception.

On Sunday, October 28th, I will be speaking at an evening fireside. This will be free and open to the public. The location and time will be announced later.

The Conference will be all day on Monday, October 29th. Those who are registered and attend will receive a book that will include all the talks. This is part of the registration fee.

Seating is limited. At present, about half the seats have been reserved. This is a first come first serve event, and I believe there are approximately 320 seats.

More information will follow.

There are a number of comments that come in and I only respond to them generally. In that way, I hope to cover more than just one inquiry in a single post. Here, then, are some general reminders:

How can you want so intensely what you do not yet understand?

The identity of who the Lord will send will be known only when that person has done the work. No one who has failed to accomplish the work can claim the identity. Vanity is no substitute for doing the works of God.

No man ever pleased God without repenting.

The greatest evidences of God's power, apart from Christ's resurrection, are yet to be. It will be the latter-day Zion:

Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land. (Jer. 23:7-8)

It is apparent that for many people the concept of "the Celestial Kingdom" is only an imaginary concept based upon the vaguest of understanding. But it is something they claim to "really want." Something a person claims to want ought to be the subject of a better informed investigation.

There have been many questions (perhaps hundreds now) from women asking about women's issues. I've decided to spend next week addressing these questions in a very general way. However, to give you some context, here is one of the latest comments I've received. Read this and you can better understand next week's posts:

Brother Snuffer,

What happens if someone like me has concerns about some of the things the church teaches as doctrines? I always go along, never making waves. But sometimes I feel like the worst kind of hypocrite. I feel like a complete mutant when you speak of

Zion and sanctification. I've had almost every calling a woman can have, and yet I feel like a stranger in the household of God. I pray, study the scriptures, fast, attend the temple, and read from good sources, such as yours. But a lot of how the church believes feels alien to my soul: the role of women chief among them. Sometimes it feels hopeless because the things you and other men in the church say just don't feel attainable to people like me. We never hear of stories of women receiving their calling and election, except through their husband. I know of no story where a woman has received The Second Comforter. No matter how it's worded, women are not valued the same as men. After all, we are given to our husbands, but they do not give themselves back. Men receive the power of God to act in his name, but women do not. We are sealed to our husbands, but they are not sealed to us. We hearken to our husbands while they hearken to God. Why can't I just hearken to God like he does? Men become the Sons of God, but women never become the Daughters of God. We are queens and priestesses to our husbands, but not to God. Everything for women is to your husband or through your husband, but not directly through God or to ourselves. Plural marriage is the greatest abomination to women that ever existed—worse than rape and prostitution—because we are expected to be happy to have our husband fall in love with and show sexual attraction to another, many other women. Yet we are selfish if this bothers us. How can this be morally clean when a man shares with another woman what he should only share with one wife? If a wife wanted to be with another husband, or many, she would immediately be called immoral, an adulteress, and kicked out. Surely a just God who is no respecter of persons would not

be so favoring of His sons, and so cruel to His daughters. I have studied until I am in a deep abyss of pain. I have lost all joy for the hereafter. I have no hope to be the kind of woman the church teaches women must be. I cannot understand how women can be so blasé about such horrible positions and men can think women would want to live like this for eternity. You may think me ignorant or rebellious, but I can only say I have studied for decades and my pain is desolating to my soul. Doesn't anyone understand how inherently unfair and condescending patriarchy is? I've heard several brethren say that whatever God commands, setup, or mandates is right. Period. But would a truly loving God setup something so blatantly one-sided? Motherhood is comparable to fatherhood, not priesthood. And no, I don't lust to be a Bishop or any other position men hold. I just cannot understand how women can be relegated to such lesser status as to not hold the holy priesthood and be able to have the same responsibilities and roles as men. We are worthy, capable, and it would lift humankind to a greater level of living. It would enrich the kingdom tremendously. To be told you don't need it, you share it with your husband feels like a very patronizing stand to take. It is patronizing. Why can't we share it by both of us holding it and helping our families together? What is to become of people like me?

Thank you.

CHAPTER 15

Role of Women

AUGUST 27, 2012

Role of Women

First, and foremost, the questions about the role of women arise from a misunderstanding of God's will and nature, and from mistrust of God's intentions. The first is because we teach poorly. The second is because we make the mistake of identifying God's intentions with men's behavior. The failure of men to live the ideals required by God do not alter God's intention. Therefore, you should not conflate these. You can overcome both without ever listening to anything I have to say. It is, or ought to be, between you and God. I loathe to put myself between you and Him. The understanding of these two principles is all you need to go forward and get an answer directly from Him. To overcome the second, you will need to repent of your idolatry. Do not make the church an idol, and do not judge God by that idol. Realize the church is an organization staffed by frail men trying hard, but with very difficult circumstances facing them in this fallen world. Be charitable.

With that in mind, your questions should not be viewed as a problem, but as an opportunity to learn more about (and from)

God. These are wonderful concerns, and they deserve an answer. God does have answers. I cheat people when I say too much about a given subject. Particularly when the topic is so important and the answer ought to be given by God.

Ponder these questions:

- What if the “role” you occupy is not just your test, but also a test of your husband (and Mormon men generally)?
- What if the Lord has only allowed you and your husband to “suppose” he has “a little authority” when, in fact, he has nothing more than an invitation to arise and receive it from heaven? (D&C 121:39).
- What if the Lord intends to judge your husband (and all Mormon men) on the basis of how the man conducts himself to see if he uses the wrong kind of “authority” to impose and control and exercise dominion? (D&C 121:37).
- What if no authority can be claimed by virtue of the priesthood? (D&C 121:41).
- What if to prove the heart of the man, it is necessary to put you and your husband into this probationary relationship to see if he follows the Lord or is blinded by the craftiness of men who deceive among all sects, including our own? (D&C 123:12).
- What if the man chooses to ignore the Holy Spirit and proceed ahead on his own desire for patriarchal supremacy?
- What if the Lord intends for you to ultimately be his “judge” because you are now apparently “subject to” him and will learn best what is in his heart?
- What if, whether you want to show all the compassion of a saint toward Mormon leaders (including your husband), you are nevertheless subjugated, controlled and exploited? Will they

be left in such a position after this life when greater things are underway?

- What if the conditions for the salvation of man are different than the conditions for the salvation of women?
- What if the primary obligation of the man is to preserve correct doctrine, God's approval to bestow ordinances, and practice correct faith? If it is, how well have men performed this obligation throughout history? How well do men perform this today?
- What if women have a primary (not exclusive) obligation to bring children into the world, care for and nurture them, and live chaste lives? In other words, what if women will be judged primarily in their role as mothers? How well have women performed this obligation throughout history? Unlike men, has there ever been a worldwide "apostasy" by women where children were no longer born or cared for in this world?

The illusion of man's patriarchal and priesthood power allows them to put on display what is in their hearts (D&C 121:35). When they begin to "exercise a little authority, as they suppose" in a way which gratifies their pride, or exercises control, dominion and compulsion over the soul of another, they "prove" who and what they are. The one most immediately affected (the wife) would be the one most able to judge the man's performance. Therefore a wise man will seek to elevate his wife, and a fool will abuse and dominate her. A wise woman will trust in the Lord and know that He is the judge of the living and the dead, and He will always restore only what is right, pure, merciful, just, true and worthy (Alma 41:13).

The focus of the question is wrong. It takes a topic which should be unifying and changes the it into something competitive. I do

not fault anyone for having these questions. They are a product of the environment. However, marriage as intended by God should be cooperative. The relationship is intended to make of the two “one flesh” (Gen. 2:24; see also Matt. 19:4–6). It is in becoming “one” that both the man and woman become like God. In a very real way, everything I said above, even if entirely appropriate and justified, is merely adding to the problem. The real value of the man and the woman is to be found in their unity, not in their disunity. Therefore, we must look to what the unity should include to know the real answer to the questions that alienate, divide spouses from one another, and make women feel subjugated.

AUGUST 27, 2012

Temple Conference

I’ve received several requests about how to register for the October Temple Conference. The telephone number at Utah State University taking the registration information is:

(435) 797-1300

You can register over the phone for the conference.

The link to the website where additional information can be found is:

Link: Academy for Temple Studies (link no longer extant)

That site will be updated from time to time as additional information becomes available.

AUGUST 28, 2012

Role of Women, Part 2

The unity of man and woman is required for either of them to be saved in the truest meaning of “saved” (meaning exalted):

Paul wrote: “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Cor. 11:11). But what does that mean?

Through Joseph comes this response:

Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are dead, and when they are out of the world; therefore, they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world. Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory. For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever. (D&C 132:15–17)

But, even with this, how does this qualify?

- Is “sealing” enough?
- What if the couple are unworthy of being preserved because, among other things, they are not happy together?
- Why keep together what is more punishment than reward?
- If this union is required for either to be exalted, then does it matter who is sealed to who, with what language?

The unity of man and woman does not come by one dominating the other, as some view the inevitable result of patriarchy. The relationship is not worth preserving if it lacks joyful association. No relationship is unified if one party dominates the other. Godly

unity comes by the man conforming to the image of God, and the woman likewise conforming to the image of God, so both reflect His image. Christ put it into these words:

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. (John 17:19–23)

What is this “glory” which the Lord has given to His disciples and which He offers us? How can we become “glorified” like the Father and the Son?

“The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth” (D&C 93:36).

Rather than envying the authority of patriarchy or the claims to priesthood, we should all envy/seek God’s glory. Why seek after something that does not exist? Why not seek after what is enduring?

Suppose you do become one with God? Suppose you do take in His glory, or light and truth, and become filled with light? And suppose further that your husband does not. What then?

- What is your responsibility?
- How can you return to God without seeking to reclaim and redeem your husband?
- Remember the counsel of Hyrum Smith when he wrote as the prophet to the church? He said:

Whereas, in times past persons have been permitted to gather with the Saints at Nauvoo, in North America — such as husbands leaving their wives and children behind; also, such as wives leaving their husbands, and such as husbands leaving their wives who have no children, and some because their companions are unbelievers. All this kind of proceedings we consider to be erroneous and for want of proper information. And the same should be taught to all the Saints, and not suffer families to be broken up on any account whatever if it be possible to avoid it.

Suffer no man to leave his wife because she is an unbeliever. These things are an evil and must be forbidden by the authorities of the church or they will come under condemnation; for the gathering is not in hast nor by flight, but to prepare all things before you, and you know not but the unbeliever may be converted and the Lord heal him; but let the believers exercise faith in God, and the unbelieving husband shall be sanctified by the believing wife; and the unbelieving wife by the believing husband, and families are preserved and saved from a great evil which we have seen verified before our eyes. Behold this is a wicked generation, full of lyings, and deceit, and craftiness; and the children of the wicked are wiser than the children of light; that is, they are more crafty; and it seems that it has been the case in all ages of the world.

And the man who leaves his wife and travels to a foreign nation, has his mind overpowered with darkness, and Satan deceived him and flatters him with the graces of the harlot, and before he is aware he is disgraced forever; and greater is the danger for the woman that leaves her husband. The evils

resulting from such proceedings are of such a nature as to oblige us to cut them off from the church.

And we also forbid that a woman leave her husband because he is an unbeliever. We also forbid that a man shall leave his wife because she is an unbeliever. If he be a bad man (i.e., the believer) there is a law to remedy that evil. And if the law divorce them, then they are at liberty; otherwise they are bound as long as they two shall live, and it is not our prerogative to go beyond this; if we do it, it will be at the expense of our reputation.

These things we have written in plainness and we desire that they should be publicly known. (See also 1 Cor. 7:13–14)

The marriage of man and woman puts into the closest and most intimate contact two very different people. In their union it is possible to create offspring. It is this basic relationship where the two most important things are accomplished:

The work of bringing new life into the world, and

The work of overcoming the world and becoming “one.”

Yet fools seek to overcome the world while leaving their spouse uninvolved. Or, in other words, they seek to avoid the very test that is required and which is given to us all to help us to overcome the world. Remember there is neither the man nor the woman without the other in the Lord.

Assuming this is the requirement, then does the wording of church rites matter? Does language sealing the woman to the man change this need of unity?

AUGUST 29, 2012

Role of Women, Part 3

There are many questions about issues specific to women in the emails I receive. They go way beyond the one email I posted on Sunday. Many express disappointment about “denying” priestly office to women in the church. My reaction to that issue is to say: Why aspire to be like those claiming patriarchal priority based upon an exclusive “priesthood” when, for almost all men, their ordination will never result in heaven conferring power upon them? (D&C 121:36–37). Why envy nothing?

There is a misapprehension about “priesthood” and authority. This can be tracked back to the failure to adequately teach in the church, and by the example we see in the management of the church. In the church the man is called to office (bishop, stake president, elder’s quorum president, etc.). The man is supposed to fill that office using two counselors to help him. His wife is not one of his counselors. The positions often require confidences to be kept. Because of this, a bishop does not discuss everything about his calling with his wife. This gives the mistaken impression that the men fulfilling these roles matter more, and are trusted more by the Lord.

This model is a mirage, and to the extent the church is selected as the object of admiration and reverence, it will only fool you. Remember the church will end with death. The government of God in eternity is His Heavenly Family. These family relationships endure. The church will remain a creation of, and occupant confined to the Telestial world. It is a Telestial institution, attempting to invite you to rise up to something more, something higher, something that will endure. But the church extending that invitation is not

to be envied. Service in it is not the model of Celestial glory. Your family is the critical relationship in mortality.

A man and woman would be better off if they never held any church office other than home and visiting teaching. They would be better off if they realized it is the family alone that will endure, and then devote themselves to improving that relationship. Inside the family, the woman is the natural and undeniable counselor, and she is presiding within the family alongside her husband. She should join with him in blessing their children, she should lay hands on her husband when he asks and bless him, and she should be one with him. Because inside the home it is the husband and wife, not the bishop, who presides. Even the president of the church does not call a man to office without first asking his wife to sustain him in the calling. Nor does the woman get a calling without consulting her husband. All the envy and misapprehensions notwithstanding, the fact remains that the church is inferior to the family. The church is temporary, transient and Telestial. The family can be eternal, enduring and Celestial.

To the extent that you choose the church to inform your understanding, you are setting it up as an idol. That approach does more harm than good. No institution can display what it was never intended to be. It is the unity found in marriage, not the structure of organizing the church, which should become our focus.

This week's topic has been the subject of repeated discussions between me and my wife. Each morning we spend about an hour talking about many different issues as we walk together, the role of woman being one of them. Each evening we also spend time discussing important issues, from the Gospel to family matters to finances and everything in-between. She not only edits my writing, but discusses what I write with me. She is a constant adviser and

counselor to me. Her view of this subject is much more critical of women's misunderstanding than mine. She finds many complaints and complainers exasperating. Through prayer and study, she has had to come to terms with many of these same issues. On the ones she doesn't struggle with or can't get answers to, she trusts that God loves her and that "everything will be okay." We find it joyful and necessary to reason together and discuss gospel issues with one another.

If we are all the Lord's, there should be unity between us all; even more so between husband and wife. That does not come through neglect. It comes through effort. Sometimes the effort must begin by the woman bringing to the attention of the husband what he is failing to do or to be. Then it grows from there to discussion, and finally understanding and agreement. That is the work of every relationship. It cannot be avoided. Effort and time are required for any union to be obtained.

AUGUST 30, 2012

Role of Women, Part 4

You ask about women and The Second Comforter. It is apparent from the question you have not read *Come, Let Us Adore Him*. I ask people to read what I've written to understand this blog. If you had taken that advice you would already know the first person to receive the risen Lord's personal ministry was a woman. And you would likewise know there were many others who received His companionship and ministry before any of His Apostles. When He did visit with the Apostles, He rebuked them for not receiving the testimony of the women in particular. This makes clear that the Lord values His family and closest associates and companions

more than an hierarchy. You should read that book if you'd like to understand Him better.

The “ambition” to have position or authority or power or “equality” is based on our mistaken understanding of patriarchy and confuses mankind’s bad example with God’s intention. You have also associated the idea of priesthood with the institutional positions of the church.

Therefore, since women are barred from filling those institutional positions, you’ve reached a wrong conclusion.

Go back to what is most basic. It is the basic truths which matter most. All great truths are simple.

What is “priestly?” Whether it is done by a “priest” or by a “priestess” what exactly is “priestly?”

At the core, to perform a priestly act is to do something for the Lord; to act as His surrogate, or to act as His agent. The greatest of these priestly acts are rendered through service to others, and can be done by anyone, almost at any time, and in almost any circumstance.

When administering relief to others, you can act on the Lord’s behalf. When you clothe the naked and needy, or visit the sick and confined, or feed the hungry, you are doing His work (Matt. 25:34–46).

The “chief seats” don’t matter. When men obtain the honors of others, sit in the chief seats, and receive public acclaim, they are not the ones to envy. Those who support themselves through the widow’s tithes are damned (Luke 20:45–47).

The Lord has respect to the obscure, and He took greater notice of the faithful who donated her two mites than the rich who made a show (Luke 21:1–4). This is who He is. This is who you are to serve. He has no respect for those who consume these donations

from the poor. When you serve others, you are a priestess whom the Lord will recognize and are the one He intends to exalt (Matt. 23:11-12). It is not the ruler who will be honored, but the servant (Matt. 23:8-12).

There is nothing to envy from anyone who receives public acclaim, praise, adoration and celebration (Matt. 23:5-8). When crowds gather to proclaim your greatness, this is neither priestly nor godly, and you have your reward (Matt. 6:1-4). But when you serve in quiet and are faithful in secret, then you are priestly and the Lord will honor you (Matt. 6:5-6).

There is nothing preventing you from acting the part of the priestess in blessing others and serving on the Lord's behalf (D&C 58:26-29). If you wait to act the part of a priestess until someone calls you to a priestly position, and then only want to hold office to be seen and recognized as a priestess, then you have failed to know your Lord.

You have confused priestly service for God and to your fellow man with rank, position and institutional authority. That is nothing. Worse than nothing. These institutional positions confuse both holders and observers into thinking this is what matters. Misused church position can become little different than membership in a civic club, as some leaders I have known. You probably have seen such people in your own experience. If your "service" is entirely confined there, and you do nothing to benefit the poor, the weak, the needy, the naked and you let the beggar pass by you unnoticed, then priestly service is for you only vanity and pride. It is not something to connect you with God (Mosiah 4:12-27). You can do that without any institution conferring upon you, like "the Great and Powerful Oz" what is in reality nothing more than a watch, a certificate and a medal.

I would advise against looking to those who are almost always damned to decide what example to follow (D&C 121:39–40). The ones acclaimed the most, celebrated the most, and who hold the greatest public eye generally have no authority from God anyway (D&C 121:34–37). Do not either envy them or take them for your model. People who make this mistake aspire to be a child of hell (Matt. 23:10–15).

Even if we receive all the praise men can bestow upon us, we are STILL not priestly. For that, you need to serve our Lord. The honors of men are nothing. They never have been anything (D&C 121:34–36).

You want to be priestly? Then cry repentance. It will offend others, and will cause them to despise you, but will bring you to know your Lord. He is meek and lowly. He speaks to man in plain humility, as one man speaks to another.

His first witness of His resurrection, and therefore the first apostolic voice having authority to declare her witness that He who was dead is alive, was a woman. She was not among the church hierarchy, but the Lord rebuked them for ignoring her authoritative and true witness. They were “fools and slow of heart” for this error.

Our Lord is no respecter of persons. You ought not be either. To the extent you allow false and exaggerated claims to inform your understanding of a meek and lowly Lord, you will always reach errant conclusions. That is part of the deception we are required to overcome here.

AUGUST 31, 2012

Role of Women, Part 5

I know more than I can or ought to say about this matter, but that has been a deeply personal journey. You should take that same journey. I do not want to rob you of discovery. Therefore, let me reiterate that this is a worthy topic and ought to be something you take to the Lord and inquire of Him. He can make it plain to you, only if you are prepared to receive it.

What is required to qualify us for the kingdom of Heaven is driven by what we each lack. In each person that is different. However, the final standard is the same for all of us.

Do not think a merciful and self-sacrificing Lord, who endured infinite suffering to redeem you, has any intention of disappointing you, much less of making you miserable. He will exalt you. But you cannot be as He is without first learning to trust Him and then to follow Him. He descended below it all. Are you greater than He? (D&C 122:8).

Man is incomplete. Woman is incomplete. The “image of God” is both male and female (Gen. 1:27).

There is a reason for this necessity of both the man and woman to complete the image of God. The capacity of one is different from the other. Without betraying too much, I will close by saying this, which if you were to understand you would know more about God than you do at present:

The role of the man is knowledge. The role of the woman is wisdom. These are eternal, and not merely found here.

Even the names of God reflect these separate roles and the scriptures associate wisdom with the feminine. Underlying this are things which we are only shown to the faithful when we have first become more like God.

There is nothing to your lamentation and complaints that God will not provide a more than adequate reward for enduring. God will not leave you comfortless on this issue any more than He will on any subject which causes you tears. They will all be wiped away (Rev. 7:17). You need to develop the faith to trust Him. He will not disappoint you.

Each of us needs to find God. Then we should lead our spouse to Him likewise. There is a lifetime of effort required to do so.

SEPTEMBER 1, 2012

Role of Women, Conclusion

I've addressed the issue of "plural wives" elsewhere. I do not believe it is a requirement imposed on those who are sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise. The greatest challenge is to produce a couple who, in the image of God, are one. If a couple manage to overcome the world and become so, they do not need additional women to join them to qualify for exaltation. And if a group insists upon complicating the process by the multiplicity of wives before they are sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, the challenge to become one may never be overcome.

I have no doubts about the Lord's kindness and compassion for all men and women. Therefore, I have no doubt about the circumstances of the single, or the forsaken woman who is faithful to the Gospel. There will be none who are abandoned by the Lord who are faithful to His teachings.

The role of woman is more glorious than I can explain in the present circumstances. To discuss all I know would be to violate the present order, which I will not do. But I have no hesitation to say that the "many great and important things" which are "yet to

be revealed” (Articles of Faith, Article 9) will include a great deal more than presently understood about women. I do not know if that will need to wait until after the Lord’s second coming, or if it will be known to the church before then. What I do know, however, is that the full picture of woman’s past and future glory is presently withheld from man’s view in the wisdom of the Lord.

Temple rites are not complete. I’ve said that before on a number of occasions. When they are, the role of women will be greatly clarified. But it is not my calling or my right to get ahead of the Lord on such matters. What I can do, however, is to testify that among the things which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man” is included a sound understanding of the role of women. It is only withheld at present because of our wickedness. What we have is enough to test us, and we are being tested. Will we ever be enough to pass the test to warrant the Lord giving more?

When we have more before we are ready to receive it then it only condemns us. The Lord is merciful in withholding such things.

What I also know is that if He will reveal things to any man He will do so to all mankind. Therefore as I said at the beginning, these are legitimate and worthy questions. They deserve an answer. Ask the Lord and trust His answer.

No man has ever been elevated to a throne in eternity who was not placed upon it by his wife.

CHAPTER 16

The Battle Is Within You

SEPTEMBER 2, 2012

What We Control

We are not accountable for things we do not control. The Lord alone in His wisdom will determine what will be done about such things. For us, it is what we do control that will matter. Our decisions about what opportunities He offers have eternal consequences.

One of those decisions is whether we recognize the opportunities before us. We allow a great deal to blind us and let us think the opportunity was never ours, when it was really within our control all along.

SEPTEMBER 3, 2012

Waiting on Others

The fullness of the Gospel is found in the Book of Mormon. There you will find individual after individual who have returned, through faith, back to God's presence. Once they have returned to God's presence, they have a different view of themselves and others.

In the case of Lehi and his family, he listened to the testimony of others warning of the destruction of Jerusalem, took their warning

seriously, and begged God on behalf of his people (1 Ne. 1:5). As a result of his intercession and compassion for others, he was visited by God (1 Ne. 1:6).

Lehi's family did not believe him. They followed him into the wilderness, but only because of the respect accorded to the father in their society. None of the family could believe what he was saying.

The younger son, Nephi, prayed to be able to believe what his father Lehi was saying. Even though Nephi wanted to acquire faith, it was not easy to trust his father's message. Because of his desire to believe, Nephi reports the Lord "did visit me;" this sounds like something more than it was. The Lord's initial "visit" to Nephi consisted only in 'softening Nephi's heart so that he was able to believe his father.' (1 Ne. 2:16).

This is the beginning. This is the first step. When the Lord first takes hold of your hand, it is a faint grip, a partial contact, a weak beginning. It is the token, however, that everyone must first receive. It comes from obeying and then acting faithfully on what has been shown to you. It requires you to sacrifice your own will to the Lord's.

No one will return to the presence of God who has not received this gentle grip from the Lord. It is a true token given by the Lord; not just something ceremonial. It is the companion to faith. It is the start of the path you will walk back to the presence of God, passing the sentinels who stand along the way. They will want to know you have learned all you need from your experiences here to be able to return to God's presence.

When the most dramatic points of struggle happen along the path, the Book of Mormon provides us with a view into the person where the struggle takes place. Nephi's record of the fullness includes his testimony of kneeling on a dark Jerusalem street where

he found the person of Laban lying drunk and unconscious before him (1 Ne. 4:7–8). He disarmed him. Then took the time to admire the weapon of war he had taken from his fallen uncle, noting its precious material and workmanship (1 Ne. 4:9).

While admiring the sword, he had the urge to slay Laban (1 Ne. 4:10). Though Nephi attributed this impulse to “the Spirit” it was nothing more than an impulse. Here is where the cosmic struggle plays out. In Nephi’s heart, there is a strong urge to kill a man which, in Nephi’s life, is unprecedented. It is foreign to him. It is “the Spirit” and not Nephi who has this will to kill the man.

Nephi’s hesitancy is not based solely on moral scruples, but on all he believes about himself. He is not a man of war. He has “never before shed the blood of man” and does not think it appropriate to start now (1 Ne. 4:10). This is not about self control, this is about who his identity. This is who Nephi believes himself to be. He is better than this base impulse. It is beneath him.

When he resists this impulse, “the Spirit” elevates the message. No longer is it “constraint” or inclination, but “the Spirit” now “speaks” to him in unmistakable words (1 Ne. 4:11). The message not only clearly tells Nephi the Lord’s will in ‘delivering Laban into his hands,’ but also makes enough sense to Nephi that he can immediately recognize the many reasons for the Lord accomplishing this (1 Ne. 4:11). The proof of the Lord’s hand lays before Nephi. After all, Laban is lying helpless, and “has been delivered into thy hands” as the most tangible, clear proof of God’s power (*Id.*).

Yet all of this struggle is internal to Nephi. You could stand on the same street, at the same moment and see the same scene play out before you, and you would not be a witness to God’s great work underway.

The fullness of the Gospel requires us to recognize the hand of God guiding us. The battle we join is within. No one is spared from these stages of growth and development.

The church cannot provide you with an alternative means to get there. It is between you and God, alone. The scene will be as the Book of Mormon continually portrays it. That record is the most comprehensive retelling of how to return to God's presence ever compiled. It was put together by those who made the journey along the path, passing all the sentinels who stand guard along the way. They embraced their Lord through the veil before entering again into His presence. Then, having been true and faithful, they were brought back into His presence and redeemed from the fall of mankind (Ether 3:13). They, like the Brother of Jared, were redeemed because of their knowledge (Ether 3:19).

Yet you insist on captivity because you have no knowledge (Isa. 5:13). You take blind guides and are therefore, blinded by your own ignorance (Matt. 23:16). You insist on keeping what can never inform you, while rejecting what is told you in plain words (2 Ne. 32:7). You refuse to see and are willingly blind and therefore the greater darkness lies within you.

You can wait, as one recent and frequent, anonymous commentator has insisted, until there is a program offered to you by an institution and see how long it takes for you to learn of God. Or, believe in the Book of Mormon and remove yourself from condemnation (D&C 84:56–57). But if you seek for approval from an institution, then the Lord cannot overcome the barrier you have erected between you and Him.

SEPTEMBER 4, 2012

The Church's Greatest Appeal

There are many disagreements among Latter-day Saints. Sitting in on a Sunday lesson in my High Priest's Group will show just how many topics divide us. We understand a great deal differently from our history, our doctrine, and our priorities. This is normal among any group of people, even when they join together as fellow believers.

The most unifying thing about the church, however, is the service we render to others. Unlike many other denominations, our church is filled with opportunities to serve. It is expected. And it is rendered. Everywhere you turn the members are giving service.

I am not particularly political. The differences between political parties is so little as to not justify enthusiasm for either. However, I watched the evening of Mitt Romney's acceptance last week. A number of speakers extolled his past service to others. There wasn't a dry eye in the house as parents spoke about the support they received from Bishop Romney for their troubles.

As I listened, it seemed to me this was a description of a typical Mormon Bishop. It can be found in thousands of wards throughout the church. It is an expected part of the calling. And that service and support is rendered willingly, week after week, throughout the church.

From Home Teachers to Visiting Teachers, Relief Society Presidents and Bishops, Elder's Quorums and Young Women Leaders, there are continual acts of service and support expected and delivered.

It is my view this is the church's greatest strength and its greatest appeal. We take it for granted. But when behavior which is "normal"

for a Mormon Bishop was put on public display, it touched people to the point of tears. We get used to it. We shouldn't. It is, after all, the pure religion of Christ (James 1:22-27). It is what we do, more than what we say, that matters in practicing our faith.

This should unify us no matter what may divide us.

SEPTEMBER 5, 2012

Proverbs 6:20-23

My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother:

Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.

When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.

For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

We should teach with more simplicity. We should take the counsel in the scriptures to heart and bind them to us.

SEPTEMBER 6, 2012

Faith

The scriptures say that without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Have you thought about what that means? From *The Lectures on Faith* it is clear that faith is a "principle of action." If it is a principle of action, whose action is it? Must you do something, and if so, what? What action must you take? What is the role you occupy in faith?

The Lectures on Faith also say that faith is a “principle of power.” What does that mean? Whose power? Is there a relationship between the action of man and the power of God?

Think of any great example of faith in scriptures and apply these questions to them. It can be as simple as David and Goliath, or as complicated as Elijah. After you have studied the example, ask yourself, “what action did the man or woman take? Why did they act in that way? What was the intention? How was God’s power used? Who controlled the power? More precisely, from what source did the power come? Is this principle of power connected with priesthood? (D&C 121:36). If it is, then when any person exercises faith as a principle of power, are they exercising priesthood?

SEPTEMBER 10, 2012

A Worthy Cause

A family in my ward lost their father in a one-car accident on Tuesday, August 14. He leaves behind a family in need. There is a fund established to help the family members at Wells Fargo Bank. If any of you have the means and would like to do so, donations can be given at any Wells Fargo Bank to: The Todd Kunz Family Memorial Fund.

I have home taught this family for many years. His wife is a wonderful woman left now to care for the family alone. There are two grandchildren belonging to the oldest son and his wife. I’ve followed their son’s missionary work in Kenya and seen the faithfulness of this good family. Another son just finished high school and isn’t old enough for a mission yet. Their youngest daughter is the same age as one of my daughters.

Todd was a gentle, decent and caring man. He did volunteer work at the Utah State Prison, and helped others in need.

Circumstances combined to take his life at this moment leave his family in need of help. If you can assist, it will go directly to the fund. Only his family can access the account.

UPDATE: Last four digits of the account for verification purposes 4899

SEPTEMBER 11, 2012

Bearing Testimony v. Presiding

When Mary Magdalene, and Joanna and Mary and other women saw the angels in the empty tomb, and then testified of what they saw and knew, were they disrespecting the proper authority? (Luke 24:1-10). Was there something improper about them knowing something that the Lord's Apostles did not know yet? (Luke 24:11-12).

Was there something wrong with the Lord appearing to, and speaking with Mary on the morning of His resurrection, even before He returned to His Father? (John 20:11-17).

Was there something improper, too sacred, or too private in these events to prevent these witnesses from testifying of them? Isn't everyone required to bear their testimony of the Lord? If those who can read the Lord's revelation are required to testify they have "heard his voice" (D&C 18:35-36) how much greater an obligation is imposed upon those who have seen Him?

Testimony of Christ is not co-equal with presiding. All who can do so should testify. Presiding, however, is based on the common consent given exclusively to those who are in the church's hierarchy. Unless sustained to such presiding positions, no one has the right to such office (D&C 26:2; 28:13).

SEPTEMBER 12, 2012

What is Meant by Keys

There are many different ways in which the words “key” or “keys” are used in scripture. It is an interesting topic to research. President John Taylor was so interested in the word that he did a study he titled, “The Book of Keys” wherein he attempted to reconstruct the topic in whole. So far as I have been able to learn, that book no longer exists.

In Temple Recommend interviews you are asked to acknowledge the current church president “holds all the keys” and “is the only person authorized to exercise them” on the earth today. This is a question we all answer. But in discussions with bishops, stake presidents, religion professors, friends and mission presidents, I’ve never been able to determine, nor has anyone been able to explain what is included. Below is the answer given in *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, (entry written by Alan Perish):

The keys of the priesthood refer to the right to exercise power in the name of Jesus Christ or to preside over a priesthood function, quorum, or organizational division of the Church. Keys are necessary to maintain order and to see that the functions of the Church are performed in the proper time, place, and manner. They are given by the laying on of hands in an ordination or setting apart by a person who presides and who holds the appropriate keys at a higher level. Many keys were restored to men on earth by heavenly messengers to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. The keys of the kingdom of God on earth are held by the apostles. The president of the church, who is the senior apostle, holds all the keys presently on earth and presides over all the organizational and ordinance work of

the Church (D&C 107:8–9, 91–92). He delegates authority by giving the keys of specific offices to others (D&C 124:123). Only presiding priesthood officers (including General Authorities, stake presidents, mission presidents, temple presidents, bishops, branch presidents, and quorum presidents) hold keys pertaining to their respective offices. Latter-day Saints distinguish between holding the priesthood and holding keys to direct the work of the priesthood: one does not receive additional priesthood when one is given keys (Joseph F. Smith, IE 4 [Jan. 1901]:230). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “the fundamental principles, government, and doctrine of the Church are vested in the keys of the kingdom” (*TPJS*, p. 21). “The keys have to be brought from heaven whenever the Gospel is sent”; they are revealed to man under the authority of Adam, for he was the first to be given them when he was given dominion over all things. They have come down through the dispensations of the gospel to prophets, including Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah; to Peter, James, and John; and to Joseph Smith and the designated prophets of the latter days (HC 3:385–87). Keys to perform or preside over various priesthood functions were bestowed upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by John the Baptist (see *Aaronic Priesthood: Restoration*), by Peter, James, and John (see *Melchizedek Priesthood: Restoration of Melchizedek Priesthood*), and by Moses, Elias, and Elijah in the Kirtland Temple (see *Doctrine and Covenants: Sections 109–110*). Many types of keys are mentioned in the scriptures of the Church (see MD, pp. 409–13). Jesus Christ holds all the keys. Joseph Smith received the keys pertaining to the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ (D&C 6:25–28; 28:7; 35:18), and through him the First Presidency holds the “keys of the kingdom,” including the

sealing ordinances (D&C 81:1–2; 90:1–6; 110:16; 128:20; 132:19). Specific mention of certain keys and those who hold them include the following: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles exercises the keys “to open the door by the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ” in all the world (D&C 107:35; 112:16; 124:128). Adam holds “the keys of salvation under the counsel and direction of the Holy One,” and “the keys of the universe” (D&C 78:16; *TPJS*, p. 157); Moses, “the keys of the gathering of Israel” (D&C 110:11); Elias, the keys to bring to pass “the restoration of all things” (D&C 27:6); and Elijah, “the keys of the power of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers” (D&C 27:9). Holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood are said to have “the keys of the Church,” “the key of knowledge,” and “the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church” (D&C 42:69; 84:19; 107:18), while belonging to the Aaronic Priesthood are “the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins” (D&C 13:1; 84:26). All these stewardships will eventually be delivered back into the hands of Jesus Christ. (*TPJS*, p. 157)

As far as it goes, I think this is a good attempt. But when church members are asked if the church president holds “all the keys” I cannot be certain the above definition is what is meant. Here is the clearest way I think it is illustrated:

From the smallest branch to the largest ward, through all the areas, missions, stakes, wards and branches of the church, there is not a single place in the church where President Thomas Monson would not be recognized as the presiding authority in any meeting he attended. He could go anywhere, in any location, in any meeting,

and he alone would be the final authority. While a bishop presides and has the keys over his ward, and in that ward can call or release anyone to any position, President Monson would preside over that bishop if he were to attend the ward. No one would doubt or question whether President Monson could release and call a replacement bishop in that, or any, ward. The same is true of any stake president, or any mission president or any area authority, or any general authority. There is simply no one other than President Monson alone who holds the keys to put the church in order. Period.

I think this is the best definition of “all the keys.”

SEPTEMBER 13, 2012

Keys of Ministering of Angels

The Aaronic Priesthood has the “keys of the ministering of angels” (D&C 84:26). This raises these questions:

- Do the “keys of ministering of angels” guarantee the holder he will entertain angels?
- Does the ministry of angels depend entirely on possession of these keys?
- Does the appearance of an angel necessarily mean the one to whom the angel appears holds the Aaronic Priesthood? Even in the case of a woman, such as Mary? (Luke 1:26–27).
- If the appearance of an angel does not equate with holding of the Aaronic Priesthood, then does it equate with holding the keys of ministering of angels?
- Can the keys of ministering of angels be separated from the Aaronic Priesthood, or are they entirely confined to this priesthood?
- If the keys can be separated from the priesthood, then what is priesthood and what are “keys?”

We tend to gloss over a great deal and have too little curiosity about important questions. In *The Second Comforter*, I explained part of being “childlike” is to possess relentless curiosity about things you do not understand. We should try to get every answer to every question we can obtain from God. First through the scriptures. Then through prayer and inquiry.

What if “keys to the ministering of angels” are not coequal with the Aaronic Priesthood? Who or under what circumstances could angels minister in the absence of Aaronic Priesthood? Are there “keys” conferred whenever an angel ministers to a person, any person? If an angel appears to a woman in Tibet, does that appearance give her the “keys of ministering of angels” even if she is not Mormon? If so, what is meant by “keys of ministering of angels?”

If an angel has appeared to someone outside the church, and if, because of that, the person does hold some “keys” because of an actual appearance, what of the Mormon priest who has never had an angel appear to him? If he has never had an angelic visitor, does he still hold the “keys of the ministering of angels?”

Do “keys of the ministering of angels” guarantee angels will appear? If not, then what do the “keys” entail? What do they confer? Must an angel minister to the key holder if he demands it? Are angels subject to the keys or not? If not, then how should these “keys” be understood:

- As a right?
- As a privilege?
- As an invitation?
- As a matter to inquire into until you have understanding?

SEPTEMBER 14, 2012

“Keys” as Challenge

What if “keys” are better viewed as a signal, or a sign post along a pathway? Instead of “I hold ‘keys’ and so I hold something of value.”

The better view might be “I have been told one ‘key’ to my calling is to have angels minister to men. Therefore, I know this is a critical matter, or a key to search into.”

What if “holding a key” is better viewed as being given a strong guide or route to take? It points you to something you need to obtain. You have a “key” and now need to discover what it is that must be unlocked.

A “key” is something used to open a lock. It is also something that is “important” or “central in importance.” A “keystone” is the point in an arch that fits in the center, holding the arch together. Upon it all else rests.

If the word is viewed using these meanings, it suggests that holding a “key” implies using it in action. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve use their key positions to manage and maintain the worldwide church organization. If not for that constant oversight, the organization of the church would lapse into disorganization. Their “keys” are indispensable to hold the entire structure together. Without them at the center, like a “keystone,” the “building” would collapse. But the Gospel (and the church) is not a spectator sport. Even if fifteen presiding authorities waste and wear out their lives keeping the church organized, no one will be saved by observing them. It devolves upon us, each one, to obtain the keys of our own salvation by a covenant with God.

Offices belonging to others are their responsibility. For you, there are “keys” which come to us in our own sphere. We are all

asked to rise up in testimony and knowledge until, at last, we arrive at “the perfect day” of understanding (D&C 50:24). We are all invited to come to know the Lord, see His face, and know that He is (D&C 93:1).

Can you imagine what a different church it would be if we were all able to say we know for ourselves, nothing doubting, our Lord? Can you imagine how all the problems we now face would evaporate overnight, if our quest was to grow from grace to grace until we too receive of the Father’s fullness? (D&C 93:20). Most of what now afflicts us would become trivial, left behind as we grow in light and truth (D&C 50:23–25).

Our temple rites symbolize the trek back to the presence of God. All of us, male and female, receive the same ceremonial blueprint to build upon. Every person within the church should obey and sacrifice (for God and not man), then learn through service, the Gospel of Christ by walking in His footsteps. You agreed to undertake obedience and sacrifice before committing to following His Gospel. This order is critical. Without it, you could err in thinking the Gospel will come to you without sacrifice.

From *The Lectures on Faith*, Lecture 6:

7 Let us here observe, that a religion [meaning true religion, no matter what another may say or do that tempts you to depart from it] that does not require the sacrifice of all things, never has power [forget about office or position or authority to conduct a meeting, and realize this is the power to obtain eternal life] sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things [meaning your own

reputation, your standing, and any praise you may hope to gain from others — all must be laid upon the altar even if your fellow Latter-day Saint falsely accuses you]: it was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things, that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God [because God will make that known directly to you and you will know, nothing doubting]. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has, for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice, because he seeks to do his will, he does know most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice & offering, & that he has not nor will not seek his face in vain. Under these circumstances, then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life.

8 It is in vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they in like manner offer unto him the same sacrifice [which you learn in the temple rites and which you have covenanted to do], and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him.

This outlines the “keys” for your own salvation. Seek for these for they belong to each of us. Do not be jealous of church positions, they do not matter and are not necessary. One thing is necessary; therefore choose the better part (Luke 10:39–42).

SEPTEMBER 15, 2012

Edit: A Worthy Cause

A CPA in our ward has been working with the Kunz family to straighten out the donation account. There was an account that was being used (an already existing account), that has now been closed. There is a new donation account with the last four digits 7987.

We would like to thank all of you for your generosity in donating, or trying to donate. The Kunz family is deeply appreciative, as are we.

SEPTEMBER 17, 2012

The Equinox

This coming weekend will mark the final Equinox of the year. One in the spring, marking the change from winter to spring, and this one marking the change from summer to fall. Apart from separating our designation of the seasons, these times also represent the most colorful times of the year. New and colorful life in nature stirs with the promise of fruit, flowers and planting. In contrast, the coming event marks the harvest when nature's bounty is gathered. In an agrarian society it is a time to enjoy the fruit, work is reduced, and the brilliant colors of a season well spent in growth shows its retirement for a time.

The fall Equinox is the time when, year after year, the Angel visited with Joseph. It is also when the plates were turned over to Joseph in that final year. This may not be mere coincidence. Every Equinox marks the balance of light and dark all over the world. From the North Pole to the South Pole, every place is in harmony with the sun. Wherever man lives, they receive the light equally; twelve hours of light and twelve hours of dark.

Joseph trusted in the power of that time, and perhaps waited to inquire as to his standing before the Lord specifically trusting that day would produce an answer (*JSH 1:29*) I also believe the balance of light has spiritual meaning.

Days and seasons do not control angelic visitations. They happen without regard to the calendar, but according to the will of God. However our faith matters. If we have great confidence, like Joseph, then marking your submission to heaven and desire to know your standing before the Lord may well be aided by such confidence.

I must confess, although I have had a number of visits, none have been calendar related so far as I can tell. There are many scriptural records of visitations that appear to have nothing to do with the dates on the calendar. They appear to me to be based on circumstances and our needs here, or upon the will of God. Therefore, I do not believe anyone is precluded from a visit at any time of the year.

Having said all that, I do not think the Equinox should go unnoticed. And, Joseph was alone when he was visited.

SEPTEMBER 18, 2012

An Unknown Piece of Music

Sunday night I was up late praying and thinking about many things. Sometime shortly after midnight I quieted down and began listening carefully to KBYU FM (classical 89.1) which had been playing in the background. As I listened, they played a piece that sounded to me like it was played on a french horn. Most of the piece was a solo. The piece was delicate, despite the instrument, and it soared and delivered runs of delicate notes. It was astonishing

that these notes could come from such a limited instrument. Now I know that there are competent french horn players, and that with practice it is possible to acquire this kind of skill and delicacy with a somewhat cumbersome instrument.

When the piece ended, the KBYU announcer, Peter Van de Graff, informed me that this piece had been played on the tuba. This stunned me. I have never met nor heard anyone who can take that heavy, cumbersome and relatively inarticulate instrument and turn it into something that can play music which can soar into the skies and dance about like a piccolo. Here are a couple of examples: Baaddsvick (link: <https://youtu.be/mHMyrhilkdo>) and Marshall (link: https://youtu.be/r2VG_sOfA4Q). The tuba is primarily a percussion instrument. It is like a bass guitar in a rock and roll band. They both thump out a foundation upon which the rest of the orchestra or rock band build melodies. While they exist, there are comparatively few bass guitar solos in rock music. The bass player for Primas, Les Claypool, (link: <https://youtu.be/GoelxcQF9Jo>) is a rare exception, but even his amazing gift is mostly percussion. Moving them out of that role is akin to asking Andre the Giant to perform ballet.

As I pondered this, it struck me how very like the heavy, inarticulate, restricted instrument mankind is. But a skilled musician took the very same thing which in normal use gives merely a pounding back beat and brought it front and center in a solo that soared to heaven. If such skill can bring the tuba into submission, then with practice, diligence, desire and the help of God, we can likewise bring ourselves into harmony with God. All things typify Christ and the Gospel. Even that wonderful piece played on a tuba.

My vision of how high man can soar was ratified anew in the testimony of that skilled musician. I believe once we find it is possible to delicately soar in concert with heaven and enjoy the thrilling harmony in God's creation, that alone should help us rise up. May we each have the humility and the patience and undertake the long-suffering to change our clumsy efforts into a delicate symphony, even so amen.

SEPTEMBER 18, 2012

Christ the Father

After Christ redeems the brother of Jared from the fall (Ether 3:13), He explains to the brother of Jared the doctrine of Christ's Fatherhood. The doctrine is simple. It is an elaboration on what Christ taught in the New Testament.

Here is the doctrine:

Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters. (Ether 3:14)

In other words, because of our sins and the fall we have experienced, our relationship as sons and daughters of the Father cannot be restored without an intermediary who is willing to cleanse us and to accept us as His son.

This is what Jesus had reference to in John 14:6 when He declared: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." If you find yourself in the circumstance that a voice from heaven declares unto you that you are a son of God because this day He has begotten you (Psalms 2:7) that voice

will be Christ's, your Father will be Christ, and you will understand that Christ is the Father and the Son.

SEPTEMBER 20, 2012

“Leaning” Romney

I am not particularly political. Political partisanship is generally a distraction from what our problems really are. Once you have become partisan you tend to ignore the merits of the other side, as well as the mistakes of your own side.

We must all become converted in our hearts to Jesus Christ. If we have Christ in our hearts, all else will follow. Joseph Smith's comment that he “teaches them correct principles and they govern themselves” was not just a casual statement. It was the confidence a prophet of God in the ability of people to know the difference between good and bad, right and wrong. Even if they err, they would get closer to the correct course by considering the principles they had been taught than by assessing the argument or immediate decision before them.

When a man is converted to truth, correct principles, and true doctrine, such a man has no difficulty stating in simple, but clear terms, the truth which inhabits his heart.

Mitt Romney has been running to be the President of the United States for 5 years now. In all of that time, I find myself unconvinced that his heart is filled with sound, true, heartfelt principles and doctrines. Why can't he set forth in plainness true economic doctrine as well as I can? His background should qualify him to speak with greater plainness about the truths of economic freedom and the principles of economic growth better than I can. He does not. At times he is almost incoherent.

There are fundamental and universal God-given principles for the preservation of the freedom of mankind. Madison, Monroe, Jefferson, Washington, Mason, and the great John Adams could all state with clarity and simplicity, with the beauty that persuades you to your very core, these God-given truths. Why is Mitt Romney unable to do so?

In his first term, President Obama experimented with turning a soft hand to the Muslim world. It was something new. Although it failed, the virulent critics immediately labeled it “an apology tour.” No one had any idea how the Cairo speech might move the Muslim hearts. Instead of condemning and even rooting for its failure, we should have prayed to God that our President would move the Muslim world. We should have asked God to soften the hearts of our enemies. We should have asked God to embolden our friends. Instead we withheld our sustaining prayers, and in contempt, we let the matter proceed to its now complete failure.

Thinking upon the failure of that experiment, I recall how clearly Richard Nixon articulated, and Henry Kissinger elaborated, on the effective policy of projecting national strength to our enemies. Whatever terrible flaws Richard Nixon had, he was convinced to his core, and able to persuasively articulate the truth of national power in the international arena. After our national humiliation under Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan was elected in very large part because he could speak the principles of American power persuasively, convincingly, and from his heart.

Mitt Romney is unable to do this.

As I listen to Mitt Romney speak about any topic, principle, or true doctrine, he seems hollow. He sounds more like a spokesman for the opinions of others than a man speaking from his heart. He sounds like the chairman of a committee. He sounds like he is

trying to use focus group phrases. He seems to be using the results of opinion polls to formulate his public statements. In short, he seems more like an artificial life form than a principled, true-hearted, complete convert to God given truths, proven economic doctrines, and historically successful foreign policy.

This leaves me wondering:

- It is not “who” but rather “what” am I electing?
- Is this a man with a true and converted heart and soul, or is this a weather vane prepared to be tossed to and fro with every wind of shifting opinion?
- Is he, as I suspect, double-minded and unstable as water?

If opinions shift on something which is absolutely fundamental and God-given to preserve man’s freedom, will that popularity shift cause him to surrender such a principle?

Why should I regard him as something more than an empty suit espousing, without the conviction I can feel in my own heart, the results of market driven research?

I am “leaning” Romney. That is because I believe all of the quantitative easing has not worked and has hurt us all very much. This I could explain with simplicity, but that’s beyond this post. I believe President Obama’s soft approach foreign policy has utterly failed. I believe the stock market is over-priced, and nothing more than a politically manipulated show piece for the President’s sake. I believe shutting down the pipeline was an act completely contrary to our national interest, and has resulted in increased gas prices to every American. Mitt Romney criticizes each of these things. But he sounds more like a puppet than a man of principle with a converted heart. To me, if in the end I vote for Mitt Romney, it will only be as a choice of the lesser of two evils. How I wish he

were not Mormon. I think he represents the religion of conviction, devotion, and true principles (the ones which reside in my heart) in such an embarrassingly weak way that if taken as an example of our people should engender contempt and disrespect. He is like the progressively less principled Joel Osteen. As Mr. Osteen's popularity has risen, and his wealth has increased (he now lives in a \$10 million dollar home) the principles he used to preach have eroded, softened, and been abandoned. He is a living example of the very problem Mitt Romney's behavior now puts on display.

May God have mercy on us all. May we all look to our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, for our salvation—both temporal and spiritual. Even so, Amen.

SEPTEMBER 21, 2012

A Number of Clarifications from This Week

It is impossible in a short post to ever discuss any subject completely. For the most part, all posts are abbreviated ideas to cause anyone who reads this to think. I want the reader to turn ideas over in their own minds, and reach their own conclusion, after hopefully being provoked to thought by what I say. It is a mistake to think because I have said one thing that I have then said everything.

To illustrate and hopefully clarify, and certainly cause further thought, I want to add the following comments. These are taken from input I received this week from some of you.

I pray to the Father in the name of the Son. In my mind I think of the Father. I let heaven speak to my heart concerning that name-title and I do not presume to have the right to tell anyone what comes into my mind. I also thank the Father for the sacrifice of His Son.

I would add that “El” is singular. “Elohim” is plural. In Abraham 3, there is a group identified as “the noble and great.” The noble and great are the “we” who are to prove “them.” This is in Abraham 3.

When the matter is settled, in chapter 4 of Abraham, that “we” or “the noble and great” commence the creation, and that group throughout Abraham 4 are continually referred to as “the Gods.” The English term “the Gods” captures the same idea as the Hebrew word “Elohim.”

If you have not read “The First Three Words of the Endowment”, you may want to do so. **

It would be an astonishing, but not completely unprecedented, if one of the “sons of God” were to fall away. Were that to happen, the heavens would weep over him.

When Christ says that no man “comes unto the Father but by [Him]”, this implicitly means that Christ will at some point take you to His Father.

When Christ promised not to leave us “comfortless”, he added that “my Father will love him, and we come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23). Joseph Smith added “the appearing of the Father and the Son, in that verse is a personal appearance; and the idea that the Father and the Son dwell in a man’s heart is an old sectarian notion, and is false” (D&C 130:3).

Joseph affirms he “saw two Personages.”

It is more important that you come unto Christ and you allow Him to teach you these things. Pray to the Father in His name, ask Him, listen to Him. It is Christ alone who is responsible for the salvation of each of us. Read the scriptures carefully. In fact, if you will pray and study your scriptures diligently, He will open up to your mind the meaning of the more mysterious passages and use the words of the Prophets found in our scriptures to answer

your questions. Do much more of that. There is no man who is a substitute for Jesus Christ. **

I agree that the purpose of keys, and in particular priesthood keys, is to confer an authoritative invitation to the recipient from God.

I would not encourage anyone to leave the church. It was commissioned by and still authorized by God. The majority has always had a divine preference and protecting hand. Splinter groups have always dwindled or fallen into abuse and corruption. The August 1844 vote in Nauvoo was the right of the saints under the Lord's law of "common consent." I believe the Lord did accept the vote. Whatever shortcomings that generation had, they were only like all of humanity. Our Lord suffered for all imperfect people. But He also will discipline and correct us, even if He needs to use a rod to do so.

In my thinking, a "President" or a "candidate to be the President" is a figure head. Once a man is elected to be the President of the United States, he is referred to as "the Administration." I believe there is a great difference between a man, on the one hand, and "the President of the United States", or "the Administration", on the other.

Let me see if I can illustrate the point.

I think President Jimmy Carter was a failure. I think he was an embarrassment as an administration throughout the world. President Jimmy Carter made so many errors that in my mind I have little hesitation in thinking of him as foolish. In short, my regard for President Jimmy Carter borders on exasperation and deep disappointment.

In contrast, the man Jimmy Carter is principled, devoted, and admirable. As a man he possesses basic goodness. I think he is good-hearted.

Bear that distinction in mind. My comments concerning Mitt Romney had nothing to do with the man, and everything to do with the “the candidate”, and the representative of a proposed “new Administration.” Like Jimmy Carter, if I change the topic from the Candidate, to the man Mitt Romney, it’s a different topic.

If you watched the GOP convention, before Mitt Romney’s acceptance speech, there were many who had the opportunity to describe Mitt Romney, the man. He is a compassionate and exemplary Mormon bishop. He rendered kind, compassionate and loving support to members of his ward while he was bishop and for years afterwards. While those people were speaking, the camera panned the audience. There were many in the audience who were moved to tears as they listened to those people speak. Mitt Romney, the man, seems to me to be an example of how all bishops should be. More than that, he seems to be an example of what all of us should be.

When I said that I wish Mitt Romney did not represent my faith, I had exclusive reference to “the candidate” and not the man.

I know you cannot read my mind. So that is probably my communication failure. As to Mitt Romney the man, I am grateful he is a member of my faith.

I could write pages more. I am only offering a glimpse.

When I am in the voting booth, (and I always vote) I have never voted for evil. Therefore, I have never voted for the “lesser of two evils.”

While I don’t think it is anyone’s business, over the years I have voted for, among other people, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan,

written in Lee Iacocca and former LDS church historian, Marlin Jensen. As I cast these votes, I always thought I voted for someone who would be wise and good.

That post did not represent a decision about anything. That post represented musings I thought might be helpful to others.

In addition, I hoped there would be some few who might read that post and detect some layers. For anyone who would be open to the idea, I think you could well consider those musings to be about you, me, or all of us. What ultimately turns into the “Administration” almost always reflects quite accurately a collective decision. In other words, we always give the power to the “Administration” that we deserve to have lead us.

We have made thousands of decisions, and cast millions of votes to place the Candidate Romney at the head of a political party. That is us.

**[There is nothing inconsistent in these two statements. If you can't understand it, it is because you will not ask and allow God to enlighten your mind. Remember, I am not trying to get you to understand what I understand. I am trying to get you to open your heart, your mind; look to heaven for guidance and get answers to anything you don't understand.]

SEPTEMBER 23, 2012

Upcoming General Conference

I've heard from several sources that Elder Russell M. Nelson has announced to a number of Stake Presidents that President Thomas S. Monson has received a revelation that will affect every man, woman, and child in the church. This revelation is supposed to be announced in the upcoming general conference.

The last great revelatory program introduced in general conference was the Perpetual Education Fund announced by President Gordon B. Hinckley. That program is profoundly Christ-like.

During His ministry, Christ blessed lives in practical ways. He cured lepers; allowing them to return to society. He cured blindness; rescuing the blessed from darkness. He cured the lame; liberating them from physical captivity. His goodness conferred life-changing blessings, making practical changes to the lives of those he blessed.

Similarly, the Perpetual Education Fund has conferred practical, life-changing blessings. It mirrors the way Christ blessed people.

Not all beneficiaries of the Perpetual Education Fund have repaid their interest-free loans. Not all have remained active in the church. That is of no consequence. The goodness of the program is in the giving of the blessing. It does not matter whether those who are blessed are grateful.

The church's (our) acts of Christ-like generosity is unchanged whether the beneficiary ever returns to thank us. Nine of the ten lepers never thanked the Lord. There is little evidence in the scriptures of the many who were healed by the Lord then becoming faithful disciples. The program is Christ-like. Its greatness consists in conferring a blessing. The Lord gives the sunshine and rain to all, the good and the bad. Very few are grateful to Him for that. It does not stop Him from being good and continuing in sustaining us all from moment to moment.

I encourage all to listen to upcoming general conference.

SEPTEMBER 24, 2012

Nephi's Isaiah

Nephi states straightforwardly why he uses the Isaiah material in his own prophecy. It is in Nephi's record, but the statement comes from his brother Jacob. Nephi records what is apparently his brother's first address.

The stage is set for the sermon in 2 Nephi Chapter 5. Here we learn of the construction of a temple by the Nephites. The temple dedication ceremonies are left out of the account. It is an interesting omission. By chapter 6 the temple is in service.

Jacob's sermon could very well have been both the event marking the commissioning of the temple, and the first sermon delivered to the people in the structure. Nephi put this into his account because he obviously approved of the sermon and wanted it preserved for all time.

Jacob states this:

the words which I shall read are they which Isaiah spake concerning all the house of Israel; wherefore, they may be likened unto you, for ye are of the house of Israel. And there are many things which have been spoken by Isaiah which may be likened unto you, because ye are of the house of Israel.
(2 Ne. 6:5)

- What does "likened unto you" mean?
- Is there a difference between something literal and being "likened?"
- Does that difference matter?
- What about the limitation Isaiah spoke about "all the house of Israel?"

- Does the Book of Mormon designation of the European bloodlines that would displace the Lamanites as “gentiles” disqualify the gentiles from “likening” the words to them?
- Does the Book of Mormon promise that the gentiles can be “numbered” with the house of Israel allow the same “likening” to apply to the converted gentiles? (2 Ne. 10:18; 3 Ne. 16:13; 3 Ne. 21:6; 3 Ne. 30:2).

Assuming the words can be “likened” to you, then what does that mean? Are the words to be taken as an analogy to guide us or as a promise given to us?

Jacob explains the analogy he wants to draw to the Nephites beginning in 2 Nephi Chapter 9. It is instructive.

Nephi ‘went to school’ on his younger brother’s example. He fills 2 Nephi with Isaiah’s words. Then, in the closing chapters of his book, he provides his own commentary. He ends his record in this manner. With all he had seen, with all he knew, and with all he was told to withhold from us, he uses Isaiah as his basis to teach, preach, exhort and expound to us. Much of it is addressed directly to the “gentiles” of our day. He applies Isaiah to the gentiles.

A great key to understanding Nephi’s prophecy is that he used Isaiah’s words as a tool to deliver his (Nephi’s) message. Using Isaiah’s intent will not help you. It is irrelevant. You must use Nephi’s interpretive keys in his closing chapters to understand Nephi’s intent in “likening” the prophecy to his people and to the latter-day gentiles. This is why I wrote *Nephi’s Isaiah*. You will be disappointed if you think it is an interpretation of Isaiah. It is not. The book is about Nephi’s message, not the words he employed to “liken” unto us. If you accept this approach you don’t need my book. You only need Nephi’s words.

As a postscript about the Perpetual Education Fund:

When President Hinckley announced it in the April 2001 General Conference he said the following: “they will return that which they have borrowed together with a small amount of interest designed as an incentive to repay the loan.”

This was the original intent.

I’ve received many emails explaining the way the original program was compromised and poorly administered. I acknowledge there may be problems with how it turned out. But that is the responsibility of the employees at the Church Office Building. Those problems do not reflect the purity of intent by the church members who donated. I think there are a lot of people in the bowels of the Church Office Building who have performed poorly for the church. Since these are funds given by faithful members, there is a responsibility which hasn’t been kept by some of these employees.

SEPTEMBER 25, 2012

Answers to Questions

Q: Why do you call the PEF a revelation?

A: The church has used that description. I have accepted the church’s vocabulary. Am I vile because I am willing to allow the church to control their own terminology?

Q: Doesn’t a revelation require “thus sayeth the Lord” and a transcript to be presented for approval by the church? A: That has not been the practice for a long time. If the practice of limiting a “revelation” to something preceded by “thus sayeth the Lord” then some of Joseph Smith’s canonized teachings in the Doctrine & Covenants, and his personal testimony in the *JS-H* in the P of GP

would be disqualified by the standard. Once again, I am allowing the church to control the vocabulary.

Q: Which is it, a divinely revealed program, or a poorly administered program?

A: Are the Ten Commandments a divine revelation even they have been poorly obeyed since the days of Moses? Is the Sermon on the Mount a divinely revealed elaboration on the Ten Commandments clarifying that it is what is in your heart that matters most, even though it has rarely been obeyed since the time of Christ? If God reveals a standard, as he has done many times, and men fail to reach the standard, does that mean God did not give a revelation?

SEPTEMBER 26, 2012

Upcoming Fireside

I've been asked about the upcoming fireside to be held on Sunday evening, October 28, 2012.

The fireside will occur somewhere in Northern Utah. When finalized, the details will be announced on this blog.

The fireside will focus on the temple and temple studies. The things I will discuss have meaning beyond the temple itself. I view the temple as a ritualized invitation to higher things. The presentation will extend into the nature of that invitation and the intended higher principles.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2012

Quietness

Our dispensation opened on a “beautiful, clear day” in the woods in early spring 1820 (*JS-H 1:14*).

It jumped forward again in 1823, at night, after Joseph and his family had retired to bed. It was at this time when an angel came to visit him (*JS-H* 1:28–30).

These towering events happened in quiet settings. It calls to mind Isaiah's remark about quietness: "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever" (*Isa.* 32:17).

I think also of Paul's advice to the Thessalonians: "and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you" (*1 Thes.* 4:11).

Why is being quiet a virtue worth acquiring?

Why is the effect of righteousness quietness?

Was it quiet when you had your most profound spiritual experience?

Have you ever known a deeply spiritual man or woman who could not be calm or quiet?

SEPTEMBER 27, 2012

Further on Quiet

Joseph Smith had been confined for months in Liberty Jail. It was a harrowing ordeal, made all the more so because of so little news about the saints. On March 24th, Joseph received letters from several friends, including his brother Don Carlos Smith, Bishop Partridge and his wife Emma.

The letters were welcomed, but sent Joseph's mind racing in all directions as he considered the plight of his family, friends and the church. He wrote:

[T]hose who have not been enclosed in the walls of a prison without cause or provocation, can have but little idea how

sweet the voice of a friend is; one token of friendship from any source whatever awakens and calls into action every sympathetic feeling; it brings up in an instant everything that is passed; it seizes the present with the avidity of lightening; it grasps after the future with the fierceness of a tiger; it moves the mind backward and forward, from one thing to another... (TPJS, p. 134)

This frenzy of thought was provoked by the letters. It set his mind whirling. He was filled with emotion and with intensity of thought about it all: past, present and future. In this state of mind he was awakened to appreciate keenly these terrible events and his own captivity.

But it was in the quietness which followed where the spirit whispered to him and we received through him revelations now contained in the D&C. He continues:

[U]ntil finally all enmity, malice and hatred, and past differences, misunderstandings and mismanagements are slain victorious at the feet of hope; and when the heart is sufficiently contrite, then the voice of inspiration steals along and whispers— (TPJS, p. 134)

“My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high” (D&C 121:7–8).

The voice comes so quietly Joseph uses “steals along” to tell of its arrival. It speaks so gently Joseph uses “whispers” to describe the voice.

SEPTEMBER 28, 2012

In Reply to Inquiries

I know many (perhaps most) of those who will attend the Temple Conference are regular readers of this blog. The conference will be held in Logan at Utah State University. The total seating will allow approximately 320 to attend.

The fireside will be free. There is no requirement for you to either have a ticket, or to attend the conference to attend the fireside. It will be digitally recorded. The recording will be done by someone I trust, and they will be responsible for making it available once it has been finished.

Whether you attend the Temple Conference or not, you are welcome to attend the fireside. It is open to the public, and free of charge.

We originally reserved the Logan Tabernacle for the fireside. It is still reserved. However, given the difference between the conference, and the fireside, it appears likely it would be more convenient for fireside attendees if it is moved to the Wasatch Front. We have contracted for a 1,000 seat auditorium in Ogden and the plan is to hold the fireside there.

We estimate the fireside may have 350–400 attend. Therefore there should be ample seating.

I want to clarify that I never post or write without using my name. If I comment on a news article or any other place, I always use my name. There are no anonymous or fictitious characters who are me in disguise. I do not do that.

OCTOBER 1, 2012

All Earthly Things?

Lectures on Faith, Lecture 6:7

Let us here observe, that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things.

Is the sacrifice of all earthly things always necessary for faith unto salvation?

This kind of sacrifice is between the individual and God. You cannot fabricate a sacrifice to try and qualify. It is the Lord who sent Moses back to Egypt to confront Pharaoh. It is the Lord who asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. It is the Lord who sent Lehi into the wilderness. It is the Lord who allowed the brothers, Joseph and Hyrum, to fall into the peril that would take their lives.

It is only when the Lord requests the sacrifice that it becomes possible to make the sacrifice knowing you are pleasing the Lord. The result does produce saving faith.

OCTOBER 3, 2012

Forty is a Symbol

The number 40 appears in a several different places in the scriptures, almost always in the context of purging or purification. When the Lord destroyed the wicked at the time of Noah, He caused it “to rain upon the earth for forty days and forty nights” (Genesis 7:4). When Moses met with the Lord on the Mount, he was in the presence of the Lord “forty days and forty nights” (Exodus 24:18).

When Israel proved unprepared to inherit the promised land, the Lord left them in the wilderness for forty years (Deuteronomy 8:2).

Elijah was fed by an angel before being sent into the wilderness. After the meal, Elijah “went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God” (1 Kings 19:8). In preparation for His ministry, the Lord likewise “fasted forty days and forty nights” (Matthew 4:2). That preparation culminated in angels ministering to Him (Matthew 4:11).

In these examples, it is not a man volunteering or choosing to afflict his soul for forty days. The period of purification is imposed by the Lord. We do not get to choose to be purified through suffering for a period of forty days, or forty years, or any other amount of time. However, if the Lord chooses to purify a soul, and that suffering does last for forty days, you can take it as a sign that the purification was given of God.

I know people have tried to voluntarily afflict themselves for forty days. I think an effort like that shows a poor understanding of how God deals with man. We wait on Him. We submit to Him. Then He alone chooses.

OCTOBER 4, 2012

Weightier Matters

The gospel contains practically an infinite amount of information. You can study a lifetime and not exhaust what is contained in the scriptures and the ordinances.

Christ distinguished between mere physical conformity to rules, like tithing, and the “weightier matters.” While acknowledging that there is a need to do the outward ordinances, Christ elevated “judgment, mercy, and faith” to the status of being “weightier” (Matthew 23:23).

The Apostle Paul went one step further and elevated charity (the pure love of Christ) to being so important that salvation itself depends upon a person's charity (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

Paul describes charity as longsuffering, kind, without envy, humble, meek, thinking no evil, rejoicing in the truth, willing to bear all things, full of belief and hope, and willing to endure whatever is required (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

Our conversion to the gospel should produce fruit. Of all the fruit that evidences our conversion, it is our charity or love toward others which most demonstrates the gospel has taken hold in our heart.

We can be proud of our knowledge. But we can never be proud of our charity. Pride and charity are incompatible. Some of the most eager latter-day saints demonstrate by their ambition and impatience that they are unprepared for the Kingdom of God, and have not given adequate attention to the weightier matters.

OCTOBER 5, 2012

Knowing the Mysteries

Despite the millions of Mormons, we live in a very small church. We cross paths with one another after years of living in different states or different parts of the world.

As a result of how small our community is, I have run into people after years of separation and often times been astonished by the difference in them. One of the increasingly frequent things I have noticed comes from a verse in Alma.

Alma taught,

They that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his

mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction. (Alma 12:11)

I have noticed that the vindication of this doctrine is unrelated to whether my friends have had administrative success in the church. Many of those who have lost understanding and who preach against “knowing the mysteries of God” do so because they have had local administrative positions.

Alma connects losing knowledge of God’s mysteries directly to being “taken captive by the devil” and being “led by his will down to destruction.” So when these friends preach to me against the mysteries and claim they have no desire to know about them, I am troubled in my heart.

The less we trust the teachings of the Book of Mormon the more we draw distant from God.

OCTOBER 7, 2012

General Conference

General conference is now over. I listened with interest to the many talks and the few announcements. Here is what I noticed:

The word “revelation” was not used to describe the change to missionary age requirements during the conference.

Immediately following the Saturday morning session where President Monson made the announcement, there was a press conference. The press conference was conducted by Elder Holland and Elder Nelson. In the conference the words used, if my memory is correct, were “revelatory process.”

The only other speaker that I recall mentioning the process was Elder Cook. The word he used was either “inspired” or “inspiration.” Again, I am just going from memory.

As a result of the foregoing, the conclusion I find the most interesting is that Elder Nelson was willing to use the word “revelation” in meetings with stake presidents and mission presidents, but did not use that word in the press conference. It is interesting to me that a much stronger word would be used in private meetings.

OCTOBER 8, 2012

Fireside Details

The location for the fireside to be held on Sunday, October 28th at 7:00 p.m., will be:

Weber State University Shepherd Union Building
Ballrooms A, B, & C Third Floor

On a WSU map, building #36

There are elevators up to the third floor. Since it is Sunday, all parking is free.

The doors will open at 6:00 p.m. There will be some prelude music beginning at approximately 6:30 p.m.

We would request those who attend leave your cell phones and other recording devices, cameras, etc. in your cars and not bring them into the fireside. There will be professional sound recording taking place, and a high quality digital recording will be made available. There is no reason for anyone to bring any recording device of their own.

This is free to the public and anyone who is interested may attend.

CHAPTER 17

Churches Built by Men

OCTOBER 9, 2012

Churches Built by Men

In our day Nephi foretells of churches that are not built to the Lord (2 Ne. 28:3). These institutions will claim to be the Lord's though they are not (*Id.*).

After Nephi explains that the problem lies generally in the false teaching that men should rely on their own wisdom rather than on God (2 Ne. 28:4), he makes this claim as the significant defect in latter-day churches:

“[B]ehold, there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men” (2 Ne. 28:5).

The idea that the Redeemer no longer works directly with mankind is denounced. In its place we have men who pretend they have authority to replace the Redeemer, and to become the new, vicarious light to which men should look for their salvation.

When men have God's power, and therefore can open or shut the doors of salvation for others, then men wielding this power command respect, power, wealth, political influence, and this

world's goods. Men desiring to have salvation will give everything, even their own souls into slavery, to men who hold such power.

Nephi lists this problem as the first great lie taught by latter-day gentile churches because it is so very pernicious. It kills those who believe it. They move their love of God to a worship of men.

The Redeemer has never surrendered His role (John 14:23; D&C 130:3; 2 Ne. 9:41).

Only the deceived will believe the Redeemer of mankind has given His power unto men. But, based on Nephi's warnings, this false idea will control latter-day churches as one of the most successful deceptions.

OCTOBER 11, 2012

Churches Built by Men, Part 2

Following hard on the idea that God has given His power to men is the necessary corollary precept that there are no longer miracles (2 Ne. 28:6). Because the claim by men that they have been given God's power and authority is false, there can be no miracles. This requires the additional doctrine that miracles have ceased.

This false doctrine is also later addressed by Moroni. He bluntly informs us that "if these things have ceased (miracles, visits by angels, etc.), then has faith ceased also; and awful is the state of man, for they are as though there had been no redemption made" (Moroni 7:38). In our own day we are instructed by the Lord that "signs follow those that believe" (D&C 63:9).

What then is the appeal of a religion that falsely claims to have God's power, but teaches there can't be any miracles because those have all ended? Why would this appeal to man? Nephi answers that the doctrine includes the reassuring teaching that "it shall be

well with us” and we can go ahead and “eat, drink and be merry” because we are highly favored (2 Ne. 28:7). These false religions of our day make us feel good. They assure us we are saved. We are in the right way. We can enjoy life.

These powerful and persuasive doctrines are only the beginning. Nephi’s warning continues into the rest of the latter-day religious landscape.

But these initial false doctrines are sobering enough. They are a caution to all mankind about protecting ourselves against false notions that creep in and can poison any believer. They are designed to draw men away from Christ, the One who can save.

I am so grateful for the candor in Nephi’s prophecy. He cares about our souls. If he didn’t, his message would not be so carefully crafted, and so brutally honest about the latter-day doctrines designed to capture and captivate us.

OCTOBER 12, 2012

Churches Built By Men, Part 3

Nephi explains these latter-day false churches accomplish the opposite of Zion. In Zion everyone is to become “one.” Zion is unified in purpose and in heart. In these false churches people become competitive with one another. This leads to dishonesty between them.

“[L]ie a little, take advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor” is the operating standard of conduct. (2 Ne. 28:8). This is believed to be harmless. (*Id.*). And if you die in this fractious and competitive condition, then all will be well with you. If God is offended by it all, then you will be chastised, but “at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God” (2 Ne. 28:8). The idea

of punishment and damnation is not to be taken seriously. It is as if everyone will enjoy a position of glory, no matter their conduct. Therefore, we should enjoy our lives and not take too seriously any need to change.

Conspicuously absent from these false teachings is any need to repent. Repentance is not even part of the latter-day religious agenda. But, then again, since everyone will fare well in God's judgment, there really is no need for it under this religious system.

According to Nephi, this is the widespread doctrine of the latter-days. But these teachings are "false and vain and foolish" (2 Ne. 28:9). Nephi notes that the only effect this gives to mankind is to make us "puffed up in [our] hearts" (*Id.*). The vanity of it all is intoxicating. We get to wallow in our pride. After all, we are saved and highly favored.

If we are honest with ourselves, this assessment of the latter-days seems uncomfortably accurate.

OCTOBER 14, 2012

Logan Meeting

On Sunday, October 28th at 7:00 p.m. there will be a meeting in Logan, Utah at which Elder David S. Baxter, First Quorum of the Seventy and Elder Thomas M. Cherrington, Area Seventy will be speaking to the Youth and Youth Leaders. It will be held at The Spectrum on the Utah State University campus. I would encourage all those who are in these groups to attend this meeting.

OCTOBER 15, 2012

Churches Built By Men, Part 4

Nephi allows for no exception to the problems facing latter-day churches. He writes they have "all gone out of the way; they have

become corrupted” (2 Ne. 28:11). This presents a dilemma for me. I believe the church I belong to was established by the Lord. I also believe:

- The Lord gave my church (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) a commission to baptize.
- Also a commission to lay on hands for the Gift of the Holy Ghost.
- Also a commission to bless the sacrament.
- Also a commission to preach, teach, exhort, expound and spread the Gospel of Christ to all the world.

If what I believe is true (and I think it is), then how can Nephi’s all inclusive condemnation of “all” the latter-day churches be reconciled with Nephi’s criticism?

It seems to me that being “chosen” by the Lord has never, in any past dispensation among any past group of believers, had the effect of removing all errors from those who were “chosen.” Nor has it prevented them from falling into error. No matter the relationship between people and God, they have always remained free to choose. For the most part, that freedom has resulted in drifting from the truth, and the need to be reminded and called back. Or, in other words, the need for repentance.

Nephi’s message is his call to us to repent. It is his reminder of the errors which will or have crept into every church, including my own. Therefore, his message is as relevant to me, as a Latter-day Saint, as it is to any other person belonging to any other faith. Perhaps it is even more relevant to me because I actually believe in the Book of Mormon, whereas other faiths do not.

Look at Nephi’s explanation for why all churches have become corrupted: (And I would add, being “corrupted” is not the same thing as being utterly corrupt.)

- There is too much “pride.”
- There are “false teachers” who do not teach the truth.
- There are “false doctrines” which differ from what the Lord taught to save us.
- The churches are “lifted up” and “because of pride they are puffed up” (2 Ne. 28:12).

Now Nephi can warn us all because he was shown us in vision and wrote scripture to caution and guide us. But I, on the other hand, can only take his instruction and examine myself. Am I caught up in these problems? Do I search for the doctrine of Christ? Can I detect false teachings? Am I willing to be stripped of pride? In other words, do I take Nephi seriously enough to examine my own beliefs and conduct?

The teachings of Nephi are challenging. But they have the power to rescue us if we will let them.

OCTOBER 16, 2012

Churches Built By Men, Part 5

Nephi equates “robbing the poor” with misuse of wealth. Given the obligation to care for the poor, and the ultimate responsibility to have all things in common, misuse of wealth constitutes an abuse of the poor in Nephi’s warning.

I’ve considered the responsibility to build and maintain temples, and how the construction of temples has always meant the finest workmanship and materials as an offering to the Lord. It is His house after all. Therefore, I do not think the warning of Nephi has anything to do with construction of temples.

Nephi says we will “rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries” (2 Ne. 28:13). If this has nothing to do with the temples, then to what is Nephi referring?

I have wondered about the City Creek project. Considering the retail portion alone, the funds used to develop the project could have funded approximately 90 temples (assuming an average cost of \$30 million per temple). If you consider the office, condominium and remainder of the project, there could have been 150 temples built. The condominiums at City Creek include many priced in excess of \$1 million. I “shopped” for a condo there. I found I could not afford one which would meet my needs, and if I bought what I could afford it would not be adequate. The development does indeed contain fine sanctuaries, and does bring an upscale venue to downtown Salt Lake.

Nephi does not confine his warning to us just to sanctuaries. He continues to condemn us because we “rob the poor because of their fine clothing” (2 Ne. 28:13). Meaning that if we cover ourselves with unnecessary expenses, we leave nothing to give to provide the poor with clothing. Our wealth is of value when we clothe the naked and feed the hungry, but of no value when we consume it for our own pleasure. (Jacob 2:19).

Nephi also draws the same conclusion from our attitudes and demeanor. We “persecute the meek and the poor in heart, because in their pride they are puffed up” (2 Ne. 28:13). Our pride alone “persecutes” the meek. Instead of fellowshipping them in meekness, we “persecute” them by our arrogance.

This standard is designed to change society. It is designed to elevate us to another level in which we are closer to God. If we heeded Nephi’s warnings, we would become more unified and more equal in earthly things. If we did that, there would be abundant manifestations of the Spirit, which are presently withheld. (D&C 70:14).

I think Nephi understood the doctrine better than do we.

OCTOBER 17, 2012

Churches Built By Men, Part 6

Nephi makes a distinction between the institutions or churches of our day, and individuals. As to the institutions he declares: “They wear stiff necks and high heads; yea, and because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms, they have all gone astray” (2 Ne. 28:14).

I think it is possible for an institution to be different from its members. I think it is possible for a “committee” to have a different mind, or intent, or constitution from the individuals who comprise the committee. In a graduate leadership course I teach in an MBA program, we examine the difference between individual behavior and group behavior. There are a lot of studies done on this topic. My view is that it is entirely possible for a group to make a decision that no single individual in the group would make on their own. It is the “group’s” decision, and does not comprise the individual thinking or mind of any of those who contributed to the outcome. Compromises, insecurities, give and take, fatigue, and conflict avoidance result in a lot of group decisions being far from what any of the participants want.

So when the institutions are condemned, I do not think that means Nephi is damning all those involved in leading. Despite this, Nephi continues: “they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ” (2 Ne. 28:14).

This remark makes it clear that the institutions contain humble followers of Christ. In other words, even if things are off track, people can remain on track. The challenge is always individual. It is up to each of us to focus on and be faithful to Christ. He is the Redeemer, and it is Him alone to whom we must look for our salvation.

That having been said, Nephi adds, “nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men” (2 Ne. 28:14). Even humble followers of Christ are “taught by the precepts of men” in our day. This causes them to “err” “in many instances.” Meaning that our doctrine is poorly and inadequately taught.

So what is the cure? The Book of Mormon, of course (D&C 84:54–57). This is how the “humble followers of Christ” can take in pure doctrine, uncorrupted by “the precepts of men” and find their way back to repentance. It is a lifeline extended to us by prophets who wrote for our day. They wrote as solitary individuals, not as members of a committee. They held no institutional positions, office or connections pulling them in one direction or another. They wrote as the Spirit led them and as the Lord directed them. And they wrote for us.

Nephi was one of them. And he cared deeply about us to have provided this counsel and warning to us. I think it ought to be taken very seriously. Our eternity will be affected by how we apply his writings.

OCTOBER 18, 2012

Churches Built By Men, Part 7

Nephi gives a list of destructive qualities. The list is qualified by what these traits do to men: It makes them prideful. They are “puffed up in the pride of their hearts” (2 Ne. 28:15). Therefore, as you read the list keep in mind this corrosive pride as part of Nephi’s warning.

The list includes:

- the wise

- the learned
- the rich. (2 Ne. 28:15).

It is possible to be all of these, and not be prideful. But if that is the case, then the wisdom, learning and riches of such an individual are used to elevate and serve others. They become advantages in helping the poor, the hungry, the naked and the infirm. In such cases the wisdom, learning and wealth do not become something that defines the individual. Instead, they become the tools of empathy and compassion.

In addition to the proud, Nephi adds another category, “all those who preach false doctrines” (2 Ne. 28:15). When it comes to corrupting the doctrine, pride is irrelevant. A person can be sincere, honest and devout, but if they preach false doctrine, Nephi condemns them. There is simply no excuse to justify preaching what is untrue or incomplete. Those doctrines will lead others to hell. Therefore, they are false ministers in the service of darkness.

There is a phrase that follows hard on preaching false doctrines. It is “all those who commit whoredoms” (2 Ne. 28:15). If read together, the result is this: “all those who preach false doctrines, and all those who commit whoredoms.” This may be a single thought, or a single description. Because to leave the Lord and follow after another false source for salvation—a false god—is often described as “committing whoredoms.” If this is Nephi’s intent, then the preacher of false doctrine is condemned because they are leading others away from God.

Nephi is clear about the fate of the preachers who preach false or incomplete doctrine and lead others away from God, “wo, wo, wo be unto them.” A three-fold condemnation. They could not be saved because of their false teaching. This condemnation is not

Nephi's. He attributes it directly to God: "wo, wo, wo be unto them, saith the Lord God Almighty" (2 Ne. 28:15). This three-part name of God mirrors the three-fold condemnation, and it is the Lord who is speaking.

"For they shall be thrust down to hell!" (2 Ne. 28:14).

Be careful what you preach. If you do not fully understand the Gospel of Christ, then you take a fearful responsibility upon yourself when you pretend to tell the truth (See D&C 11:21-22).

OCTOBER 19, 2012

Churches Built By Men, Conclusion

Nephi has a great deal more to say. You should look at the balance of what he foretells of our day.

Nephi pronounces "Wo" upon those in our day who "turn aside the just for a thing of naught, and say it is of no worth" (2 Ne. 28:16). What does this mean?

- Who are "the just" about whom he writes?
- What does it mean to be "justified" before God?
- Does this status come with an office?
- Is being justified before God a position to be called to in an organization?
- Does God determine who is "just" before Him?
- How would you know if someone is "just" or not?
- If someone is "just" and you discard them, are you treating them as "a thing of naught?"
- What does it mean to treat the just as "naught?"
- Why is it wrong to say the "just" are "of no worth?"
- How would you change that and treat the just as having worth?

What Nephi says will ultimately provoke the Lord's wrath. "For the day shall come that the Lord God will speedily visit the inhabitants of the earth; and in that day that they are fully ripe in iniquity they shall perish" (2 Ne. 28:16). What is this referring to?

- What is the relationship between treating the "just" as "a thing of naught" and the Lord's wrath?
- What is the relationship between treating the "just" as having "no worth" and becoming "ripe in iniquity?"
- Why are these associated in Nephi's prophecy?
- Can I trust an organization to sort out the "just", identify and uphold them?
- Can I ignore the Spirit when it comes to these issues?
- How can you become "fully ripe" in iniquity as a result of how you react to the "just?"

Nephi does write some very provocative prophecies about us, but they don't seem to provoke us into thought or repentance. We seem content to eat, drink and be merry, trusting that the Lord will merely inflict a few stripes on us if we err; because after all, there is no hell. (2 Ne. 28:8). We have little interest in recognizing "the just" much less becoming justified before God. And being sanctified before Him is not discussed or understood any longer.

Nephi is among the most important voices for our day.

CHAPTER 18

Scriptures

OCTOBER 22, 2012

Scriptures

“[F]or ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Cor. 6:16).

“I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God; wherefore, gird up your loins and I will suddenly come to my temple” (D&C 36:8; see also D&C 133:2-3, 3 Ne. 24:1).

Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am. (D&C 93:1)

OCTOBER 23, 2012

Scriptures, 2

[T]hey are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him; To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves; That through the power

and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory. (D&C 76:116–117)

And it shall come to pass, that if the Gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day that he shall manifest himself unto them in word, and also in power, in very deed, unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks. (1 Ne. 14:1)

OCTOBER 24, 2012

Scriptures, 3

“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:18).

“If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23).

“John 14:23—The appearing of the Father and Son, in that verse, is a personal appearance; and the idea that the Father and Son dwell in a man’s heart is an old sectarian notion, and is false” (D&C 130:3).

OCTOBER 25, 2012

Fireside October 28th

Sunday, October 28th, at 7:00 p.m. there will be a fireside, open to the public. Below are the details for those interested in attending:

Weber State University
Shepherd Union Building
Ballrooms A, B, & C Third Floor
On a wsu map, building #36

There are elevators up to the third floor. Since it is Sunday, all parking is free.

The doors will open at 6:00 p.m. There will be some prelude music beginning at approximately 6:30 p.m.

The fireside will touch upon the temple and the promise of a future Zion.

This is free to the public and anyone who is interested may attend.

OCTOBER 26, 2012

Scriptures, 4

I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life[.] (Mosiah 5:15)

Behold, I am the Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name; for I am without beginning of days or end of years; and is not this endless? And, behold, thou art my son; wherefore look and I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands[.] (Moses 1:3-4)

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent” (John 17:3).

[T]he Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you. (Ether 3:13)

OCTOBER 29, 2012

Parable

I saw a great mountain, and upon the top thereof was the glory of the fathers. To reach the top, all were required to enter through a narrow pass. In the pass was a great beast, cruel and pitiless.

The Lord brought people whom he had chosen to the mouth of the pass, and there He told them to wait for him, and He went away. The people did not wait for Him, but began to move forward into the narrow pass. The beast killed some and injured others, and none were able to pass through.

After great losses, many deaths and terrible suffering, the people chosen by the Lord withdrew and departed from the mountain. After four and five generations, the Lord again brought some few back to the pass and again told them to stay at the mouth of the pass and wait on Him. But again there were those who tired of waiting, for they could see in the distance the glory of the fathers, and they desired to be there. These, being overtaken by their zeal, did not wait, but moved into the pass where again the beast killed or hurt them.

Among those who waited, however, was a man who knelt and prayed, and waited patiently for his Lord. After a great time, the Lord came to this man and took him by the hand, and led him into the pass where the great beast guarded the way. As the Lord led, however, the beast was ever occupied with attacking others, and therefore its back was turned to the Lord and the man. And so they passed by unnoticed, safely to the top. The Lord sent the man to the fathers, who when they saw the man inquired of him, "How came you to be here and yet mortal; the last who came here were brothers who had been slain, and you are yet alive?" And the man answered: "I waited on the Lord and He brought me here safely."

OCTOBER 25, 2012

Temple Fireside Audio

(Link: Temple fireside audio) – link no longer functioning

OCTOBER 31, 2012

D&C 90:2

I received an email asking about the meaning of D&C 90:2. Here's my response:

This verse, like most scripture, is deliberately unclear. This is why the first topic in the fireside was the Holy Ghost and its relationship to both gifts of the spirit and understanding the “mysteries” of God. (See *JS-H* 1:74). The Holy Ghost inspired the text (conveying the words of Christ directly to Joseph; see D&C 90:1). Therefore, having the Holy Ghost is required to understand the meaning of the text. (2 Peter 1:20–21).

The verse says: “Therefore, thou art blessed from henceforth that bear the keys of the kingdom given unto you; which kingdom is coming forth for the last time” (D&C 90:2).

Ask yourself these questions:

- Who is “thou”? Is it Joseph Smith or some collective group or successors?
- Who “bears the keys of the kingdom” in the verse? In 1833, was that Joseph Smith? Or was it some group? Was it his successors?
- Who had the “keys of the kingdom given unto [them]”? In 1833, was that Joseph Smith, or was it someone else? Did it include a group? Successors, too?
- What does “for the last time” mean? Does it mean it will never, ever happen again? Or does it mean the “latest” or “most current”?

There are a few verses after this one that will help with some of these questions. For example, verse 3 seems to identify Joseph Smith: “Verily I say unto you, the keys of this kingdom shall never be taken from you, while thou art in the world, neither in the world

to come” (D&C 90:3). This seems to be singular. It is addressed to Joseph. But you must decide if it is him, or if it means anyone in the church leadership, then and now. The Holy Ghost should assist you in reaching the right conclusion.

It adds in verse 4: “Nevertheless, through you shall the oracles be given to another, yea, even unto the church” (D&C 90:4). This seems to make it clear that the “you” and the “thou” referred to earlier was Joseph Smith. But it then raises other questions:

- What are “the oracles”? Are these the revelations (i.e., sections of the D&C, parts of the Pearl of Great Price, etc.)?
- Are “the oracles” a power or gift of the Spirit?
- If some power or gift, when? To whom? Was it fulfilled in Hyrum? (See D&C 124:123–124).
- Was it fulfilled in the Council of Fifty when Joseph gave “the keys of the kingdom” to them, establishing the right to create a kingdom to overtake all other governments and grind all competing governments on the earth to dust in fulfillment of Daniel 2:36–44.

On the question of “the last time,” verse 5 helps with the meaning:

And all they who receive the oracles of God, let them beware how they hold them least they are accounted as a light thing, and are brought under condemnation thereby, and stumble and fall when the storms descend, and the winds blow, and the rains descend, and beat upon their house. (D&C 90:5)

If we can “stumble and fall,” it suggests we can lose what we were given. If we can lose it, then it can be returned. That would mean “last time” in verse 2 is referring to the “latest,” much like D&C 76:22, where “last of all” means the “most current” or the “latest”

testimony. It doesn't mean that there will never be another person with a testimony of Christ.

The verse also makes it clear that everyone (including Joseph and his peers/successors) can “stumble and fall” if they treat the “oracles” lightly. To “stumble” is one thing. But to “fall” suggests departing from the way and losing what was given. This returns us to “the oracles” and the meaning of that term:

- Are they the revelations/Book of Mormon? (See D&C 84:54–57).
- Is it some ordination or gift?
- If a gift or power, and if it is possible to “fall” from it, then what does that imply?

You decide by the Holy Ghost what verse 2 means. I believe it means that Joseph Smith was blessed and he held keys which would never be taken from him, even if he died. That his possession of those keys allowed him to be regarded as a member of God's kingdom. He was the latest person, or only one living in 1833 to be regarded as a full member of that kingdom. But you should prayerfully decide what it means for yourself.

NOVEMBER 2, 2012

Accountability

All of us are accountable before God for our own sins (D&C 101:78). No one can escape responsibility based on their willful ignorance. If you have the scriptures, you know you cannot be saved in ignorance (D&C 131:6). You also have been warned that the scriptures have information which is able to teach you about salvation. (2 Tim. 3:15). You also have the Lord's warning to search into the scriptures if you expect eternal life. (John 5:39). When this is before you, it is impossible to sin ignorantly, even if you are ignorant as a result of your own neglect. (3 Ne. 6:18).

from the desk of
Denver Snuffer

VOLUME 6

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VOLUME 6

NOVEMBER 5, 2012—MARCH 7, 2015

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

A Note to the Reader:

This multi-volume series covers blog entries beginning in 2010. Scripture references in the text refer to the LDS versions of scripture found in the King James Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. Beginning about March 2018 the scripture cites change to the Restoration Edition of the scriptures. Cites of the Restoration Edition scriptures are typically denoted with OC, NC and T&C references e.g., (NC Matt. 8:10), or alternately (1 Ne. 1:22 RE) setting them apart from the former LDS scripture version references. For those interested, a scripture reference conversion tool that allows navigation between the various scripture references and versions can be accessed at: <https://scriptures.info/Scriptures/ReferenceTranslator>

CHAPTER 1

144,000

NOVEMBER 5, 2012

144,000

The number 144,000 appears in scriptures in a number of places (See D&C 133:18; 77:11; Rev. 7:4–8; 14:3). The number is associated with the last days and Christ’s return. Although there are a number of myths associated with the number, the scriptures tell a specific account of these last-days people.

The number is highly symbolic. The account in Revelation makes it clear the number is associated with redeeming the Twelve Tribes of Israel from their scattered condition. When the tribes were located in their original lands in Biblical times, they intermarried. For example, the Ten Tribes of the north had been removed by Assyria 125 years before the Book of Mormon account begins. The Southern Kingdom, or Kingdom of the Jews, was where the opening of the Book of Mormon is set. The descendants of Joseph (Ephriam and Manassah) were among the Northern Kingdom. Lehi’s family were descended from Manassah. (Alma 10:3). Today, it is unlikely any individual descended from Israel is a pure descendant.

Therefore, when Rev. 7:5–8 attributes “twelve thousand” from each of Judah, Reuben, Gad, “Aser,” Nepthalim, “Manasses,”

Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zabulon, Joseph and Benjamin, once again the number is symbolic. The symmetry of the division between each tribe symbolizes the Lord's intention to treat all Israel alike because He is no respecter of persons (See D&C 38:26).

So if the Lord intends to show respect to all the Tribes of Israel, then the language of Revelation 7:5–8 demonstrates by numerical symmetry this intent. Does it mean that literally there will be “twelve thousand” from each tribe? Does it mean of those gathered the bloodlines of each tribe will be preserved? If it means the latter, then can one person have mixed blood within them from more than one tribe? Can one person have the blood of all the tribes within them?

In D&C 77:11, the 144,000 are explained in modern revelation. They are described as follows:

We are to understand that those who are sealed are high priests, ordained unto the holy order of God, to administer the everlasting gospel; for they are they who are ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, by the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth, to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn.

To understand the description it is useful to know what is meant by:

- “those sealed are high priests” Is this the office in the church?
- If not, then are they going to be among the church's priesthood?
- “ordained unto the holy order of God” Is this the system in the church?

Will they hold “certificates of ordination” from a stake clerk? Could it refer to the ordination described in JST Gen. 14:28–30.

- “ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” Is this literal? Does every “nation” mean the nations of the earth, or the Tribes of Israel?

Does “kindred” refer to all peoples, or those who descend from Israel’s scattered bloodlines?

- “by the angels to whom is given power” Does this refer to “ordination?”

Do angels have to ordain these chosen ones?

If the angels are to ordain them, will they be known or recognized by the church?

- “given power”

Are these the angels who ordain?

Are these the “high priests” who are ordained? What power is given?

It is interesting the 144,000 are connected to “power” and to “angels” in this description. What do these things have to do with the end times? Why would there need to be high priests, angels and power connected to these last days events?

Is 144,000 an actual total number? Is it representative? Can one person preserve within them the bloodlines of more than one tribe? Can they also preserve the bloodlines of more than one family within the tribes? Can a much smaller group represent 144,000 family lines and fulfill the Lord’s intent to keep all “twelve sons” equally represented (D&C 38:26) in the stock of families who begin the family of Israel again at the start of the Millennium. They, like Noah’s small group, will restart the human family. (Luke 17:26; Matt. 24:37).

How many are really needed to fulfill the Lord’s prophecies concerning the 144,000? What does the number really mean?

NOVEMBER 7, 2012

144,000, Part 2

The 144,000 are “sealed” by the “four angels” in Rev. 7:1–3. They are “sealed” by “angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth” in D&C 77:11.

In the account of Revelation, they are sealed before “the earth, ...the sea, ...the trees” are “hurt” in the last days. (Rev. 7:3). This timing necessarily requires the “sealing” to precede great distresses which to us are still future.

- What does it mean to have an “angel to whom is given power” come and “seal the servants of our God in their foreheads?” (D&C 77:11; Rev. 7:3).
- Are men, or institutions, in control of this process?
- How would you expect this to happen?
- Does the “sealing” imply some kind of ordination?
- Is this connected in any way to the “oath and covenant of the priesthood?”

On that last question, D&C 84:33–42, is often read, explained, and taught. But a context is imposed on the words that presumes a certain meaning. What if that context is incomplete, or merely a tradition, and not what the words were meant to convey? Here are the verses with another possible context inserted into them as they proceed:

For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling [*notice “calling” is singular*], are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies [*here? now? in the resurrection?*]. They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron [*who are “sons of Levi” and associated with the Aaronic or first priesthood*] and the

seed of Abraham [*who is the father of the righteous, and one of the “fathers in heaven” to whom we must connect or be “utterly wasted” at the Lord’s return; and is associated with the second priesthood*], and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God [*this body of chosen individuals are a “church” and that church is confined to the “elect”*]. And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord [*in other words, the Lord makes Himself known to them, for that is how He is “received”*]; For he that receiveth my servants [*who are His “servants?”*] receiveth me; And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father [*is this what Mosiah 5:15 is referring to when it says Christ will ‘bring you to heaven, that you may have eternal life?’*]; And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him [*in other words, the promise of exaltation and eternal life. Therefore, obtaining these two ordinations is directly connected with the “servants” and then the ministry of the Son, and the introduction to the Father*]. And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood. Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father [*in other words, they have knowledge from the Father that they are His, will inherit from Him all He has, and learned this as a result of the Son’s ministry with them*], which he cannot break, neither can it be moved. But whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come [*because they have knowledge obtained from the Son, and a covenant obtained from the Father, and if they turn away they must rebel against the Godhead, whom they have come to know. They become ‘sons of Perdition’ because this is willful and known rebellion*]. And wo unto all those who come

not unto this priesthood [because if you do not receive this, you do not receive the fullness of the Gospel, and you do not have knowledge that will save you] which ye have received, which I now confirm upon you who are present this day, by mine own voice out of the heavens [*because the higher priesthood is only given by the “voice of God” as described in jst Gen. 14:29: “And it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice” -see also jst Gen. 14:26–29. This is why the “ordination” is confirmed by God’s voice here*]; and even I have given the heavenly hosts and mine angels charge concerning you [*which is how the “sealing” of the 144,000 will be connected to the “angels” who have “authority” in the verses which describe these events*].

I have inserted a possible new context into the words for you to consider. I would remind you, however, that scripture is not something for “private interpretation,” but can only be unlocked through the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:20; see also JS-H 1:74). The meaning belongs to and is controlled by God.

NOVEMBER 9, 2012

144,000, Part 3

One final passage of scripture seems connected to this process. A question was posed by Elias Higbee. Joseph took this question to the Lord. The question and answer is in D&C 113:7–8:

Questions by Elias Higbee: What is meant by the command in Isaiah, 52d chapter, 1st verse, which saith: Put on thy strength, O Zion—and what people had Isaiah reference to? He had reference to those whom God should call in the last days, who should hold the power of priesthood to bring again Zion, and the redemption of Israel; and to put on her strength is to put

on the authority of the priesthood, which she, Zion, has a right to by lineage; also to return to that power which she had lost.

Although the number 144,000 is not mentioned here, this is also clearly a last-days event. The individuals involved are those who “God should call in the last days.” The verses describing the 144,000 make it clear they will be called of God, and will receive sealing from the angels; as Revelation 7:3, D&C 77:11 and D&C 84:42 all reference.

The “power” of the angels “over the nations of the earth” (D&C 77:11) is needed to prevent Zion from being overrun or destroyed by the nations of the earth. These other nations, if they oppose Zion, will be destroyed. (See Daniel 2:31-45; D&C 87:6). The “powers of heaven” which will hover over Zion will discourage any army from battling her (D&C 45:70).

I put the term “powers of heaven” in quotes because this refers to the hosts of heaven. This is why the term “powers” and not “power” is used in D&C 121:36. Priesthood is always a relationship between man on earth and the “powers” or hosts of heaven. These angelic or heavenly beings were those who escorted men to the first heavenly Zion (Moses 7:27), and will do so again.

It will be the relationship between those who have been “sealed ...of our God in their foreheads” (Rev. 7:3) and the heavenly powers or angels which grants “the power of the priesthood to bring again Zion” (D&C 113:8).

Notice the return of Zion is connected also with “lineage” in the answer above. Or, in other words, the bloodlines of Israel are required to be found in those who will be gathered. This has always been true of Zion. In the first Zion, the gathering of individuals was carefully assembled to bring together “a mixture of all the seed

of Adam” so all the families were included. (Moses 7:22). There was one exception, however that bloodline was likewise preserved through Noah’s son’s wife. (Abr. 1:21–23). The Lord, therefore, took measures to keep either in Zion or on the earth a representative descendant of “all the seed of Adam.”

As the revelation explains, to “put on the authority [notice here authority is singular] of the priesthood” is necessary to “bring again Zion.” This is why the Lord says HE will “bring again Zion” and not men. (See Isa. 52:8; 3 Ne. 16:19; see also the description in Moses 7:62 of the Lord’s role in the final Zion).

Zion is the Lord’s and His name is “the King of Zion” (Moses 7:53).

In the answer found in D&C 113:8 the priesthood power has been “lost” and needs to be returned. This raises the interesting question of whether this is referring to the final calling of the 144,000, or if it means the restoration with Joseph Smith. Have/ will we successfully perpetuate the authority from Joseph’s time until the return of Zion? (Look at D&C 86:11). Or will it require a new connection between man and the “powers of heaven” and a new “sealing” of men in their foreheads by the angels? Revelation 7:3 implies this authority will be returned immediately prior to the plagues described in the next chapter. But it is up to the Holy Ghost to provide a correct interpretation of these verses. I leave that to you to receive.

The Lord appears in prophecy to claim a direct or immediate role in establishing Zion. And the verses we have considered appear to make it a project which will involve not only the Lord, but also angels and the Father. Indeed, the “powers of heaven” appear to all have some hand in bringing again Zion, do they not?

The most interesting thing to me is the symbolic nature of the number 144,000. If the Lord intends to preserve the blood of all Twelve Tribes, and there are perhaps as many as a thousand different families connected together in your own ancestors, could one man account for a thousand of these 144,000? Could his wife account for another thousand? How few individuals could be able to preserve the bloodlines of the twelve thousand families from each of the Twelve Tribes?

For those who are not included, they will nevertheless have part in the resurrection. The scriptures promise it will be “tolerable” for them. (D&C 45:54).

NOVEMBER 17, 2012

A Parting Thought

I’ve been getting emails and comments asking if I’m alright. I’m fine. When I have something to say I’ll say it. I do have one parting thought:

In the Book of Mormon a people were “destroyed” when they lost control over their government. Their ability to preserve their own values, and choose the way they were governed was taken over by others. Most often it was from a different ethnic group, though not always. In the case of Amalackiah he was ethnically Nephite, but his values were Lamanite.

Once people were “destroyed” they were oppressed and suffered. Often they were oppressed with grievous taxes, and had religious liberties removed. Then they faced a choice: Either repent, in which case they came through the period of oppression with another chance. Or, if they were angry and rebellious, they would then be “swept away.”

Being “destroyed” is not at all the same as being “swept away.” It is possible for people to have been destroyed and not even realize it. But when swept away they face extinction, and cannot help but notice it.

NOVEMBER 20, 2012

I Have No Spokesman/Spokesmen

A couple of years ago I put a post up confirming that no one speaks for me. You can read that post here. (link: <http://denversnuffer.blogspot.com/2010/10/ecclesiastes-31.html>)

It is still true. If I have something to say, I will say it. No one is authorized to speak on my behalf. And no one is entitled to interpret what I think, or how I view any given issue or subject. To the extent that I have a view, I will tell it.

DECEMBER 12, 2012

CD's of Talks

I was in Benchmark Books yesterday. They told me they now have in stock CD's of all the recorded talks I've given. They asked me if I would inform blog readers. In the past, Confetti Books and on-line were the only sources to get copies. Benchmark is located at 3269 South Main Street, Suite 250 in Salt Lake City.

DECEMBER 24, 2012

Misunderstandings

I received the following comment, which I am putting up because it does a good job of illustrating a number of misunderstandings:

Mr. Snuffer,

I am not a follower of your blog but I love some who are. When I read your recent post, “I’ve been getting emails and comments asking if I’m alright. I’m fine. When I have something to say I’ll say it” I thought wow. It feels so unkind? People have become dependent on your claims to know Heavenly Father’s will. Many have abandoned their own voice of reasoning leaning on your daily prophecies. They no longer feel secure in their understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ without your input so I question how you are okay with dropping and then mocking those who you have called into your fold? I expect all is not well and pray that Heavenly Father will be able to mend His children’s fearful hearts, including yours. Peace and goodwill.

This comment contains a number of misunderstandings:

It is abhorrent to me that anyone would “become dependent” on me. I’ve worked to point to the Lord, never to myself. If there are some who have “become dependent,” then there is every reason for me to withdraw to prevent that from happening. It is wrong for any person to be dependent upon another in matters of faith. We should all be dependent upon the Lord alone. As Moroni confirmed, citing Acts 3:22–23, the only “prophet” people must hear to avoid being “destroyed” is Christ. Those who will not hear His voice will, according to Moroni, “be cut off from among the people” (*JS-H 1:40*).

If it is true that, “Many have abandoned their own voice of reasoning leaning on your daily prophecies. They no longer feel secure in their understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ without your input” then the only proper response on my part is to withdraw. It is wrong of them to do this, and it is the more wrong for me to facilitate it. This idea is one I have rejected, repeatedly

denounced, and consistently stated that I am unworthy of followers. It would be wrong of me to continue.

I have not intended to “mock” anyone who is seeking to know more of Christ and to understand His Gospel more clearly. I have done what I could to assist. In doing so it has been my purpose to point to Him, never to myself. I have fully recovered from the last surgery. I lift weights; I walk several miles a week, and I am in better physical condition than I have been in some time.

I have no “fold” and I am not a shepherd of anyone. Even my own children are asked to find Christ and His truth for themselves.

My “heart” is not “fearful” of anyone, or of anything. I am at peace with God, and I hope others will become similarly at peace with Him. I have been asked to accomplish a number of things and I have accomplished them. Until asked to do something further, I stand at the ready and await His counsel and guidance. In the meantime, I serve as asked in my ward and stake, and try not to call any undue attention to myself.

I hope that this Christmas season will be filled with remembrance of the Lord and His great condescension coming here to live among us. His birth was necessary to allow Him to die for us. He entered mortality foreordained to die for our salvation. He willingly came here, endured what was required of Him, and suffered the will of His Father in all things, even drinking out of the bitter cup given to Him when He begged to have it taken from Him. Bethlehem and Golgotha are linked together by the ministry of our Lord; the one necessary for the other. I would hope also some reflection would be given to Mary, whose soul was inevitably to be “pierced” also as the prophet Simeon foretold to her. (Luke 2:34–35). Our Lord, His Father and His mother all paid a price both to bring Him into this world and to witness His sacrifice for us.

CHAPTER 2

The Ongoing Battle

JANUARY 30, 2013

A Couple of Questions

I was asked the following:

1 Ne. 10:11 And it came to pass after my father had spoken these words he spake unto my brethren concerning the gospel which should be preached among the Jews, and also concerning the dwindling of the Jews in unbelief. And after they had slain the Messiah, who should come, and after he had been slain he should rise from the dead, and should make himself manifest, by the Holy Ghost, unto the Gentiles.”

Is this talking about a physical manifestation to the Gentiles? Does Christ show Himself to others physically by the power of the Holy Ghost? Or is this to the Gentiles’ hearts and minds before the Restoration?

This is speaking about the immediate post-resurrection ministry of the Lord. At that time He visited only with the tribes of Israel in their scattered condition. He did not go among the gentiles. Nephi explained that in the last days ministry of the Lord at that time, He would appear to the gentiles “in very deed” (1 Ne. 14:1). This is

why the Lord appeared to Joseph Smith (*JSH* 1:17–19) and Oliver Cowdery (D&C 110), and to Sidney Rigdon (D&C 76), and to others.

In Mosiah 16:1 and Alma 13:21, it says the phrase “he stretched forth his hand.” What does that mean? Raising it to the square? Using the priesthood to testify of what he is about to teach? A little help here would be wonderful.

Read Mosiah 15:31 to understand 16:1. He is demonstrating the Lord’s action, thereby affirming he is His messenger. He had been given the sign to testify, and used it as his sign that he was a true messenger.

In Alma 13, the prophet concludes his testimony of Melchizedek by using a sign to evidence his authority. He used this sign because he was authorized to do so, and knew what it meant as he did. Although those who were there may not have understood, it was a sign he was a true messenger.

We cannot be saved in ignorance.

Once the key of knowledge is lost, mankind is lost and cannot be saved until that key is returned. Prophets sent with messages who testify to an ignorant people use signs that the Lord recognizes and authorizes, but they may not be noticed or understood by those who hear the message.

Nevertheless, the testimony becomes binding when the Lord’s seal is put upon it. This often involves a required sign to be given, or in other words, for hands to be stretched forth.

FEBRUARY 2013

FEBRUARY 20, 2013

The Ongoing Battle

Although I know of no one who has left the church or “lost their testimony” as a consequence of reading my book, *Passing the Heavenly Gift* (“*PTHG*”), there continue to be accusations that this has/does happen. Therefore, again, I want to reaffirm the purpose of *PTHG*.

Let me give some background. I joined the church while in the Air Force, stationed in New Hampshire. After joining, I was a zealous missionary, and there followed over a dozen conversions of other military young folks who would listen to me explain the restoration. I got them open to the idea, then the full-time missionaries and ward members would take over. Mormonism was an exotic religion in New England. Little was known about the faith. So we got to begin with a relatively blank slate and tell the story our way.

I was transferred to Abilene, Texas shortly after joining the church. In Texas things were very different. At the local Laundromat I used, there were racks of religious tracts on the wall. Included in these were a wide assortment of anti-Mormon pamphlets intended to “prove” Mormonism was false. We went from being exotic to being the devil’s workmanship. Missionary work in Texas was a good deal more difficult. Even though I served as a Stake Missionary, and took the third-Elder (who awaited his Visa to Brazil) every evening and weekend as a companion to tract and teach, the results in Texas were nothing like what had happened in New Hampshire.

The organized effort in Texas was supported by radio programs, Sunday sermons, and the occasional editorial in the local

newspapers. The “Christian” churches were tired of losing their best congregants to the Mormon Elders. So the effort to oppose the church was inter-denominational.

I joined the church in 1973 and finished my Air Force term in Texas in 1975. This is now long ago. Since then, the growth of the church has left no corner of the United States untouched by wards, stakes, missions, temple districts and advertising. We are no longer exotic anywhere—including New Hampshire. The result of church growth has been the increasing awareness of Mormonism’s effect on other religions. It is not a happy thing for other faiths to see our church grow at the expense of their own congregations. The original inter-denominational cooperation I saw in Texas in 1974–75 has now spread. It is now worldwide. All churches are wary of the loss of revenue and participation represented by each Mormon convert who leaves their fold to join ours.

Today there is widespread sharing of anti-Mormon material among other denominations. The best defense is an organized offense. In many areas, Elders (who are easily identified) are followed in order to discover who they are teaching. Then the investigator is contacted by volunteers who distribute anti-Mormon material to prevent conversions. Some years ago there were ministries who bragged they could not only prevent conversions, but they could take it one step further: They could convert the Mormon Elder! That led to a growth in seminars, literature and preaching about ways to “convert Mormon Elders” while they are on their missions.

I do not think there has been any significant success in actually converting active Mormon missionaries. But that isn’t the point. It is the Evangelical perception of that success that has fueled two things: First, it has helped insulate converts, because if the Elders can be converted, then Mormonism must not be true (or so the

reasoning goes). Second, it creates more confrontation by anti-Mormon forces aimed directly at our missionaries.

The Evangelicals have realized that the best way to practice this kind of undermining of Mormon missionary efforts is to take the soft-sale approach. Instead of Bible-bashing, just ask questions the Elders can't answer. Make the Elders do the thinking and work to solve the riddles. When they can't, then they are filled with doubts that linger.

This is not just happenstance. This is an organized and inter-denominational effort that began decades ago. It now bears so much fruit it is alarming to Mormons. Returned missionaries are falling away. When I was in charge of missionary work in my stake, I attended regional leadership meetings at which the Mission President and a Seventy advised us of the trends underway. The inactive church members were called "low hanging fruit" who could swell our ranks just by returning to activity. One category of the "low hanging fruit" was the returned missionary population. At that time, (years ago now) it was estimated there were 40,000 returned Elders along the Wasatch Front, from Ogden to Provo, who were so inactive we didn't have a reliable address for them. The suggestion was to contact the families of the inactive, returned missionaries and locate them that way.

This background is part of why *PTHG* exists. This battle has been underway for decades, and the most successful topic being used to question our members and raise doubts is our history. The anti-Mormon forces know we are generally ignorant of our history. We don't know enough to answer hard questions. So all that needs to be done is to put the right question to the ignorant, but believing Latter-day Saint, and the doubts will eventually percolate into disbelief and abandonment. I do not think most of those who have

and are leaving do so because they know the church is not true. They leave because they no longer think the church has answers to the difficult questions. Part of the reaction of the church has been to run from the hard questions, which reinforces the idea that we don't know the real answers.

So, I wrote the book to deal with anything I thought was out there being used or potentially being used against us. I assumed the audience would be those who were already in distress, already having doubts, already aware of these efforts to undermine faith and create doubts. It was intended as relief from anxiety over the battles which have raged for decades now.

Instead of this audience, there are some who have picked the book up and thought it was intended as a hostile attack on the church, its history, and its doctrine. Thankfully, such readers are already sure they belong to the "only true church" and therefore their ire is only directed at me. They aren't leaving the church. They're only interested in damning me for writing something they can't conceive of as helpful.

Well, I have literally dozens, perhaps hundreds of emails and letters from readers who were the intended audience. Person after person, young and old, male and female, returned missionaries and church leaders have thanked me. Some who left the church have returned. Some who have had their names removed from the records of the church, or were considering it, have written to tell me they were remaining in the church. At last, they say, they can find faith and answers that enables them to remain in fellowship with the church.

For those who were never intended to read the book, but are now angry at me for having addressed this problem, let me assure you:

First, I believe in the restoration of eternal truths through the prophet Joseph Smith. My testimony of this truth is rock solid. My purpose, and all that I seek to accomplish by writing, is to further this work and be a small contributor to development of God's work.

To be clear:

1. I sustain today's church leaders as prophets, seers and revelators. The scriptures give them the right to use those titles (D&C 107:92). They preside, and it is their right to do so. They have our common consent and ought to be upheld by our "confidence, faith and prayers" (D&C 107:22). I uphold them in this way. They carry heavy burdens and have my sympathy, not my judgment, for any human frailties they display.
2. It is utterly untrue that I have said the church is apostate. I reject the accusation. If the narrative I suggest in *PTHG* is true, then the Lord's post-Nauvoo ire is evidence the Lord is still watching over and intends to further His work with the members of this church. Those whom He loves, He chastens (Heb. 12:5-11; Helaman 12:3; D&C 95:1). Mine is not a faithless, but a faith filled history. I've reiterated this before and reiterate it again (See my post: "The Traditions of Men, Part 1," April 21, 2010).
3. I believe the church possesses the right to seal on earth and seal in heaven, and have agreed with President Eyring's general conference talk on the subject.
4. I believe that all organizations, including the church, tend to characterize their history in a light most favorable to them. They have that right. I take no issue with it and think it should be expected. That does not change the divine origin and mission of the church.

5. The church provides ordinances required to see and enter into the kingdom of heaven, in addition to providing us with the necessary scriptures. Through the church, we receive the foundation of faith, repentance, baptism and enduring to the end. I hope to endure to the end myself and I seek to help others do so.

I am still in the battle to help people find and focus upon Christ. As a faithful Latter-day Saint I owe my knowledge of the Lord to the tools I obtained through The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I have enjoyed every minute of my association with the church, and I intend to remain a faithful member. The current war we face did not originate with blogs or bloggers. The blogosphere is following the battle, not leading it. It began long ago, and the efforts to deal with it here are because of the many losses we have and are suffering. They are needless losses. We just need to be willing to discuss and recognize there certainly are some tough questions. They don't go away because we ignore them. They grow.

FEBRUARY 21, 2013

Tradition's Grip

Assume you are taking a course at the local university on William Faulkner. The book for study this semester is *The Sound and The Fury*. This course does not require you to actually read the book. Instead, the information in this class will come exclusively from your professor. To begin the semester, she will be lecturing and instructing you on 'all things Faulkner.' She will discuss biographical information, including everything she could find about his personal life. She will give lectures on his writing. There will be discussions about literary criticism given his writings and awards he has won.

You will listen to audio recordings of Mr. Faulkner reading passages of *The Sound and The Fury*.

As the semester progresses, she will begin to discuss the book. She will tell you about the first time she read it, and what kind of impact it had on her. She will tell you why she decided to teach an entire semester course on this one work of Faulkner's. You will learn what her expectations and preconceptions were before she even began reading. You will hear all her first impressions. She tells you that she thought it was difficult the first time. There will be lectures on the genre, characters, plot, setting, style and structure, point of view, images, symbols, and themes. She will discuss the reception when first published. She will discuss each part of the novel in detail. She will then tell you how her personal reactions have changed as her understanding has deepened. As the semester winds down, she will end with her explanation of the literary significance of this book. With that, the semester is over.

Shortly after the end of the semester, because of this class and the things you learned, you decide to actually read *The Sound and The Fury*:

Do you suppose, with your first reading, you could formulate any thought about this book independent of what your professor fed you?

Could you make your own critical evaluations about characters, plot, point of view, themes, or symbolism?

Could the biographical information you learned about Mr. Faulkner be extricated from your psyche in order to have a blank slate from which to assess Mr. Faulkner's reason for writing this novel? Could you read this book through your lens?

How much of your professor's impressions, understanding or analysis would you have to completely discard in order to form your own personal conclusions about this material?

How many times would you have to read it before you began to make your own analysis? Would the professor's framework control your first reading? Could you ever escape from her views to discover your own?

The Lamanites were unable to convert, even when taught the truth, because of the traditions of their fathers which were not correct (Mosiah 1:5).

"Becoming as a little child" is necessary, because children are able to be taught. They are still open. They want to be filled. For such is the kingdom (Luke 18:16). None of the arguments our Lord was required to endure with His fellow-man was ever with a child.

FEBRUARY 22, 2013

Ignorance Enshrined

A purported group of "over 260 active and disaffected Mormons" claims responsibility for a "95 Theses" document released recently. (The quotes in the preceding sentence are theirs. This is how they self-describe.)

Unlike Martin Luther, they choose to categorize themselves rather than to expose themselves by using their identities. There are only a few who identified themselves. For the most part, they remain unidentified. That betrays a weakness of character and leads to the conclusion they want to complain, but they do not want to be responsible for complaining. A "reform" movement must be made of sterner stuff. They appear only willing to whine; not to do the work or take the risk Martin Luther took when he wrote the document they mimic.

I've looked at the 95 Theses. They are largely based on upset stemming from astounding ignorance of our history, scriptures, doctrine and teachings. However, this is a relatively common condition we find ourselves. As a community of believers in the restoration through Joseph Smith, we've neglected to teach and/or learn the very things that would benefit these "260 active and disaffected Mormons." These people may well be of good faith and honest intent. I'll assume that of them. But they are unable to reconcile some of the things from our past with the things they thought they knew about Mormonism. The problem is that what they thought they knew about Mormonism is not at all what I know and what they should have known about Mormonism. That may not be entirely their fault, but they must shoulder part of the blame.

I understand it from a different perspective because I've paid a price in study, prayer, practice and devotion. In *The Second Comforter* I said: "The truth will scratch your eyes out, and then scratch them in again." I've been through both. These "260" have been only through the first.

They have 11 troubling points about the Book of Mormon. I've discovered many more. I've reconciled them all in my mind.

They have 5 troubling points on the Book of Abraham. I've discovered many, many more. This is a vital topic for study. I've gathered a library of materials on this text. When I was teaching the Priests' Quorum in my ward, I took 4 weeks with them teaching on the Book of Abraham. I wasn't going to let any of them get "poached" by critics because they didn't have enough background information to understand the issues and history. Using the Documentary History of the Church, they were shown what Joseph described he translated as the Book of Abraham. They were shown the photographic reproductions of the papyri returned from the

Metropolitan Museum of New York to the church. The difference between these scroll documents and Joseph's description did not require a commentary. They saw with their own eyes the difference between the two. No one is ever going to convince them using an argument based on misinformation.

These "260 active and disaffected Mormons" have 11 troubling points about Polygamy and Polyandry. Again, it betrays a shallow understanding of our history and comprises only a fraction of what we should all know about this issue. Until we face this, discuss it openly, and put history and context together in a forthright and honest way, we are vulnerable to upset and distress anytime someone who knows a little more than we know comes along with a "fact" from our history we can't put into context.

This raises enough to make the point:

We're losing the battle with many of these souls. The more honest and intellectually open of our members are being taken in traps precisely because their greatest strengths (confidence and openness) allow the critics to show them our weaknesses. This should not be allowed to happen. Narrow-mindedness and dogmatism, as a result of fierce and unrelenting loyalty to an institution, should not rule the day. The winnowing out, if allowed to continue, will produce a frightening form of Mormonism akin to the more radical political movements currently underway in the world.

When Joseph Smith was alive, Mormonism embraced all truth.

The first and fundamental principle of our holy religion is, that we believe that we have a right to embrace all, and every item of truth, without limitation or without being circumscribed or prohibited by the creeds or superstitious notions of men, or

by the dominations of one another, when that truth is clearly demonstrated to our minds. (Letter from Joseph Smith to Isaac Galland, March 22, 1839; *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, Dean C. Jesse, editor; Deseret Book, p. 421–22)

I'd like to see that be the case once again.

I've never found a problem in the faith for which I could not ultimately find a solution or answer. The faith is quite resilient. But, oddly, some of the actual answers are thought to be so fearful that they must be ignored, suppressed or denounced. Fear is not only the opposite of faith, but it contains within it the bitterness of hell (Moses 1:20). We have become too fearful.

FEBRUARY 23, 2013

Questions From This Week

Since mentioning it, I've gotten a number of questions about President Eyring's General Conference talk: "Families Under Covenant" (<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2012/04/families-under-covenant?lang=eng&query=sealing+power+%28name%3a%22Henry+B.+Eyring%22%29>). Part of his remarks are particularly insightful. After talking about the church's ordinance, he elaborated:

The way to do that is clear. The Holy Spirit of Promise, through our obedience and sacrifice, must seal our temple covenants in order to be realized in the world to come. President Harold B. Lee explained what it means to be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise by quoting Elder Melvin J. Ballard: "We may deceive men but we cannot deceive the Holy Ghost, and our blessings will not be eternal unless they are also sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise. The Holy Ghost is one who reads the thoughts and

hearts of men, and gives his sealing approval to the blessings pronounced upon their heads. Then it is binding, efficacious, and of full force.”

When Sister Eyring and I were sealed in the Logan Utah Temple, I did not understand then the full significance of that promise. I am still trying to understand all that it means, but my wife and I decided at the start of our nearly 50 years of marriage to invite the Holy Ghost as much as we could into our lives and into our family.

I agree that men may be and often are deceived about who is worthy and who is not. But the Lord alone will judge righteously. Therefore, He decides who will be sealed and who will not. President Eyring is teaching true doctrine.

The portion of the scroll (which was quite long and included different segments) Joseph translated the Book of Abraham from is described in church history. There are three critical features to this text:

The record of Abraham and Joseph, found with the mummies, is (1) beautifully written on papyrus, with black, and (2) a small part red, ink or paint, (3) in perfect preservation. (*DHC* Vol. 2; 348.)

Color Plates of the Hor Book of Breathings are available in Appendix A, starting on page 33 of *The Hor Book of Breathings: A Translation and Commentary, Studies in the Book of Abraham*, Vol 2; (FARMS/BYU Press 2002). The contrast between Joseph’s description in church history and the photographs of the recovered papyrus requires nothing more than looking at it.

The description “a strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness” (Moroni 7:30) involves at a minimum the following:

- Strong faith is obtained by obedience and sacrifice, as explained in *The Lectures on Faith*. It requires the sacrifice of all things to obtain favor with God. No one attains to this by cowardice or respecting the views of men above the commandments of God.
- Every form includes not merely passing acquaintance with the Lord’s will, but an earnest search into the things God wants from you. And, as you find His will, then to obey it. Everything must be put on the altar. Whether it be friends, property, or life itself, it must be every form.
- Godliness is different from virtue. It is even different from righteousness. I’ve explained both previously and won’t repeat it. Godliness requires you to become godlike in your sentiments and in your meekness before Him. Whether men understand you or attribute motives to you, the relationship is between you and the Lord. Godliness is when your walk here is along the path He has chosen for you.

Prophecy requires someone to fulfill it before you can know who was being identified. Until the work is done I think it is a foolish thing to speculate about identities. There’s probably been hundreds of potential individuals, living and dead, who might have done a greater work than they accomplished here. However, they are blinded by the craftiness of other men, or they fall victim to those who deceive, or they allow traditions to control their understanding and fall short of the glory they might have obtained. Hence the saying that many are called, but few are chosen.

FEBRUARY 27, 2013

Christ Clarifies His Role

I've been reading the 1830 *Book of Commandments* as reprinted in *The Joseph Smith Papers: Revelations and Translations, Vol. 2*. I've been struck by how many clarifications Christ made of His role to the early saints. It is apparent there were a number of false notions in circulation about who Christ was and what His future role would include.

The Lord clarifies that the saints should: "look not for a Messiah to come which has already come" (Chapter XVI, verse 27).

He later adds that when He does return: "they shall see me in the clouds of heaven, clothed with power and great glory, with all the holy angels" (Chapter XLVIII, verse 37).

If that were not enough to remove the question about His return, He further explains: "the Son of Man cometh not in the form of a woman, neither of a man travelling on the earth" (Chapter LII, verse 21).

He mentions Enoch, telling us that Enoch and his brethren "were separated from the earth, and were reserved unto [God], a city reserved until a day of righteousness shall come, a day which was sought for by all holy men, and they found it not because of wickedness and abominations" (Chapter XLVIII, verse 14). Since "all holy men" sought for this city, but found it not, it is apparent that the rule is failure because holy men cannot teach righteousness to the wicked who prefer their abominations, pride, vanity and errors. The exception is success.

The Lord clarifies there will be success before the world will see Him. He will have a holy city built, which He will call "the New Jerusalem." There, His glory will rest upon these few inhabitants: "it

shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the most high God.

And the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it: And it shall be called Zion” (Chapter XLVIII, verses 59–61).

When He does show Himself to the world again, it will be in judgment: “I the Lord...will come down in heaven from the presence of God, and consume the wicked with unquenchable fire” (Chapter LXIV, verse 36).

I’ve heard some of the same errors discussed among Latter-day Saints who would know better if they read the scriptures. As early as 1830 the Lord explained He was the Messiah, and had already come. He will not return as a man walking on the earth, but will come in glory and judgment when He returns, and that we need not look for another to come in that way.

I am surprised at how difficult it is to hold on to doctrine. It evaporates almost before our eyes. Perhaps the greatest miracle of the ages will be this latter day New Jerusalem. For, despite all the wickedness and abominable beliefs of mankind urging them to vanity and faithless pride, there will be some small group willing to learn and walk in the way of God. That will be a miracle indeed among the people living in this generation.

MARCH 2013

MARCH 3, 2013

A Sign

When the Seed of the Woman was born, a new star appeared in the heavens. In like manner, when the Lion of Judah returns, as with

his first coming, there will be a new star seen. All the world will note its appearance and shall be troubled at its meaning. When it makes its appearance, you may know His return is soon upon the world. You may also know by that sign that He has given to me the words I have faithfully taught as His servant.

MARCH 27, 2013

Remembering The Covenant, 5 Vols.

For years now I have received requests to put this blog into print. Part of it is already in print titled *Removing the Condemnation*. It is available through Amazon. Now that I have finished what I had to say using this medium, the entire content of this blog is now available in print titled *Remembering the Covenant*. It is a 5 volume reprint of this blog from its beginning to the end post titled "A Sign." It contains only what I have written, and none of the comments.

Before you decide to purchase a copy, I would remind you everything in these 5 volumes is already on the blog for free. You needn't buy one to have the information. The blog will remain up. However, interruptions in the Internet, as well as planned regulation of the Internet may affect whether this blog remains.

I don't plan to post on the blog any longer; though I do plan to write.

The 5 volumes does **not** include any of the essays that are linked on this blog. There will eventually be a separate volume of essays which will contain those, and some additional material. No date is planned for completing that volume.

If you decide to purchase the books then you should know the 5 volumes are comprehensive, and therefore include what has already been printed in *Removing the Condemnation*. The material

from that book takes two volumes (volumes 2 and 3) of the new set. If you already have *Removing the Condemnation* and decide you would like the rest of the material, then you needn't purchase volumes 2 and 3. In *Removing the Condemnation*, the material is compressed into a single volume with smaller print size and more pages. In this new set, the type is larger, so it required two volumes.

For those considering purchasing, the books make some few improvements. First, some subjects were interrupted by some added posts and then continued. In the printed version, the subjects are gathered together and the interrupting blog posts moved to follow, rather than intrude into the discussion of a certain subject. There are a minimal clarifications of what may have been ambiguous. There are no hyperlinks, therefore all the scriptures referenced are now footnotes on the same page as the scripture reference. There are over 2,400 pages of materials. Each book contains approximately 400 pages. There are over 2,700 footnotes in the volumes. Pages are numbered in sequence, from page 1 in volume 1 to page 2,400+ in volume 5.

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These are now available directly from [Createspace.com](https://www.createspace.com) as well as at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). A link has now been put to the Amazon site by

clicking on the Volume numbers above. Remember though, that the content will remain available here for free.

CHAPTER 3

An Obligation to Teach

JULY 15, 2013

Boise, Idaho September 10, 2013

On September 10th I will have been a Mormon for 40 years. To mark the occasion I am going to give a talk. I was in New Hampshire when I joined the church, but I grew up in Idaho and would like to give the talk there.

September 10th is a Tuesday this year; so I don't expect many people will attend. However, if you are in or near Boise and have that evening available, you can come and listen. As always, it will be free.

The tentative talk title is: "Forty Years in Mormonism." It will probably start around 6:30p.m.

It will be recorded and the recording will be available for any who want it. **Specific details will follow.**

JULY 20, 2013

Forty Years in Mormonism

The first talk planned for Boise, Idaho will be the first in a series of lectures. September 10, 2013 will be the first, and the last will be in

Phoenix, Arizona on September 9, 2014. They will all be recorded and made available for those interested.

The lectures will be free to those who attend. I want to show my gratitude to The Lord by expounding on the religion Joseph restored. Each talk will build on that subject, but any single one will be self-contained.

After Boise, the next engagements will be in Idaho Falls and then Logan, Utah. Some locations will be close enough that I intend to schedule them on Saturday and Sunday of the same weekend. No dates are set for any other than September 10th, and no locations are arranged. As further information becomes available it will be posted here.

JULY 23, 2013

Upcoming Talks

For anyone who intends to come to one of the talks I have a couple of requests and a bit more information:

First, unless the talk is scheduled on Sunday, please come in casual dress. There is no reason for you to be uncomfortable. Come relaxed so your minds can focus on the information. If I do schedule one on a Sunday, it may be more convenient for some who attend to remain in Sunday dress. I leave it to each to decide for themselves, but as a matter of courtesy to those who will come on their way to or from a church meeting, I will be wearing something appropriate for a Sacrament meeting.

Second, please bring your scriptures. You will want them. They will help you follow the discussion. (You will be encouraged to use them.)

Third, no one can be expected to accept the religion restored through Joseph Smith unless it has been preached to them. That

hasn't been something we've focused on for many years now. Therefore, we will be trying to recover it. Your presuppositions and present understanding can be more a hindrance than help. So if you attend, please come open-minded, capable of being taught from the scriptures about something you may not have noticed before. This is called "humility" and it requires us all to approach with some respect and a little awe what God was trying to accomplish by sending Joseph on His errand. The topic awes me, and leaves me thinking of my own inadequacy and foolishness. The subject is greater than I will ever be. But the attempt to address this is important enough that even the inadequate can provide a little insight if the heart is right.

Fourth, these will all be recorded. The last time I did this there was a question and answer exchange at the end. The questions could not be heard, and as a result the recording was incomplete. Therefore, I'd like any questions to be in writing so, if I choose to address questions at all, I can read and then answer them. I've not worked out any mechanics for this, but if you think you will have a question, please bring a pen and paper and plan to write it and pass it forward. Then, if I choose to address inquiries, the recording will include both the question and answer.

Fifth, these series of discussions will really be one long exposition of the religion restored through Joseph Smith. I do not expect anyone will attend more than one of them, but everyone can listen to the recordings of all of them. There will be some deliberate continuity in the total of the recordings.

The first talk will focus on the big picture of what Joseph Smith represents in the context of prophecies about the last days, and how that should influence our understanding of the religion he was sent to begin restoring. You should read the *JS-History* in the

Pearl of Great Price to remind yourself of how Joseph explained the beginnings as he wrote in 1838.

Finally, since I am paying for this, the venues will be chosen in an effort to reduce my costs. Since everything will be recorded, I do not think it matters much whether the place holds 400 or 40. There will be no charge for attendees, but it will be first-come first-served, so to speak. I will let you know beforehand how many seats will be available.

JULY 30, 2013

Detail for Upcoming Boise Talk

The planned talks will be an effort show gratitude to the Lord for the faith I found and to return something of what I have learned back to my fellow saints. I'd welcome anyone and everyone. I encourage you to invite skeptics, the faithful or the disaffected, those who dislike me or fear me, those who question my motives, and those curious about Mormonism. I'm hoping the audience will include local leaders and those who are inactive and everyone in between. Mormonism is one of the most interesting, compelling and inspiring subjects we can spend time considering.

The Boise venue will be the Boise Hotel and Convention Center on Vista Avenue. I will begin at 6:30 P.M and speak for approximately two hours.

Because of family commitments (school will have started), my wife and I will drive up immediately prior to speaking and return home immediately after.

The tentative plan for the next two talks will be Idaho Falls on a Saturday evening and Logan the following, Sunday evening. Dates, venues and times are not yet set, but we hope to do them this Fall.

We have received a generous, anonymous donation from a family and a handful of verbal offers from people wanting to contribute to the cost of this venture. We had not anticipated that, but we want to clarify: We do not expect nor want financial contributions for this effort. We aren't set up to receive them. The offers are appreciated, but if you want to donate, then contribute to a local homeless shelter, or a family in need, or a stranger who needs food, shelter or clothing. Bless the lives of those less fortunate. When you do good to the stranger you are doing good to your Lord.

There have also been people who have offered to find or provide local venues for the lectures. Inasmuch as we do not have locations lined up for all of them, we may take people up on that offer.

Finally, there will be a professional recorder who has agreed to come (at his own expense) to every one of the discussions. He will record and edit the lecture into easily accessible tracks and afterwards make it available for purchase. I appreciate very much the work and donated time he and others behind the scenes are making.

AUGUST 2013

AUGUST 4, 2013

Idaho Falls and Logan

A few weeks after Boise, the next two talks will be given in Idaho Falls on a Saturday evening and then Sunday, in Logan. Locations and times are being arranged. I will post those as soon as they are finalized.

Following Logan, the next talk is tentatively planned for Centerville, Utah, but no time has been set for that one.

The only venue confirmed is Boise. However, there will be some Utah locations including Provo, then I'm considering Grand Junction, Colorado, St. George, Utah and Las Vegas, Nevada before concluding next year on September 9, 2014 Phoenix, Arizona. I mention this in advance because there have been those who have offered venues for planned locations. Giving advance notice may assist in getting things finalized.

Boise will help in estimating a number of things, including the size of a facility needed, the time discussions will take and the difficulties of getting the recordings completed and available. The hope is to see new people, let them listen to something about the religion Joseph Smith was restoring, and have both understanding of and faith in that religion rebound from the rather moribund state we currently find Mormonism.

If you have read what I've written and plan to attend, I would ask you bring someone who is struggling with their faith, or alternatively someone who isn't, but who thinks poorly of me. Either will do. I would like to speak to those who haven't heard me, or who dislike me, or whose faith in the Restoration is failing.

Boise will be on a Tuesday night. It will be "come as you are." Bring your scriptures. For Idaho Falls and Logan, bring your scriptures and a copy of *The Lectures on Faith*. Idaho Falls will be casual dress and for Logan, I will be in Sunday dress.

Finally, to respond to an inquiry about the upcoming talks and the cost of buying recorded copies:

I have great empathy for the poor. They are generally the most generous people on earth. They have the Lord's greatest concern and respect. What is said in the Psalms about the poor should make us all sober about their plight.

With respect to the work I am doing (and make no mistake about it being work) understand:

- I pay for my wife, myself and whatever family members come to attend.
- I am not paid anything for the recordings of any of my talks (never have been and never will be). Anything left over after costs of production are entirely donated by me and I receive nothing.
- I pay for the costs of renting the facility where I speak, requiring from me a greater price than for anyone who attends, for they pay nothing for the facility.
- I pay for the CD's of my talks. My wife has purchased many copies from Benchmark Books and Confetti Books which we subsequently gave away.
- I will drive ten hours to get to Boise and home on the day of the first talk.
- I am inconveniencing myself so that others living in Boise or nearby are not inconvenienced. This will be true of all the locations.

If you feel you ought not to suffer any inconvenience, and should always be given for free what takes the time and money of others to make available, then you can entertain your view, but please allow me to have a different one. As for warning me that “critics” will find fault with paying for recordings, I grant critics the right to fault me for that, and anything else they feel inclined to criticize. When time permits, I will put the transcripts on this blog. If you will wait, then you can have for free what others pay a dear price in time, money and effort to make available for you.

Having said that, let me be clear: I fully expect criticism of anything and everything I do. I do not need to be defended by

friend or foe. No one needs to explain my motives, take offense at criticism directed at me, or praise my efforts. I'm irrelevant and energy spent on such things is entirely wasted. This is about faith in the Lord and the religion He was working with Joseph to return to the earth. That matters. I don't. Rather than take a moment's notice of me, look to the Lord and His purposes.

When I hear criticism about me, my first thought is "they're probably right." So if you feel inclined to defend me, instead why don't you reflect that "they're probably right."

On an unrelated topic, here is an old story set at the time of the Babylonian captivity:

There were two men, one a scribe the other a zealot. Both were poor. Both sought favor with God. At the first, the zealot was the poorer. The scribe was named Ezra whose living came from the work he performed transcribing scrolls. As circumstances permitted, he used his means to buy the leather scroll from the priests, made from the skins of the sacrificed lambs. He then spent his days transcribing the work of Jeremiah from a scroll he borrowed, thinking them of worth to study and of value to others who might purchase the scroll and be benefited from his labor. When he finished his labor, the scroll was placed for sale by Ezra. The scroll, however, was stolen by the poor zealot because he could not pay and he believed it was important to have the words of Jeremiah, believing they came from God. For Ezra, the loss cost him the year's labor. The zealot took not only the scroll, but also Ezra's savings to buy the leather, and the year of labor spent upon it. Nevertheless, Ezra forgave the theft and did not trouble himself over it, commending to God the good which his labor might bring and hoping the means would

be provided that he might make another. But the zealot excused himself of his own theft and thought himself greatly blessed, even favored by God, because he had God's prophecies before him. At the end which of these two were the poorer?

AUGUST 5, 2013

I Guess I Need to Say it Again . . .

Got some more interesting emails, and I'm not sure what goes on in the Internet. I don't have time to read everything out there. Based on email, once again I need to remind readers I have said *this* (blog post, Tuesday, November 20, 2012, "I Have No Spokesman/Spokesmen") and *this* (blog post, Wednesday, October 20, 2010, "Ecclesiastes 3:1") regarding people speaking on my behalf. It is still true. No one is authorized to speak for me. If you want to know what I think read what I write.

There are no private conversations, personal interpretations, or personal descriptions given or retold by "friend" or "foe" that can be honestly or accurately attributed to me. I don't have spokesmen, agents, and do not want disciples. I willingly accept responsibility for everything I write and whatever I have or will say in a public talk. However, the interpretations, misunderstandings, selective memories and assumptions others make are not my responsibility. Oftentimes I choose what I say carefully, only to learn the care is not preserved in the re-telling. I'm not responsible for that.

AUGUST 5, 2013

September 28 & 29

Idaho Falls will be on Saturday September 28 and Logan on Sunday September 29. Idaho Falls at 6:30 p.m. Logan at 7:00 p.m.

The locations will be confirmed and announced soon.

AUGUST 6, 2013

Agenda

Each talk will be a “stand alone” event. No talk will be repeated. If you go to Boise, you will hear a different talk on a different topic, using different scriptural references than will be addressed in Idaho Falls. In turn Idaho Falls will discuss a different topic than Logan. Each will be a complete discussion in a self-contained presentation.

At the end, if you were to listen to all of the lectures, you will find they fit together. They will be akin to essays on the common theme of the religion being restored through Joseph Smith. There will be a “whole” to the entire material. But each part is self-sustaining as a discussion.

It would be helpful to hear all of them, but should be beneficial to hear any given one. I do not expect anyone to attend all of them. I’m hoping it will be interesting enough that, for anyone hearing one of them, they will want to listen to the others.

If you hear them all, you should have a much better idea of what the religion Joseph was restoring was beginning to look like. Some of it remains recognizable still today. But it requires some effort to reclaim what we were once offered. I will try and motivate you to make that required effort.

AUGUST 21, 2013

Idaho Falls & Logan Locations

The final arrangements for Idaho Falls and Logan are as follows:

Idaho Falls will be at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, September 28th at the Skyline Activity Center, located at 1575 North Skyline Drive in Idaho Falls. It will hold approximately 200 people.

Logan will be at 7:00 p.m. on Sunday, September 29th at the Coppermill Emporium, 2nd floor, located at 55 North Main Street in Logan. Parking and entry are in the rear of the building. It will hold approximately 500 people.

AUGUST 22, 2013

Comments and Emails

I get comments and emails when they are submitted. Whether or not I respond, I always read them (Will and Donald).

AUGUST 23, 2013

Don't call me. (Yes, that means you too!)

Denver Snuffer Notice of Disciplinary Council

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

SANDY UTAH CRESCENT STAKE

August 21, 2013

Brother Denver Snuffer

Sandy, UT 84092

Via Hand Delivery

RE: Notice of Disciplinary Council

Dear Brother Snuffer,

After nearly 18 months of prayerful consideration, you are hereby notified of a disciplinary council to be held for you on Sunday, September 8, 2013. The disciplinary council will be held in the High Council room at the Stake Center beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Please let me know if you plan to attend the disciplinary council. You are welcome to bring your wife if you choose. If you wish to bring any witnesses, let me know by Wednesday, August 28th so that I can consider who you would like to bring and their purpose in participating in the council. In addition to the High Council, I will invite Bishop Lundgren to attend the disciplinary council.

The issue for consideration at the disciplinary council is whether the continued publication of *Passing the Heavenly Gift* constitutes an act of apostasy and, if so, what the appropriate remedy should be. For your information, if the council concludes that publication of the book is an act of apostasy, the only alternative outcomes for the council are disfellowshipment or excommunication. Church policy makes no allowance for probation for acts of apostasy, a reflection of the serious nature of this issue.

Denver, I am not anxious to chase people out of the church. My goal is the opposite—to enable all to enjoy the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have tried to be open minded about the issues we have discussed. I am sympathetic with those who face crises of faith.

I cannot deny, however, the spirit's influence on me and the responsibilities I have to protect the interests of the church. I have tried to persuade you that PTHG is not constructive to work of salvation or the promotion of faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The book's thesis is in direct conflict with church doctrine. In your effort to defend the restoration, you have mischaracterized doctrine, denigrated virtually every prophet since Joseph Smith, and placed the church in a negative light. The book is a misguided effort to

attempt to bridge the gap between the church and its dissidents. PTHG will never be the solution to hard questions that you believe it is. Like every other such effort, it will attract only the attention of those whose spiritual eyes, ears and hearts are obscured from the truth. Your work pits you against the institution of the church and will lead to the spiritual demise of you and your family.

To avoid the disciplinary council, I ask you, again:

1. To remove PTHG from publication;
2. To acknowledge to those who follow your blog that PTHG contains content that needs to be withdrawn; and
3. To cancel your planned speaking tour that begins in September, which I believe will promote the views expressed in PTHG.

Please, dear brother, we want and need you on the side of the Church of Jesus Christ in the latter-days. Please reconsider your journey down the path that is likely to lead to the impairment of your church membership.

Sincerely,



Truman Hunt
Stake President

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

PRESIDENT M. TRUMAN HUNT
SANDY UTAH CRESCENT STAKE
SANDY, UTAH 84092-4975

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Denver Snuffer

AUGUST 23, 2013

Attendance

For the Boise venue I discussed with some of the local residents an estimate of how many would attend. The estimates ran from 65 to 150. As a result the venue chosen was for 400, anticipating there would be plenty, even some empty seating. I've now been told there may be a number of non-local attendees, which may exceed the seating.

All seating is first-come, first-seated. If it turns out there are not enough seats, the recording is going to be available in near real-time. The people doing the recording plan to have the first hour (75 minutes) put on CD's at the location and made available at about 90 minutes into the talk. The concluding portion will similarly be released about 15 minutes after it concludes. Therefore, assuming the equipment works as hoped, recordings will be available before the talk ends. I'm not involved in any of that, but this is what is planned by those who are doing the work of providing the recordings.

This is the plan for releasing recordings at all locations, but I hope there will always be enough seating for anyone who takes the time to attend.

AUGUST 24, 2013

Correction on Boise Venue Size

I made a mistake on the size of the Boise venue. It will hold 400, not 200. I've updated that post and make a note of that here.

I did not want anyone to attend any of the talks, including the first in Boise, without making them aware they were listening to someone who has church discipline pending (or accomplished). Therefore, I posted the letter to make sure no one was misled about my status.

No one needs to defend me. I am concerned that expressions of support will do no good, and may result in the church taking notice of those who step forward. I don't want that to happen to anyone else. No matter your own sentiments, it would be best to just let this run its course without involving anyone other than me.

AUGUST 26, 2013

Current Events

There have been quite a few emails and comments about the notice I put up on the blog regarding a disciplinary council. Let me respond to some of the questions by clarifying a few things.

There are laws ordained before the foundation of the world. The church must act in accordance with one law, and I must act in accordance with another for the purposes of the Lord to be fulfilled. Don't think you can foresee what the Lord has already ordained. It will follow His pattern, and there will be consequences. Be of good cheer. I am.

Second, I put the notice up so no one is misled about my status. I do not want anyone to think one thing of me when the truth is contrariwise. If someone would be disinclined to attend one of the talks had they known what the church was up to, I do not want them to attend thinking all is well between me and the powers in control of the church. There were two choices. Be criticized for hiding it because I'm not being forthright with people. Be criticized for putting it up because I'm divulging a private matter. I chose to err on the side of disclosure. Either way it is inevitable—those who want to criticize will do so.

Third, my former Stake President defended me against complaints from the Strengthening the Members Committee. His last Sunday as Stake President eighteen months ago he called me in and we talked for several hours about the events that began years before his release. He had defended me continually during his presidency, but he explained there was going to be a new Pharaoh in Egypt who would not know Joseph (so to speak) and he couldn't vouch for what was coming. The new Stake President has

investigated, delayed, discussed this with me, pushed back against downtown, been called in for “training,” and received input from the top leadership in the church. He told me a great deal at the start about what was going on behind the scenes, which matched what the former Stake President had been telling me during his tenure. Those details are unimportant, and I have no intention of making them public. Right now, I don’t think President Hunt thinks he has any other choice. He probably doesn’t. That is fine. I bear no ill will toward him or any other member of my stake. No one gets ahead in the institution by disregarding instruction from above. Actually, I do the same. However, for me, “above” has little to do with 47 East South Temple and the institution is not where I expect any future. I try to help the church regardless of its opinion of me. I simply have no axe to grind no matter the outcome on September 8th.

Fourth, I have no intention of complaining, or becoming an opponent to anyone. I will leave that to the Lord, and would recommend you do that also. There is so much that needs to happen in these last days that our time must be spent anxiously engaged in things that matter. There’s just no time to waste on trivial matters. Hopefully, the upcoming talks will allow you to see what the Lord would like done, and provide a framework and understanding for you to do something about it. Let’s look forward and up, not backward and down. There is sufficient evil to overcome every day. Let’s not waste time bickering or complaining.

Fifth, I wrote *Passing the Heavenly Gift* as a reconstruction of the events of this dispensation. The framework was primarily the description in the Book of Mormon of the latter-day Gentile behavior. This includes specifically, the prophecies of Christ in Third Nephi. I also used Joseph Smith’s prophecies in the Doctrine

and Covenants, his sermons and history. Taking this scriptural framework, not as an historian but as a believer in the prophetic insight about us) I then tracked through our history. I used a lot of primary sources, including journals and diaries of church leaders. What I found was that the events in our history could be viewed as an exact match for the prophetic warnings given us in scripture (Book of Mormon/D&C). The result was not history, but truth. If the book is true (and I am persuaded it is the most correct account of our dispensation written so far) then we need to awaken to our present peril and repent. If it is not true then we have nothing to worry about. The church is entirely intact, has the fullness, and all is entirely well in Zion. It would be very exciting if *Passing the Heavenly Gift* is wrong. The trouble is that I don't believe it's wrong. We have very serious issues confronting us, and a great deal of work to complete before we attain unto what the Lord expects of us. Joseph Smith was betrayed and killed as a result of steps taken by church members. True enough it was a mob of Carthage Greys who shot him. But he would not have been in a position to be shot if it had not been for the betrayal by church members.

When we (meaning church members) caused or contributed to his death, we offended heaven in a way that required three and four generations to pass before we receive another opportunity from the Lord. With the recent passing of Eldred G. Smith, we have a milestone representing the end of those required generational passings. Now is the first time it is possible for the Lord to recommence the restoration. But it won't commence again without us knowing what we lack. Conceit and arrogance will never redeem us from our fallen state. But contrition and repentance might. *Passing the Heavenly Gift* is intended to inspire those who are downfallen in their faith, and to help those who are prepared to

hear it, that we (all of us, including me) are in a fallen state from which we must awake and arise.

Sixth, we can always repent.

Seventh, I have no concerns of my standing before the Lord. My situation allows me to do only one thing. I can try and persuade. I can compel no one. Therefore, I use the only tool allowed for someone who holds the Priesthood. I try to use knowledge and persuasion to bring others to understanding. The effort to control, exercise dominion and compulsion to force others to surrender to some pretended authority does not involve me as a perpetrator, because I preside over no one. I can't abuse authority over anyone, because I haven't any. If there is any coercion, compulsion, dominion or control involved it is not by me. No one need have any concerns for my standing before the Lord. I will be fine.

Eighth, the content of the talks was set long before the letter from the church threatening discipline. They won't change. These talks do not involve either *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, nor any discussion about church discipline. There's too much to be covered to take on new topics.

Finally, all of this is nothing so far as I am concerned. What matters is this dispensation and how great things remain to be accomplished. God has a work to complete. We are living now and must cooperate with His will to bring about His purposes. Forget about me. Look to the Lord, His scriptures, and this moment you have here in mortality. Learn more about the prophecies. Stop hoping someone "presiding" somewhere is going to lift you to heaven. No one can do that. There is only One who matters and "He employeth no servant" at His gate (2 Ne. 9:41). When you focus on me, or some man as a leader, you are an idolater (D&C 76:98–105). Put an end to your idolatry and look to Christ. Read

James 1:5–6 and Moroni 10:5. That is where you should invest your time. Not in trivia involving me or some other man.

The time is upon us. The heavens are open. Not for someone other than you. Not for some “special” leader. They are open for YOU. Stop looking around—look up. That is where you will find not only a testimony of God, but God’s handiwork on display (D&C 88:42–47).

AUGUST 29, 2013

We Don’t Need a New Church

We don’t need another church. We don’t need and shouldn’t want another hierarchy. The very idea is repulsing. Zion won’t be a project managed by a control group.

Zion is to have “one heart” and “one mind.” It is the idea itself that creates it.

If you create an organization, it can be compromised. It can be regulated. It can be overtaken by ambitious and cunning men; or by stupid, well-meaning, but misguided men. Organizations are a threat to Zion. Zion is an idea. Only an idea. It cannot be overtaken or controlled.

Conformance to the laws of man will ensnare you. Threats of litigation, loss of tax benefits or coercive power will work against you. You cannot sue an idea. You cannot tax an idea.

Zion will be free from the control of this world because, despite all man can do, threaten, oppose it, when it assumes the existence of merely an idea even dictators cannot touch it, cannot defeat it, cannot overcome it.

Zion will gather people around an idea. There will be no leader and no one greater than another.

How then are the people of Zion able to be of “one heart” and “one mind?” It will be because they agree on an idea which brings them together, and then they act in conformity with that idea.

Zion may have its ordinances and covenants, but they are between the individual who believes and God who ordains it.

Organizations fiddle with the notion of Zion and believe they have some “power” or “control” or “dominion” that allows them to compel others to be uniform (D&C 121:37). They use “compulsory means” to achieve this end. But this is not and can never be Zion (D&C 121:46).

Be patient. Over the next year the idea of Zion will become more clear than it has since the restoration ended. There are only two opposing forces at work. One creates, the other destroys. One causes life, the other controls and ends life. Birth and death. Restoration and apostasy. Growth and decay. We are either in one phase or the other. There are no moments when things are motionless.

Zion, as an idea whose time will only come when her ideas are understood, must be plainly taught again. The time wherein this is possible has arrived. Our time here comes and goes, generation after generation, and the Lord can regard it all as “one generation” because He reckons from a different time frame than we do.

And so the idea needs to begin unfranchised, uncontrolled, unfettered by the laws of man, and unpolluted by the ambitions of men. It is an idea which will make, without fear and compulsory means, all mankind equal.

This next year I will be trying to discuss as much of this idea as can be tolerated. It is up to you what you decide to make of it. It is ironic that the trigger for the church discipline and the condition for avoiding discipline involves this very speaking tour

on this very subject. It is a small thing to be cast aside when the only thing that matters now is—can we accept the idea and then live to be of one heart and one mind. I have no ambition to lead. No desire to control or preside. But I have an obligation to teach, which I am willing to do.

SEPTEMBER 2013

SEPTEMBER 4, 2013

Compliance (So Far as Possible)

The problem with *Passing the Heavenly Gift* has not been its accuracy. The issue raised in the notice I received from the stake president does not say the book is false, contains errors or makes mistakes in history. Rather, it “contains content which must be withdrawn.” That is not an indictment of the book’s accuracy. It is considered subversive by those who want to control history to perpetuate a view of events that do not follow the pattern described by the Book of Mormon prophets, Joseph Smith’s prophecies, and Christ’s description of the conduct of the latter-day gentiles to whom the Book of Mormon would be given.

The first demand is that I cease publication; a task that would involve violation of agreements between me and others. To compensate me for that potential liability and permit me to violate the agreement, I was offered money to cease publication. Offering money to help me violate agreements is not a satisfactory course of conduct. Therefore, I declined; but not before asking those with whom I have contracts if I could be let out of the publishing agreement.

The second demand is that I tell blog readers that the book “contains content that needs to be withdrawn.” I will say this: The

church believes very much the content of the book needs to be withdrawn. They think this because the book brings to light the babylonian methods church leadership uses to make rapid and dramatic changes. We are not now the same church restored by Joseph Smith. *Passing the Heavenly Gift* shows how that happened. There are social, political and legal forces pulling on the church which the leadership intends to accommodate. They've already made a step in that direction with the renewed support for the Boy Scouts of America.

The church introduced a web page on same sex attraction. Two of the twelve contributed to the page. One of them asserted that same sex attraction is not a sin, but only acting on the impulse would be. This is an interesting accommodation which contradicts the Lord's statement that "whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery in his heart." Or, adds to it: "but if you burn in lust for the same sex that isn't adultery in your heart."

The church advocated, and obtained from the Salt Lake City Council, an ordinance prohibiting discrimination against homosexuals in housing and employment. This ordinance was considered a great breakthrough by the gay community in Utah. The Utah Legislature has been influenced by the church to consider a statewide ban on discrimination against homosexuals in housing and employment.

In saying this I'm only focusing on the trends within the church. Nothing else. The trend is toward open acceptance of socially progressive mormonism. This is the product of social, political and legal pressure.

This accounts for the difference between the reaction of the church to socially progressive Mormons (who are tolerated) and me.

Those who advocate for the place the church has already decided to go are not a threat to their plans. What I write can create a good deal of difficulty in arriving there.

The issue is therefore how the church is to accomplish these changes in its doctrine and teaching. To get from one position to another without destroying the believers is a challenge that can only be accomplished by having a foundation which includes the absolute confidence that the church leadership cannot be led astray. Church leadership inerrancy is necessary.

The church needs not only to “teach for doctrine the commandments of men,” the church must be able to teach AS doctrine the commandments of men. Meaning that the church must have those aboard who will do, believe and accept whatever the leaders tell the members. Unquestionably. Unhesitatingly.

When I pointed out to the stake president in one meeting that there are dozens, even hundreds of readers whose faith was restored and whose activity in the church was renewed or resumed from reading *Passing the Heavenly Gift* the stake president had no response. After he received further “training,” he asked me “what makes you think the church wants that kind of member?” I understood that to mean that once someone has read the book and come to realize what changes and how changes have come to our church, they are disinclined to continue sleepwalking along with the herd. They understand that all is not well, and view with some healthy skepticism many losses we’ve suffered in the restoration since Joseph’s death. Such people will be difficult to bring along with the current social, political and legal trends if they base their view on scripture and history, as I advocate.

Therefore, to make what concessions I can, I will state for all you blog readers: *Passing the Heavenly Gift* contains content that

will make your appreciation and acceptance of the efforts of the institution now and in the future to bend its teachings to conform to social, political and legal trends much more difficult to achieve. You will be happier if you don't read the book. You will be more inclined to sleepwalk along with what is progressively distant from the original restoration. You will not detect that these changes mark the downfall predicted in the prophecies of the Book of Mormon and Doctrine & Covenants. While I cannot withdraw the content, you should not read it if it will upset your worldview.

Which then leads to the final demand: I never intended to speak or promote *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. The stake president knows that. I don't promote books. Don't do book signings, have never advertised any book I've written and don't make appearances to push sales. Never have and never will. The upcoming tour has nothing to do with that, or any other book. Well, it has to do with the scriptures and promoting them. But since the church publishes them and Deseret Book profits from their sales, I'm actually promoting Deseret Book, owned by Deseret Management Corporation, owned by The Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which consists of one person, the senior member of the twelve. Therefore, I am promoting the interests of the church president. But not my own.

The letter demands I do three things: Breach a contract (I won't do). Tell you that the "content needs to be withdrawn." Not promote the book in the upcoming tour. To the extent that I can, I'm complying.

I'm not sure if that meets the requirement for "repentance" in this current predicament, but that's what I can do. If the church wants to make me another offer, then let the stake president know and I'm sure he'll pass it along. Given how little time remains I

thought I'd skip the middleman and put this up here because you guys downtown read this blog (as we can tell from the blogmeter).

Finally, I want to be clear I am not addressing homosexuality in this post. I am merely using the subject to make an illustration. I need to add that the advocates of socially progressive Mormonism have been far more tolerate of my views than the church has. They (social progressives) are willing to be tolerant precisely because they've had their own view so marginalized in the past. For their kindness toward me I am appreciative. Disagreement does not require warfare, and sometimes makes for very healthy and interesting conversation between those holding different views. We all need to push beyond rhetoric into the substance of the disagreements. Once we do that we can find the ability to love one another even as we disagree.

SEPTEMBER 6, 2013

Additional Information on Upcoming Talks

Those who are recording the upcoming talks have invested in new recording equipment to be able to produce the CD's. They are also bearing their own costs to attend and record. I receive nothing from their efforts and have instructed that anything that would be earned should be donated to the LDS missionary effort. Those recording the talks allow preorders through their site, www.publishinghope.info

Tuesday in Boise I'd like to remind those who will attend:

1. Please bring and plan to use your scriptures during the talk.
2. It is a Tuesday evening, and therefore informal dress is expected.

I understand the distinction between attraction and lust, and acknowledge the criticism I've received by failing to allow for it.

SEPTEMBER 7, 2013

Contentment

I've been reflecting on Mormonism. That joyful, confident, speculative religion given to mankind between 1820 to 1829, with all the potential vitality of a new movement. Unafraid, uncaptured by an institution, filled with the possibility of changing the world. A time before the adversary saw that inasmuch as you can buy anything in this world with money, you could also buy Mormonism with money.

That's the trick. Turn the religion into a "thing." Because "things" can be bought and sold. They are merchandise. Mormonism wasn't to be a thing. It was to be intangible, a spiritual revival, otherworldly.

But those sorts of inchoate notions cannot long survive without a sponsoring entity; an organized host to carry it onward. And so what was an idea at first, took second-place behind an emerging organization with a hierarchy, controls and assignments. That "thing" was subject to control, could be sued, threatened, and captured by the monetary needs of the thing itself.

When I joined Mormonism it was essentially confined to a single, triumphant "thing." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints owned it, brought it to me, packaged it for presentation through missionaries, and delivered it with flannel-board discussions and film strip displays. It was homely and crude. But that didn't matter. It was the substance, the doctrine, the answers it offered that captured my heart.

I've loved every minute of Mormonism. From the initial conversion to the latest constrictions, it has been a wonderful journey for which I have nothing but gratitude.

I've kept that sense of wonder, of excitement, of endless possibilities for this restored faith. As the correlated church has advanced its stranglehold on the minds of my fellow Latter-day Saints, I've grown progressively quiet in meetings and lessons, allowing my own explorations to proceed outside the bounds of the organized meetings. What I've found continues to keep me in awe. I love this faith as much today as I did when I joined.

I've written about it. But I do not think I've ever discussed (apart from those who actually insist on talking to me) anything I've written with any member of my ward or stake. I remain silent inside the organizational sub-department where I live. I think there are many people in my ward who are not aware I've written a single book. I doubt many people know I have a blog.

What I love about the faith is not a "thing" and therefore cannot be taken from me. I fully expect to lose my card (temple recommend) tomorrow. That thing can be taken. And my membership number can be lost, too. And I won't be able to talk in church. I stopped attending Sunday School some years back because they would call on me and ask me to discuss something even when I preferred to remain silent. When asked a specific question by the teacher, I had an internal debate about how to respond: Do you give a full answer to a topic warranting the rest of class time and then some, or give some misleading, incomplete dangling remark for which I am accountable before God. Better to withdraw. So I did. In High Priests Group it is much easier. There the atmosphere is either a wade through mind-numbing trivia, or pretty good material. Selective and pointed comments are allowed, and hardened opinions are unchanged. A safe environment in which to remain silent or to express occasional insight.

Tomorrow will not end my love of this restored faith, though it may cost me some “things” that the organized entity claiming to own the faith thinks it can remove. I’m reconciled to that potential loss. But I’m also reconciled to these few truths underlying my faith:

- God spoke to me BEFORE I joined the LDS church. If He hadn’t, I wouldn’t have joined.
- God has continued to speak to me since.
- Administrative allocation of membership numbers, status and privileges inside an organization don’t matter much to God. I know that because I’ve been the least of the Latter-day Saints and He has taken note of me.
- God will continue to have fellowship with me.
- The religion I believe has existed from eternity and will continue into eternity. Therefore, a temporary, corporate organization that is owned by a sole individual, which is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints won’t survive beyond the veil. There you leave behind your money. You can’t buy or sell in that better place. Since I’ve been there already, the turbulence here is of little moment to me.
- Souls matter. Yours, mine, the living and the dead. God is more compassionate than we are. No matter how serious we take our organizations, our things, the souls of mankind are infinitely more valuable than commerce between ourselves.
- I have an assignment given to me I intend to discharge. It is because I love God and therefore love His children. It will cost me a great deal to accomplish that. Not only ire of the organization, but the money I will spend to accomplish the task.
- I am converted. Not to things, but to God. Whatever stuff is taken away, that will remain.

Be of good cheer. All of you. Whether you hate me, think me an apostate, authentic, a lunatic, pretender, inspired, misled, devout, or merely inconvenient, I'd recommend you try to find joy in this life. Think deeply. Ponder carefully. Search into meanings. Look up at night and search for the constellations and planets. Note their movements. Try to watch the occasional sunrise. God's fingerprints are all over this creation. Envy the birds, feel pity for the insects, taste and smell and listen and rejoice. You are alive. And for so long as you live, the possibilities remain endless. You possess choice, which in itself is godly.

A Latter-day Saint today, perhaps a Cast-away Saint tomorrow. But always a Mormon. I remain content with my faith.

SEPTEMBER 9, 2013

Last Night's FHE—Don't Call Me

We have Family Home Evening on Sundays. I try to teach a meaningful lesson each week. Last night the lesson was on Church Disciplinary Councils. After a discussion at home, I went with my family to the stake building to participate in an actual council.

The notice from the stake mentions "the spiritual demise of [me] and [my] family." My wife prayed about this and was of the strongest of convictions that the family needed to be at the council. I agreed with her. Therefore, my children were all there to silently observe. The stake leaders were afforded the opportunity to reclaim my children as they dealt with the charge that publishing a book constitutes "apostasy" requiring discipline.

We spent an hour in the hallway, outside the High Council room, discussing the stake president's refusal to allow my children to attend. My wife was welcome, my children were not. My wife explained that she had made it a subject of prayer, and in answer

to prayer wanted them to be there. The stake president refused. He said it would be “a circus” to permit it. My children, all in Sunday dress, each explained they were only there to observe and there would be nothing disruptive from them.

I explained my fear that if anything happened behind closed doors, my children could always entertain doubts about the content of the council and charges raised. I told the stake presidency (the councilors came out and joined us in the hallway) that there are always rumors and those who will insist that a council was “really” about something else; immorality, dishonesty, or some serious moral transgression. The stake president clarified it was only about a book. I said I was worthy of a Temple Recommend, and he agreed. It was only about a book.

We talked for an hour in the hallway and ended with me bearing my testimony to the children, pointing to President Hunt and telling them (my children) that I sustained him, pointing to my Bishop and telling them I sustained him.

The door to the High Council room was open. I assume they overheard the discussion. It was a little after 8:00 when we left.

I think it was a good Home Evening. When we returned home we had a lively discussion about the scriptures and revelation. It ended with a peanut butter pie.

SEPTEMBER 9, 2013

Don't Know

I know a decision was made. They must deliver a letter. I have not yet received it.

During our hour long discussion, the stake president admitted to my children he got a call during one of his meetings with me from one of the Seven Presidents of the Seventy. He was instructed

to “stand down” while the Seventy and one of the Twelve read *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. Then he (the stake president) did nothing further until he was told to proceed. I asserted that if he believed I was really “apostate” he would never have stood down. For that reason it was him merely following commands from higher up, and not a local matter.

Before last night’s meeting I told the stake president I was bringing my children. He knew that and said nothing beforehand to suggest they would be excluded. We were very surprised he refused to allow them to enter. I was excluded from the High Council room unless the children stayed behind. I asked to be allowed to just make a statement to the council while my children listened, he refused to permit that.

My wife reviewed the *Church Handbook of Instructions*. She explained to President Hunt that the book is silent, and does not bar children from attending. He admitted that was true but it was his decision to forbid them. My wife said it was my court and I ought to be allowed to have them with me. He replied it wasn’t my court, but the church’s.

Roy: Yes I lived down the street and remember you and your brothers. But you didn’t leave an email address. Boise tomorrow, 6:30.

CHAPTER 4
Forty Years

SEPTEMBER 11, 2013

Yesterday

Yesterday was the 40th anniversary of my baptism into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I marked my gratitude by giving a talk in Boise, Idaho. On my way to the meeting, at 10:30 yesterday morning, President Hunt called to tell me I'd been excommunicated. He emailed me on Monday and asked if we would like to come to the stake center that night (with the children) to hear and discuss the outcome. I replied as follows:

President Hunt,

For clarification, we weren't of the conviction that the children should be at the disciplinary counsel to hear the "outcome." We had already discussed that at length in our family beforehand. We all were prepared for any outcome. What we are absolutely certain of was that they should be allowed to see the process as it took place.

In our discussions with them we talked of the Spirit that attends a disciplinary council. We discussed the format and the procedure. We reviewed the scriptures and what they say about disciplinary councils. We were certain this would offer them an opportunity to

hear from people who disagree with their father and hear how other people interpret the scriptures and how they relate to the history of the church. We were looking forward to the opportunity for them to see the scriptures used by me and then by the members of the high council testify of gospel truths. The Spirit witnessed to Stephanie this would be a faith promoting meeting for them to attend. The outcome was a non-issue.

In any event, again we would like to thank you for your service. We know this has been difficult and bear no resentment for you or anyone involved. I am saddened, even ashamed that there wasn't an open process which allowed my children to have this important opportunity. I've prized the underlying principles of the gospel which involve persuasion, knowledge, meekness and avoid control, compulsion and dominion. I wanted my children to witness this glorious process in which men of good faith and belief come together to work through an important disagreement. I had wanted them to behold the Spirit leading to unity. In as much as the kids are scattered, (Kylee went back to school this morning at 4 a.m., Benjamin and Kalisa live hours away and can't return because of work commitments), we see no need to meet to discuss the outcome. Please send the letter announcing my excommunication so we can end this tragic ordeal. I meant what I testified to last night.

— Denver”

The paperwork will arrive sometime later. It was certainly symmetrical to have the news given exactly on the 40th anniversary of the occasion. Almost like a sign, really.

I saw another sign yesterday. A dove was waiting for me on the lawn at work. She didn't stir as I walked by her. But she did take note of me (and I of her).

Boise was a wonderful experience. Beautiful day. Great occasion. Joyful day, and gave me an opportunity to talk about the faith I very much believe in and will continue to practice.

The next talk will be in Idaho Falls. There are stake presidents there “warning” people in the church to not listen to me. They are preaching fear.

Christ instructed us not to fear (D&C 68:6). Fear is the motivation of hell itself (Moses 1:20). If you are fearful, then don’t attend the talks.

I rejoice in liberty, because freedom to believe in Christ is liberty itself (2 Cor. 3:17).

I am grateful to the LDS Church for providing to me the instructions, ordinances and scriptures. I believe the faith which was restored through Joseph. That hasn’t, indeed can’t, be taken away from me.

SEPTEMBER 12, 2013

My Sympathy

Elder Russell M. Nelson presides over the Strengthening the Members Committee. His wife has created a great deal of controversy with a children’s book she has written. Some active LDS psychologists have denounced the book as “child abuse” and used very unkind terms against both the book and her.

I wanted to express my sympathy for Elder Nelson and his wife. I know what it is like to have written a book with the intent to help others, only then to become the object of public criticism. I hope there is no church action taken against her.

SEPTEMBER 13, 2013

Flavor of the Month

I notice there's a lot of blog activity for the moment. That doesn't fool me. I'm the "flavor of the month" to folks and that will soon pass. But while I have your attention let me say this to whoever is stopping by because you think this is a temporary amusement, outrage, vindication or car wreck:

I really do believe in the religion I've accepted. I live it faithfully and joyfully. There's a lot of stupidity parading as enlightenment in the congregations of the "Saints" and I've never rebelled against that. People have always been allowed to believe as they want, and to preach things I don't believe or accept without any opposition from me. I have been a "low maintenance" Mormon and I'm not looking for a fight.

The conduct of the church reminds me that "the wicked flee when no man pursues (Prov. 28:28). I'm not after them and never have been. There are a lot of problems with our history that can't be explained with the "traditional narrative." I've looked into this fearlessly, and honestly tried to reconcile the many corners we have turned since the death of Joseph. The book that got me into trouble was written to help those who are similarly befuddled by what we had as opposed to what we have. The book has actually helped people. It wasn't advertised. I recommended it to a tiny handful of people.

In the narrative I propose, the framework is taken from scripture and prophecy. It is reassuring. We aren't in a mess solely because we were irresponsible, but are here because God foresaw it, planned for it, told us it was going to happen, and now wants us to wake up to it. There's still time. And that time is precious and ought to

be spent doing something other than arguing over the “flavor of the month.”

The church excommunicated me, but now it's time to move on. I suspect, however, they will fire up the machinery to deal further with me. Before all that kicks in, let me assure you that whatever goes on I am content, even happy with life and with my 40 years in Mormonism. I will be pressing forward in faith, believing that you matter, I matter and our love for one another matters.

I don't matter. But God does, prophecy does, your soul does and God's potential involvement with you matters a lot. That is something you can engage in without any need to ever look at another flavor of the month.

So be of good cheer. And don't believe all you are going to read about me. If you want to really know what I think, read what I say. Better still spend your time learning how to relate to God and how He actually does relate to you. Even those who are bitter about your Mormon experience and now distrust God Himself. The fact is that much of what has broken your heart did not originate with Him. It was always an abuse inflicted by men.

So hang in there. Christ is cheerful. You be cheerful too.

SEPTEMBER 14, 2013

Clarification

My wife and I dropped by to visit with President Hunt at his home today. Neither he nor I like the present circumstances. We had a pleasant discussion.

He clarified to me that the comment, “What makes you think the church wants that kind of people?” was not intended by him to mean they weren't welcome. Rather it was meant that their attitude,

if it arose from *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, was an attitude that wasn't necessarily helpful. I told him I would make that clarification.

We discussed many interesting things, and parted as we were before—friends and fellow sojourners in this troubling world.

SEPTEMBER 14, 2013

Ten Points

Because of recent events I want to make ten points:

First, I disabled comments and then I stopped blogging as a sign of good faith to the stake president.

Second, I was and am able to a pass temple recommend interview. I can answer all the questions in the right way. I don't pretend to "preside" over anyone. Even within my family, everyone is merely encouraged to believe and act consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But they must have their own testimony and are free to disbelieve or think freely. I hope my example persuades. Outside my family I have absolutely NO ambition to lead anyone, control anyone, or even be discussed (much less praised) by anyone. The presiding authorities are the only ones who are sustained by common consent and they are welcome to it. I don't envy them, don't want their positions, and don't hope to be one of them.

Third, I have been expelled for writing a book. The book was not a "sin." Therefore, what separated me from the church is not some shameful moral lapse, but writing history. It represents a good faith attempt to reconcile events with scripture. It was undertaken as an expression of faith, not rebellion. I feel no shame at having written it, and sincerely believe it to be a truthful account of how we wound up in our present condition. I do not believe I need to "repent" to be right with God. Throughout this whole ordeal, I have always been right with God.

Fourth, I am not trying to reform, revise or affect the church or management of the church. I don't much care about that. What I'm interested in is exploring and finding truth. That requires openness and candor. I am not interested in threatening anyone or anything. If others feel threatened by that then I regret their reaction, but that is all it is: their reaction. Soon they will get over it and perhaps take some time to reflect on what I'm saying and maybe come to another view. If not, then perhaps they can support their view more persuasively and we can agree on things again.

Fifth, I am not and have never been a critic of the church. My focus is on history and doctrine. The church is irrelevant to the inquiry.

Sixth, I spent time with my stake president on Saturday, at his home. Delivered a copy of the Boise talk, which he said he would listen to. Last evening my wife and I talked with my bishop. Today I was with one of the stake counselors, then with another bishopric member. I have said to all of them that I would be willing to talk with anyone in my ward or stake who is troubled and help them get over any ill feelings. I have none. If someone locally is upset then they can talk with me and I will gladly help them realize they still belong in church. That's where I'll be—just not this Sunday, because I don't attend Stake Conference anyway. But next Sacrament Meeting I'll be there. All of these local leaders said they would refer upset folks to my blog so they can read about what they (local leaders) aren't supposed to give details about. They thought the blog would be helpful.

Seventh, I'm an odd sort of "apostate" who entertains no ill will against the church. I'm not sure that what I've done can reasonably be called "apostasy." In matters of doctrine, we are not supposed to have "faith" in anyone or anything other than Christ. I readily

admit I don't have, never have had, and have not advocated faith in the church. But I don't think that matters. What matters is faith in Christ. Take a look at Christ's doctrine at the end of 3 Ne. 11:32-40. You'll notice that "whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock." I testify of Christ and seek to establish His doctrine. My book says nothing to contradict His doctrine. So when I'm accused of violating "the doctrine of the church" I have to say: So? That doesn't matter anyway, or if it does it "cometh of evil."

Eighth, you forfeit priesthood when you sin. You forfeit it when you exercise control or compulsion or dominion over others in unrighteousness. You forfeit it when you use it to gratify your pride or to serve your vain ambition, a proposition which is facilitated by having some office or standing which allows you to assert that "by virtue of the priesthood" you are entitled to be followed. You forfeit priesthood when you depart from His doctrine and seek to establish your own priestcraft, but do not seek to establish Zion. But you do not forfeit priesthood when you talk about Christ, testify of His doctrine, and follow the Spirit despite those who may abuse you. Nor do you forfeit priesthood when you look charitably on the mistakes of others. Nor do you do so when you have no office, nor any standing in a priestly office which is used to demand others follow you. When you testify of Christ and tell others to follow Him, there can be no force, order, panel, critic or organization that can affect your priesthood. Indeed, if they wrongly attempt to do so, then "amen to the priesthood or the authority" of those making the attempt.

Ninth, there have been changes in heaven and on earth recently. I've done all I have done in obedience to our Lord. Things will unfold and everybody will have a more fulsome understanding

of things. Be patient. Be believing. Do not despair as God's work unfolds.

Tenth, you don't **know me** by reading what I write. I very much try to keep myself out of these discussions. I truly believe I am irrelevant, therefore I make an effort to remain outside the material. What little I disclose is to give context. At the beginning I wanted to remain anonymous or use a pseudonym. The problem with that is the message must be identifiable with someone who can be evaluated, known to exist, and can be tried. It was unavoidable. I must be known. For that reason alone I have let myself be identified. I wish it were otherwise. Privacy would be preferable.

SEPTEMBER 16, 2013

Evil Speaking of Anointed

I was asked how I justify "evil speaking of the Lord's anointed" — a question I've already answered here, here, and here, among other places: (see links below)

<http://denversnuffer.blogspot.com/2012/04/criticism-of-church-part-3.html>

<http://denversnuffer.blogspot.com/2012/05/last-weeks-comments.html>

<http://denversnuffer.blogspot.com/2010/07/2-nephi-28-3.html>

It would be better to read what I write than to presume something about me. If you're interested enough to criticize, then why aren't you interested enough to read what I've written so your criticism can be grounded in more than your imagination?

It used to take a hundred years for changes to come about. Now those same changes in understanding take about 5 to 7 years. A whole new understanding of the history of the church is coming.

Just wait, and remember when it does, how very foolish the church's reaction to *Passing the Heavenly Gift was back in 2013*.

I spoke with a member of my ward (leadership) the other day. He said he thought I'd gotten all the facts right in the book. He said the church can differ in interpretation, but no one can really argue with the facts.

I kept all my covenants with both the Lord and the church. I would never have broken my covenants with the church. But the church has broken them. That will not change what covenants I have with the Lord.

They will remain unbroken.

Sometime after Joseph's death, there was one covenant the church changed. Instead of consecrating everything for the building up of Zion, the covenant was reworked to consecrate everything to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, for the establishment of Zion. That reworking of the covenant means that if the church doesn't do it, then someone who honors the covenant with the church cannot. Or, alternatively, it means that when the church neglects to build Zion, then the church has broken the covenant and that relieves the other party of their obligation to consecrate to the church. I took the first view. I would not depart from that covenant, even though I've had more than one conversation with the Lord about it. Now I find the church has broken the covenant, relieved me of any further need to involve them in the matter, and allowed me to pursue this as a matter of faith. The irony of that is they broke the covenant on the day I was traveling to Boise to begin a year-long series of talks about Zion. I see the hand of God in that.

As soon as the Boise talk is transcribed I will post it/link to it here. I imagine that will be within the next two to three weeks.

SEPTEMBER 17, 2013

Transcripts

On the right column of this page there is a new section where you can link to the talks/papers I've given. The transcript of the Boise talk is available there now, as well.

SEPTEMBER 17, 2013

The Talk Transcriptions

For those who read the newly linked talks, the transcripts will differ slightly from the talks. In the talks I spoke spontaneously using lists of scripture as my only text. The remarks were free flowing and unrehearsed. Then they were transcribed verbatim.

I took the verbatim transcription and edited it to reflect better sentence structure and subject-verb agreement. I took some compound sentence fragments and reshaped them into actual sentences. NOT perfect, but somewhat better. Then I added parenthetical references to show where an unexpressed scriptural cite could be found because that was what was in my head when the remark was made. It gives context to the reader.

I also corrected some misstatements, such as "Articles of Faith" when I meant "*Lectures on Faith*." Since I knew what I meant, the transcription corrects that. Also there was a "Levite" which was meant to be "Judah."

I also noted that one thought I began wasn't finished. So in the transcript I finished the thought.

When these get gathered together and published as a book, it will be edited further. At that time, it will be edited with readability in mind and a good deal more grammar and sentence structure will be imposed on the text. Also, there are numerous footnotes that will be added when I make them into a book.

None of the talks are written or will be written in advance. They will just be given—then transcribed. The only talk I've written in advance was the paper presented at Sunstone last year. They required it.

Otherwise, I speak spontaneously.

SEPTEMBER 20, 2013

No title

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

SANDY UTAH CRESCENT STAKE

September 18, 2013

Brother Denver Snuffer

Via Hand Delivery

Dear Brother Snuffer,

It is with love and concern that I write you this letter. You and I have been meeting for quite some time now to discuss your writings and the various assertions that you have made. It had been my hope that through these discussions we might come to understand one another better, and that you might have been willing to reassess some of your actions. I was saddened when you told me you were not willing to change your views or stop teaching them to others.

Because of this, as you know, a stake disciplinary council was held on your behalf on September 8, 2013. The council's conclusion was that several of the claims that you make in *Passing the Heavenly Gift* constitute clear, open, and deliberate public opposition to the Church and its leaders. Consequently, the council determined that you should be excommunicated from the Church for apostasy.

Although it was very clear to the council that your actions constitute apostasy, the excommunication decision was not an easy one. You are our friend, neighbor, and brother. I've shared on many occasions that we love you and want you to be part of us. We are sorry that -- through your actions and claims -- you have chosen to leave us. Because your actions and teachings are having a direct impact upon others, we determined this action was necessary.

As I think you know well, although you are no longer a member of the Church you are still very welcome to meet and counsel with me and your bishop. I hope you will take the opportunity to do so. We warmly invite you to sacrament meeting, other public meetings, and social functions. Stake and ward leaders and members have a strong desire to continue our friendship with you. We hope you will have that desire as well.

As I think you also know, the loss of Church membership also brings with it some significant limitations. You should not pray or offer talks or testimonies in Church meetings. You should not engage in activities which require an exercise of priesthood power. You should not pay tithing or wear the temple garment. At least one year must pass before your rebaptism may be considered.

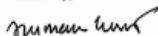
1

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have about these limitations, or to discuss them with you in more depth if you desire. I would also very much like to continue meeting with you as we have in the past, and to discuss the specific steps necessary for you to come back to the Church. I stand ready to do that at any time.

As you also know, you have the right to appeal this decision. I have received your appeal letter and will work with you to facilitate this process.

Brother Snuffer, the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ are for everyone, whether embraced once or once again - there is a way back. The Savior's atonement is beyond our comprehension to fully grasp, yet gratefully it is personalized and individualized to help each of us, to heal us, and to cure all ills. I would welcome the opportunity to help you with that.

Sincerely,



Truman Hunt
Stake President

SEPTEMBER 21, 2013

On Marriage

A couple trying to lose weight decided they would be more motivated if they began to weigh themselves together. As they did, the husband complained that all the increases were the fault of his wife. He took credit for all their losses. Over time she became very thin, and he quite corpulent. But they did lose a little in the process.

SEPTEMBER 22, 2013

Schedule

The next lecture in the fortieth year series will be on Saturday, September 28th in Idaho Falls (Skyline Activity Center, 1575 North Skyline Drive, Idaho Falls.) Since it is a Saturday it will be casual dress. The site will accommodate 200 people. There is overflow potential outside, and the intention to put two speakers for that area (if needed). This would allow some folks to bring their own lawn chairs or blankets and (weather permitting) listen outside. Or just get a CD afterwards and listen to that. Copies can be preordered at <http://www.publishinghope.info>. The following day in Logan (The CopperMill Restaurant, Emporium, upstairs, 55 North Main Street, Logan, Utah. Enter off Center Street or 1st West.) The talk will begin at 7:00 p.m. I will be in Sunday dress.

Each talk is entirely different material, laying a foundation to understand the topic of Zion. All the talks will be leading into a single theme: the restoration of Zion.

The fourth talk will be on October 6th in Centerville, Utah. It will also be Sunday dress, beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Do not think you need to attend. The talks are recorded. They will be available on CD's. The CD's will be transcribed.

Once they are transcribed they will be made available here on this blog. Eventually the recordings will be made available as a free MP3 download. When the entire subject is concluded next year, the transcripts will be gathered into a book and the book will be available. So whether you ever attend or not, the information will all be available in two formats: recorded and written. Both will be available for purchase (CD's/book) and for free (MP3/blog entries).

The discussions will mean a good deal more if you just listen to the material. The ideas and doctrine matter. The scriptures and their language matter. The message, not the messenger.

I like criticism more than praise. Criticism, particularly well thought through criticism, is appreciated. Never shout down critics. Let them have a full say. If they make a good point then think about it. Always remember that redemption comes from the only Holy Being who condescended to come here precisely because of His perfection. He alone could break the bonds of death.

Remember that in all the diversity and wonder of nature there is very little that is identical. Each one of us is unique for a reason. Your unique existence is a reflection of God's great liberty given to us all. There is no uniformity of thought. We ought to exchange ideas, never try to control the thinking of others. Let everyone believe as they may. If you have a better idea, articulate it and persuade others. But never think your view alone ought to rule everyone else's thinking. God doesn't do that. He persuades. He invites. He entices. Gently. Lovingly. Patiently. So stop acting like you shouldn't be bound by the same constraints. Also remember that when discussing an important topic, it is not possible to set out every detail in one statement, one comment or one discussion. The entire scope and sweep of the matter takes time and patience for clarity. If you've read it, the discussion in *The Second Comforter*

about the first year Torts class in law school is a good illustration of how confused the subject was before clarity was found. It is good to let a matter emerge incrementally until you can see enough of the topic to have it form a clear image.

SEPTEMBER 23, 2013

A Contemplated Rebuttal

I received two emails notifying me there is a man, woman, child, or committee who is now getting ready to do a “rebuttal” to *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. It can be found at:

<http://onewhoiswatching.wordpress.com/2013/09/23/an-evening-in-oise-with-denver-snuffer-part-one/>

Normally I would just dismiss someone who lacks the courage to stand up for what they write by identifying themselves. Only then can they be tested by the kind of criticism, disdain, insults, derision and discomfort my family and I are constantly subjected to. Denver Snuffer is my real name. However, this particular woman, or committee, or man has some thoughtful material that I have enjoyed reading. Therefore, despite her/his/their anonymity, I am hopeful there will be worthwhile and productive criticism given.

I suspect this is written by a single individual, because of the constant use of the word “I.” However, that could be a collective agreement to use the singular. It is clear the individual/committee want to be viewed as masculine, but I’ve seen this done by women as well. You will note in the first installment that when they agree with me, I am called “Denver” and when they disagree I am “Snuffer.” That suggests some internal disagreement, so there’s either more than one or the individual is conflicted.

In any event, I'm hopeful this can provide what the church never has: some feedback based on history that shows *PTHG* errs in retelling the events of our dispensation.

SEPTEMBER 24, 2013

Missionary Mishap

When we got back from a walk the other night, there was a missionary tract with \$5 in it, a note, a pumpkin, and some tomatoes. The note apologized for destroying our watermelon. The \$5 was to pay for the lost watermelon.

On Saturday when the missionaries returned, we learned that the pogo stick on the front porch was too tempting to the Jacksonville, Florida Elder. In his attempt to impress, he mashed the porch watermelon. I told him that I'd like that on video if he filmed it, and that since the garden produce was an unexpected gift, the watermelon wasn't missed. I gave him his \$5 back.

If the Jacksonville parents read this, your Elder is fine, and in the good care of a Missouri companion. If the mission president reads this, I gave the Elders some referral information they could use.

Comments come to the blog and we read every one of them. They are not posted, but are read. Comments degenerate and quickly get off topic. They made this into another discussion blog/board. This is not intended to be a discussion board.

If I wanted to mislead people and never brook even constructive criticism, I would want to make people believe I could never lead them astray. In that regard, instead of telling you that you should always ask and defer to God, because He is unchanging and unchangeable; and instead of explaining that everything you believe should be measured against the scriptures and consistent with what was revealed through Joseph Smith, I would expect you to

accept my pronouncements and whims. I respect your intelligence too much to attempt such a foolish undertaking. If I tried to do anything other than persuade with meekness and pure knowledge, you would be able to discern I was up to no good. You know better than to trust any mere man with your faith and confidence. At least I hope you do.

The Red Sox have locked up the AL East. My daughter hit a two out RBI double last night in a boy's league hardball game. Life is good.

SEPTEMBER 25, 2013

Idaho Falls

Please have your scriptures and *The Lectures on Faith* for the upcoming Idaho Falls lecture.

Elder Christopherson of the Twelve gave a speech at BYU Idaho this week. It fits in nicely with the upcoming talk, therefore I am linking it here (http://www2.byui.edu/Presentations/Transcripts/Devotionals/2013_9_24_Christofferson.htm). I'd recommend you listen to it. His defense of the Prophet Joseph Smith is needed as more and more believing Latter-day Saints get a little troubling information, and collapse in disbelief. The cure, as Elder Christopherson explains, is to not know too little, but to immerse yourself in study and find the answers to any troubling information you unearth.

We have greater access to information today than we have ever had. But if we neglect studying it, then it serves no purpose. Whether Joseph was a prophet or not should matter to you. If you conclude he was, then he affords an opportunity to better understand the relationship between God and man. Joseph's life is recent enough, with sufficient enough material, that we can learn

things about him that are not available to us about Paul, Peter, John the Baptist, Mormon, Moroni, Nephi, Isaiah, Moses, Abraham, Noah, Enoch or Adam.

Learning of the difficulties Joseph endured, understanding the tendency to attribute ill-will to his words and actions despite what motives were in his heart, and the subsequent drift away from his preaching and teaching is important to understand. That understanding should help you in your own effort to live in harmony with God.

I believe that the many revelations in the D&C identifying Joseph as the spokesman for God means exactly that: Joseph was and IS the spokesman God sent. Joseph's words need to be heeded as if they came from God directly to us. No one has the right to change or ignore them. No one (and I mean NO ONE) has the right to claim they are Joseph's equal. There are no "keys" or "key holders" who can alter Joseph's teachings except at their peril. When they ignore or contradict Joseph's revelations, and teach others that they can ignore the message and warnings given by that prophet who was called by God to begin this dispensation, they damn themselves and any who listen to them.

When Elder Christopherson defends Joseph, I want to rejoice and shout my own "Amen!" to his message. He is my brother in belief as he makes that defense.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2013

Equal in Authority and Accountability

The First Presidency are the primary organizational leadership in the hierarchy of the church (D&C 107:22). They are the presidency of the church. They set the agenda and are accountable for keeping the church running.

The Twelve are equal in authority (D&C 107:23–24). They differ from the First Presidency in their responsibility. They have no authority within organized stakes, but are missionaries, whose job is to spread the missionary work throughout the world. When there is no organized stake, they preside because of their role as a “traveling high council.” But their authority to administer in a stake ends once a stake is organized.

The Seventy are equal in authority (D&C 107:26). Like the Twelve, they are missionaries. They fill missionary assignments when the Twelve cannot be present.

The stake High Council forms a quorum equal in authority (D&C 107:37).

Joseph Smith never called a member of the Twelve into the First Presidency. They were sent on missions. In Nauvoo, Joseph presided over the sitting High Council, as you can read in the minutes of the Nauvoo High Council.

When Brigham Young wanted Sidney Rigdon excommunicated, he recognized as a member of the Twelve he had no authority to do so. Therefore, the trial was before the Nauvoo High Council.

When Joseph died, and Hyrum predeceased him, there was no one designated to replace Joseph. D&C 43:4 required Joseph to designate his successor. He did this. It was Hyrum (D&C 124:91–95). Therefore, there was no successor.

Interestingly, Section 107 was not referred to in the succession process in August 1844. Nor was there a revelation given to settle the matter. It was handled as a political event, with an election by common consent. Brigham Young campaigned for the Twelve, not for himself. Rigdon campaigned unsuccessfully to wait for one of Joseph’s sons to be old enough to assume the role. The election in Nauvoo was primarily between those two options. In the months

following however, others would make claims and would peel off followers.

Once the Twelve were elected as the replacement leadership group, they have thereafter remained in control. Today there is an oligarchy of the Twelve governing the church, and they control everything, with the senior member becoming the automatic successor President, and the First Presidency invariably organized from the Twelve (though there have been exceptions).

Although the Twelve and the Presidency of the Seventy were responsible for my excommunication, they lacked the jurisdiction to implement their decision. Therefore, it was necessary to employ the stake, which had jurisdiction, to accomplish this.

I've appealed to the First Presidency. But what I find interesting is that the process in my case has involved the stake high council, the Presidency of the Seventy, the Twelve, and will now also involve the First Presidency. All of those quorums which are "equal in authority" are to be affected by this decision. Only the Lord could bring about such an interesting alignment of responsibility for this decision to excommunicate someone for their belief in scripture, belief in prophecy and their historical viewing of Christ's prophecies about us and our behavior.

OCTOBER 2013

OCTOBER 1, 2013

Some Reflections on the Weekend

Saturday I was in Idaho Falls. After the conclusion of the talk my wife and I drove home. We went to church with the family Sunday morning, then she and I drove back to Logan on Sunday evening for the talk there.

Three talks have been given. There was an introduction, and then discussions about faith and repentance comprised the first three topics. The Centerville talk, this coming Sunday, will be about covenants.

There are about 7 1/2 hours of material covered to this point. This is about 30% of what will be covered. My original estimate of 25 hours seems to be about right at this point. I'm hoping to get another talk in before the Thanksgiving/Christmas/New Year time frame and then not do another one until the Spring. If another can be fit in after Centerville and before a winter break, then this will be 50% complete. That would be a wonderful accomplishment.

Now that three are done, I have learned how challenging it is to drive and speak in two venues in a single weekend. The only other time I expect that to happen will be in Las Vegas and St. George.

There continue to be warnings coming from the leadership about attending these talks. That seems to be attracting unwanted attention. The size of the audience in Boise and Idaho Falls was about the same.

Logan was larger. Centerville should accommodate 500, but I'm hoping there will be empty seats. If the church continues to oppose, discuss, announce and call attention to this it will drive up curiosity. I don't like that.

Here's what happens. When someone who has been warned that I'm "apostate" comes and listens, they hear something that doesn't sound like it is *apostate*. It seems rather more faith promoting and sincere than rebellious and angry. That produces another round of distrust of the church that is altogether avoidable if the church would just be quiet. Opposing won't work. Ignoring is the best tactic. I'd recommend that the leadership and those stake presidents and bishops who want to prevent people from coming to hear me

never mention my name. That way I can come and go unnoticed by those who are not interested enough to search out what it is I am doing. Let them sleep. I'm not trying to steal anyone. But people can be alienated by the false and unwarranted criticism being cast my way.

If what I am doing is of God, then that will show soon enough. If it is not of God, then it will fail of its own accord. Nothing needs to be done. The best approach is to allow the matter to unfold as it will. In the end, we will all know whether this is something the Lord has required of me, or if I am just another one of the long list of pretenders.

I give this advice in all sincerity. Smaller venues and a more intimate and informed group would be better. Larger crowds, who are interested in a carnival atmosphere will be disappointed. I discuss scripture and doctrine. Deseret Book told me, "doctrine doesn't sell."

OCTOBER 2, 2013

Centerville

The address for Sunday is 525 North 400 West, Centerville, Utah. Everyone has to be in a seat to comply with fire code. There are approximately 500 seats (including a balcony).

If you are in town for General Conference and want to attend, come by. All people from out of town will be admitted free. Locals are also free. Anyone arriving before the talk begins will be free. Come to think of it, this time it will be free to all. The talk begins at 7:00 p.m.

OCTOBER 8, 2013

Next Talk November 2

The plan at the present is to have the next talk on November 2nd in Utah County. That is a Saturday, and I am hoping to find a venue that can be used in the morning. If possible, I'd like to begin at 9:30 a.m.

The next talk will be on priesthood. At that point, I will be half way done. I will continue sometime in the Spring in Grand Junction and that topic will be Zion.

All of this is really one long talk, delivered in 10 increments. But each one is a stand alone discussion. If you listen to them in order, you should be able to see how it fits together into one great whole.

Transcripts will be put up as they are completed. The recordings are all available now.

Last week I spent four days out of town in a trial, and then returned home to speak in Centerville. You should pay special attention to the scriptures in that talk. They are worth considerably more attention than can be given to them in a 2 hour lecture. I can only present ideas and then spend limited time directing you to where you can study them in the scriptures. The full import of the material is left to you to study out and reach your own conclusions.

Our thinking is tied to a model given to us by the Mormon traditions. The scriptures are not necessarily in harmony with those traditions. Therefore, it is necessary to look carefully at the scriptures, discard untruths, discover the revelations that are there and then believe what God has revealed. For many people that is too much to ask. I realize that, but the notion of people looking at things with new understandings should not be opposed. We all believe in Joseph's ministry. We believe in the Book of Mormon.

We believe in the revelations and translations given through Joseph Smith. That should be enough to allow us to have fellowship with one another.

Studying the revelations and finding something new or long forgotten is no basis for fighting with one another, or denying fellowship to those who choose to believe the works of God include something more than our traditions dictate. President Uchtdorf's general conference address suggests the church welcomes different ideas. Whether that is true or not, our *individual* application of charity towards differing opinions and views should be broad, friendly and welcoming. On BOTH sides.

OCTOBER 12, 2013

Idaho Falls Transcription

The Idaho Falls lecture has been transcribed and uploaded to Scribd. It is also available in *The Teachings of Denver C. Snuffer, Jr., Volume 2: 40 Years in Mormonism 2013-2014* and at www.restorationarchives.com.

OCTOBER 12, 2013

Questions

Four talks are finished. Two transcripts are up. I am working to complete the other transcripts.

The fifth talk will be on November 2nd in Utah County. If you are planning to attend and would like to submit a question, please bring it with you in writing and I will collect them before beginning. Questions will be difficult to incorporate into the recording of the talks unless I can read them as part of the discussion and then answer.

It would be good if questions did not change the subject, but related to the topics discussed this far. If a question is already part of what is coming in future talks, then it will get covered in the ordinary course of the material, rather than taking it out of context.

The next subject covered in Utah County will be the priesthood. I'm going to try to be there a little early to gather written questions beforehand from those who come. If you can't attend, you can still send a question to me by commenting on this post and I will receive it.

OCTOBER 14, 2013

A Friend's Comment

I got an email from a close friend in Tennessee that said:

I think if we live our life and don't change our views over time, hopefully toward more correct, we are waisting our life. I suppose even if we become more incorrect, while trying to become more correct, then that is still better than not even trying to find out the truth.

Its hard though because the tendency is to search for proof of what we already think instead of just looking for the truth. I like that saying, "whatever there be that truth can destroy, it should."

I replied:

Well put.

Isn't it curious how we adopt ideas like they are part of our anatomy and then refuse to give them up. It's like the ideas are more painful to change than cutting off a finger. That's quite strange when you think about it. Ideas should be welcome when

they come and welcome when they are replaced by something better.

Imagine if nature didn't respond to changing demands. Imagine if after a forest fire the birds refused to look somewhere else for seeds. Everything adapts, except for the human mind in many people once we get past about 25 years old. Then we think we know enough to keep holding onto the same tired ideas, even when they fail us in life. We remain "devout" to the errors.

OCTOBER 15, 2013

Priesthood Talk

The next topic will be priesthood. This will be November 2nd. I will not take time to give all the background information from the scriptures and history to lay out the many problems we have in the traditions taught by the mainstream LDS culture. I will simply assume you are already well enough informed to know about these topics:

Claims of priesthood were rewritten into our history later than the actual recorded events.

The first church offices, Elder, Priest, Deacon, etc. were elected positions.

David Whitmer thought the addition of High Priests was as a result of Sidney Rigdon persuading Joseph Smith. David Whitmer thought it was wrong.

High Priest and High Priesthood are not the same thing.

In the Old and New Testament there was only one High Priest at a time. He was of the Levitical order, presided over the Levitical priests and was essentially the ancient equivalent of the Presiding Bishop.

There is no account of the visit of Peter, James and John conferring Melchizedek Priesthood, but only passing mention of the event added later into Section 27. It was not there when first recorded. Joseph also mentions them in Section 128.

If I were to say to you that I own the keys to a Dodge pick-up, does that make you the owner of the same truck? Joseph wrote in Section 128 that Peter, James and John “declared themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fullness of times.” You should ponder those words.

Joseph and Oliver were the first and second “Elders of the church” before the Melchizedek Priesthood was conferred upon them. Church offices include Elder, Priest, Teacher, etc. and do not require priesthood to possess.

President Grant changed church practice to ordain men to church offices, and to no longer confirm priesthood, a practice which lasted for over two decades.

If “all priesthood is Melchizedek” as Joseph Smith put it, “but there are different degrees or portions of it” then why did the Nauvoo Temple need to be completed to return the fullness? (D&C 124:28).

Joseph spoke of three priesthoods. We claim to have two (D&C 107:2).

Even the idea of priesthood is not well explained in the many historic accounts of the restoration.

These are topics, not an explanation of the topics. I will not even mention these topics in the talk. I intend to clarify the overall subject of priesthood, and therefore cannot take time to address these other side-issues. But the more acquainted you are with these topics the more the clarity you will see in the next talk. The more you know beforehand the more you will get from the talk.

But everyone will get something if they listen. Those who are only acquainted with the traditions will not get as much out of it.

OCTOBER 18, 2013

I Will Not Start a Church

Apparently the reason the church is now interviewing and discouraging some of those attending the talks I have given is driven by the false expectation that I intend to start a church. Let me be clear: I will not start a church. Period. Won't. Not now. Not later. Never.

There is nothing about starting a church that appeals in the least to me. To the extent one is needed, we already have one.

Any organization formed in this world must comply with laws of man. Tax issues, regulatory issues, and potential legislative intrusions are always part of the life of an institution. Pressure from political and economic interests abound. Before long, no matter how noble in origin, this world erodes and later controls the institutions here.

A “strong man” model is the opposite of Zion. A controlling hierarchy where some are over, and others under control perverts the essential equality that must prevail in order for Zion to exist with one heart, one mind, and all things in common. From the moment Brigham Young began to envision the church as a platform to support his kingly ambitions until today, the church has been a temptation to practice priestcraft.

The church can dismiss any thought I have that ambition. I don't.

When religion is reduced to a market and business interests drive programs, I find it repugnant. The idea that you identify underserved areas and build temples to drive larger temple recommend

participation to produce a cash stream may excite business leaders, but it repels me. That the church now recaptures the cost of building a new temple in two to three years after building one is little more than priestcraft. The Jews used their temple as a place of commerce. The Latter-day Saints have turned the temples themselves into merchandise. That is NOT my ambition. It causes me to mourn, not to become excited that I might join in the feeding frenzy upon the sheep.

I am just not like you. Not at all. I will not become like you. You keep the Mormon religion as your product line and never give another thought to me trying to “poach” your paying members. I WILL NOT lead another church. Ever. Period.

The break-off movements led by the carnal and ambitious polygamists are even more repugnant to me. They oppress their women and have descended into child sexual exploitation with disappointing regularity. The idea I want to follow in that distasteful abomination is even more offensive than thinking I want to be an LDS leader.

Read what I’ve written. Listen to my talks. You needn’t think there is a hidden agenda. There isn’t and won’t be one. I am so transparent that even the church court information has been made public.

OCTOBER 18, 2013

Another Review of *PTHG*

Another review of *Passing the Heavenly Gift*.

Enjoy.

[My wife noticed this and put it up yesterday. I’ve now skimmed the review. Wasn’t worth really reading. Doesn’t look

like the reviewer actually read the book. Seems like he collected comments from others and put a patchwork together as a response. Committees always tend to bungle things. Maybe he'll read the book sometime and look back with embarrassment at this poorly done review.]

OCTOBER 19, 2013

Yet Another Review of *PTHG*

Here is another link to a review done by The Association of Mormon Letters of *Passing the Heavenly Gift*.

Enjoy.

OCTOBER 19, 2013

Logan Transcript - Repentance

The Logan lecture has been transcribed and uploaded to Scribd. It is also available in *The Teachings of Denver C. Snuffer, Jr., Volume 2: 40 Years in Mormonism 2013-2014* and at www.restorationarchives.com.

OCTOBER 20, 2013

Centerville Transcript - Covenants

The Centerville lecture has been transcribed and uploaded to Scribd. It is also available in *The Teachings of Denver C. Snuffer, Jr., Volume 2: 40 Years in Mormonism 2013-2014* and at www.restorationarchives.com.

UPDATE: Blogger links are fixed. The transcriptions of all the talks are now linked in the sidebar on the blog.

OCTOBER 21, 2013

Daymon Smith's Cultural History of the Book of Mormon

I have written reviews of the first three volumes of Daymon Smith's planned five volume set titled "*A Cultural History of the Book of Mormon*." It is available on Amazon.com for those who are interested. It is not easy to navigate your way through the first volume, but it gets easier in the two which follow. I enjoyed all of them, but some will find the writing style difficult.

Daymon's work is not without its weaknesses. But this is a valuable ground-breaking attempt to account for early Mormon history as an explanation for how the Book of Mormon has been sadly neglected or, to the extent it has been used at all, misused.

Below are the reviews I have put onto Amazon for each of the first three volumes:

Review of Volume 1 (*Setting, a Foundation of Stones to Stumble Over*):

When someone you love is terribly ill, but unwilling to accept treatment, what is the solution? Is fiction about their condition an adequate substitute for dealing with their illness? Can you lie your way out of such difficulties? What if the necessary treatment will be unpleasant? Even painful? Does your love of her justify causing her pain? And so it is that Daymon Smith ventures into treatment of his beloved faith in Mormonism. I don't think she's going to appreciate it (or at least her management won't).

Here is an effort to search into the origins of the mythical and tradition-ridden retelling of the origins of Mormonism in a substantial and candid way. The resulting exposure of events,

measured against the contemporary source material (which made no effort to conceal what happened by adopting later interpretations and reinterpretations), requires a new lens to be accepted.

For some this new lens will be disorienting, even confusing. This retelling makes no allowance for the fictions created to support the traditions which encumber Mormonism. Some will reject this outright because it disagrees with their lifelong understanding of events. But in the end it is fiction, not truth, which really threatens our world.

If we are viewing Mormonism from within (as the author and this reviewer does) or from without, it deserves the respect of as honest an assessment of its origins and meaning as we can give the topic. This book is a delightful search into, and then an honest of a retelling of the events that those living it might have understood and agreed with it. Some of them would be shocked at the face of both modern corporate Mormonism and the stories it tells about Mormon origins. They might not recognize themselves in the corporate accounts, but likely would see themselves in this book.

The influence of Parley Pratt and Sidney Rigdon upon the original trajectory of Mormonism is parsed and shown to be considerable. Much like the foreign occupiers of Egypt anciently who claimed to conquer Egypt, only to find themselves conquered by it (Pharaoh Alexander, for example) so too Mormonism's triumph in the first Mission to the Lamanites failed to convert any of the targeted audience, instead bringing aboard the Campbellite community at Kirtland, Ohio. This missionary success became an instant burden on Joseph Smith's original path, bringing into the "church" what would be a body

of beliefs which entwined themselves into Mormonism and begin immediately to dominate the faith.

In this book Smith tracks these cultural and religious influences to demonstrate how the hallmarks of the “restoration” through Joseph Smith grew to include much of the zeitgeist of the Scots, through Thomas and then Alexander Campbell, then Rigdon to Pratt and into Mormonism. The “Old Independents” and John Glas were among those who set in motion a stone rolling downhill, and Smith searches for the many historical antecedents which Mormonism acquired as it first rolled forth.

This history tells the “context” in which the Book of Mormon appeared to emerge into the foreground. That “context” then substituted pretext for text, metatext for reading meaning INTO the Book of Mormon rather than allowing meaning to come FROM the text itself.

I found this book hard to put down. But some readers will have a difficult time with this author. He should be read for substance and not necessarily for style. His anthropological bent and graduate school vocabulary will leave some readers wondering what he’s getting at. As I read it I came away fearing this would not be wide read or well understood except for a very few. Hence the four instead of five stars. I’d encourage everyone interested in Mormonism to make the try.

At the book’s end Smith quotes from Michel Foucault this line: “How can we reduce the great peril, the great danger with which fiction threatens our world?” Inspired by the question Smith has undertaken a work to value truth above fiction with a result I found delightful and entertaining at the same time.

Volume 2A (*Voicing, Being, Power*):

The second volume of Daymon Smith's Cultural History of the Book of Mormon is better than the first. It is more accessible and less technical in writing style, but every bit as important in content. Like the first, I found the book hard to put down.

Daymon Smith's retelling of Mormonism's neglect, abuse and misunderstanding of the Book of Mormon is gripping and tragic. From the opening moments of the book's appearance, it was overwhelmed by an artificial forced interpretation which rendered it merely a secondary support for the Bible. When read for its own content, the Book of Mormon roundly condemns the Bible as a corrupted text which has had important covenants removed by men.

The Book of Mormon voices Jesus Christ's message. That message is not aligned with Biblical traditions. But the faith which claims The Book of Mormon as its foundational scripture has never actually allowed the text to inform the faith claims.

As Daymon Smith acknowledges, it is not as linear as "Campbell begot Rigdon, who begot Pratt, who begot Mormonism" however all of these operated together to make The Book of Mormon into a Bible meta-text. The effort underway in this series of books tracks the beginning of Mormonism using the archival material generated at the time, and permits the reader to see how the religion that emerged was not well informed by The Book of Mormon itself. Instead The Book of Mormon has been required to fit into another, prior tradition.

The second volume is a bit more reader friendly, but you will need to have read the first beforehand. The story continues

here, but you need to be familiar with the material that precedes it to appreciate the evolution of Mormonism. Because it is more readable, I give this volume more stars than the first. But they are equally valuable.

Volume 2B (*Follies, Epic and Novel*):

This volume in Daymon Smith's series continues the account of how Mormonism's descent into a wilderness was physical, cultural and spiritual. Heedless that the possible cause could have been God's ire with the Latter-day Saints, Mormon leadership blamed their followers for insufficient fidelity to the leaders. It was unthinkable to even consider the leaders were themselves pursuing a course unapproved by God.

The Mormon Reformation only intensified the notion that Mormonism could advance only at the cost of submission to the leaders, because God's disapproval was evident. The cause could not have been the follies, epic and novel, of the direction leaders had taken the work begun by Joseph Smith.

In this volume the story begun in the earlier volumes continues, with chilling accounts of the depths to which the early Mormon followers fell in search of pleasing their leaders, if not God.

Particularly interesting in this volume is the account of how "keys and power" were claimed to have been continued through a replacement hierarchy, then a replacement "prophet" which descended thereafter to the leaders who followed. The foundation of sand is recast into stone by rhetoric originating in an affidavit from Orson Hyde between September 1844 and March 1845 which none of the other apostles would sign. Daymon Smith reflects on the document as reading "like an

obsequious boosting of apostolic ambitions to take collectively the powers of the church, by copying the image of the Prophet onto their countenance” (P. 50).

Enjoyable and ‘tough love’ throughout, this is an unrelenting stare into the eyes of the foundation of the beast which now claims to be the Restoration through Joseph Smith. If you have an appetite for candor and a willingness to go on an adventure in humanity’s insufficient best-efforts, then you will find this a great read. This is Mormonism stripped of varnish and left naked, completely unaided by soft lighting and an unfocused lens. The truth requires something as important as the Restoration through Joseph Smith to be allowed to define itself, not to have pretensions and presumptions act as substitute.

It is the failure of Mormons to allow The Book of Mormon to ever have spoken which drives this series. Daymon Smith is hoping to allow that to at last begin. But first an honest seeker must overcome the opposition now to be found in the institution which has made its fortune by selling a different version.

OCTOBER 23, 2013

Understanding How To Read *PTHG*

If you are going to read *PTHG*, then read the words in the text rather than overlaying your own fears and conclusions. Your reaction to the book is not indicative of what I wrote.

There is very little of me in the book. Nor does the book represent all of what I think or know about the topics covered. It is an overview, not a comprehensive treatment.

The book assumes it is competing with another tradition taught to us by the church, and only suggests there may be another way to view events. It does not claim to be right. That is left to the reader to decide. In many specific topics the material reaches a “tie” and leaves it to the reader to choose the result.

Careful readers have claimed I am “wishy-washy” because I refrain from making conclusions. Others who read carelessly have instead damned me for their own conclusions, using “Snuffer claims” or “Snuffer views” and “Snuffer wrongly assumes” to substitute their internal reactions for what I have written.

It is not until Chapter 15 that I move from recounting what scripture and church leaders wrote or said to assume the proposed new view is true. That chapter opens with this explanation: “For purposes of this chapter, I am going to assume the church never obtained the fullness offered by the Lord in Nauvoo.” Then I give all the reasons why I would choose to believe, and remain faithful to the church. That is the point at which my voice emerges into the narrative. It comes to quiet alarm, reassure belief and to muster support for the church.

Eventually the furor will calm down and the book will have a dispassionate reading. When we finally get there, people will wonder why the reactions were so overwrought. I hope the many things now written by the pseudo-defenders of Mormonism remain available, so they can inform future saints on how to react with less fear toward unwelcome ideas.

The purpose of *Passing the Heavenly Gift* is to awaken all of us to how delicate a proposition it is to live faithfully. Perhaps the most offensive character treatment is given to Heber J. Grant. The offense is taken from his own hand, recorded in his own diary, preserving his own mother’s criticism of him. But those are his

words and the words of his mother. I defend him and praise his candor and honest introspection. My voice praises the man; his condemns. The distinction between these two voices is altogether lost on at least one of the most harshest reviewers of *PTHG*. His quarrel is not with me. It is with others.

I would suggest that it is better to take a look at the source material and consider that, and leave me out of the equation.

The Nauvoo Temple was not complete. Ever. Nor did they perform any endowment in a completed structure. When they left Nauvoo after shutting down the rites, they prayed to be allowed to complete the Temple so they might be able to dedicate it. The next day the attic caught fire and the area where the endowment had been performed was badly damaged. While they re-covered the roof, the attic was not repaired. Finally they abandoned work and “considered it complete enough to dedicate.” These events are chronicled and the sources quoted. In light of Section 124, those events matter. I was hoping to provoke some effort to examine those facts. Instead all I see are personal attacks directed at me borne out of ignorance and insecurity. Your insecurities do not belong to me. When you react to the book by attacking me, you expose your own doubts.

We should confidently state the case for Mormonism. I’ve done that in *PTHG*, even with historical lacunas in our story lines. If a reviewer wants to react to the events, then it would be a better service to everybody, myself included, to fill in the missing connections.

OCTOBER 26, 2013

Part 2 of Passing Up The Heavenly Gift

Here is a second installment of a reviewer’s criticism of *PTHG*.

<https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/passing-up-the-heavenly-gift-part-two-of-two/>

Enjoy.

[The contrast between his attributions to me and the text I wrote is remarkable.]

The very odd thing about those who are busy damning the book is that:

My book is a defense of faith in the restoration. I'm actually on the "same team" (so to speak) as those who hate the book.

Testimonies have been strengthened, people have returned to activity, and bitter feelings have been soothed by those for whom it was written.

I bear my critics no animosity. They are doing and saying what they honestly believe to be worthwhile when they say and write what they do. There was a time when I would have joined them in that view.

Mormonism is a faith which simply cannot be confined to a single tightly controlled confession of faith, because it was always designed to "comprehend all truth." Think about that for just a moment. If it encompasses all truth, then it is vast in scope. Endless, really. So, at any given moment, Mormons will include those who are beginning to study the faith, those who have brought a background in Buddhism, those who have a foundation in science, or any number of other pre-conversion talents, capacities and preferences. These new believers will use those backgrounds to search into the Gospel.

Those varieties of talents were always intended to be a blessing, even a strength, to the restoration. Any requirement for absolute uniformity will not permit those who have vastly different capacities

to share in faith, even though they are honest, believing and acceptable to God.

Coming into the “uniformity of faith” is an ideal that will require a lot of work, a lot of communication and sharing, and a process that allows people of honest intentions and good faith to speak openly across diverse views. Remarkably, many of those who have been the object of official church ire are more open and willing to discuss faith issues than are those who are extremely active, or employed by the church.

I am a Mormon. I’ve done a series of posts on that. I remain a Mormon, though now a cast-away saint. I’m fine with my status. Nothing has changed in my soul as a result of the current situation. God and I still have a relationship which continues uninterrupted by the excitement which *PTHG* has caused.

Some day Gregory Smith will drop his defensiveness and become capable of an open and friendly discussion, and we will be friends. This is because we both have far more in common than we do in opposition:

- He and I accept Joseph Smith as a prophet of God.
- He and I both accept the Book of Mormon as scripture.
- He and I both believe in the revelations which came through Joseph Smith.
- He and I are both trying to live our lives in harmony with our faith.

These are vastly more important than our differences about what happened following Joseph’s death.

These important beliefs we share between us make him my brother. Therefore, I regard his misunderstanding of the book and his attribution of motives which I simply do not possess as only

his opening position. It will not be his final position. He will be led to a better conclusion about me in years to come. His motives arise from defending what he honestly believes to be threatened by what I wrote. This is good, even commendable. His mistake is to read with such alarm and fear that he turns a difference in understanding into an attack on me and my motives. With time and patience he will figure those things out much better than he does at present. Given the Lord's patience with me, can I give Gregory Smith any less patience?

Read charitably his review. That is how I have taken it. At present I am too busy to go through and respond point-by-point to his rant. If I find the time, I may respond to his review.

If Gregory Smith reads this (or someone knows him) I'd like to invite him to come to the talk I will be giving on November 2nd in Orem at 9:30 a.m. The address and directions will be posted soon.

OCTOBER 27, 2013

November 2 Talk, and Another Review

The next talk will be Saturday, November 2 at 9:30 a.m.

Canyon Park Technology Center—J Auditorium - Map
1401 North Research Way Orem, UT 84097

Also, here is another review of *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. Enjoy.
(Link no longer extant)

OCTOBER 27, 2013

Fenway

After a 95-year hiatus, the winning World Series game happened last night. At Fenway Park.

Sure hope they re-sign Jacoby.

Loved that Drew hit that home run. He was due.

Papi got walked to TIE the WS record for walks in a game (a milestone in pitching cowardice).

What a Series. Just when you think you've seen it all you get an outcome deciding obstruction call in one game followed by a pick-off walk-off in the next.

Molina missed that tag at the plate. Didn't matter, though.

A BALK in the WS?!?! Wow, now I gotta cut my daughter slack.

Parade today in Boston.

OCTOBER 31, 2013

Details for Saturday

The building is a secured building with a business occupying it. It will be locked until approximately 9:00 a.m. The entrance is on the East, but you must park in the West lot, as the East lot is reserved for employees.

I got an inquiry about seating numbers. There should be approximately 400 seats, which is expected to be more than enough for all who come.

CHAPTER 5

Priesthood, Marriage and Appeals

NOVEMBER 2013

NOVEMBER 5, 2013

First Rung

I got this question handed to me on Saturday: “what is the first rung on Jacob’s Ladder?”

It is to have your calling and election made sure through the Holy Spirit of Promise. That is the beginning.

NOVEMBER 10, 2013

Orem Transcript - Priesthood

The transcript from the Orem talk on Priesthood is up. Because the subject required more time than could be taken, the transcript has been edited and enlarged.

NOVEMBER 13, 2013

Inquiry About Talks

I received an inquiry from someone who asked:

I've been reading your 40 Years talks. I came across a post on a blog that states:

“Regarding this talk and all of them really. Before they are given, I will clear the room, spiritually, then shield it and have Warrior Angels stand guard. It is all done in praise, honor and to the glory of our God, the Eternal Father with proper priesthood. ... A good friend was told to come also by the Lord. She was told to produce a huge ball of energy above your heads. It had to be rotated at the right frequency, color and rate. That is to bring those attending up in their own frequency (spirit) so they could have clear heads and understand what he was saying at a higher level. If your frequency or light is at a low level the understanding isn't there. If you 'vibrate' at a higher frequency, as do beings of light, then you can understand at that level. There were several that left at the first brake and a bunch more at the second. I know that some had obligations. But some of these were those in severe judgment. We pray that they won't be able to take the light. Sometimes those in that much judgment will flee the light like cockroaches and some did. That made it even better for those there. As darkness leaves the light gets brighter.”

Are these things true? Do you concur with the statements, specifically, the room shielding, Warrior Angels and the ball of energy?

I do not belong to or read other blogs. Therefore, I do not know all of what is discussed or by whom. But I would like to be clear. Since I have given five talks (in the latest series) totaling over twelve hours, and I have thirteen books in print to date, what I believe or concur with should be apparent from what I have published. I

have a blog that I have written for years about the gospel. I teach openly and publicly what I believe. I have no spokesmen or agents who speak for me in any place, or with any right to attribute more or less to what I have written, taught, said and declared openly. If you want to know what I would like for others to understand about the gospel, then read or listen to what I have written or said. I cannot be responsible for any other statement, discussion, claim, conclusion or declaration other than those I make directly, publicly and openly.

There are people or friends with whom I have private discussions about a number of topics, i.e. the idea of multiple mortalities (not mentioned in the inquiry above but mentioned in a number of emails and blog comments). This is the position I have taken on that topic—ALWAYS: What possible good can it do you to know about your pre-earth record. The challenge in front of us all has “sufficient evil unto the day thereof” without, like the Indigo Girls, to “try and get it right” for some other life. The challenge is underway. Fight now. Win in this present estate and focus on what it takes to get out of here with honor. Nothing else matters. Isn't this life challenge enough for you? You have time to contemplate what you might have done in some other place, time, circumstance or experience? If the topic were important enough that it should influence you today, don't you think the scriptures would make the question plain enough so the doctrine is out in the open? If it is veiled, even if it were true, then it is left obscure for a reason.

When Christ asked His disciples, “Who do men say that I am?” The responses varied from Jeremiah to Elijah, to John the Baptist. The Lord never responded to these speculations. Instead, Christ refocused the question and asked, “But who do you say that I am?” That second question mattered. To it, the declaration, made by

revelation from heaven announced, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” To this the Lord responded, confirming it not only true but to have been given by revelation from heaven. And “upon this rock” of living revelation from the Father, Christ said “I will build my church.” That church is not made with hands and does not need a building. It needs only a foundation in revelation, and the buildings will all be temples in which Christ and the Father will come to dwell. They will “take up their abode” within such temples.

I can point you in the right direction. I can testify to what is true. But do not expect me to lead you there. I am unworthy to do so. There is only one Lord who can save men. I testify of Him and I work to establish understanding of Him. The fact I am the subject of discussion disappoints me. Any moment spent thinking about me or talking about me is a moment you might have spent thinking and talking about the Lord.

If you want to know what I believe, then listen to what I have said. Read what I have written. I believe in Christ and His mission to save some few souls in the last days. This will be a big enough challenge that there is no time to refocus the discussion away from Him, His prophecies and how great things He will yet do with those who will follow Him.

NOVEMBER 13, 2013

Why Am I Unwilling to Answer

I’ve been chastised in a number of comments by those who want me to be more willing to respond to questions, and not be so “evasive” when I respond. They want me to be their answer man for every issue that perplexes them. I won’t.

Do you think I would help you more if I were to create dependence on me? Do you think I want you to be dependent on

me? Should you cease to think for yourself, but instead wait to see what I have to say on a topic before you decide a matter? I want you my equal; and if I can assist in accomplishing it, then to help you be my better.

I pay to talk to you. I rely on the good work and problem solving of others to make the recordings available. They are asking for payment to defray their work. Make no mistake about it, they do work to provide these things. Whatever “profit” that may be owed to me after all their expenses are paid is given to others. I keep nothing. I don’t even receive anything. The money is donated to missionaries and others in need. I do not get so much as a tax deduction for those contributions to others. I pay to rent the places where I speak, if they are not donated. I do look for donated facilities to reduce my costs. It is a financial burden to speak to you. That is as it should be. It is my responsibility and between me and the Lord to accomplish. I do not ask you to bear that burden for me or even with me. I travel to different locations to make it possible for those few who may be interested to attend. I am inconvenienced so that you needn’t be.

I try to be the kind of person who I would be willing to trust, have confidence in, and be willing to listen to because of the sincerity of the conduct. And still everything I do is questioned, and foolish people believe themselves justified in using measuring standards that neither they nor their own religious idols would pass.

You need to work some things out on your own. You need to pray and get answers for many, many things. I do not give commands, nor make demands. I tell you what I believe, what I know, and make suggestions in the hope of persuading you. If I fail to persuade you, then I am content to let you go in peace.

All people have gifts. There are a great deal more gifts and capacities than you can possibly imagine. What one person can accomplish through their gift may be something another looks at with disbelief and surprise. But the blessings given by God are without number, and you should be very careful about condemning what you do not comprehend. Encourage your brothers and sisters in their gifts and let them enjoy the freedom which is in Christ. We have too many organizations, governments and churches trying to suppress the freedom of all men. There is an unholy alliance between almost every organization on earth right now trying to suppress the agency of those who belong to them. It does not matter if it is a club, a school, a political party, a government or a church. They are all taking in a spirit which seeks to oppress and control. Everywhere in the world today men are filled with the madness of destroying agency. I refuse to be among them. I work to allow you to freely choose and to reject everything I say or write. I do not even ask you to believe, but to ask God and believe in Him.

As the winnowing continues I want to remind you of something we saw in the ministry of Joseph Smith. There was contention, disbelief, rejection and treason against Joseph in Kirtland and Nauvoo. He fled Kirtland in the night, and was chased for 200 miles by his former followers. In Nauvoo, he was surrendered to be killed. We have had enough of Kirtland and Nauvoo. When there is a gathering to Zion, if we do not get rid of the faithless, weak, traitorous, foolish and vain beforehand, we will not have Zion at all. Let any and all opposition that can be aroused be permitted to revel in their complaints and draw as many away as they are able. Better they be winnowed before than to be gathered together into disharmony and weakness, only to fail in the end.

At this point I do not even know if the Lord will permit a gathering in our time. He will decide that, not a man. I only know that He is now offering something. Let every man choose for themselves whether they will hear His voice. Then, when they think they can hear Him, let them follow Him. Until then, we should each one do what the Lord inspires us to do in faith, believing He will bring His will to pass in spite of earth and hell.

NOVEMBER 16, 2013

The Scriptures

As I have pointed out in recent talks, if you were to be taught by an angel of God it would be a lesson in the scriptures (See, e.g., *JSH* 1:36–41). The day the Lord was resurrected He spent the better part of the day expounding the scriptures to two of His followers (Luke 24:13–32).

I teach from the scriptures because they contain everything needed to support, explain, justify and make clear those doctrines which are needed for your salvation. Even the deepest of material I've given to you is anchored in the scriptures.

If angels and our Lord all found the scriptures a sufficient text to use in teaching truths, then we should look there, searching deeply for any truths we want to learn. We shouldn't move our attention away from the scriptures to learn what is needed for salvation and exaltation. No matter how much a topic glitters and begs you to notice it, the scriptures should form a shield to keep away what is unnecessary and save you from unreliable error.

The more exotic the “spiritual” information, the more important it is to find a home in the scriptures. This is because if it cannot be found there, then it does not belong to Christ's Gospel.

In the traditions of the church, we have added speculation to conjecture, and contradiction to supposition, until the present array of approved topics through the correlation process has been adopted to try to bring an end to the chaos of opinions. Earlier teachings that were thought to be critical to salvation have been abandoned. Earlier practices that were taught as necessary for exaltation are now condemned. Earlier positions on practices and church government are now renounced. It has become an embarrassment to the institution to allow this foolishness to continue. They have resorted to correlation and the current practice of saying “only the living mouthpiece is reliable.” This is anti-historical and renders each leader almost entirely irrelevant as soon as he dies. Mormonism has been reduced to the medieval shout: “The king is dead! Long live the king!” each time a church president dies. Through this means, the church is attempting to bring stability to a reed so thin it cannot be leaned upon at all for your salvation. It will break because it cannot support the weight of your salvation.

Look to the scriptures. They testify of Christ. They were given by Him to teach you of Him. Because if you are to be saved at all, it will be through the knowledge which can be found in the scriptures.

Anyone attempting to save souls who neglects to anchor their teaching in the scriptures offends common sense, and is attempting the impossible. Angels and the risen Lord used them. You should therefore find them sufficient for your own study unto salvation.

NOVEMBER 18, 2013

Marriage

Marriage is the perfect opportunity for learning to live the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount is the blueprint for being like Christ.

Wives have claim on their husbands for their support (D&C 83:2).

Neither man nor woman alone can be exalted (1 Cor. 11: 11; D&C 132:16–17).

Divorce was tolerated because of the hardness of the Israelites, but Christ denounced divorce, teaching what God joined no man should set aside (Mark 10:4–9).

If your spouse does not believe as you do, it is your obligation to bear with them in patience, and by your godly walk convert them to the truth. Only a fool will ignore the obligations set out so clearly in scripture and choose to abandon their marriage. Worse still are those who imagine themselves justified in such conduct by claiming they are following God's will.

NOVEMBER 21, 2013

Appeal Letter

President Hunt called and read me a very short letter from the First Presidency denying my appeal. Because the appeal was denied, I have no reason to withhold a copy of the appeal letter. See below [next page]. The letter denying the appeal was approximately 2 sentences long, the second sentence told President Hunt that he could read it to me, but that President Hunt could not give me a copy of the denial.

September 13, 2013
Appeal of Disciplinary Council Decision

The First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
In Care of Truman Hunt, President of the Sandy Crescent Stake
[Hand delivered]

Dear Presidents Monson, Eyring and Uchtdorf:

I have been excommunicated. The proceeding was initiated by Elder Russel M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve on the day he called President Truman Hunt to be the Stake President of the Sandy Crescent Stake. Elder Nelson took control by handing my membership records to President Hunt in the hallway of the Stake Offices and told him that I “needed to be disciplined.” The issue involved a book I wrote titled *Passing the Heavenly Gift*.

Over the next months I met with President Hunt in a series of interviews, answering his questions. He and I were meeting when a phone call came in from one of the Seven Presidents of the Seventy. I was asked to leave the room. When I was invited back in I was informed that the Seventy and Elder Christofferson of the Twelve were going to review the book and President Hunt was to “stand down” until he heard further. As a result President Hunt did stand down and we had no further meetings for several months.

President Hunt called me in again after he had received further direction from the hierarchy and told me there was church ordered compulsion to withdraw the book from publication or face discipline. I agreed to investigate what it would take to withdraw the book. I investigated and learned I could revise the book, but could not take it out of print. I informed President Hunt of that. He said I could be paid for any damages and asked me to investigate it again. I did so and found that payment would not be acceptable.

When we met again I urged President Hunt to look at a number of letters I had received from alienated and disaffected church members who had returned to activity as a result of reading the book. I had dozens of these letters. He considered the information. He said he would get back with me.

When we met again he said it didn’t matter what anyone thought of the book because it was “faith destroying.” I responded that there were actual people whose faith had been rescued and whose activity in the church had revived because of reading it. He responded to me: “What makes you think the church is interested in having such people anyway?” I took that response to be coming (as everything else) from higher up.

I was shown a section of the Church Handbook of Instructions that mandated discipline for criticizing the church’s leaders. I explained I hadn’t done that. I quoted from past church leaders’ diaries, journals, talks, letters or writings. But I did not criticize. To the extent I have ever spoken about living church leaders I have praised them. I denied this accusation and after

giving the explanation President Hunt agreed. He said he would look further into the matter. Sometime later I was given notice of a proposed Church Disciplinary Council based on three things. A copy of the notice is attached.

I asked if the council could be delayed until Thanksgiving so all my children could be present. He considered the request but declined it. He asked who I would have attend with me, I said I would bring my family.

When the date arrived my family came with me to the event. President Hunt refused to allow the children into the room. All of my children agreed they would say nothing. All of them agreed they would not disrupt in any way. All of them had my permission to be present. President Hunt refused to allow me to enter with my children. I asked if I could make a statement to the High Council with my children present. He denied the request. My wife explained that she had read the Church Handbook of Instructions, had prayed about the matter, and believed it was very important for her children to be in attendance. President Hunt refused.

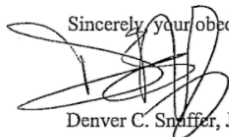
I was prevented from entering the room with my children. Therefore I was unable to speak with the High Council about the matter. They used their dominion over me to sustain the charges and ratify all that went on before.

I have honored my covenants. I was and am worthy of a Temple Recommend. There is nothing amiss in my behavior involving my family, the community or the church. I have written an honest account of what our history might look like if viewed from the perspective of scripture and prophecy. In it I make no conclusions, merely suggesting a different possible narrative. On almost every topic I leave it to the reader to decide after bringing out a "tie" in the material. The book has helped dozens, perhaps hundreds, of individuals retain their membership. It is an inspiring book and has done actual good for many wounded individuals.

The course of events makes it clear that the Stake, the Seventy and the Twelve have all been involved and bear some responsibility for this outcome. I need to afford the First Presidency the opportunity to bear responsibility as well. Therefore I am appealing the decision to you.

I would appreciate it if you would consider reversing the outcome. But if not then you should add your own "Amen" to this proceeding. This is an important moment in the restoration. I hope you take it with the appropriate seriousness required by the trust given you, the importance of restraint by those holding priesthood office, and the measure required of you in judgment by The Lord.

Sincerely, your obedient servant;



Denver C. Snaffer, Jr.

NOVEMBER 22, 2013

Cursings Instead of Blessings

Passing the Heavenly Gift is not an historic analysis of Mormonism. It is primarily a doctrinal analysis and only incidentally related to history. The many different historic sources allow different stories to be told and supported by selecting from among them. There are some undeniable events foretold by prophecy. It is prophecy which should allow us to make a correct choice between a false and a true narrative. In *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, I tried to see if there was another possible narrative conforming to the prophecies to replace the traditions we all know. The book explored this possibility.

In the January 1841 revelation to Joseph Smith the Lord stated “the fulness of the priesthood” had been “lost unto you, or which [The Lord] hath taken away.” (D&C 124:28.) To “restore” it the Lord needed to personally come to a Temple that He was required to be built within a limited time frame. The length of the time given to accomplish the building was not specified by a certain date. Instead the Lord said He would give to the Saints “sufficient time to build a house unto me.” (D&C 124:31.) In the time between January 1841 and the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith in June 1844, the Nauvoo Temple was not completed. The walls were only complete to the second floor.

The absence of any date for “sufficient time” to build the Temple leaves that an open question. Traditionally, we believe that extended until sometime following the departure of the Saints in February 1846. A small group remained behind and eventually the Temple was dedicated. But these are undisputed facts:

1. When the endowments were performed between November 1845 and February 1846, the attic was used, but even it was not finished. Canvas was used to separate different areas.
2. At the time the endowments were performed, the rest of the Temple was incomplete.
3. When the endowments were performed, the attic was the only place temporarily dedicated for that limited purpose.
4. The day before departing Nauvoo, the Apostles prayed they would be able to finish the incomplete Temple.
5. The next day, the attic caught fire and the area used for the endowments was badly damaged. Although it was subsequently re-shingled, the charred attic space, which had not been finished before the endowments were performed, was never re-finished to the condition it was in with the canvas dividers. They re-roofed the outside top and left the charred interior alone.
6. When it was finally dedicated, it was only “considered complete enough to dedicate” and not actually a finished structure.

It does not matter which historic source you use there is no diary, letter, journal or talk which says that Christ came to the Nauvoo Temple and “restored again the fulness of the priesthood” which He had previously taken away from the church. Most importantly, there are no claims made by any of the leaders of the church that the “fulness of the priesthood” was bestowed upon them by Christ in the Nauvoo Temple. There are multiple explanations of how “the keys” (which the typical LDS apologist claims to be the same as “the fulness”) were passed to the church’s leaders. None of these involve Christ coming to the Nauvoo Temple to restore

again that which was lost. These accounts of “passing the keys” to the Apostles include the following:

1. By virtue of the Apostleship, which is the highest office in the church, keys are automatically passed.
2. By the rituals Joseph performed in the Red Brick Store.
3. By Joseph’s declaration about the “keys of the kingdom” made in a meeting of the Council of Fifty in May 1844.
4. By reason of the equivalencies (Twelve “equal in authority” to the First Presidency, etc.) set out in D&C 107 (an argument never raised during the election in August 1844).

Never has there been a claim that the “fulness” was “restored” to the church by the visit of Christ in the Nauvoo Temple after it had been completed.

The argument that the Lord didn’t need to come because the “fulness” was dispensed by the Apostles in the Nauvoo Endowments in November 1845–February 1846 ignores the language of the revelation. The language of the revelation required *the Lord* to come and restore again what was lost: “*For there is not a place found on earth that he [Christ, personally as I read it] may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you*” (D&C 124:28, emphasis added). I take these words at their plain meaning. Therefore, I view the complete absence of any record or claim that the Lord came to the Nauvoo Temple and restored again the “fulness of the priesthood” as an important point to be accepted. The traditional narrative is that the endowments were sufficient to restore the removed “fulness” to the Saints.

History also reflects the Saints were chased out of Nauvoo by an armed mob. They left with considerable hardship in the dead of winter, leaving for the most part in February 1846.

The January 1841 revelation states:

ye shall build [the required Temple] on the place where you have contemplated building it, for that is the spot which I have chosen for you to build [the Temple which Christ was to visit to restore again the fulness]. If ye labor with all your might, I will consecrate that spot that it shall be made holy. And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place. But if they will not hearken to my voice, nor unto the voice of these men whom I have appointed, they shall not be blest, because they pollute mine holy grounds, and mine holy ordinances, and charters, and my holy words which I give unto them. And it shall come to pass that if you build a house unto my name, and do not do the things that I say, I will not perform the oath which I make unto you, neither fulfil the promises which ye expect at my hands, saith the Lord. For instead of blessings, ye, by your own works, bring cursings, wrath, indignation, and judgments upon your own heads, by your follies, and by all your abominations, which you practise before me, saith the Lord. (D&C 124:43–48)

If you accept these words as a guide to knowing the truth, then answer for yourself the following questions about what happened:

Was the Nauvoo Temple consecrated by the Lord?

Was the Nauvoo Temple made holy by the Lord?

Did the Lord visit it?

Did the Lord restore the fulness to the church within it by coming to bestow it again? How? To whom? When? What was involved?

Did the Saints hearken to the voices of their leaders, Joseph and Hyrum, who had been called by the Lord?

Why did Joseph complain that the church failed to listen to Hyrum? Was there some greater risk to the church if it did not hearken to Hyrum?

Were the Saints moved out of Nauvoo?

Did the “sufficient time” begin in January 1841 and last until a date we can now deduce?

What date did the Lord take Joseph and Hyrum from us?

Was three-and-a-half years sufficient to complete the Nauvoo Temple construction?

Were there other projects completed in that time frame, including houses for the church leaders, and Seventies’ Hall, the Masonic Lodge?

If the effort given to these other building projects had instead been spent on completing the Nauvoo Temple, could it have been finished earlier?

Could it have been completed by June 1844?

Was the Nauvoo Temple ever completed?

Were there “blessings” or “cursings” suffered by the Saints immediately following the three-and-a-half years between January 1841 and June 1844?

The effort to build the traditional narrative taught by the LDS church using other source material than I have used can only persuade me I am in error if:

1. There is proof the Lord came to the Nauvoo Temple. (Never claimed by anyone.)
2. There is proof that while in the Nauvoo Temple the Lord restored again the fulness of the priesthood. (Never claimed other than to say the Nauvoo Endowments were the same thing as. But if this were true why did the Lord say He needed to come? I assume the Lord said what He meant

and therefore we could only reobtain “the fulness” if He gave it to us, personally, as the revelation promised.)

3. There is proof the Saints were not moved out of their place in Nauvoo because it had become “holy” to the Lord and He defended it. (Which cannot be proven because the opposite happened.)
4. There must be proof the Saints were *not* cursed, did *not* suffer wrath, and did *not* have the judgments of God poured down upon their heads following Nauvoo. (The suffering and wrath of God is apparent from all the contemporaneous accounts of the terrible suffering, privation and death suffered by the Saints in the western trek.)

I have allowed the prophecies to inform the story. I readily admit anyone can build another story that ignores the prophecies, and tells us “all is (and was) well.” But there is no source you can appeal to that conforms to the prophesied events as well as the story proposed in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*.

The book was written to explore and introduce an idea. That idea is to let the prophecies, instead of our pride, speak to us about us. I want to see our failures, if we have any. I do not want to substitute a happy account based on arrogance to deprive me of the truth. If the warnings are talking to me about me, then I want to face up to that no matter how painful it might be. In the book, in addition to the January 1841 revelation to Joseph Smith, I also use Christ’s prophecies, and Nephi’s warnings to us from the Book of Mormon to inform my effort to reconstruct what has happened in this dispensation. In the end I think it is faith promoting to see ourselves stripped of our vanity and fulfilling the prophetic warnings by our failure. It it a false faith, only pseudo-faith, to ignore the

truth and substitute a false narrative about unmitigated success. It was foretold by Christ that we would reject the fullness.

So far the most critical review of the book assumes I am writing history and it proceeds to gather other historic sources to contradict me and to reinforce the traditional narrative. It damns my book and proclaims again that “all is well.” My book isn’t history. It is doctrine. It focuses on prophecy to see if the subsequent events can be shown to fulfill the prophecy. This is how we should always try to understand our condition. Not through the tools of the apologist historian, but instead through the lens of prophecy. What God has said matters a good deal more than what we think of ourselves.

NOVEMBER 26, 2013

Enemies in Control of the Vineyard

The Lord foretold the failure of the Saints to acquire the fullness as early as December 1833. He explained that the Saints would plant “the twelve olive trees” (or restore the covenant) and would build a wall and place watchmen (or restore the church), but would unwisely fail to build the required watchtower (Nauvoo Temple) to protect the restoration. Therefore, they would be overthrown (D&C 101:43–51). This was eight years before the Lord warned them they were on the cusp of failing and being rejected as a church (D&C 124:31–32). But the Saints ignored the warning where they were told they would become “very slothful, and [hearken] not unto the commandments of their lord” (D&C 101:50) given to them eight years earlier. They failed to complete the Nauvoo Temple before Joseph and Hyrum were slain. The brothers’ deaths were plainly avoidable by paying attention to the warning given eleven years beforehand in the parable.

The effect of the Saints' sloth, as foretold in the 1833 parable, was to leave the Lord's vineyard in the possession of His enemies who would own the vineyard, have the walls and be able to set their own watchmen, and erect their own tower atop His property. That destruction and scattering left the Lord's enemies in possession of His vineyard.

The circumstances following the scattering of the Saints (D&C 101:51) reminds me of Joseph Smith's last dream:

Joseph Smith's Last Dream:

I was back in Kirtland, Ohio, and thought I would take a walk out by myself, and view my old farm, which I found grown up with weeds and brambles, and altogether bearing evidence of neglect and want of culture. I went into the barn, which I found without floor or doors, with the weather-boarding off, and was altogether in keeping with the farm.

While I viewed the desolation around me, and was contemplating how it might be recovered from the curse upon it, there came rushing into the barn a company of furious men, who commenced to pick a quarrel with me.

The leader of the party ordered me to leave the barn and farm, stating it was none of mine, and that I must give up all hope of ever possessing it.

I told him the farm was given me by the Church, and although I had not had any use of it for some time back, still I had not sold it, and according to righteous principles it belonged to me or the Church.

He then grew furious and began to rail upon me, and threaten me, and said it never did belong to me nor to the Church.

I then told him that I did not think it worth contending about, that I had no desire to live upon it in its present state, and if he thought he had a better right I would not quarrel with him about it but leave; but my assurance that I would not trouble him at present did not seem to satisfy him, as he seemed determined to quarrel with me, and threatened me with the destruction of my body.

While he was thus engaged, pouring out his bitter words upon me, a rabble rushed in and nearly filled the barn, drew out their knives, and began to quarrel among themselves for the premises, and for a moment forgot me, at which time I took the opportunity to walk out of the barn about up to my ankles in mud.

When I was a little distance from the barn, I heard them screeching and screaming in a very distressed manner, as it appeared they had engaged in a general fight with their knives. While they were thus engaged, the dream or vision ended. (*TPJS*, pp. 393–4, Recorded 27 June 1844, also *DHC* Vol. 6, pp. 608–611)

A great work remains undone to prepare for the Lord's return. It cannot happen by continuing in the same slothfulness that got us driven into the wilderness. More is required than conceit and contentment as we squander the time remaining. Unless we awaken, we will be utterly wasted at the Lord's return.

Idolatry is not the Gospel.

NOVEMBER 29, 2013

Tyranny

Chief Justice Roberts' opinion upholding Obamacare reasoned that this burdensome and unpopular law was legal because the

Constitution, as amended, allows Congress to assess taxes. This regulatory construct was appropriate use of government authority because Congress can levy taxes.

Before concluding Congress had the authority to impose this burdensome law, he acknowledged “the National Government possesses only limited powers; the States and the people retain the remainder.” Explaining the limits of Federal Governmental authority, he wrote, “rather than granting general authority to perform all the conceivable functions of government, the Constitution lists, or enumerates, the Federal Government’s powers.”

Although the U.S. argued that Congress had authority to impose Obamacare under the Commerce Clause, Chief Justice Roberts concluded no such power existed. “If the power to ‘regulate’ something included the power to create it, many of the provisions in the Constitution would be superfluous.” He explained, “the individual mandate, however, does not regulate existing commercial activity. It instead compels individuals to become active in commerce by purchasing a product, on the ground that their failure to do so affects interstate commerce.” This was too vast a grant of authority, and clearly exceeded the limited purpose of the Commerce Clause in the Constitution.

This naked grab for power to control the citizens was rejected by Roberts. The argument advanced by the U.S. would carry the nation far away from a government of limited powers. “Indeed, the Government’s logic would justify a mandatory purchase to solve almost any problem.”

And yet, Justice Roberts upheld the law! The foolish are often blinded by their power to reason through a problem, reaching carefully constructed errors while thinking themselves wise.

In deciding this was a Constitutionally permissible law, Justice Roberts reasoned,

The exaction the Affordable Care Act imposes on those without health insurance looks like a tax in many respects. The ‘[s]hared responsibility payment,’ as the statute entitles it, is paid into the Treasury by “taxpayer[s] when they file their tax returns. 26 U. S. C. §5000A(b).

It does not apply to individuals who do not pay federal income taxes because their household income is less than the filing threshold in the Internal Revenue Code §5000A(e)(2). For taxpayers who do owe the payment, its amount is determined by such familiar factors as taxable income, number of dependents, and joint filing status §§5000A(b)(3), (c)(2), (c)(4). The requirement to pay is found in the Internal Revenue Code and enforced by the IRS, which—as we previously explained—must assess and collect it ‘in the same manner as taxes’ *Supra*, at 13–14. This process yields the essential feature of any tax: it produces at least some revenue for the Government. *United States v. Kahriger*, 345 U. S. 22, 28, n. 4 (1953). Indeed, the payment is expected to raise about \$4 billion per year by 2017. Congressional Budget Office, *Payments of Penalties for Being Uninsured Under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* (Apr. 30, 2010), in *Selected CBO Publications Related to Health Care Legislation, 2009–2010*, p. 71 (rev. 2010). It is of course true that the Act describes the payment as a ‘penalty,’ not a ‘tax.’ But while that label is fatal to the application of the Anti-Injunction Act, *supra*, at 12–13, it does not determine whether the payment may be viewed as an exercise of Congress’s taxing power. It is up to Congress whether to apply the Anti-Injunction Act to any particular statute, so it makes sense to be guided by Congress’s choice of label on that question. That choice does not, however, control whether an exaction is within Congress’s constitutional power to tax.”

In my view, this reasoning is deeply flawed. Any number of things may “look like a tax in many respects.” But taxing is merely incidental to the real and primary objective to control behavior. Roberts is saying the abuses and expansive control over the citizens which is not authorized through the Commerce Clause may be usurped through the power to tax. In other words, the Federal Government can achieve in two steps what it cannot achieve in one. Directly, it cannot regulate commerce in such an oppressive and expansive way; but indirectly, under the guise of a tax, it may utterly control and subjugate the citizens without regard to limits on Federal power.

This reasoning allows an oppressive intrusion into every individual and family’s healthcare choices because there is merely an incidental effect that can be viewed as a tax. Does that mean other, similarly intrusive government regulation can now be adopted by an increasingly out-of-touch Federal Government over an unwilling population because the regulatory scheme has an incidental tax? The reasoning justifies continuing intrusions, regulations, and mandating behavior by citizens which the citizens themselves oppose, so long as the Federal Government is shrewd enough to include even an incidental component which relies upon the power to tax. Hospital costs alone in 2011 were \$387.3 billion. Total healthcare is estimated at 17.9% of the US GDP, or a total of approximately \$2.8 trillion (assuming today’s GDP of \$15.6 trillion—which will likely increase by the 2017 date used by Roberts). That makes the tax component of this regulatory scheme less than 2/100ths of 1% of overall healthcare spending. As a consequence of that tiny, de minimus component of this part of the economy, the Federal Government now gets to assume 100% control over 17.9% of the entire economy, impose unwanted control

over individual choices, dramatically alter relationships between citizens and their doctors, control doctors income, decide who can receive what treatment, increase scarcity of supply, remove religious choices, require me to pay for maternity care even though there is no rational connection between requiring me to make that purchase and my need for the coverage, and allow non-physician regulators to impose health-care decisions, even deciding to restrict access to life saving treatment? An incidental tax permits these things to be imposed by an imperial, distant and unresponsive Federal Government? This is Constitutional? This is an appropriate use of the power to tax? It does not impermissibly expand limited powers in a way which threatens rights of privacy, right to contract, right to property, nor involve improper taking?

Chief Justice Roberts will be remembered as the intellectual architect of the totalitarian state which the Constitution was designed to prevent. He has managed to undo, by his flawed reasoning, all the limits which the enumerated powers were designed to prevent. He joins a chorus of those in government, business and religion who seek to destroy man's agency.

As we learned through the Declaration of Independence, when the rights of citizens are abused, there comes a point at which they properly decide they are no longer willing to submit. A decent regard for liberty by a citizenry who consent to be governed requires them to constantly consider whether their government has become destructive, rather than conducive, of liberty. When a long train of abuses and usurpations lead citizens to conclude the end in sight is absolute despotism, then it is the right, even the duty, to throw off such government. We are now being regarded as the property of a government entitled to control our choices, rather than free citizens whose consent is first required before any control is permitted.

When citizens consented to be taxed, they did not consent forever after to permit the Federal Government to exercise control over lives based on the thinnest of connections to taxing. This law is not a revenue bill. It is an improper usurpation imposed by an imperial, aloof and usurping band of overlords who have lost regard for the will of the governed.

Chief Justice Roberts was wrong. His decision reflects a trend in tyranny which, unless repudiated, will end in the destruction of either individual rights or the union of this nation. This scheme was the product primarily of a Senator, Harry Reid of Nevada, who controlled the Senate, got the required votes by dispensing favorable treatment to several individual states to acquire votes, and got the required support for the 1,900 page bill without most Senators having read it beforehand. The current national leadership's view of the proper role of government is repugnant to me. If our liberties are lost, or the union ultimately destroyed, it will long be remembered that a Latter-day Saint was directing the legislative muscle to adopt this invidious scheme.

We have a limited form of government. Unless the limited Federal Government returns to abide within those limits, it will destroy itself or the liberty of its citizens. We are at a tipping point. I hope there remains enough wisdom in our country to avert what will follow from the present, ill-advised course if it is allowed to continue.

DECEMBER 2, 2013

Scripture Interpretations

In answer to a question about differences between something Joseph Smith said about a scripture and something another prophet said about the same scripture, here is my response:

When Peter referred to the fulfillment of Joel Chapter 2, he declared: “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:14–20).

Referring to the same prophecy of Joel, Moroni declared, and Joseph Smith reported: “He also quoted the second chapter of Joel, from the twenty-eighth verse to the last. He also said that this was not yet fulfilled, but was soon to be” (*JS-H 1:41*.) This was immediately after Moroni quoted from Acts Chapter 3, and therefore Moroni would have been familiar with Peter’s statement in the preceding chapter, Acts Chapter 2.

Both spoke the truth.

What one prophet, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, speaks about a passage of scripture may vary from what another prophet, under the influence of Holy Spirit, may say about the very same scripture. Speaking in different times, under different circumstances, to a different audience, with a different objective in generations separated by considerable amounts of time, allows them both to speak the truth.

How many times have Isaiah’s words “beautiful upon the mountains” been fulfilled? (Isaiah’s prophecy is in Isa. 52:7). It was discussed by later prophets in different settings. In 1 Ne. 13:37: Nephi speaking about those who will seek to establish Zion in the last days. In Mosiah 15:13–17: Abinadi speaking of those who

testified about Christ in every generation, past, then and in the future. In 3 Ne. 20:40: Christ speaking of the future generation when Zion will be established.) Do not think that because one prophet has declared a matter to be fulfillment of scripture that the Lord cannot declare through another prophet another fulfillment of the same scripture. As the Lord stated, “Because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever.” 2 Ne. 29:9.

DECEMBER 3, 2013

Drat

It is always best when you get bad news from someone you love. The news remains terrible, but hearing it from my daughter eases my pain. My daughter called from Wyoming to break the news that Jacoby Ellsbury is going to the Yankees. Now we must face him in the AL East.

On the bright side, apparently Robinson Cano will be leaving the Yankees. With Jeter injured, ARod likely not returning to the game again (ever), and Youklis disabled, they need Jacoby at the top of the lineup to compete. I guess \$20 million a year was just too much to resist.

Oh well, he is injury prone.

DECEMBER 8, 2013

Mormon History

Just because you “know” something, it doesn’t mean it is true.

Just because you don’t know something, it doesn’t make it false.

LDS history is riddled with lies: Some told to protect lives. Some told to conceal truths. Some told to escape prosecution.

Some told to keep the government from taking property away from the church. Some told to promote faith. But LDS history is riddled with lies.

The historic reality of institutional lying does not render our faith itself a lie. But perpetuating the lies today is increasingly perilous.

You tell the truth. Faith cannot be based on anything other than the truth. Everything else is not faith.

DECEMBER 9, 2013

I Want To See You Be Brave

I want to see you be brave, and so do others, including Sara.

Sara Bareilles song "Brave":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUQsqBqxoR4>

CHAPTER 6

The Angel Nephi

DECEMBER 10, 2013

Nephi

As part of the assignment given Him, the Lord added to and corrected the Nephite scriptures. He had them bring their records to Him, and noted they omitted mention of Samuel the Lamanite's prophecy about some rising from the dead at the time of His resurrection. He got them to confirm Samuel prophesied it, some of the dead did arise, and they had neglected to include it in their scriptures (3 Ne. 23:7–13).

Among those who would have risen would have been Nephi, son of Lehi, after whom the Nephites were named.

Moroni would not live for another 400 years. Moroni would have missed the resurrection at the time of Christ, and therefore would await the Second Coming for his resurrection.

This is perhaps the reason Joseph Smith identified the angel who visited him, taught him, and gave him possession of the gold plates, as “Nephi” and not Moroni.

In the *Joseph Smith Papers, Histories*, Vol. I, we learn Joseph read and corrected his history: “...it suggests that JS [Joseph Smith]

read aloud from Draft 2 in the large manuscript volume, directing editorial changes as he read” (*Id.* at p. 201). Here is how Draft 2 reads, describing the visit of the angel to him in his bedroom on the night of September 21, 1823:

When I first looked upon him I was afraid, but the fear soon left me. He called me by name and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me and that his name was Nephi. (*Id.* p. 222)

Under Joseph’s direction, a Draft 3 was prepared by Howard Coray. This version reads as follows:

When I first looked upon (him) ~~it~~ I was afraid; but the far soon left me: calling me by name, (he) said, ~~that~~ he was a messenger, sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Nephi—. (*Id.* p. 223)

There is a footnote that explains someone, unidentified as to who or when, changed the name from “Nephi” to “Moroni” because of a “clerical error.” The same footnote explains that throughout Joseph Smith’s lifetime, in any history he supervised, the name was always “Nephi”. Here is an excerpt from footnote 56 on page 223 of *Joseph Smith Papers, Histories*, Vol. 1:

A later redaction in an unidentified hand changed ‘Nephi’ to ‘Moroni’ and noted that the original attribution was a ‘clerical error.’ Early sources often did not name the angelic visitor, but sources naming Moroni include Oliver Cowdery’s historical letter published in the April 1835 *LDS Messenger and Advocate*, an expanded version of a circa August 1830 revelation, as published in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants; and a JS editorial published in the *Elders’ Journal* in July 1838. The present history is the earliest extant source to name Nephi

as the messenger, and subsequent publications based on this history perpetuated the attribution during JS's lifetime. (*Id.* p. 223)

The footnote prefers Oliver Cowdery's account to Joseph's. Oliver was not present September 21, 1823. Nor was he present for any of the other visits by the angel over the next four years. Therefore, embracing Oliver's statement above Joseph's seems to me to be an odd preference.

I'm persuaded Joseph would not have mistaken who it was that visited him on September 21, 1823 and again each year for four years thereafter. If it was a resurrected personage, it is more likely Nephi, who died before the Lord's resurrection, than Moroni, who lived after.

DECEMBER 11, 2013

New, Improved Mormonism

Lots of excitement arises from the statement by the church denouncing past practices and teachings in its editorial on its website titled "Race and the Priesthood (<https://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng#23>).” Lots of buzz on the Internet and in news outlets. The thesis of the editorial is that the church, which today is headquartered in a nation with a black president, has overcome racism, which was a sin, and now can denounce it (and past president's of the church) with passion, like others in modern society.

The LDS position is that the church leaders can never lead its members astray, except in the past—and then it can correct it—in the here and now. When corrected, the LDS church can then consign its past leaders to condemnation for their sins. Sort of ex

post facto “we’re still not going to lead you astray” as long as you are living when we fix it...or something like that. It’s really hard to keep up with the “we’re not going to lead you astray” component of modern Mormonism with all the dramatic changes and strong denouncements of past errors and sins and mistakes by racist, sexist, polygamous church presidents. But, trust them, they’re somehow not going to lead you astray.

The minions in the faceless editorial composition unit (I envision them as little yellow chaps who are constantly engaged in slapstick shenanigans) need to move forward now to continue their fix of the LDS position. I’d like to point out for their revisionism some more editing now needed:

The new editorial explained:

According to one view, which had been promulgated in the United States from at least the 1730s, blacks descended from the same lineage as the biblical Cain, who slew his brother Abel. Those who accepted this view believed that God’s ‘curse’ on Cain was the mark of a dark skin.

This view was based on a verse in Genesis. But they can leave Genesis 4:15 alone, because the “mark” put upon Cain is not defined there. It is only in LDS scripture the mark is clarified. It was blackness:

And Enoch also beheld the residue of the people which were the sons of Adam; and they were a mixture of all the seed of Adam save it was the seed of Cain, for the seed of Cain were black, and had not place among them. (Moses 7:22)

This uniquely LDS scripture clarifies what Genesis does not make clear. For the Christians “in the United States from at least 1730’s” this idea of blacks descending from Cain was merely a

theory. But for Latter-day Saints it was a matter of actual canonized scripture. So the purging of the LDS sins is only partial. They need to condemn Enoch as yet another past, false leader who subscribed to a now discredited view.

The editorial continues, describing “*Black servitude was sometimes viewed as a second curse placed upon Noah’s grandson Canaan as a result of Ham’s indiscretion toward his father.*” This is derived from the account in Genesis 9 where Noah curses Canaan with these words: “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren” (Moses 7:22). These Biblical words have been used to justify slavery. This raises two issues: first, slavery, and second, a cursed lineage. These are two altogether different topics.

As to the first, slavery was practiced throughout the Old and New Testaments. Further, if you look at the specific curse of Noah’s, it did not relate to Ham. Nor to all of Ham’s descendants. Ham married Egyptus, a descendant of Cain. However, the curse of servitude Noah pronounced did not target Ham, nor Ham’s sons Cush, Mizraim, or Phut (Gen. 10:6). The curse of servitude was only on his grandson Canaan, the youngest son of Ham. Examples of servitude in scripture are too numerous to list, but the Law of Moses adopted rules governing how to treat slaves because slavery was permitted. Even Christ presumed slavery, using slaves in His parables. Most telling of all, however, is the unique future LDS heaven which envisions servitude for the unworthy (See, e.g., D&C 132:16–17). So there’s some work left to do for the editorialists in conforming LDS scripture to the newly enlightened position. We will need for them to condemn past leaders like Moses, Christ, Joseph Smith and the God of the future LDS heaven for their errant positions if they expect to make full recompense for LDS past errors.

On the second idea of a cursed lineage, there's more work to be done with LDS scriptures as well. In Abraham we read of the "Pharaoh being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood, notwithstanding the Pharaohs would fain claim it from Noah, through Ham, therefore my father was led away by their idolatry" (Abr. 1:27). This makes it plain enough there was a "cursed lineage"—an idea which survives in LDS scripture despite the editorial.

The editorial continues: "*Today, the Church disavows the theories advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse,*" Stopping just there, we need to have the following language taken from the Book of Mormon:

And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity. For behold, they had hardened their hearts against him, that they had become like unto a flint; wherefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them. (2 Ne. 5:21)

There's also mention in 2 Ne. 26:33 and 3 Ne. 2:15). This was designed by God to prevent intermarriage ("that they might not be enticing unto my people"). In the LDS scriptures the word "enticing" is footnoted to the Topical Guide subject "Marriage, Temporal."

Then there is the editorial remark denouncing "*that mixed-race marriages are a sin.*" This brushes up against the verse in 2 Ne. 5:21 as well as Abraham's commandment concerning his chosen son, Isaac. For that son and the chosen lineage Abraham commanded: "I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my

son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell” (Gen. 24:3). Strong, even racist language from father Abraham. He refused intermarriage for his son. The editorialists announce that “*Church leaders today unequivocally condemn all racism, past and present, in any form.*” The word “unequivocally” means without any hesitation or limit. So we now have the editorialists speaking for the “Church leaders today” denouncing Abraham. It was a racist demand imposed by Abraham, while swearing by the God of heaven and earth, that his son must not marry a Canaanite.

I’m impressed with the LDS leader’s bold, historic, revolutionary break with their past, their scriptures and their future heaven as well. This is courage and drama on a scale seldom seen in religion. We are witnessing revolutionaries in the very act of overthrowing their past beliefs.

There’s a lot of the LDS past now denounced, unequivocally, by the “Church leaders today.” They’ve judged and dismissed God, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Christ, Joseph Smith, along with past church presidents Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Councilor J. Reuben Clark, and even President Spencer W. Kimball who made the change in 1978 (because he denounced interracial marriage).

I was excommunicated after being accused of among other things “denigrating every church president since Joseph Smith.” I don’t think the accusation was true. In fact, I merely quoted them or their diaries. But even if you accept the accusation against me, I managed to stop short of denigrating Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Christ and Joseph Smith along with “every church president since Joseph Smith.” The “Church leaders today” have raised their game to a whole new level. I know when I’ve been outdone. I’m an

underachiever by comparison. These “Church leaders today” will even take on God in their denigration of past leaders!

The trouble I see the LDS church editorial writers now making for the church is conflating racism (which everyone should recognize as bad) with priesthood. They ought to have stopped short of this overreaching effort to fix their public reputation. One (racism) is decidedly bad. The other (priesthood) is not at all related to racism. Racism which results in afflictions visited by one group upon another merely based upon their racial status is invidious. That should be something all mankind can overcome at some point.

But priesthood is something quite different. It is so narrowly distributed that even the lesser priesthood was limited to one tribe (Levi) and even then could not be given to a man with a withered limb, or some other physical defect. Higher priesthood was yet more restrictive, almost never given to anyone, in any age. It is extraordinarily limited in numbers. God controls that Himself, directly.

For mankind to complain about God’s control over His own power is beyond arrogant. The LDS church asserts it has some control over God’s priesthood (a position that is increasingly dubious with each act of rebellion against God, and usurping power and control over the conscience of its members). On the assumption the LDS’ claim is true, then they are merely stewards. They have no right to tinker with something God alone controls.

Fortunately, the highest form of priesthood requires a visit from God, who alone confers it. Therefore, no policy change, or enlightened new political position, will ever have an effect on who receives such an ordination. When (if) it reappears on the earth, it will have only one purpose: To bring about Zion and enable God’s promises to be fulfilled. It won’t be for empowering priestcraft and

enabling multi-billion dollar purchases of land and buildings by an elite group who fare sumptuously while the poor are left begging

This is a great moment—and another example of the LDS church’s “continuing revelation,” because it surely is revealing.

DECEMBER 15, 2013

The Angel’s Identification

I have received many comments to the prior post about Nephi having visited Joseph Smith. That post used the *Joseph Smith Papers* histories to show Joseph Smith consistently identified the angel who visited him as “Nephi” rather than “Moroni.” I’m not going to solve the dilemma for you, but I will point out a few things.

Section 27 of the D&C mentions, “Moroni, whom I have sent unto you to reveal the Book of Mormon” (D&C 27:5). However, the original transcript of the revelation did not contain any of these words. You can read the original in *Joseph Smith Papers, Revelations and Translations: Manuscript Revelation Books*, pp. 40–43. These words were added later, probably by Oliver Cowdery. [Oliver thought it was his right to add revelations to the church, as Section 24:5–6 authorized him to do. He authored a good deal, if not all of Section 20. He also wrote a section on marriage that was contained in the 1835 D&C as Section CI “Marriage” beginning on page 251. It condemned plural marriage and was later deleted.] The addition to Section 27 occurred before the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, and that version can be found in the *Joseph Smith Papers, Revelations and Translations*, Vol. 2, p. 490 (Section L, verse 2). Joseph Smith reviewed this volume prior to its publication and should have been aware of the mention of “Moroni” as the one who came “to reveal the Book of Mormon.”

Section 128 of the D&C is a letter written by Joseph Smith in September 1842. In the letter he wrote:

“And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, declaring the fulfilment of the prophets—the book to be revealed” (D&C 128:19).

So we either have a contradiction in these identities (Nephi vs. Moroni) or we do not. If we do not have a contradiction then these are some possibilities:

The Section 27 and 128 references are not to the visit described in *JSH* in verse 33, but to something else.

For those who believe in multiple-mortal probations it is simple: This proves that Nephi and Moroni were the same person, come twice to the earth, once to begin and once to end the Book of Mormon. I’m not at all persuaded of that one.

For those who want Moroni to have credit for his vast contribution then give it to him, even if it was Nephi who came as the angel to visit Joseph. Moroni gets the credit because:

1. He completed his father’s work in preserving the book.
2. He was the author who completed the Book of Mormon (the one attributed to his father beginning on page 469 and going to page 487) within the larger Book of Mormon.
3. He added a translation and commentary known as the Book of Ether.
4. He added the Small Plates of Nephi to the text “for a wise purpose.”
5. He added his own Book of Moroni to complete the volume.
6. He buried the book, along with other sacred artifacts, to preserve it and the means to translate it.
7. He wrote the cover page to the Book of Mormon.

For these reasons, even if it was Nephi who came, we ought to give credit to Moroni because he deserves mention for his overarching responsibility in preserving, completing and bringing forth the book.

The problem with these proposed alternatives is the language used in the September 1842 letter which calls Moroni “an angel from heaven, declaring...” which suggests it was Moroni who was the one visiting with Joseph. The letter describes a visit, not merely an attribution.

Because of these issues, those who think there is a contradiction are left to wonder:

Did Oliver Cowdery not know the identity of the angel? After all, the testimony of the Three Witnesses in the beginning of the Book of Mormon never mentions the angel’s name. It refers only to an “angel from heaven.” So if Oliver was confused, it would support the notion that the addition to Section 27 was his. But that doesn’t explain why Joseph would approve the addition in the 1835 D&C.

On the other hand, the histories written by Joseph Smith naming the angel “Nephi” came after the 1835 version of the D&C. He wrote these histories naming Nephi in 1838, 1839 and 1841. So was the later naming of Nephi a correction of the earlier addition by Oliver Cowdery naming Moroni? Given the timing, it is possible this may be the case.

This line of reasoning, however, gets interrupted by the 1842 letter calling “Moroni” an “angel from heaven” and associates him with the “Hill Cumorah.” So if understanding the timing is how to solve the contradiction, why would Joseph make this later reference? And why call Moroni “an angel from heaven” in the 1842 letter if he didn’t at least visit the Hill Cumorah? It is rather a stretch to think that visit was when he first buried the plates, and not when

Joseph Smith recovered it as part of the “glad news” discussed in the 1842 letter (Section 128).

Is it possible that Joseph wasn't careful about the name when dictating the letter, but was more careful when compiling his history? Why, if he had worked on the history earlier and got it right, would he then err in the letter?

Most of the references made to the visitor throughout the writings and talks of Joseph Smith refer to a “messenger” or to an “angel” and leave identity unresolved.

What is most interesting is that the controversy resulted in the church editing the Joseph Smith-History in the Pearl of Great Price. They didn't disclose the contradiction, but covered it up until the *Joseph Smith Papers* project brings it to light. Then we learned it was resolved in favor of Moroni, without any effort to explain there is another possible identity. I commend the church for now allowing it to become public in an official document.

You should know there is an uncertainty about this. You should be allowed to decide for yourself which you want to believe.

I've always called the visitor “Moroni” and intend to continue doing so because it is somewhat annoying at this point to give the angel another name. They won't know what I'm talking about if I change the name, or they will think I'm too dumb to read what is in the Joseph Smith-History. So I will continue to use “Moroni” as the visiting angel. However, I think it was actually Nephi who visited. That is my view. You ought to study it out for yourself and reach your own conclusion.

The question of resurrection is mentioned in my earlier post as a result of the angel actually having handled objects (plates, sword, directors, breastplate) during the visits and in the presence of two of the three witnesses. Physical contact with tangible things

is the province of physical beings (See, e.g., Section 129:2–7). Nephi is the more likely to have been resurrected considering when he was born and when he died. Post-Christ era resurrection is normally confined to the Second Coming (See, e.g., D&C 133:56). There are exceptions, but they are for highly specific reasons, based on individual covenants. Unless Moroni had such an individual covenant with Christ he would not have been resurrected, and therefore could not have handled the physical objects involved in the history of this angel's mission to Joseph and the three witnesses. If Moroni had the covenant, I would expect it to be mentioned in his book. Of course not everything is mentioned in the Book of Mormon, but the absence of proof leans in favor of concluding it was Nephi, rather than Moroni, who would have been resurrected at the time of the visits.

DECEMBER 16, 2013

I've Met Valor

A recent email I sent in response to an on-line conversation about the current state of affairs in the US:

My father landed on Omaha Beach on the morning of June 6, 1944 in the first wave, as a Combat Engineer. It was his job to clear the beach of tank traps for tanks which would never arrive. The water was too turbulent that morning and all the tanks sank before reaching the beach. But destroying the traps was not an option anyway, because they were the only thing to hide behind to shield soldiers from incoming machine-gun fire.

Eventually the surviving few, filled with rage at what was done to their comrades, did the only thing they could do: sacrifice their own lives to kill the bastards who were killing their friends.

So it was that the mines intended for tank traps were diverted to destroying the fencing and barbed wire protecting the cliffs from being scaled by the GIs. At a cost difficult to comprehend, they overtook the pillboxes and destroyed the German emplacements.

On the morning of June 7th, 1944 my father was the only one in his Company who was not a casualty of the first day's fighting. He was unhurt. So they formed another Company made of the remaining remnants and he turned from combat engineer to infantryman.

He pressed into Paris, then into Germany. He was involved in the Ardennes, where he suffered his only injury of the war: frostbite to his feet. He was taken to a surgical tent where they intended to amputate both his feet. Outside there were barrels of hands, feet, arms, legs and assorted GI parts. He begged to keep his feet.

There was a nurse from his home state in the surgical prep area. She took pity on him. Throughout the night she rubbed his feet to restore circulation, while moving others ahead of him for surgery. At morning the waiting supply of injured were exhausted, and only my father remained awaiting care. They carried him into the room to begin the amputation, and the Doctor inspected his feet beforehand to decide how much to remove. The Doctor said he saw signs of circulation, and thought it might be alright to wait and see a few more hours. Everyone was exhausted anyway, and my father was in no hurry.

The next day the feet improved a little more. After a few days he was removed from the list to be amputated, and then allowed to return to fighting.

For the rest of his life his feet hurt him. But he never complained. In fact, the pain made him grateful, he said, to have his feet.

He never collected a dime of disability. Worked till retirement age, then went to work again. Worked until they retired him again. Then he worked part time till he was in his late 70's.

As he was dying he returned to a hospital for the second time in his life. He was diagnosed with lung cancer on Friday, and died on Sunday. Saturday night he and I were talking in the hospital sometime in the wee hours of the morning and he remarked: "I can't figure out why my life was spared when all those others died that morning."

Warriors are not like those who live safely at a distance from the fight. But they only die once.

DECEMBER 17, 2013

Tolerance

Tolerance requires disagreement. Insisting on agreement is not tolerance, but its opposite.

DECEMBER 17, 2013

Sound Doctrine

2 Timothy 4:3-4:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; [they will be unable to even tolerate it. Unable to "endure" hearing it. They will think what is "sound" or true doctrine is beyond what can be permitted to be spoken, thought or believed.]

...*but after their own lusts* [that is, they will allow their ambitions, pride and desire to be popular and praised to control what they are willing to believe. They will require the truth to give way to the social attitudes and fashions of the day.]

...*shall they heap to themselves teachers*, [that is, leadership which will give them what they want. Leaders and presiding authorities whose goal is to deliver on the “lusts” for popularity and acceptance. Leaders whose decisions are driven by focus groups and opinion polling and other social studies to arrive at the place they lust to arrive.]

...*having itching ears*; [that is, ears tuned to hear the flattery, praise and assurance that comforts them in their false pride: “chosen people” and “royal priesthood” and “all is well” and “cannot be led astray” and such nonsense.]

...*and they shall turn their ears away from the truth*, [because it is never popular. It does not gather wealth and status, but instead criticism and ostracism. It will cost you something, not pay you something. Indeed, among the false teachers one of the evidences they offer of God’s favor toward them will be their wealth, influence and popularity.]

...*and shall be turned unto fables*. [in which a counterfeit is portrayed as the real Gospel. In which lies are told about history. In which soothing things are provided by wormtongue preachers whose goal is to keep the flock praying, obeying and paying; with no regard for the souls being lost by their false preaching. Fools trifling with the souls of men will offer fables instead of revelation.]

CHAPTER 7

Brigham's Legacy

DECEMBER 19, 2013

Plural Wives

The LDS church has issued another press release. This one is on plural wives (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/plural-marriage-and-families-in-early-utah?lang=eng&query=plural>). The press releases could certainly help combat the “Google Apostasy” and the “Swedish Apostasy.” When Elder L. Tom Perry went to Europe recently and said he had answers in his briefcase but couldn't release them, presumably he was referring to the press releases now rolling out onto the LDS.org website.

The historical stories that have been taught within the church are generally in conflict with the outside accounts told by historians. Increasingly, there are LDS historians recounting history in ways which conflict with the church's narrative. The best way to deal with these things is to get it all out.

The church's statement on plural wives in early Utah begins its discussion with the year 1843, ignoring all the history between 1829 (when I date the beginning of the topic) and 1843 (when the

revelations on the subject were reduced to writing in what is now Section 132 of the D&C). Although the statement mentions someone (not clearly identifying who) did post-1890 plural marriages, it avoids discussing the deceit and official involvement at the highest levels of the church in continuing the practice of sealing plural wives from 1890 to 1904, and thereafter.

The church avoids discussing the full history from 1832 (Joseph Smith/Fanny Alger) through 1904, which the fundamentalists make good use of. The problems will not be solved by hiding the unpleasant parts of the history. Fundamentalists and church critics should be able to exploit this lack of complete candor.

The statement by the church says the 1890 Manifesto was “inspired.” It reads: “In 1890, the Lord inspired Church President Wilford Woodruff to issue a statement that led to the end of the practice of plural marriage in the Church.” That is not quite true according to actual history. This subject was debated in my High Priests Group a couple of Sundays ago. Some of these fathers and grandfathers have children and grandchildren falling away from the church over the subject of polygamy. Not because the practice existed, but because there is very little candor by the church in its discussion of it. The Manifesto was a political statement. It was a press release to deal with pressure from the Federal Government. It was not “inspired” in the LDS vernacular. Rather it was a desperate attempt to preserve legal rights and church property by making a statement designed to mislead Congress into believing the practice would end.

Heber J. Grant, an apostle at the time, was the publisher and managing editor of the Salt Lake Herald. His paper responded to another newspaper’s article that said the Manifesto was a revelation by writing: “[The Tribune] pretends the declaration is a revelation...

although no one today has heard anyone except the lying sheet say it was a revelation” (*Salt Lake Herald*, October 9, 1890). Heber J. Grant said on September 26, 1890:

I...feel that it is merely a public announcement of the course which we had already decided in our private councils to adopt...Yet I believe greater troubles will follow the prominent Elders in the Church through adoption of this policy.

When asked if the Manifesto was a revelation, “President Smith answered emphatically no...he did not believe it to be an emphatic revelation from God abolishing plural marriage” (*First Presidency Office Journal*, August 20, 1891.) In the trial for the membership of Apostle Matthias Cowley he testified that President Joseph F. Smith informed him the 1890 Manifesto did not “mean anything.” Others including George Reynolds, L. John Nuttall, Charles W. Penrose, John Henry Smith and B. H. Roberts all denied the Manifesto was a revelation. To the extent the statement by the church is intended to convey the impression this was an inspired revelation, there is plenty to show that is inaccurate. It would be more correct to say the church reluctantly abandoned the practice as a result of legislation passed by Congress which disincorporated the LDS church, escheated its property, disenfranchised Mormons from voting, disqualified Mormons from serving on juries, and criminalized continued plural marriages. But it was abandoned only as a temporary measure to secure statehood. It was to resume when a state legislature, instead of the US Congress legislating for the Federal Territory of Utah, could pass laws. The United States did not trust Mormons, and required Utah’s state constitution to include the abandonment of plural wives as a condition of statehood. Utah became a state in 1896, but underground plural wives were

continued until the Congressional hearings during the Senator Reed Smoot controversy in 1904. President Joseph F. Smith went to Washington, DC and testified under oath about the matter, and subsequently actually ended the practice. The trauma of testifying during these hearings resulted in the “Second Manifesto” written in 1904 by President Joseph F. Smith. This was another attempt to end the underground practice.

Even the 1904 letter didn't actually end it. It just became more secret. Apostles Taylor and Cowley were sacrificed when their continued sealing of plural wives was brought to light by the Salt Lake Tribune. Their trials removed them from the Quorum of the Twelve for failing to discontinue the practice of sealing multiple wives in violation of the 1904 letter (NOT the Manifesto). No one contended in the church court proceedings for Apostles Taylor and Cowley that the Manifesto ended the practice or required them to cease sealing plural wives as early as 1890.

Interestingly related to this topic is the ruling by Judge Clark Waddoups on the issue of plural wives. The Waddoups' opinion does not legalize plural wives. Instead it decriminalizes private sexual relations between consenting adults which would otherwise violate a criminal statute adopted by Utah. It also does not prevent criminal prosecution of bigamy. The distinction between what is legal and what is illegal is driven by whether the people engaged in the private consensual relationships bothered to purchase a marriage license and seek governmental authorization for their second (or more) marriage. If they did, and they have more than one legal marriage, they violate Utah's bigamy law and can be prosecuted. If they did not, then they are merely engaging in private conduct which is protected by the penumbra of the First Amendment.

As a result of the decision, a man could have concubines, but not plural wives. Which brings to mind a discussion that took place in a meeting of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve on April 5, 1894 (four years after the Manifesto): They discussed concubinage as a means of meeting the technical requirements of the law, while still continuing sexual relationships with multiple women. George Q. Cannon said:

I believe in concubinage, or some plan whereby men and women can live together under sacred ordinances and vows until they can be married. Thus our surplus of girls can be cared for, and the law of God to multiple and replenish the earth can be fulfilled.

President Lorenzo Snow added:

I have no doubt but concubinage will yet be practiced by this Church, but I had not thought of it in this connection. When the nations are troubled good women will come here for safety and blessing, and men will accept them as concubines.

President Woodruff added:

If men enter into some practice of this character to raise a righteous posterity, they will be justified in it. The day is near when there will be no difficulty in the way of good men securing noble wives. (Spellings corrected).

If you put the decision of Judge Waddoups together with the discussion on April 5, 1894, a resumption of concubinage seems possible. I'm not expecting it to resume with official sanction. But the fundamentalists are going to be perking up in Utah, I assume.

DECEMBER 19, 2013

Just To Clarify

I assumed it was clear from all I've written before that I am not persuaded polygamy was ever appropriate or understood by the church. Joseph Smith did not father children with any woman other than Emma, his wife. The subsequent advocacy of taking of multiple wives, I believe, was an abomination and offensive to God.

The purpose of the last post was to show how reluctant the church was to abandon the practice, and how dishonest they were about ending it. If the US Government did not force the church to end plural marriage, they never would have. If there was any party that deserves credit for the "inspired" ending of the abominable practice, it was the US Congress.

DECEMBER 20, 2013

Polygamy

I do not find the discussion of polygamy interesting. But it is clear by the comments and emails I've received that a number of you do. Without putting the questions I've received into this post I'll explain:

The significance of Joseph's failure to father other children with plural wives is nothing other than a data point in a much larger picture. Fanny Alger was later married to another man and had, as I recall, eight children from that marriage. She was therefore clearly fertile. Joseph fathered children with Emma. He was clearly potent. But between them, Joseph and Fanny had no children although both were clearly capable of doing so had they been determined to bring children to their union.

The many historical candidates and continuing suspicions resulted in an attempt to identify those who may have been a child of Joseph Smith's. There was a decades long search, using DNA testing, to try and prove he fathered someone (anyone) other than Emma's children. None of the suspected children were his. They finished the list about two years ago, as I recall.

This is only significant in one, narrow regard: Joseph's purpose with plural wives was not primarily to produce offspring.

That is very different from what happened under Brigham Young's administration, and later. The primary reason for the later Mormon practice was to produce offspring.

There is something very different to me between Joseph's practice and the later practice. I am not really interested in elaborating fully about the difference. But there was a definite difference in the orientation and justification.

For Joseph, (as has been criticized, condemned and mocked) the explanation dealt with his assurance that the plural marriage would result in "salvation" for not only the wife, but also for "her family." This was/is regarded by many of the critics and even many faithful Latter-day Saints, as Joseph exploiting women using (or abusing) his claim to priesthood power.

What if there was something more to this idea than we have preserved? What if Joseph understood more about salvation than do we? What if Joseph could offer salvation to these others by "sealing" them to himself (he being a saved soul who had a connection to heaven)? What if Joseph was actually offering something of value to these women and to their families, which had little or even nothing to do with producing offspring?

It may just be that Joseph understood this as something quite different than what later became the teaching of the LDS Church.

To me, the subject is plagued with the Brigham Young version of the practice, which almost all Latter-day Saints believe represented an accurate continuation of what Joseph Smith was teaching. I disagree. I think Brigham Young changed rather dramatically the primary orientation. Under Joseph it was primarily focused on the afterlife, salvation and organizing a family that would endure death itself. Under Brigham Young it was primarily focused on breeding children for this life, and secondarily promised some next-life continuation for the worthy.

To me there is much more to the difference between Joseph Smith's focus and Brigham Young's than has been appreciated by those interested in this subject. I think it is possible to view Joseph's practice in different terms than Brigham's. I think it is possible to think of Joseph as morally superior to Brigham Young. I think it is possible to believe Joseph had a higher code of personal conduct than Brigham Young. I think it is possible to believe Joseph held women in higher regard than did Brigham Young.

But this is not a topic I think I need to spend any time sorting through. It really does not interest me. The advocates of polygamy who think they believe in some higher law are almost invariably thinking that Brigham Young got it right and his model is worth following. I think Brigham Young didn't even understand the subject, nor did he have the power to save anyone, nor did connecting to Brigham Young as a sealed plural wife garner any advantage in the world to come.

Some day I may try to fully explain what I think Joseph Smith was up to. But that's not a current priority for me, and I don't think it should be a priority for anyone. At least not until a good deal more of what the restoration was designed to accomplish is first understood.

DECEMBER 21, 2013

Foundation of Destruction

“And now behold, I say unto you, that the foundation of the destruction of this people is beginning to be laid by the unrighteousness of your lawyers and your judges” (Alma 10:27).

DECEMBER 27, 2013

Disgusting

I received an email which contained, in part, this alarming information:

To the homes we have been to, your name is spoken in hushed reverent tones, no jokes are allowed to be made about you in a fun teasing way without people glaring. I have noticed a huge amount of people calling themselves ‘Snufferites’ and welcoming us into the ‘Snufferites group’...I can see that You are becoming to people a man with ‘God awe’ not of your own doing but of our own love of men and wanting a man to lead us instead of trusting in God. I notice how there are offshoot groups and group leaders that have cult following. There is so much going on with the mystical aspect of different sorts of healings and controlling elements, that I hardly hear Christ mentioned. I hear people well known in these groups dropping your name as to give themselves more credentials because they had a conversation with you, or a phone call or went out to lunch with you.

I assume this email information is based on actual events and not merely a put-on. It disgusts me to read of such things.

Worship of anyone or anything other than the Lord will damn all those who participate (D&C 76:99–103). Anyone who listens to what I say or reads what I write knows I believe these scriptures.

How utterly foolish to think that changing from one idol to another will bring any advantage in the world to come.

Looking to others for answers instead of looking to and asking the Lord for answers is idolatry which will end in disappointment.

I have no respect for anyone who calls him/herself a “Snufferite.” They have no support or encouragement from me. When have I asked anyone to follow me? When have I asked anyone to believe in me? I point only to belief in Christ and following Him. If you are following me, stop it. Follow Him alone who can save you (John 14:6).

I have repeatedly declared that alleged private communications from me should not be trusted. I’ve written, spoken and published the things that I believe. Anyone who “name drops” to achieve credibility should be the last one you trust.

All of us should be willing to confine what we believe, teach and accept to the scriptures. I have accepted that burden, limitation and obligation and have expounded the scriptures in all I have taught. The only additional text I have accepted as authoritative has been Joseph Smith’s teachings. Apart from these, I advocate nothing.

If someone is trying to gather their own following they are welcome to acquire whomever they can mislead. They should lead them away, because such people and their followers would be destructive to a Zion community. They need to be “picked off” into these strange paths so they cannot prevent Zion from coming.

We have had too many errors creep into the faith restored through Joseph already. Adding to it new, novel and self-aggrandizing errors compounds the mistakes of the past.

In his day, Joseph was confronted with the dilemma of how to keep order and establish a new faith. He did what then had to be done. The result was an organization which itself is a testimony of

Joseph's prophetic status. The church organization is a miracle and a gift from God to man.

The problem is that any organization, no matter how Divinely inspired, can become corrupted. Without the same Spirit that accompanied its founding, it will invariably become corrupted. This is as true of our government as it is of the church.

In the meantime, I want it understood that those who follow others and fail to obtain a relationship with the Lord by going to Him for answers, will not be invited to the wedding feast. They, like the foolish virgins, will have no oil in their lamps. Therefore, they will be unable to continue to borrow from others what they believe to be oil, but which is instead merely dross and error which expands the darkness and dims the light.

Zion is the Lord's. He will decide who to gather. I am satisfied, however, that both the soothsayers and their idolaters will neither be invited to the gathering, nor will they be able to endure the glory there.

DECEMBER 27, 2013

Disgusting Too

That same email makes this observation:

Here in Utah it seems many people who read your blog go to classes and gifted people will DIVINE God and repeat the message to these people. Some have claimed to receive their calling and election this way and have been told through these arm's of flesh that they were certain people of significance to Christ in probations past.

This too is distressing. Think about this process, if it is taking place: Someone goes to a soothsayer to receive revelation about God's will for themselves through another mortal. They do not

appeal to the Lord. They bypass Him. They do not learn to fast, pray, approach Him and become capable of receiving light and truth by revelation from He alone who can save us. They are turning over the “voice of God” to an individual. They rely on another person in place of the one with the absolute right to speak to them (God).

I have never asked another person to receive revelation for me. The only thing that approximates such a thing is the Patriarchal Blessing I received as a church ordinance. Thereafter, all revelation I’ve received to govern and guide my life has come directly to me from the Lord as a result of prayer.

You will never grow to receive angels if you instead rely on others to tell you God’s will for you. They will weaken you, not strengthen you. As the trials of these final days mature, you must have the required oil in your own lamp, and cannot borrow it from another.

The idea of past lives has intoxicated those who preach it. If it were important, it would be set out plainly. If Joseph spoke of it in hushed tones among select few, it was for a good reason. He denounced reincarnation publicly, calling it a “doctrine of the devil” and this was not the “way of eternal life” (See *TPJS* p. 105). That is the public standard. We would be wise to follow it. The many foolish speculations and arrogant assumptions about pre-mortal experiences are extremely unwise.

Speculation about what happened before your birth here will not rescue you from the challenges you face here, now, today. The way back is to live as if all eternity was at risk by what you do now (because it literally is) (See 1 Cor. 15:30). We are in a battle to survive. There is more than enough evil to be overcome without distracting us from the present challenges by directing our attention

to somewhere and sometime other than now. Be here. Be present. Be engaged now. This is the day of the battle.

As King Benjamin lamented, “I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them” (Mosiah 4:29). The possible ways we can fail are endless. But the way to succeed is singular. There is only one of them and it requires you to follow Christ in the here and now.

King Benjamin added,

But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not. (Mosiah 4:30)

There is enough challenge to do what is right. So much so there is no time remaining to spend speculating upon what past experiences you had before entering into this mortal probation now underway.

Errors are plenty. Truth is narrow, confined, singular and solitary. You find it between yourself and the Lord. Looking elsewhere for someone else to lead you will only cripple your development and bring to you darkness. (That darkness comes just as readily from foolish reliance upon presumably inerrant “church authorities” as it does from “spiritually gifted” men and women when they become the source of your faith, devotion and trust). Trust no man. Look to God and live.

A true messenger will point you to Christ and seek to strengthen you in your independence from man. A false one will seek to make

you dependent upon them, so they may exploit you for their own ends. I do not ask nor want your devotion. I want all of you to become my equal or, better still, my better. I want you strengthened in the Lord. We will never have Zion if we are not equal in all things, both spiritual and temporal. I am too weak a reed for you to rest your weight upon; as is every other man or woman. Trust only God. He alone has the strength to support us all.

CHAPTER 8

Just the Facts, Words Matter

JANUARY 2014

JANUARY 2, 2014

Divine Word Usage

For generations, the words “endless punishment” and “eternal punishment” had a clear meaning. So clear, that churches built their doctrine upon it. Then the Lord explained to Joseph Smith that the words had a different meaning:

Nevertheless, it is not written that there shall be no end to this torment, but it is written *endless torment*. Again, it is written *eternal damnation*; wherefore it is more express than other scriptures, that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men, altogether for my name’s glory. Wherefore, I will explain unto you this mystery, for it is meet unto you to know even as mine apostles. I speak unto you that are chosen in this thing, even as one, that you may enter into my rest. For, behold, the mystery of godliness, how great it is! For, behold, I am endless, and the punishment which is given from my name is endless punishment, for Endless is my name. Wherefore—Eternal

punishment is God's punishment. Endless punishment is God's punishment. (D&C 19:6–12)

Instantly, what was once an adjective turns into a proper noun. With that shift, doctrine collapses and a new understanding unfolds.

What makes you think the scriptures are not filled with these same forms of Divine word usages that have one meaning in the minds of the uninitiated, and another to the minds of “mine apostles” [or the Lord's true witnesses of His resurrection]?

When I read the many arguments regarding the design of God in authorizing plural wives “to raise up seed unto me” (Jacob 2:30), I am left with the same bemusement about this error as I am with the historic Christian error about *eternal* punishment. I would ask you to consider whether the designs of God in “raising up seed unto Him” might be fulfilled *ONLY* by producing eternal fruit worthy of preservation at the coming harvest? (See Jacob 5:74). If this is the meaning, then the process of “raising up seed unto God” will require something different than merely breeding. It will require a covenant, and redemption, knowledge, light and truth, and ultimately the glory of God, which is intelligence. I think there was as much going on in using a Divine vocabulary with the term “raise up seed unto me” as there was in the terms *endless* punishment and *eternal* punishment.

Our greatest problem is the presumption that we “know” something to be true when it is merely our belief in a notion, coupled with our arrogance and lack of humility before God. We want certainty. We want to be right. We don't want to be working out our salvation in fear and trembling, as the Gospel requires (See Philippians 2:12; Mormon 9:27). We want no such anxiety.

JANUARY 2, 2014

A Riddle

Anyone can obtain it, and yet it is:
so fragile it can be lost in a moment,
but powerful enough to destroy nations and defeat armies.

JANUARY 2, 2014

Broken Hearts and Critics

Readers have pointed me to places on the Internet where discussions or blogs are critical of me. Some are quite funny; others are just mistaken. I assume the critics are well intended. They have every right to be skeptical of motivation and sincerity. Some of those who are most disapproving of me have had their hearts broken by trusting religious leaders who have failed them, lied to them, or abused them. Therefore, questioning motives is not only justified self-defense, but based on hard learned lessons they have taken to heart.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ taught:

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you,
and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in
heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets, which were before
you. (Matt. 5:11-12)

This is not just sage advice, it is the way the Lord would like people to interact with one another in order to come to understanding.

There are a couple of people on the Internet who are fixated on me. They are watching to see their predictions of my future ambitions, adoption of plural wives and religious ambitions unfold.

This is good. They care. They are paying attention and want to see for themselves the mess they have come to expect from religious people.

I understand their heartbreak and disillusionment with organized religions. They are right to be heartsick.

For myself, I believe the Latter-day Saints are some of the best people I know. They are sincere, and do many good things for one another, voluntarily. I love being among the Latter-day Saints. I do, however, have a different view on some things. The common view I have heard is that the trouble experienced by the church is the fault of the members, not the leaders. They accept their own failings, acknowledge their inability to measure up, and then go on to heap adoration on the leaders for their obvious righteousness. Latter-day Saints take as proof of righteousness the church leaders' callings themselves. It is a "but-for" sort of argument. They would not be a "president" or an "apostle" or a "seventy" but-for their righteousness; because God would never call an unrighteous man to such a position. In contrast, my view is that the leaders are unworthy to lead the Saints. The basic member is more virtuous, more worthy, and better than those who lead them. I'm skeptical of the top, not the bottom.

Leadership treat the religion as a product they own, market and manage. Their decision-making is largely informed by business decisions about their product. The current demographic of tithe payers must focus on the Mormon corridor, and primarily the Utah segment of that corridor. Therein lies the financial engine which foots the bill for the rest of the worldwide venture. These are hardy, largely conservative, middle-aged and older, lifelong Latter-day Saints. As that demographic ages, there must be a new demographic. This new demographic is younger, more liberal,

and integrated into a larger population which has very different values than the Mormon corridor. The management challenge for the leaders is to balance retention of the current financial support from the paying demographic, and adjust the message to suit the targeted demographic. Gay marriage illustrates the management's dilemma. The older, conservative Latter-day Saints in the Mormon corridor oppose gay marriage. Utahns voted about 70% in favor of the law recently declared unconstitutional by the US District Court. But the younger demographic, particularly those under age 21, are overwhelmingly in favor of same-sex marriage. The trend lines all suggest that in the future the church will need to remove this barrier to entry/conversion in order to attract the younger members. The church's recent maneuver with the Boy Scouts is an illustration of the balancing act in open display. The Boy Scouts would have looked for support and approval from its largest sponsors before making this kind of major change to their policy.

Leadership must "hold the line" with their rhetoric to keep the current conservative payers paying, but need to give signals to the younger, more liberal coming population. They are doing just that. Ultimately, good management would seek to remove homosexual opposition as a barrier to converting the younger demographic. This would suggest a compromise of the church's historic opposition so as to permit open acceptance. But that cannot be done now. Too quickly and it would be a financial disaster. For the present, the worldwide programs of the church require the current conservative payers to continue paying. Their opposition prevents any hasty changes.

From my perspective, the church is run exactly like a business would be run if its product was a religion called "Mormonism." It gives lip-service to the faith by the leaders/managers/owners but

the strong convictions and the righteous lives are not found there. Those things are to be found in the daily lives of the faithful who surrender their purses to the leaders for their use, consumption, distribution and enjoyment. This confers on the leaders the political, business and social power of the purses of the believers. With that, the leaders influence (virtually control) political life in Utah, wield influence in Washington, DC, own vast real estate holdings, and allow fortunes to be made by trading with favored companies and suppliers for LDS ventures.

Some disaffected Latter-day Saints believe that everyone who holds religious sway in any way at all does so for the same reasons as displayed by the LDS church. That is, religion is big business. It is a way to make a profit and acquire influence. They project these ideas on me, and then question my motives and sincerity. I understand it. I honestly do not envy church leaders. I pity them. I've concluded that nothing can be done any better in this world than what is being done at present. No matter how it starts out, eventually every organization will become captive of traditions and social and governmental pressures. All organized religions will eventually become Catholicism. I will not leave another relic to become the tool of the established order here below. Religion must be heavenly and otherworldly to remain pure.

However, since I now have these devoted critics' attention, I'll address them. Further, I get to live my life before these captivated critics and allow them to see whether or not:

- I love my wife and am devoted to her alone.
- I have no ambition to profit from others' donations.
- I will/have sacrifice/d for my beliefs.
- I can gracefully endure rejection at almost every hand.

- I use my own resources to give talks, not accepting anything in return.

Or, in other words, they can measure whether I count myself “blessed” by having to live through the ordeal Christ described: “when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.” I get to live the Sermon. They get to judge whether I measure up. I do not begrudge them their right to judge me. Their hearts, like my own, have been broken by pretenders. The challenge is to live without pretense. The challenge for me is to not break their heart again by proving there are none who are willing to worship God by what we lay upon His altar. I am keenly aware of my weakness and all my past failings. But I am converted, and I do believe with all my heart in the Lord and His message. Therefore, I do “rejoice” in the limited time I’m afforded to make my efforts here in this temporary world.

JANUARY 2, 2014

My Peculiar Status

I was asked: “*Do you no longer sustain the church’s leaders?*”

The question doesn’t apply to me. I am no longer a member of the church. I cannot sustain leaders of a church i don’t belong to. I’m not allowed to sustain them, or anyone in any calling in the church. Nor am I permitted to pray in meetings, or teach, or perform any function beyond attending meetings (which I still do).

I remain devoted to my faith. But my faith exists independent of the institution. I suppose that was the case for many years prior to my excommunication. However, I was grateful to and supported the institution. As a result of the actions of the institution, I am no longer a member. I did not resign or voluntarily leave. I was told I was no longer permitted to be a church member.

I was also asked:

If there is a future 3rd edition of Second Comforter, would you still write this in the concluding chapter? 'There are rationalizations for why Joseph was not called of God or if called, why he failed in his task. Or, if Joseph didn't fail in his task, then the Church officers following in his footsteps have failed in their tasks. Or, if past Church officers did not fail, then the current ones are in the process of failing.'

No, I'd leave that the same. If you are a member of the church, these things should not matter. The leaders are not the issue. The issue is the faith itself which you believe. Leadership may try and intrude into your faith, you needn't let them. You can follow Christ while giving to those who "sit in Joseph's seat" their due regard.

Remember, I am in a different situation than those with active membership. There is a difference between a member of the church, who should still submit to church leadership elected through common consent, paying tithing, and participating in the church programs, and someone who has been discharged from that obligation. My responsibilities are different. If you are a member, you should work within the church to fight for the truth, testify of Christ, oppose idolatry and bring others to appreciate the great responsibility and unfinished work of the restoration.

Also, "*Would you have ever voluntarily left the church?*"

Yes, under circumstances which have not occurred yet. I have to assume each person will weigh for themselves the circumstances which would provoke them to depart. Those circumstances never happened while I was a member, and therefore I did not voluntarily leave.

JANUARY 8, 2014

Letter from Liberty

Joseph Smith co-wrote a letter from Liberty Jail. The entire letter can be found either in the *Documentary History of the Church*, vol. 3, pp.289 through 305, or in *TPJS*, pp.129 through 148. The letter is where D&C Sections 121, 122 and 123 came from.

When you read the entire letter you can see how our scriptural excerpts skip about and leave out paragraphs. It jumps around from one disconnected thought to another. The impression you get from the D&C sections leads you to believe that each verse follows in order.

I leave it to you to track the differences. It is well worth the effort. There is only one matter I would like to call to your attention. Section 121 ends and Section 122 begins in the same thought. In the original letter there was no division between them. They belong together. As presently published, the impression you get is that Section 122 is speaking about Joseph Smith. While it certainly would apply to him, it also applies to you. Here, then, is how this section of the letter was originally composed. Read these words as one thought, and apply that thought to yourself:

No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the Priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile, reprovng betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost, and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reprov'd, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy; that he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the chords of death; let thy bowels also be full of

charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distill upon thy soul as the dews from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever. The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name, and fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee; While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand. And thy people shall never be turned against thee by the testimony of traitors. And although their influence shall cast thee into trouble, and into bars and walls, thou shalt be had in honor; and but for a small moment and thy voice shall be more terrible in the midst of thine enemies than the fierce lion, because of thy righteousness; and thy God shall stand by thee forever and ever.

This is how to act as a priest, and also to understand doctrine because you are serving in the way God requires. As a result of living these principles your confidence will grow in the presence of God. This is how you will obtain a scepter of righteousness given you by God.

This describes Joseph. It describes the faith Joseph had and the religion he lived. You live it too. You rise up likewise to gain confidence in the presence of God. If you do, God will stand by you forever and ever and you will no longer need to fear any man.

JANUARY 15, 2014

Fearful Question

I received this comment:

I'm trying to reconcile your inconsistencies. On one hand you cry obedience (a significant theme of The Second Comforter), and yet, at the same time, you have clearly denounced (with the exception of Joseph Smith) true prophets and apostles speaking the will of the Lord in these last days. Therefore, you would also have to say their words are not binding and it is not necessary to obey anything they have taught. So then, one wonders what obedience looks like to Denver Snuffer and who has set the standard? The words of Jesus Christ given in the New Testament, and nothing since then? Attending church meetings? (I'm guessing optional, since you have publicly stated you don't do stake conference). Word of wisdom irrelevant? Tattoos okay? No such thing as sustaining general authorities of the church (since you say they have no authority) so general conference must also be optional/ irrelevant? Priesthood power didn't get "passed on" so nothing in particular required to hold/honor the priesthood? Lacking priesthood power, the sacrament must be nice but not necessary? Temple worship irrelevant? Covenants and ordinances have no value so nothing required to be obedient regarding temples and covenants made there? Temple recommends must also be bogus then? One has to wonder just what the construct is for obedience to you. Promoting the idea that there is no legitimate priesthood power, temple ordinances and covenants, or prophets on the earth today lands you (as much as you may love Joseph Smith) in the same church camp as all of our protestant friends. What is so profound about that mindset? Ironically, it places you theologically as far from

Joseph Smith as you could be. One last thought: if it is true that you have received a visitation from Jesus Christ Himself, how do you know it was because the Lord was validating the course you were pursuing? Have you considered it may have been to humble and chastise you, and correct the path you were on?"

This sounds like fear. The first thing I would recommend is that you quiet your mind and calm your troubled heart. Take a deep breath or two, and let's reason this out.

Look at all we share. Both you and I believe in Christ. We share a common acceptance of Joseph Smith's mission. We both believe in the Book of Mormon. We are on the same side. We have so much in common we ought to be able to allow one another the right to think things through for ourselves on those few things about which we differ.

Remember, our views will only differ momentarily. Eventually, if we are both seeking to understand the truth, and both are proceeding prayerfully and sincerely, we will grow together. While we are developing, let's not insist that everyone see things exactly as "I" see them.

From a bird's eye view, exactly what does the church ask of you that you can "disobey" or be in a state of rebellion by refusing? Let's go through a list.

- Tithing? I paid it. Fully. For forty years.
- Home Teaching? I enjoy home teaching. I sincerely care about and appreciate those families I home taught. I was a 100% home teacher. I miss it.
- Attend Sacrament Meeting? Always did, still do.
- Accept callings? Never refused one. Served whenever asked.

- Stake Conference? Not required. They don't take attendance. Never been asked by any bishop or stake president to attend. I was invited, but that was merely an invitation.
- General Conference? Not required. They don't take attendance. But I do watch. And I have attended priesthood session every six months at the BYU Marriott Center with my sons and a friend with his sons, and my father-in-law, and brother-in-law. We have done this for 24 uninterrupted years. Afterwards, we go to the same Mexican restaurant for dinner. It is a well established tradition for us and we all enjoy it greatly.
- Word of Wisdom? Always obeyed. Still do.
- Tattoos? Don't have one. I tell my kids "if you have a tattoo you failed the IQ test." Even before President Hinckley advised against them, Lev. 19:28 forbid them. Now that's the law of Moses, it is true. But I think it good advice. And, more importantly—never tempted to do such a thing.

That's a pretty good overview of what the church asks, isn't it? So where's the beef? The church has not asked of me as a normal, faithful member, anything that I have not done. They did, however, ask me for something that contradicts their own standard established in the temple recommend interview, violates the scriptures, runs contrary to the teachings of Joseph Smith, and offended my conscience. That I could not do. Not because I wanted to rebel, but because they were not justified in the request. We reached an impasse.

The temple recommend interview, among other things, asks me to be honest in my dealings with my fellow man. That requires me to respect contracts I enter into and honor my promises to others. It required me to honor a contract in publishing, which I did. The

offer of money to have me betray that obligation was not, in my view, an honorable way to terminate my commitment.

The scriptures teach an ideal which the ancient Nephite civilization respected. I think this ideal is described in the Book of Mormon to teach us how to deal wisely with one another:

Now if a man desired to serve God, it was his privilege to serve him; but if he did not believe in him there was no law to punish him....Nevertheless, there was no law against a man's belief; therefore a man was punished only for the crimes he had done; therefore all men were on equal grounds. (Alma 30:9, 11)

What I believe is the result of faithful service, careful study, years of prayer, and diligent searching. I do not *expect* you, or anyone, to agree with me. Nor do I *ask* you or anyone to agree. I state what I believe and why I believe it. Then I leave it to others to agree or disagree. I afford all the freedom to disagree with me in the way I would like to have reciprocated.

Joseph Smith taught against adopting “creeds” or demanding that people all agree or be disciplined. He remarked that the Methodists

have creeds which a man must believe or be kicked out of their church. I want the liberty to believe as I please, it feels so good not to be trammled. It does not prove that a man is not a good man because he errs in doctrine. (DHC 5:340)

My conscience and my heart told me that the LDS church has changed, and my mind needed to understand why. I studied to learn the answer. I believe I found it. It was learned by study of the scriptures and revelations given through Joseph Smith, and in the diaries, journals, letters and histories I searched. I honestly believe I've answered the questions to my own satisfaction about how we

got from where we began to where we are now. I do not offer my explanation as a denouncement of anyone else's beliefs, only as my own. In my explanation, I remind readers that I'm not offering the accepted view, and that the traditional narrative is very much different from the one I tell. In the long run, a century from now, I believe Mormon history will be told the way I have explained it, and the traditional narrative will continue to unravel.

I have not "denounced" church leaders. I have quoted them. In recent times, the church has denounced past leaders in ways I would not have dared. They affirm that past leaders made serious mistakes about doctrine, and unjustifiably left unsaved, unordained, unendowed, and unsealed an entire bloodline. They did this "in the absence of revelation" to guide them. This is "denouncing" the past church leaders by the present ones. I did nothing of the sort. I quoted them, and let their words speak.

The church is very useful. It gives important foundational material the world needs. But like any organization, it has its limits. If you make the church the end of your journey, instead of the introductory course it is supposed to be, then you have made it an idol. The church is growing more idolatrous in recent years. The pace of that is accelerating. Your comment is grounded in both fear and idolatry. This is the fruit of the emphasis on controlling even what you think. That seems afoul of the scriptures, Joseph's teachings, and common sense.

But to answer the question: I believe in obedience to Christ. I believe He is the standard and the prototype of the saved man. I believe the Book of Mormon is the most correct book and a man will get closer to God by abiding its precepts than any other book. I believe in worshiping God according to the dictates of my own conscience, and allow you the same privilege. I believe

all that God has revealed, all He continues to reveal, and that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to His coming Kingdom. I believe in revelation and the gift of prophecy. I believe the church has a commission and should remain true to that commission—preach the Gospel of Christ. I believe it is hazardous to change the ordinances, because it risks breaking the covenant when we do so. I believe Christ will set His hand a second time to reclaim and rescue His people before His coming. I believe when we killed Joseph Smith, we fell under condemnation that required three and four generations to pass away before the Lord would open the heavens for salvation again, and that those generations have now passed. The symbol of their passing was the death of Eldred G. Smith. I look forward to the Lord’s hand now moving again to reclaim and restore His people.

I believe it is important to keep the Lord in mind always. To always remember Him, that we may have His Spirit to be with us. I believe it is difficult to always remember Him when we are preoccupied with potentates, presiding elders, captains of fifty, captains of hundreds and captains of thousands as our substitute “connection” with heaven.

I teach of Christ. I testify of Christ. I worship Christ. I preach faith in Christ. And I advise all men to likewise believe in and obey Him and Him alone.

JANUARY 17, 2014

Connecting With Heaven

Religion is a terrible thing when it is sold like a product by an institution trying to profit by claiming ownership of the rights. Faith in Christ is a wonderful, liberating thing.

When Paul was called directly by the Lord, it was as if Christ were proclaiming His independence from the very movement He had launched by calling Twelve Apostles. It is apparent the Lord wanted to affirm that He alone would be involved in how His faith would roll forward. This independently called Apostle witness then proceeded to write two-thirds of the books of the New Testament. Christianity is Pauline, even if the Catholic tradition claims to be Petrine.

When the Lord rose from the dead, He visited with women first, then with two men who were not His Apostles. His Apostles were told, but they didn't believe these women (Luke 24:1-11). Then when He came to visit with the Apostles, He criticized them for failing to respect the women's testimony of His resurrection (Mark 16:14).

The Lord's behavior was (and still is) uncontrollable by institutional constraint. That is a very hard thing for some good people to comprehend. After all, in a revelation, the Lord said the restoration through Joseph Smith was the "last time" he would be giving in the "last days" (D&C 112:30). But, then again, the same Lord, speaking through the same prophet in another transcript from heaven itself, used the word "last" to mean "most current" or "latest" rather than precluding another (D&C 76:22). And we confront the Lord's word usage of "Endless" and "Eternal" as proper nouns, meaning "God's" rather than an adjective meaning "forever."

We try to capture God by His words, and find He is always free to speak again and again (Moses 1:4), and to amplify, enlarge, and expand even the scriptures when He chooses (2 Ne. 29:10-11).

It is a rule that the Lord's house is a "house of order." But what if the "house" about which He speaks is not institutional, but familial? (See, e.g., D&C 132:18). He established a system to replace Apostles

in His church, right? And that system remains in place, right? It is like the one in His original New Testament organization, right? That system allowed the remaining Apostles to vote and replace the deceased Judas (See, Acts 1:21–26). But then He alone called Paul without consulting with the Twelve (Acts 9:3–15; see also Gal. 1:1).

What if the Lord’s “house of order” can only be established by Him, directly? Something with fewer moving parts, no one in charge except for the “keeper of the gate” who cannot be deceived in a worthiness interview? (2 Ne. 9:41). That would remove doubt from all our minds about whether anyone gets included or excluded based on man’s judgment.

How do we make sense of what God is up to at any given moment? He always allows Himself to speak yet more. Alma explained, I think, how God works:

It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God...he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full. (Alma 12:9–10)

So God gets to talk. To anyone at any time. Even to women. Before the Twelve. And He gets to condemn the Twelve because they didn’t believe the women.

Faith in Christ is liberating because Christ is the final authority and power. Fear is the opposite of faith. Christ invites and entices to do good by His great love for us. When the god of this world tries to reign with blood and horror, constantly reminding you to be fearful and cower, you are sensing the bitterness of hell itself (Moses 1:20). Remember the Lord’s tools and even the Lord Himself are the

opposite (1 John 4:8). Be of good cheer because He has overcome the world (John 16:33). Have faith in Him and doubt not because He lives. I know for I have seen Him.

JANUARY 18, 2014

Why Ignore “Fact”?

History is an attempt to weave into one comprehensible story the complex interaction of an almost infinite number of moving parts. It involves not just one life in isolation, but how all lives interrelate. In a very real sense, all history is theory; merely a fiction helping our understanding of the infinitely complex.

The Book of Mormon is not history. The writers repeatedly tell us it is not a full history:

Nephi:

- “[T]hese plates...are not the plates upon which I make a full account of the history of my people” (1 Ne. 9:2).
- “[I]f all the things which I saw are not written, the things which I have written are true” (1 Ne. 14:30).
- “And if my people desire to know the more particular part of the history of my people they must search mine other plates” (2 Ne. 5:33).

Jacob:

- “And a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, which now began to be numerous, cannot be written upon these plates” (Jacob 3:13).

Mormon:

- “I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people” (Words of Mormon 1:5).

Helaman, son of Helaman:

- “But behold, a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, ...cannot be contained in this work” (Hel. 3:14).

Nephi, son of Helaman:

- “[H]e did teach them many things which are not written, and also many things which are written” (Hel. 5:13).

Nephi (son of Nephi, son of Helaman):

- And there had many things transpired which, in the eyes of some, would be great and marvelous; nevertheless, they cannot all be written in this book; yea, this book cannot contain even a hundredth part of what was done among so many people in the space of twenty and five years. (3 Ne. 5:8)
- “And now there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people” (3 Ne. 26:6).

Moroni:

- (Writing of the account of the Jaredites he abridged in the Book of Ether:) “[A]nd the hundredth part I have not written” (Ether 15:33).

It was not a full history because telling everything is not necessary in order to establish the truth of the proceedings among the Nephites. Their record was true, even if incomplete. A more complete history might even have been misleading. For example, preserving all the arguments Laman and Lemuel used against Nephi would not contribute to understanding. It would only detract from the account we have.

Likewise, the priests of Noah were not ignorant. They were qualified as priests, held positions of authority, were trusted by the king, and used the scriptures in their counsel to Noah. They quoted from Lehi and Nephi when they argued Abinadi was a false prophet (See Mosiah 12:15). This was based on the revelation

to Nephi found in 1 Ne. 2:20. Lehi reiterated this in counsel to his children found in 2 Ne. 4:4. The full arguments of the priests of Noah are not preserved

Which introduces the topic about my own retelling of history. Like those who have written about God's dealings with past generations, I do not believe it is either necessary or advisable to include all information in order to tell the truth. Taking second-hand accounts from highly partisan "defenders of the faith" is a dubious practice. As a lawyer I've encountered such witnesses. They are usually not qualified to give evidence. Their statements are mere hearsay, and if an objection is made, the Court will not permit such evidence to be considered.

Apart from my own education and profession, however, the church itself has a standard which precludes a lot of the information used to attempt to support a "more faithful history." Lorenzo Snow's son and granddaughter, for example, are not qualified under the church's standards to proclaim a revelation for the church. Yet they are the only sources for a purported meeting between Lorenzo Snow and Christ on the staircase of the Salt Lake Temple. Apart from this failing, however, there is the other most obvious problem: Why did not President Snow discuss or mention or testify about this to the church? One of the most obvious reasons would be because it isn't true. Or, alternatively, it is greatly embellished, but was actually uneventful. Or, alternatively, he did not think it mattered.

I've been criticized because I fail to mention this second-hand account from a granddaughter of a church president who claimed to have heard a story from her grandfather a few decades before she retold it which supports a different narrative than the one I tell in my account of the Lord's dealings with the Latter-day Saints. Well I admit I ignore it. I consider it insubstantial.

The priority for finding the truth begins with searching the scriptures. They tell us in prophecy about what the latter-day gentiles will do when the Book of Mormon comes forward. I let that prophetic framework construct the outline. Then, trusting the Book of Mormon as “the most correct book,” I followed the prophetic outline into well documented historical events. The result was a “hand-in-glove” fit between what has transpired and what was foretold.

I do not blame anyone for thinking I am in error. After all, there have been hundreds of written accounts that can be marshaled to support the existing narrative. These favorable, flattering histories have been told and retold. Entire libraries exist which support the church’s claims. I acknowledge they exist. I also acknowledge I ignore a great deal of the material precisely because I consider it incompetent.

When the disputes began between the sons of Joseph Smith (and Emma) and the “Reorganized” church movement on the one hand, and the LDS church on the other, emotions ran high. There were several critical issues at the bedrock of the conflict. Perhaps the most obvious (then and now) was plural marriage. Emma artfully denied it, and her sons (Joseph III and David) disbelieved it even happened. When their cousin, Joseph F. Smith, tried to prove them wrong, he gathered evidence from surviving witnesses. These included a number of women who claimed to have been married to Joseph in Nauvoo. These affidavits were gathered many years after the events, in a highly charged atmosphere wherein:

- there was a pending dispute with the US Government over plural marriage
- there was a threat to the survival of the church mounted by an upstart rival church

- the dispute made Brigham Young and Emma rivals
- loyalty to defending both the church and its hierarchy were at stake
- some of the women were remarried in plural relationships, including some with Brigham Young.

In this setting the affidavits that were gathered were affected by the circumstances. In the courtroom, sometimes witnesses are not only discounted, but ignored, once the self-interest of the witness is brought to light. A jury needn't believe anything they hear as testimony from a biased witness. They get to consider the statements, but are not bound to accept them as true or reliable.

I offer what I believe to be true. It shouldn't be very difficult to muster together another assortment of statements, claims, and records to the contrary. When it comes to the truth, however, you are not required to agree or accept any and/or all statements made in favor of a particular party, issue or view. If that were the case, then the Book of Mormon would not have ignored Laman and Lemuel's views. Nor would Abinadi have been counted as a true prophet delivering a true message to a fallen and corrupt society desperately in need of reconnecting with God.

What could be more "faithful history" than one which accepts the words of Book of Mormon prophets as the guide?

JANUARY 21, 2014

God's Great "Strength"

In an email discussion with someone I respect, the following exchange occurred. This is his criticism of my views and his attempt to persuade me I am in error. His emails are italicized and quoted below, followed by my responses.

I believe in a God who is stronger than the God you believe in. My God was able to restore everything that He wanted through Joseph Smith before Joseph was killed. And He was able to control (through birth and death) those that led the Church thereafter so that it was (and is) always led by a righteous and worthy prophet. In contrast, it appears that your God wasn't able to get everything revealed before Joseph was killed and has let Church leaders be chosen and to ascend to influential positions even though they are not completely inspired.

Second, it seems that I have more faith in the Latter-day Saints than you do. I believe that righteous men have been consistently available to serve with inspiration in Church callings. In addition, I believe the righteousness of a portion of Church members has always been sufficient to make them worthy of inspired leaders.

Consequently, I believe that if the Church, its leadership and members, ever begin to apostatize, my God is strong enough to call the erring leaders home (through death) and install new inspired ones. And such men have always been available and a portion of the Saints have been righteous enough to deserve it. The Mormon fundamentalists and others who want to claim God's pure grace and authority, saying the mother Church has gone astray, have adopted a very narrow view that is quite self-serving. Yet, I believe God is powerful enough and a portion of Church members have always been righteous enough to have allowed the continued fulfillment of D&C 65:1: "The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth."

My reaction to this bundle of false ideas is as follows: (I did not include the scripture references in my email to him)

I do not disbelieve in God's strength, but know I can trust in His great restraint (See, e.g., Matt. 26:39; Matt. 26:51-54; John 2:4; John 7:3-8; Alma 14:10-11; 3 Ne. 11:11; and many others). He honors us by giving us agency to choose (Moses 4:3; Helaman 14:30; D&C 93:30; and many others), He even gave Lucifer the right to choose and rebel (D&C 29:36; D&C 76:25; 2 Ne. 2:17-18; and many others), and then He shows the wisdom to allow us to reap the consequences of our choices (Alma 10:25-27; Helaman 14:30-31; 2 Ne. 2:14-16; Jacob 3:11-12; Alma 41:3; D&C 121:25; and many others).

I believe He is the same yesterday, today and forever (1 Ne. 10:18-19; 2 Ne. 27:23; 2 Ne. 29:9; Heb. 13:8; and many others). That He cannot limit one generation's right to choose any more than He has done so with another (Mosiah 27:25-26; 2 Ne. 28:1-32; D&C 18:42-46; D&C 84:54-58; and many others). That if God intended to accomplish what you suggest He has underway with the Latter-day Saints, He could have interrupted man's agency in the Garden and saved us all.

Come to think of it, you are proposing a God of such strength and determination to prevent mankind's failure that this God of strength reminds me of Satan's proposal so that not one soul could be lost (Moses 4:1).

I believe we are in jeopardy. All of us. From the moment we enter this life we are in peril (1 Cor. 15:30). We become accountable at age 8. Then we are judged on the basis of the choices we make. God doesn't interrupt our mistakes. He permits them. He does this for a wise purpose. For underlying

it all is the patient plan to “prove” us by what we do (Abr. 3:24–26).

I think your proposed God is not a God of “strength” so much as He is a fearful dictator who will not allow man’s agency to survive. This, to me, is not only an error, but it is Satanic.

I believe we have exactly the same situation in our day as in the days of Adam. Exactly as in the days of Noah (Matt. 24:37–38; Luke 17:26–30; JS-Matt. 1:40–48). Exactly as in the days of Abraham (Abr. 1:5). Exactly as in the days of Moses. Exactly as in the days of Peter and Paul. That is, I believe we also must find our way back through the fog of a true religion administered in a false and vain way, in which man cannot save man, but can only assist one another or interfere with one another in the quest to find God.

I believe it is more than foolish to stake the outcome of your life on the bet that God owns, personally, everything about the present situation of the church. I think God is as dismayed and alarmed by our present choices and predicament as any prophet proclaimed Him to be about ancient Israel. I think we are no better than the Jews who slew Isaiah, or the righteous pretenders who denounced and rejected Christ’s Apostles, or the brothers of Nephi who refused to accept his leadership once Lehi died. I think our dilemma is exactly like all others. We proceed with the exact same test. Few will pass it. Few will find it. But those with the eyes to see and ears to hear will listen to the Master’s voice and follow. No amount of criticism or doubt from man will deter them from following the Master. No offering from an organization or institution will substitute for the Master.

I distrust all men. I am a man. Therefore, I distrust myself. It is the Lord and the Lord alone upon whom I stake my eternal

outcome. Grateful for what I know, humbled by what He has shown me, and always keenly aware of many weaknesses which beset me at every turn, I hope to endure the course He has shown me and to finish with my trust in Him intact. I fear my failure. I do not believe myself at all equal to the privileges He has granted to me, nor qualified to accomplish what He has asked of me. I do what I am asked, trusting in the Lord's wisdom, not mine.

I believe in Him. Only in Him. And I cannot allow that trust to be displaced by anyone making any claim to speak for Him, because He speaks with me. Therefore, I do not need anyone to stand between Him and me.

In my view, it is not the "strength" of God at issue. It is man's weakness and God's respect for man's agency that is at issue. These two combine to allow us to fail. Likewise some few, with His help, will succeed.

The keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel and He employs no servant there (2 Ne. 9:41). Therefore, it is only that gate which I seek.

I am certain of very few things. But I know God, and have reasoned with Him as one man reasons with another. I have questioned His counsel to me. I have used scriptures and testimonies of those who knew Him before to persuade Him to my view. His wisdom is greater than mine, His comprehension of the scriptures is greater than mine, and His will is more benign, placid and love filled than mine. Because of my own weakness, I expect to fail. However, He knows the end from the beginning and I do not expect Him or His purposes to fail, even if it involves my weak contribution to His plan.

In reply, I received the following:

I have not represented my beliefs very well. I agree with you that God would never intervene so as to control us (and take away our agency). However, I believe God is not impotent regarding His believers and leaders on earth.

God controls when and where we are born and “hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of [our] habitation” (Acts 17:26; see also D&C 122: 9). He “holds the destinies of all the armies of the nations of the earth” (D&C 117:6) and can determine when we die. Joseph explained: “I understand my mission and business. God Almighty is my shield; and what can man do if God is my friend? I shall not be sacrificed until my time comes; then I shall be offered freely. . . . I thank God for preserving me from my enemies” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 274). I do not believe God let Joseph Smith die before he had restored everything that was necessary. If God had not preserved him, the Prophet might have been killed years earlier (I’m sure you know the stories, but see D&C 38:13).

As you know, Joseph Smith’s God knows “the end from the beginning” (Abraham 2:8). He assures us that “all things are present before mine eyes” (D&C 38:2). Nephi explained: “the Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men; for behold, he hath all power unto the fulfilling of all his words” (1 Nephi 9:6). I believe God’s power over life and death and his foreknowledge allow Him to have leaders and believers here today to perpetuate His work. We are told that

The Prophet Joseph Smith, and . . . Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and other choice

spirits... were reserved to come forth in the fulness of times to take part in laying the foundations of the great latter-day work. (D&C 138:53)

Why not Thomas Monson and Gordon B. Hinckley as well?

You wrote:

I believe we have exactly the same situation in our day as in the days of Adam. Exactly as in the days of Noah. Exactly as in the days of Abraham. Exactly as in the days of Moses. Exactly as in the days of Peter and Paul.”

Forgive me if I disagree. You don't seem to believe it because you say there is no Adam, no Noah, no Abraham, Moses, Peter, or Paul here to guide us today. In those days, people rejected the prophets, but there were prophets to reject.

The reason I wrote to you in the first place is that I have studied Mormon fundamentalism for many years. Fundamentalists universally condemn the Latter-day Saints in the 1890s because they accepted the 1890 Manifesto. Lorin Woolley wrote:

[Church members were writing letters] asking the leaders to do something, as the Gentiles were talking of confiscating their property in connection with the property of the Church. These letters not only came from those who were living in the Plural Marriage relation, but also from prominent men who were presiding in various offices of the Church who were not living in that relation. They all urged that something be done to satisfy the Gentiles so that their property would not be confiscated. (1929 Account.)

The problem I encountered was that as I studied the Saints of the 1890s, I discovered many devout believers who were willing to do anything their God required. Most didn't know what to do

with the Manifesto and were willing to continue sacrificing for plural marriage. Then it dawned on me that the fundamentalists today needed to believe they were more righteous than the 1890 Saints so to support that belief, they simply misrepresent them in their literature.

It is easy to say the Saints are not righteous enough, but many are very righteous, even holy. You seem to say our leaders have led us astray, but I believe God would have called them home before they would have been able to do so. It isn't a question of respecting agency, it is God's foreknowledge and His control over when and where we live on earth that allows His Church to continue to fulfill the prophesy:

The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth.(D&C 65:2)

In response I state:

I do not disagree with the scriptures you quote. They are as you say. But they are not, of course, the entire story.

I am not "rooting" for or against our success or failure. No matter how flattering or condemning the truth may be, I'm only trying to understand our condition. I'm not interested in skewing the decision, only trying to make it correctly. However delightful or painful the truth about our day may be, I want to understand it.

I have made no judgment of the saints. But the Lord, who does know the end from the beginning, has revealed His own judgment of us. He said:

And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you: At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations; and if they shall do all those things, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them. (3 Ne. 16:10)

This prophecy of Christ, recorded in the Book of Mormon, at least raises the possibility of our rejection of the fullness of His gospel.

This possibility turns into a probability with this revelation from the Lord through Joseph:

And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things which you have received- Which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all. And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which is written- That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father's kingdom;

otherwise there remaineth a scourge and judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion. (D&C 84:54–58)

This was a revelation given about eighteen months after the church was organized under the laws of New York. We've never remembered the Book of Mormon, as Daymon Smith's series currently coming into print demonstrates. Nor are "the children of Zion" closer to Zion now than in 1832.

Then there is the last great revelation given to Joseph Smith in January 1841 where the Lord reminded Joseph that the fullness of the priesthood had been lost to the church (D&C 124:28). The Lord offered to restore it again as long as the conditions were met. Those conditions were possible in a time frame known only to the Lord. For us, it was merely described as "sufficient time" for the demanded work to be finished (D&C 124:31). Whether or not we succeeded or failed, the Lord gave us an objective way to decide. If we succeeded we would not be moved out of Nauvoo, but the Lord would fight our battles. If we failed, we would be driven out, cursed, and put through hardships. As the revelation states:

If ye labor with all your might, I will consecrate that spot that it shall be made holy. And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I shall have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place. But if they will not hearken to my voice, nor unto the voice of these men whom I have appointed, they shall not be blest, because they pollute mine holy grounds, and mine holy ordinances, and charters, and my holy words which I give unto them. And it shall come to pass that if you build a house unto my name, and do not

do the things that I say, I will not perform the oath which I make unto you, neither fulfil the promises which ye expect at my hands, saith the Lord. For instead of blessings, ye, by your own works, bring cursings, wrath, indignation, and judgments upon your own heads, by your follies, and by all your abominations, which you practice before me, saith the Lord. (D&C 124:44-48)

The martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith was accomplished through a conspiracy involving William and Wilson Law, among others. William Law was a counselor in the First Presidency. Nauvoo was wallowing in sin, including adultery and fornication initiated by men with evil designs. The seducing of women in Nauvoo was perpetuated by many evil men, including John C. Bennett while he was also a counselor in the First Presidency. Reading the High Council minutes for Nauvoo you can see how widespread this adulterous conspiracy spread inside the community. I do not mention this to judge or condemn anyone. Only to suggest that the Lord's description of the latter-day gentile condition in His prophecy ("filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations") can be taken as a description of events at the end of Joseph's life. If so, then it was merciful for the Lord to pour out "wrath, indignation, and judgments" upon the saints to end those things and prepare for something better to come of Joseph's ministry.

I do not think the restoration through Joseph accomplished Zion. That remains undone; future. The time Joseph had was very short. He restored much, and did what he was required to do in that period of time. He left us a foundation to build upon. More is necessarily coming.

Brigham Young did a great work in preserving the church as a body and keeping Joseph's work alive. But he never claimed to be Joseph's equal, nor to be a prophet like Joseph. He repudiated that idea.

I am converted to the Book of Mormon, and to Joseph Smith as a prophet, and to the revelations we received through him. But we remain under condemnation. I'm not interested in judging anyone, condemning anyone, or belittling anyone; far from it. I am grateful to all those who went before and acknowledge a debt of gratitude to them for keeping the revelations of Joseph in print and maintaining an organization that at least tries to remember Joseph and the work God did through him. But I want to know the truth of our awful state, even if it breaks my heart.

CHAPTER 9

The Wisdom of a King

JANUARY 23, 2014

King Benjamin's Self Reliance

King Benjamin struck the perfect balance on the subject of “self-reliance.” His example was his greatest sermon. Although he could have done so as their monarch, King Benjamin refused to tax or oppress his people (Mosiah 2:14). Instead, he labored with his own hands and spent his life serving his people (Mosiah 2:12).

His policy anticipated the discontinuance of servitude in the Law of Moses (Mosiah 2:14). Long before Christ would do so, King Benjamin made people free from slavery. But that came at a social cost. Without servitude as a form of repayment (limited under Moses' law to six years servitude, in the seventh they go free Ex. 21:2), some were reduced to begging. For those, King Benjamin taught his people that they must give to beggars. He required that his people notice them, and not allow them to petition in vain for relief from their needs (Mosiah 4:16). He forbid withholding from beggars because of the convenient thought beggars deserve their direful condition (Mosiah 4:17–18).

King Benjamin's overall theme reminds us that we are all beggars (Mosiah 4:19). In a very real sense, none of us are or can ever be anything more than a beggar, dependent upon God. God gives us the power to live (Mosiah 2:21). We borrow from God the power to breathe (*Id.*). We borrow from God the ability to move and do whatever we do. God lends all this to us so we can do according to our own will (*Id.*).

Since we are beggars, utterly dependent upon God for our very existence, we have nothing to brag of and no legitimate claim to self-reliance (Mosiah 2:24–25). That recognition of our condition is what motivated King Benjamin, although a monarch, to humbly labor for his own support.

In our day of abundance, we are easily misled into thinking that the blessings of our productive society permit us to be self-reliant. Of course that is only temporary. The principles upon which our society's abundance are built have been discarded. Therefore, our "riches will become slippery" as the fruit of true principles vanish from those who dishonor the foundation upon which prosperity is conferred.

Safety in the coming scarcity of the last-days will only be found through Zion (D&C 45:66–68). Because the occupants of Zion will be one, they will follow two controlling principles which create the "self-sufficiency" of Zion.

First, the counterpart to the world (or Babylon as the scriptures have nicknamed the world) is Zion. Zion will require the laborer to labor only for Zion, not for themselves (2 Ne. 26:31).

Second, we must perform the required great labor. We cannot expect to eat or be clothed in Zion if we do not work to produce the necessities of Zion (D&C 42:42).

JANUARY 25, 2014

King Benjamin's Wisdom

King Benjamin taught his people to repent and rely on God's mercy. He declared that salvation comes "through faith on his name" (Mosiah 3:9). Therefore, he testified of Christ coming to suffer, be rejected, killed and rise the third day (Mosiah 3:9-10). King Benjamin's testimony was that this atonement would allow everyone to repent, and even those who sin "ignorantly" would be forgiven of their sins (Mosiah 3:11).

To King Benjamin's thinking, the great error was willfully doing what you know was against God's will. However, even then, King Benjamin invited his listeners to repent and reclaim the mercy God offered (Mosiah 3:12).

His sermon presumes that his audience were sinners, and suffered from a myriad of shortcomings. As King Benjamin explained, "the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be forever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah 3:19). This doctrine is astonishing because it:

- makes each person individually accountable to follow the Holy Spirit
- presumes that the Holy Spirit will entice you directly
- puts each person in a position to be submissive to God
- accepts the fact that life will always "inflict" even the best of us
- makes God the one who is responsible for life's challenges

- bids us to accept these afflictions, because they come from a wise Eternal Parent.

King Benjamin is remarkably democratic in his view of God and His involvement in our lives. God is direct, immediate and involved with everyone. He reminded his audience to:

Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend. (Mosiah 4:9)

This should be self-evident, but how often do we need to be reminded that we do not understand all that God understands. We are inferior in our understanding, we lack wisdom and are more often than not unable to understand what God does or why He does it. Yet we presume to judge whether God is right or wrong in many matters which, to our limited understanding, seem unfair, unequal, unkind and unfeeling. This is a product of our ignorance. God is merciful, kind and seeks to exalt mankind by bestowing His grace upon us. We take His wisdom to be offensive. How often have you heard: “I cannot believe in a God who...” followed by a list of preferences and demands for greater latitude in behavior. Since we don’t (indeed can’t) comprehend all God does, we make ourselves fools when we insist we know better than God, or we are right and God is not.

His message does not focus on man’s failures, but instead focuses on hope through Christ. This hope, he declared, obligated the believers to take care of the needs of their fellow men. King Benjamin made charity to others the hallmark of retaining a remission of our sins:

for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God— I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants. (Mosiah 4:26)

For him, our assistance to those in need is directly related to retaining forgiveness of sins.

Can you imagine a government led by someone with this outlook?

JANUARY 27, 2014

My Viewpoint

I sent the following comment in an email this morning, and thought I would put it up here as well:

I believe the form of Mormonism practiced by the LDS Church is in great peril at the moment. If the members do not fight to retain their religion it will continue to alter and degenerate into something very different that it was and it will fail in its purpose to bring again Zion. If the members allow the trend to continue, the church may “succeed” in the world, but it will not succeed in the mission of bringing Zion again. Like happened in the Book of Mormon, it will require another off-shoot to repent and return.

JANUARY 29, 2014

King Benjamin: Come Together

Nephi divided the kingdom between the prophetic line (descended through his brother Jacob) and the kingly line (descended from Nephi). Jacob's line maintained the plates. Nephi's line maintained the kingship and called themselves after Nephi. The prophetic line used whatever name they were given at birth, with no need to retain Jacob's name. The direct line from Jacob (Nephi's brother) ended with Amaleki. In his day two things happened. He would die without an heir (Omni 1:25) and the plates they had been maintaining were filled and there was no more room to add to their engravings (Omni 1:30).

It apparently did not occur to any of those who descended from Jacob that the Small Plates of Nephi could be expanded by adding additional plates (See e.g., Jarom 1:2; Omni 1:30). There is no explanation for this in the small plates. Perhaps there was an oral tradition (see, e.g., Omni 1:9) with Nephi instructing that no more plates were to be added. That would account for the plates being "full" at the time of Amaleki, because none could be added.

In any event, when the plates are filled, Jacob's direct line ends. I do not believe this is a coincidence. The convergence of these two events is what puts the small plates into the hands of King Benjamin, and in turn through his descendants, into the hands of Mormon (Words of Mormon 1:3).

Amaleki was impressed with King Benjamin's efforts on behalf of the Nephites. He described King Benjamin as one who labored "with all the might of his body and the faculty of his whole soul." As such, he was able to convert the people back to the Lord (Words of Mormon 1:18). However, in accomplishing this, King Benjamin

had to “use much sharpness because of the stiffneckedness of the people” (*Id.* v. 17) as he and other prophets preached repentance (*Id.* vs. 17-18.) Apparently King Benjamin had no problem with others who preached repentance to his people (*Id.* v. 18). Instead he welcomed these “prophets” who taught repentance.

In many ways King Benjamin is the perfect leader, both civic and religious. It is no wonder the lines divided at the time of Nephi and Jacob would come together again in the person of King Benjamin.

FEBRUARY 2014

FEBRUARY 5, 2014

The News to Rejoice

King Benjamin’s instruction to his people (and in turn to us) was not just a good man giving fatherly advice at the end of his life. His message was given to him to deliver by heaven itself. King Benjamin said,

And the things which I shall tell you are made known unto me by an angel from God. And he said unto me: Awake; and I awoke, and behold he stood before me. And he said unto me: Awake, and hear the words which I shall tell thee; for behold, I am come to declare unto you the glad tidings of great joy. For the Lord hath heard thy prayers, and hath judged of thy righteousness, and hath sent me to declare unto thee that thou mayest rejoice; and that thou mayest declare unto thy people, that they may also be filled with joy. (Mosiah 3:2-4)

First, it is noteworthy that the message he received was because “the Lord hath heard thy prayers.” The message would not have come without a petition.

Second, the petition was granted because the Lord “hath judged of thy righteousness” and determined King Benjamin was qualified to receive the messenger and the message. The petitioner must be judged righteous. Petitioning without qualifying would not have accomplished anything.

When a sermon has a Divine source, it is important to listen. More than what an academic can offer, an angel’s message is given from God, who is the author.

Notice the purpose of the message is to cause the recipient to “rejoice” and for those who he was permitted to relay the message to likewise “be filled with joy.”

When you read the message, however, there are many things contained within that do not cause us to “be filled with joy” because we learn about the coming of the Lord Omnipotent into the flesh (Mosiah 3:5) to “suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death” (Mosiah 3:7). The message continues that men will “consider him as a man, and say he hath a devil, and shall scourge him, and shall crucify him” (Mosiah 3:9). Yet despite these horrible details of the Lord’s life, we all (King Benjamin, his people and us) are told this is news which should “fill us with joy” when we hear it. It is as if the Lord wants us to be mature enough to look beyond the trouble, the difficulty, the terrible price and to the effect of His sacrifice. To the extent we ponder His awful suffering, it stands as a powerful symbol, testimony and record of His great love and willingness to go to the extreme to reclaim us from condemnation and suffering. We should stand in awe of His love, because this suffering was born from His great love. In no other way could He open the door to bring us back from death and hell. Therefore, the message must necessarily include these awful details.

The joy we are to feel comes from the result of His suffering: he shall rise the third day from the dead; and behold, he standeth to judge the world; and behold, all these things are done that a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men. (Mosiah 3:10)

Christ will rise! Through the power of this suffering He is qualified to judge! He will judge righteously!

The good news continues: “his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned” (Mosiah 3:11). These are good things, indeed.

However, what decides if we are blessed by the Lord Omnipotent when He stands “to judge the world” and imposes a “righteous judgment?” King Benjamin expounds this sermon precisely to teach his people how to take advantage of the atonement of the Lord Omnipotent. I think the sermon is worth studying. It was given to allow those who hear this message (including us) to take advantage of the Lord Omnipotent’s great sacrifice. We ought to all be interested in doing that.

FEBRUARY 10, 2014

Benjamin, Christ and Joseph

King Benjamin’s teaching are astonishing to read. For him the critical question was his conscience: “I had served you, walking with a clear conscience before God” (Mosiah 2:27). This was important because he knew he needed to put the burden upon his people by warning them, otherwise he would be accountable for failing to warn them. His sermon was so that he “might be found blameless, and that your blood should not come upon me, when I shall stand

to be judged of God of the things whereof he hath commanded me concerning you” (*Id.*). He knew that warning the people in plain language would be the only way his conscience would be clear before God. Then his people could choose between heeding his teaching and thereby obeying God, or rejecting his message and being accountable.

King Benjamin also taught a lesson almost identical to what the risen Savior would later teach. Here is King Benjamin’s language:

O my people, beware lest there shall arise contentions among you, and he list to obey the evil spirit, which was spoken of by my father Mosiah. For behold, there is a wo pronounced upon him who listeth to obey that spirit” (Mosiah 2:32–33).

Here are Christ’s words:

And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been. For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away. (3 Ne. 11:28–29)

Neither King Benjamin nor Christ anticipated complete agreement among their followers. All of us understand things somewhat differently, and in some cases more completely as a subject begins to be studied. Even the same individual will understand things differently at different times. As you study in good faith and confidence before God you may believe in a

proposition that you will change your understanding about later. That is inevitable when we are progressing.

Assuming we take seriously King Benjamin's and Christ's instruction to refrain from contending in anger with one another, how do we proceed as brothers and sisters in sorting out our unavoidable disagreements? The answer, of course, is provided in counsel from Joseph Smith found in scripture which clarifies how we overcome our disagreements:

- by persuasion
- by long-suffering
- by gentleness and meekness
- by kindness
- by pure knowledge

(D&C 121:41–42.)

The inappropriate disputations and contentions that were condemned by King Benjamin and Christ would likewise fit Joseph's scriptural clarification. We are warned not to:

- cover our sins
- gratify our pride
- pursue our vain ambitions
- exercise control
- exercise dominion
- exercise compulsion
- persecute the Lord's saints

(D&C 121:37–38.)

One of the strongest evidences Joseph Smith was in harmony with the Spirit of the Lord is shown in his words mirroring both King Benjamin's and Christ's. King Benjamin counseled his people after a lifetime of service and contemplation. Christ's counsel was

given following His resurrection in His appearance to a Nephite audience. In contrast, Joseph's inspired words came while he was confined to Liberty Jail in Missouri. Gracious words from all three, but Joseph's were composed in the worst of circumstances. This is one of the reasons I have such respect for Joseph.

FEBRUARY 11, 2014

False but Repeated

There is a false rumor which gets often repeated, and I thought I'd mention here.

Many people, including those who criticize *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, claim that the talks I began on September 10, 2013 in Boise, Idaho were to "promote" that book. That accusation comes from the stake president's letter demanding that I not promote the book in his summons letter. That letter was written before any of the talks were given. He was guessing about the talks. I responded to him, and on this blog, that I've never promoted the book and the planned talks have nothing to do with the book. The subject of the lectures is Zion. I have concluded five of them. You can search them if you like. There is nothing in any talk that promotes *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. If it is mentioned, it is only to give context to something discussed. I do this with other things I have written. It helps quickly put something in context. That is not promotion.

Before the talks began the *Salt Lake Tribune* also said the purpose of the upcoming talks was to promote the book. They took that from the stake president's letter. Of course, since no talk had been given, they were merely speculating along with the stake president.

Reviewers writing after the Zion talks began, the *Salt Lake Tribune* writing before the talks began, bloggers writing after the

talks began, and those making comments on news articles both before and after have repeated the stake president's unsubstantiated fear that I was planning to promote the book on a speaking tour. When the accusation was originally made, he didn't know what I was planning to speak about and he feared (or more correctly those who were behind the court feared) it would be about the book. The accusation continues to be repeated that I was excommunicated because I refused to stop promoting the book. The fact is that I've never *begun* to promote it. It is dishonest to continue to claim the contrary, even when five of the talks have now been given and they have nothing to do with promoting a book.

At the talk venues, which I pay to rent, the public is invited to attend without any cost. My books are not available for sale at the venues. Those who spend their own time, provide the equipment and recording media sell copies of the recorded talks. They charge to offset their costs. I get nothing from the sales, and any portion considered mine is donated to further the missionary effort of the church.

The talks are about Zion. You can read transcripts of them by using the links on this blog. If you find something promoting *Passing the Heavenly Gift* in any of these talks, please send me a comment pointing it out to me.

The first five talks laid a foundation for the next talk, which will address Zion directly. The talk after that (which will be the seventh) will speak of Christ. Thereafter, the criteria and characteristics of mankind related to Zion will be discussed. All of the talks are on one subject only: Zion. In retrospect you will see there was only one talk given, in ten increments, on that single topic.

Just to be clear, I am not angry. Sometimes in this politically correct culture, correcting an error is thought to represent an angry

outburst. That is not the case. I just want to be clear about the truth. If you believe I am promoting a book in the talks I have been and will be giving, then you are mistaken because you believe a false accusation which, by now, has proven to be untrue.

FEBRUARY 19, 2014

An Ideal Society

King Benjamin taught how to be engaged in the work of God.

“I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17). Service to others, and charity to others, not judging the beggar but relieving their suffering, these were the hallmarks of King Benjamin’s religion. He practiced his faith by helping others. He tied together forgiveness of your sins with helping those who are in need:

For the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God—I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants. (Mosiah 4:26)

King Benjamin is teaching the ideal. This is his pattern of righteousness for his people. If they follow this sermon, there will be unity and no poor among them.

This single focus on helping others was to the exclusion of a lengthy discourse on evil. In his great sermon he only briefly discusses evil, focusing instead on avoiding contention. He taught that contention allowed an evil spirit to enter in, at which

point other bad things would follow (See Mosiah 2:32–33). He admonished you to return what you borrow from your neighbor (Mosiah 4:28).

To cover the topic of evil, he wisely counseled as follows: “I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them” (Mosiah 4:29). That frank assessment by King Benjamin is beyond the wisdom of a young person to grasp. It reflects the lifelong contemplation of an aging king, not the clever fiction of a young Joseph Smith. It is one of the reasons I do not believe Joseph Smith authored the Book of Mormon and one of the proofs it reflects a greater wisdom than was his when the book was first printed. King Benjamin was unwilling to give a lengthy list of what not-to-do, because the list would be endless. Instead he tells what ought to be done to avoid it in an ideal society.

Likewise, the Lord was not concerned with all the temptations which befell Him. Instead, He chose to give them “no heed” (D&C 20:22), staying focused upon what good He could do to His fellow man. Had it been followed, King Benjamin’s blueprint would have made a better Nauvoo. The fact it wasn’t is proof Joseph Smith did not author the Book of Mormon, nor possess the society-organizing wisdom of King Benjamin. But, then again, Joseph died at 38, and King Benjamin lived into old age.

FEBRUARY 24, 2014

Scriptures, not Traditions

Mormon’s abridged account of King Benjamin gives us a wealth of background information about the Nephite sacred history. Look at what leaks through in these opening verses:

And now there was no more contention in all the land of Zarahemla, among all the people who belonged to king Benjamin, so that king Benjamin had continual peace all the remainder of his days. And it came to pass that he had three sons; and he called their names Mosiah, and Helorum, and Helaman. And he caused that they should be taught in all the language of his fathers, that thereby they might become men of understanding; and that they might know concerning the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which were delivered them by the hand of the Lord. And he also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, saying: My sons, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God. For it were not possible that our father, Lehi, could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time. I say unto you, my sons, were it not for these things, which have been kept and preserved by the hand of God, that we might read and understand of his mysteries, and have his commandments always before our eyes, that even our fathers would have dwindled in unbelief, and we should have been like unto our brethren, the Lamanites, who know nothing concerning these things, or even do not believe them when they are taught them, because of the traditions of their fathers, which are not correct. (Mosiah 1:1-5)

Notice the “plates of brass” are mentioned. These are not the Nephite records, but the records obtained from Laban (See 1 Ne. 3:3; 1 Ne. 4:24; 1 Ne. 5:10–16). These Old Testament records were “in the language of the Egyptians” which was required to be able to “read these engravings.” Therefore, it was necessary for King Benjamin’s sons to “be taught in all the language of [King Benjamin’s] fathers” in order to be able to read these records. From this we can conclude the earliest Jewish records were composed and preserved in Egyptian rather than Hebrew. As a matter of historic fact, Hebrew did not exist as a written language until several thousand years following Egyptian writing. This is an interesting detail that leaks through. Joseph Smith would not likely have known this.

To even be capable of reading these scriptures, the Nephite student was required to be proficient in another language. This proficiency was required in order to prevent this line of faithful descendants from “dwindling in unbelief” because they would never be able to remember all of God’s “mysteries” apart from the record. When they lose this kind of information they “know nothing” and “do not believe them when they are taught them, because of the traditions of their fathers, which are not correct.”

What is the difference between ignorance of scripture because they cannot be understood due to the inability to read the language (Egyptian) and ignorance of the scripture because you do not study?

Do we dwindle in unbelief because we fail to study as easily as one would who couldn’t read the language?

Can we overcome the incorrect traditions of our fathers if we fail to study the scriptures any easier than we could if we were unfamiliar with them because of apathy?

Is it possible today to dwindle in unbelief because we do not study the scriptures and acquaint ourselves with God’s mysteries?

King Benjamin intrudes into the Nephite record following the content of the Small Plates of Nephi. The Small Plates document a dwindling by the descendants of Jacob. The greatest content is early, and as the record moves along, it has less and less to offer about God and His mysteries. Then abruptly, King Benjamin reverses this pattern. He emerges as a figure of restoration in a pattern of decay. But his ability to serve in that role was directly related to him “remembering” God’s mysteries, which came directly from his study of scripture.

You neglect the scriptures at your peril. You dwindle as you lose contact with God’s mysteries contained in scripture. Trusting in the traditions of our fathers is risky. Traditions get measured against scripture, not the reverse.

The Constitution is likewise a guide to protect our liberty. We are free to ignore it, and thereby lose the protection it provides us. Because we have done this, we have destroyed our freedom. The scriptures are also a guide to save us. Because we ignore them, we have lost our way. In place of liberty and salvation we have chosen captivity and damnation. The cure for both is only found through repentance and remembering God’s great mercy to us, then laying hold again upon that mercy.

FEBRUARY 27, 2014

Stiff Necks, Ancient and Modern

King Benjamin explains something which ought to give us all pause.

“[T]he Lord God saw that his people were a stiffnecked people, and he appointed unto them a law, even the law of Moses” (Mosiah 3:14). Think about all that implies. The people who God claimed as “His” were nevertheless “stiffnecked people.”

He didn't abandon them because of their spiritual stubbornness. Nor did He reject them because they were suffering from their own pride and self-will. They were still "His."

But, because they were unable or unwilling to really come to Him and be redeemed from the fall (See Ether 3:13) He gave them something to trouble them: the law of Moses.

This set of rules, sacrifices, ordinances and observances included worship within a Temple or House of God. There, in rich symbolism, they were reminded about the real thing: His presence. They were taught about His real nature. They were shown symbols that foreshadowed His coming into the world to be the bread of life, the light of the world, the sacrifice for sin, and the one through whose blood it was possible to enter back into the Holy of Holies. They had symbolic clothing, sacred language, Divine ritual, and sacred space given them. All this because they were "a stiffnecked people" who were unwilling to enter into His actual presence.

These benighted and proud people then looked at all others and regarded them as less than "the chosen people" because the law of Moses given to them entrusted them with sacred space, sacred ritual, and sacred observances.

These stiffnecked people made the law of Moses an end in itself. It was their special set of rites, their sacred space, their hidden rituals participated in by only the "worthy" and "chosen few" that reassured them they were God's chosen people. And they were chosen. But they were chosen to be an example of foolishness, an example of pride, and ultimately an example of those who reject God and kill His Son. They were chosen to show how to miss the mark while standing atop sacred ground dedicated to the God they claimed to worship. They were chosen to be foolish, so we might be wise. They were chosen precisely because of their stiff necks to show how God

does not delight in the mere observances of outward rituals, but expects our hearts to be made righteous. They illustrate how God rebuked the ancient chosen people for their failure to follow Him in the heart, rather than just in their empty ordinances (1 Sam. 15:22).

In King Benjamin we have the wisdom of a godly king. He is warning us about the foolishness of God's people. It is a powerful insight into what God prizes and what God thinks of those who, because of their stiff necks, will not bow down in prayer to seek His presence. King Benjamin is not a fictional character. He is a prophet-king whose wisdom exceeded the young Joseph Smith's when Joseph translated the record of this fallen people. It contains wisdom that still exceeds the grasp of those who claim to follow the religion restored through Joseph.

MARCH 2014

MARCH 4, 2014

King Benjamin's Faith

King Benjamin is great even as he proclaimed his weaknesses. Only a confident leader, secure in his worth before God can admit all King Benjamin admitted about his own weakness. Concerning his moral worth he declared: "I am like as yourselves, subject to all manner of infirmities in body and mind..." (Mosiah 2:11). Concerning his physical vitality he explained "For even at this time, my whole frame doth tremble exceedingly while attempting to speak unto you..." (Mosiah 2:30).

King Benjamin was not seeking admiration. He did not give his people reason to envy him, nor did he take wealth or support from them. He provided for himself and labored with his own hands; never imposing anything upon his people. He was a servant,

though a king. He measured his life by what he gave others, not by what he received from them (See Acts 20:35).

King Benjamin did not even deliver his own message. Instead, he taught what an angel told him to teach. “[T]he things which I shall tell you are made known unto me by an angel from God” (Mosiah 3:2).

This was a meek king, whose own life modeled the life of the coming Savior about whom he testified. The testimony of his own weakness affirms King Benjamin’s willingness to value service to others above self-interest.

How different from our leaders today was this ancient king! This model of meekness is so unlike the proud, the vain, the self-willed who lead today in government, education, religion, business and society. The contrast is so great that it helps us to understand why angels would minister to King Benjamin and the heavens are silent with leaders today. There simply is not a leader among us who is willing to give in sacrifice what is required to know God. King Benjamin illustrates the principles of the *Lectures on Faith*, Sixth Lecture:

An actual knowledge to any person that the course of life which he pursues is according to the will of God, is essentially necessary to enable him to have that confidence in God, without which no person can obtain eternal life.

It was this that enabled the ancient saints to endure all their afflictions and persecutions, and to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing (not believing merely) that they had a more “enduring substance” (Heb. 10:34).

Having the assurance that they were pursuing a course which was agreeable to the will of God, they were enabled to take,

not only the spoiling of their goods and the wasting of their substance joyfully, but also to suffer death in its most horrid forms; knowing (not merely believing) that when this earthly house of their tabernacle was dissolved, they had a building of God, a house “not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1).

Such was, and always will be, the situation of the saints of God, that unless they have an actual knowledge that the course that they are pursuing is according to the will of God, they will grow weary in their minds and faint; for such has been, and always will be, the opposition in the hearts of unbelievers and those that know not God, against the pure and unadulterated religion of heaven (the only thing which ensures eternal life), that they will persecute to the uttermost all that worship God according to his revelations, receive the truth in the love of it, and submit themselves to be guided and directed by his will, and drive them to such extremities that nothing short of an actual knowledge of their being the favorites of heaven, and of their having embraced that order of things which God has established for the redemption of man, will enable them to exercise that confidence in him necessary for them to overcome the world, and obtain that crown of glory which is laid up for them that fear God.

For a man to lay down his all, his character and reputation, his honor and applause, his good name among men, his houses, his lands, his brothers and sisters, his wife and children, and even his own life also, counting all things but filth and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, requires more than mere belief or supposition that he is doing the will of God, but actual knowledge; realizing that when these sufferings are ended he will enter into eternal rest, and be a partaker of the glory of God.

For unless a person does know that he is walking according to the will of God, it would be offering an insult to the dignity of the Creator were he to say that he would be a partaker of his glory when he should be done with the things of this life.

But when he has this knowledge, and most assuredly knows that he is doing the will of God, his confidence can be equally strong that he will be a partaker of the glory of God.

Let us here observe, that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things, never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things; it was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things, that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God.

When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice, because he seeks to do his will, he does know most assuredly that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not nor will not seek his face in vain.

Under these circumstances then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life.

It is in vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they in like manner offer unto him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him.

... Those then who make the sacrifice will have the testimony that their course is pleasing in the sight of God, and those who have this testimony will have faith to lay hold on eternal life, and will be enabled through faith to endure unto the end, and receive the crown that is laid up for them that love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who do not make the sacrifice cannot enjoy this faith, because men are dependent upon this sacrifice in order to obtain this faith; therefore, they cannot lay hold upon eternal life, because the revelations of God do not guarantee unto them the authority so to do; and without this guarantee faith could not exist.

All the saints of whom we have account in all the revelations of God which are extant, obtained the knowledge which they had of their acceptance in his sight, through the sacrifice which they offered unto him. And through the knowledge thus obtained, their faith became sufficiently strong to lay hold upon the promise of eternal life, and to endure as seeing him who is invisible; and were enabled, through faith, to combat the powers of darkness, contend against the wiles of the adversary, overcome the world, and obtain the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.

But those who have not made this sacrifice to God, do not know that the course which they pursue is well pleasing in his sight; for whatever may be their belief or their opinion, it is a matter of doubt and uncertainty in their minds; and where doubt and uncertainty are, there faith is not, nor can it be.

For doubt and faith do not exist in the same person at the same time. So that persons whose minds are under doubts and fears cannot have unshaken confidence; and where unshaken confidence is not, there faith is weak; and where faith is weak, the persons will not be able to contend against all the opposition, tribulations, and afflictions which they will have to encounter in order to be heirs of

God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus; and they will grow weary in their minds, and the adversary will have power over them and destroy them.

It is from the example of King Benjamin we can see the Sixth Lecture in action. Likewise, in King Benjamin's sermon we see the fruit of that faith: the ministry of angels to the king, and his knowledge of God. Therefore, King Benjamin had the kingdom of heaven with him, because he showed the living fruit which comes from that heavenly vine.

The Book of Mormon is a treasury of eternal truth, told in example after example, testifying to the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We can all get closer to God by abiding its precepts than from any other book.

MARCH 6, 2014

Your Only Hope

Contrast the reaction of King Benjamin's audience with modern expectations and sensibilities. We want to hear smooth things. We want our self-image enhanced. We want stories that tell us we are good people in a good place doing good things and getting better every day. We want to feel reassured. King Benjamin's audience felt threatened, unnerved and dismayed. They were reduced to fearful trembling, instead of hurrahs for their greatness. A sermon like the one King Benjamin delivered would drive the audience out the doors today.

Keep that in mind as you read the reaction recorded in Mosiah, Chapter 4:

When king Benjamin had made an end of speaking the words which had been delivered unto him by the angel of the Lord, that he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and behold they had fallen to the earth, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them. And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men. (Mosiah 4:1-2)

Fear had come upon them! They viewed themselves in their carnal state! They thought themselves less than the dust of the earth! They cried out for mercy! Interesting indeed!

No hymns were sung thanking God for a prophet-king to guide them. No hymns proclaiming that all is well, all is well. No praise to the man who shook their hearts and minds with fear. Instead, it was contrition and prayer for Christ's atoning blood to remove their sins and purify their hearts.

We read this stuff but don't recognize any contrast between ourselves and these earlier "saved" people. We think we're like them. But we are not. We're nothing like them in our faith, in our practices, in our humility and in our understanding of God's plan of salvation. We are filled with pride and foolishness, leading one another about from vanity to trifles, like drunkards who vomit upon one another and then view the results as proof of our inspiration (Isa. 28:1-3). We get angry at the idea we need repentance because we are not yet saved. Our anger is proof we have fallen for Satan's lies (2 Ne. 28:20).

Joseph Smith decried the Saints of his day (with a lamentation that has increased in relevance in our own) with these words:

How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations — too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of the called and chosen of God. None but fools will trifle with the souls of men. (*TPJS*, p.137)

If sermons were trifling in his day in ours they are vacuous. This thin gruel cannot sustain us. Oddly, we are supposed to be constantly reminded of the need for spiritual nourishment to sustain life. When you participate in religious conventions dominated by theatrics, mood lighting and musical manipulation it is a substitute for the Spirit, not the Spirit itself. Theatrics are never an adequate substitute for Gospel substance. Everything money can buy can make an impressive show, but in the end it is just another example of how you can buy anything in this world for money. Being heart-warmed is not the same thing as being brought to repentance.

You will lose your soul if you seek foolishness instead of truth. Like King Benjamin's audience, you should be afraid. Your only hope is through Christ.

CHAPTER 10

Work to be Done

MARCH 12, 2014

Themes, Truth and Scripture

There is a great work left undone. The field has been abandoned and there is no harvesting taking place. We are all required to repent first, then to learn something before we attempt to teach others.

In doing the work I have been asked to do, I am relaying what I have been instructed needs to be taught to this generation at this time for the Lord's promises to be fulfilled. That requires time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thought to be given to the Lord's design. Although I do not consider myself equal to the task, I am nevertheless doing what little I am able to do as part of the Lord's work.

To the best of my ability, I seek only to lay out what should be noted about our present challenges. I do my best to avoid a fanciful, or flowery or heated imagination in discussing salvation. While others may do so, I do not intend to trifle with the souls of men.

Joseph Smith's counsel is appropriate and guides my thought on these things:

A fanciful and flowery and heated imagination beware of; because the things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity-thou must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God, than the vain imaginations of the human heart! None but fools will trifle with the souls of men. (TPJS p. 137)

I have never trifled with men's souls.

I have never given any one permission to speak for me, use my name to support their cause, or advocate using me as their source to make their ideas or teachings credible. If someone has a good idea, it should stand on its own. It should be reasonable. If an idea is so weak and fanciful, then associating my name, Joseph Smith's name, or some general authority's name with it should not overcome the weakness of the idea. I do not believe in citing any authority other than scripture and Joseph Smith. Check the books I've written and talks I've given. Check my blog. There you can find what is true, taken from the authority of scripture. It is self-evident and capable of standing on its own. The truth I advocate is so self-supporting that I need to make no claim to authority.

Yes, doubt everything other than truth taken from the scriptures. They are the standard by which I teach.

Because this generation does not understand their precarious situation, they are unable to repent. But it is only repentance which can save some few souls. People are so quickly and easily drawn away from the challenge to repent before God into some other vain and

foolish track. That is necessary, however, because in Joseph's day we failed in Kirtland, failed again in Missouri, failed in Nauvoo and then lost Joseph. In Brigham's day we failed in Salt Lake. The effort to save great numbers has not and will not work. There have always been comparatively few who have the patience and devotion to allow the Lord to do His work. Men and women charge into the upward pass and are slain by the beast who guards the way generation after generation, while God works patiently to save some few. In the meantime, if great numbers can be persuaded to wander off or charge impatiently, then so be it. Had they remained, they would have spoiled what lies at the top of the mountain. It is better, therefore, that they be taken in their vanity than to bring it with them into a society where such things would be ruinous.

King Benjamin is a more important topic for today than ever. But I get a flood of emails and comments asking about other, ridiculously extraneous things propounded by others using my name for credibility. You should already know enough to determine on your own the significance or insignificance of these side show issues. If you do not, then you deserve your confusion. You are on trial here. You must grow to stand on your own. Do not be dependent on me or any man for your knowledge of the truth. You must be able, by the power of the light given to you, to decide between truth and error, between what comes from God and what is of men and devils. If you are unable to determine that for yourself, then relying on others will never qualify you to enter into the Lord's rest.

We have gotten to the reaction of King Benjamin's people to his sermon. They were brought to repentance. But we have not yet taken a look at the overall setting wherein King Benjamin taught. Nephi established a line of prophet/priests to whom was given the charge to teach the people. That line's work is recorded in the

Small Plates of Nephi. At about the same distance in time from Nephi as we find ourselves from Joseph Smith, we read on the Small Plates of Nephi: “I know of no revelation save that which has been written, neither prophecy...” (Omni 1:11). I’ve discussed this in *Eighteen Verses*.

The prophetic line ended in silence. Whole generations record only one verse, admitting their failure; then the Book of Mormon reignites with King Benjamin. After generations of dissipating the light and falling into darkness, he represents the return of the prophetic. He is a symbol of restoration, a type of how God reclaims His people when they err. By his day, the people were overcome again, and needed return to the faith that could save them.

But King Benjamin did not operate on his own. He taught only what had been given to him to teach by an angel (Mosiah 2:2–4; see also Mosiah 4:1). Because God renewed His covenant with King Benjamin, it was through King Benjamin that the people could once again make an acceptable covenant with God. The purpose of sending the angel to King Benjamin was not to offer him alone salvation, but to offer once again a valid covenant through which others could repent (Mosiah 5:5–7).

This is how the Gospel works. Even the chosen people of Lehi and his son Nephi brought to the promised land failed to abide the conditions of the covenant. But God did not abandon them. When enough generations had passed to allow the Lord’s hand to be revealed, then the Lord acted. The heavens were opened, the covenant was offered again, and souls were saved.

This is a great type. The Book of Mormon is far more relevant for our day than we imagine. It is a blueprint for how our own history is unfolding. It is a sobering lesson in how to fail and how to wait for the Lord to reclaim and redeem us.

We ignore or misunderstand the content of The Book of Mormon at the peril of our own salvation. When we do, then no one can be saved.

MARCH 14, 2014

The Gospel's Effect

The people King Benjamin addressed were brought to repentance, but it is the record of their repentance that is so relevant to us today. Keep in mind that King Benjamin's record was originally composed about a century and a quarter before Christ. At that time the Law of Moses was in effect. The version we have in the Book of Mormon was abridged by Mormon about four centuries after Christ. Therefore, we have a record which is both pre- and post- Christ. Mormon's abridgment was intended, however, for a latter-day audience. He saw our day. Before finishing his father's record, his son, Moroni, described us in detail and even foretold that those whose religion would be based on his record would not only pollute God's holy church, but would use it as the means of "getting gain" (Mormon 8:33–38). Mormon also knew his civilization was passing away as he made his abridgment (Mormon 6:1). I conclude that the account of the repentance process was primarily intended as a message to the latter-day gentiles who would receive the record.

King Benjamin's audience cried out in prayer this petition to God:

O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men. (Mosiah 4:2)

What strikes me about this prayer is that today we would identify this with the Evangelical/Born Again Christian approach to a religious experience. It is a confession of belief coupled with a request for forgiveness. Latter-day Saints belittle this approach. We claim that much more is needed, including certain authoritative rites and ordinances. Ultimately, that may be part of God's plan, and certainly Christ's own example informs us that baptism was required even of Him "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:13-15). But the ordinances are signposts that provide an outward proof of inward change. Here, in the account of King Benjamin, we have the focus entirely upon the inward change. This is the "weightier" part of the process. Christ condemned those who observed the ordinances, but failed to exercise mercy and faith; the inward target of the outward observance (See, e.g., Matt. 23:23). There is some considerable peril in being too proud of your ordinances. They have displaced the inward, weightier part of the Gospel in past dispensations, and certainly can do so again. Satan has no new tricks. The old ones seem to work so well, there is little reason to introduce some new road for apostasy. Pride in ordinances as the ticket for salvation works every time it is tried. It's a little thing, but little things count when the measurement is taken against perfection.

The effect of this inward change of heart is also recorded in King Benjamin's account. It is the universal evidence which comes from God to all those who find saving grace.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come, according to the words which King Benjamin had spoken unto them. (Mosiah 4:3)

From this we learn:

- The Spirit of the Lord is the testifier and witness of salvation (witnessing to the saved)
- There is joy when you receive the Spirit
- Sins are remitted, because the Spirit cannot dwell in unclean vessels (the vessel is cleansed)
- Your conscience is clear because you no longer carry your sins
- All of this is the product of faith
- Faith comes as a consequence of being ministered to by one authorized by God, as was King Benjamin.

That last point was one which Joseph Smith also taught. Joseph said:

Whenever men can find out the will of God and find an administrator legally authorized from God, there is the kingdom of God, but where these are not, the kingdom of God is not. All the ordinances, systems, and administrations on the earth are of no use to the children of men, unless they are ordained and authorized of God; for nothing will save a man but a legal administrator; for none others will be acknowledged either by God or angels. (*TPJS*, p. 274)

It is for this reason that King Benjamin and Mormon include the final ingredient in verse 3: “according to the words which king Benjamin had spoken unto them.” They heard the truth from one sent by God, had faith in Christ as a consequence of that, believed, asked and experienced the fruit of conversion. This is how Christ’s Gospel works (Romans 10:17).

The Gospel, when it makes its brief appearances upon the earth, comes in the same way as we find recorded in this record of King Benjamin. Those who receive the message, believing it to be from

God, having faith to ask God for their part in Christ's atonement, can likewise receive their own inward confirmation; their own experience akin to that described in Mosiah 4:3.

An unchanging God has an unchanging Gospel. Rather than taking pride in your ordinances, view yourself in your lost and fallen state. Start there, and rebuild your faith through repentance. Once you've cleansed the inward part, there will be time to worry about the outward later.

MARCH 19, 2014

As Soon as Converted...

As soon as his people covenanted with God to receive their redemption through the atonement of Christ, King Benjamin's attention turns to the needs of the poor. He taught those who were converted to think of the needs of others.

This is what James would call "pure religion" (see James 1:27; see also James 2:14-18) because it changes the world, here and now. Instead of suffering, the unfortunate are ministered to by others because their religion requires it of them. King Benjamin's instruction to those who covenanted with God to apply the atonement on their behalf was:

ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish.
(Mosiah 4:16)

There was no room for judging the needy. There was only the obligation to give. As he counseled:

Perhaps thou shalt say: the man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just—. (Mosiah 4:17)

Maybe the beggars in your life deserve to suffer. Maybe it is their fault. Maybe they shouldn't have used drugs, or behaved so poorly they lost their jobs, or run away from home and family who would have cared for them if they hadn't strayed, or any number of other circumstances to conclude "their punishments are just." Maybe they are all at fault. Maybe they do deserve your condemnation, not your help. Maybe you are facilitating their wickedness. Maybe you are enabling their irresponsibility. Yes, maybe you shouldn't help, after all...

King Benjamin anticipates this and warns you:

But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done he perish forever, and hath no interest in the kingdom of God. (Mosiah 4:18)

If you judge the beggar this way, even if you are right about their "punishments" being "just," then you have need to repent. You have no right to do this. You will not be forgiven by God, and cannot enter His kingdom. You are to help the beggar. That is all.

For behold, are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for all the substance which we have, for both food and raiment, and for gold, and for silver, and for all the riches which we have of every kind? (Mosiah 4:19).

You occupy the same relationship to God as the beggar occupies to you. If you have the ability to help, then you must. You only have what you possess in this life as a result of God's mercy and

kindness to you. Therefore, even if you think you “deserve” what you own because you worked hard for it, you are nevertheless a beggar whose very existence is drawing upon God’s power to live, and move and have your being (Mosiah 2:21).

King Benjamin warned us:

if ye judge the man who putteth up his petition to you...and condemn him, how much more just will be your condemnation for withholding your substance, which doth not belong to you but to God....I say unto you, wo be unto that man, for his substance shall perish with him. (Mosiah 4:22–23)

This has been in our Book of Mormon since 1830. But we hear the only way we are to help the poor should be through Fast Offerings, institutionalizing our charity. I doubt that would satisfy King Benjamin. I doubt there will be collective salvation. I’m certain there is no such thing as group-charity sufficient to qualify you to avoid individual condemnation for refusing the beggar who asks you individually to help.

Remember this is the subject addressed by King Benjamin to those who have entered into a covenant with God to obtain a remission of their sins.

MARCH 22, 2014

Blog Numbers

This blog has had a total of 2,298,164 visits so far.

The top five referring sources of traffic are:

Google 120,221

Facebook 6,884

Bing 6,121

Pure Mormonism 6,047

LDS Freedom Forum 5,582

The top five countries are:

US 2,131,397

Canada 29,144

Russia 15,882

Australia 14,243

UK 14,187

MARCH 23, 2014

The Poor

King Benjamin does not concern himself with all the ways it is possible to get it wrong (Mosiah 4:29). Mankind gets it wrong all the time. The great challenge is to finally get it right. His sermon is an attempt to lay out how a society may finally overcome the failures and draw close to God. Individual righteousness is a rare thing in this world, but it happens more frequently than societal righteousness. King Benjamin's talk is about societal success, or social righteousness.

Once converted, the work begins. The work, as we have seen, involves eradicating poverty by helping the needy. We are forbidden from turning away the beggar. We are forbidden from judging them. We have but one duty toward them; that is to help them.

His sermon continues:

And again, I say unto the poor, ye who have not and yet have sufficient, that ye remain from day to day; I mean all you who deny the beggar, because ye have not; I would that ye say in your hearts that: I give not because I have not, but if I had I would give. (Mosiah 4:24)

Even the poor are required to have a charitable heart. They may lack the means, but they cannot lack the heart. All society must have a disposition to help one another.

Unless we are willing to render aid to one another, we cannot possibly become one. Until we view the circumstances of the least member of the community from their vantage point, we cannot become one. It isn't possible to bear one another's burdens when we are oblivious to the burdens they bear. Alma would preach this as a requirement to be baptized (See Mosiah 18:8-10). Until we are like-minded we don't even qualify for the ordinance offered by Alma.

The Book of Mormon speaks of the ideals that condemn us because we do not even recognize them. Even if we pretend to share the religion of those of the Book of Mormon, our social order is far from what the book preaches.

King Benjamin continues: "And now, if ye say this in your hearts ye remain guiltless, otherwise ye are condemned; and your condemnation is just for ye covet that which ye have not received" (Mosiah 4:25).

Here is a failure so significant it absolutely prevents Zion. Coveting is a vile personal failure, and so foreign to becoming "one" as a people, that it is condemned in the Ten Commandments (See Ex. 20:17). It prevents us from being equal. Equality is required for Zion.

When the Restoration was led by Joseph Smith, the Lord cautioned the early believers that they were required to be equal in temporal things. Because they refused to do so, they forfeited the Spiritual manifestations which necessarily accompany Zion.

"Nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld" (D&C 70:14). They failed. We do

not even attempt it. We probably shouldn't attempt it until we first repent and receive the faith the Lord once attempted to restore through Joseph Smith.

When Joseph was still ministering, the Lord foretold of a great work to be done. This work was the Lord's to do, but even the mention of it inspired eagerness by the early converts. When hints of Zion emerged in Joseph's prophecies, the Saints thought it was their right to have it immediately, and without the necessary patience and diligence that must precede it. They hastened to the center spot, where, as a result of the Indian Relocation Act enforced by Andrew Jackson, all Native Americans had been relocated. The line between the Indians and whites was drawn on the western border of Missouri. All eastern Indians, from Maine to Florida, had been resettled in the Indian Territory. The center of their population was, at that moment, Independence, Missouri. If the Indians were going to be taught, there was one center spot available for access by white missionaries. It was in Independence, Missouri. When Mormons attempted to cross the line and preach inside the Indian Territory, they were threatened with arrest and transport to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. At that brief moment in time, the closest they could locate to the target audience was Independence, Missouri.

By June 1844, when Joseph Smith was leaving to seek out the Remnant, the Indians had long since left the former relocation area. They were then scattered westward. Hence Joseph's plan to go to the Rocky Mountains to find the Remnant and build the New Jerusalem.

When the Mormon missionaries located the then-closest, center spot the eager Saints filed into the area. Even if they had the right location at that moment, they were unqualified to be there. Had they followed King Benjamin's sermon, they would have had a

better chance. Instead they were anything but converted in their hearts to the kind of principles which would allow people to live in harmony with one another.

Here is how the Lord characterized the 1830's ruinous attempt to steal Zion:

Behold, I say unto you, there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore by these things they polluted their inheritances. (D&C 101:6)

Once again, covetousness in the heart is prohibited in Zion. Though the Lord may have given them a potential inheritance, they squandered it.

King Benjamin's sermon is about the ideal. It is what the heart should have within it for the man or woman to be able to live with others equally. We will fail, like all others have failed, if we are unable to first remove the impediments within our hearts. What good would be accomplished in any age to gather together people who are unwilling to be one, unable to live in harmony with one another. We have that society already. The mantra we recite to overcome the vast inequalities and dissimilarities among us in our fractured society is "tolerance" and "non-judgment." These are as likely to invite evil as good.

Cease to be covetous and lustful. Have a disposition to no longer do evil, but to do good. Give to those in need and succor those who you are able to succor. Then you have some chance to avoid jarring one another, contending and envying one another. There is no reason for the Lord to gather anyone until everyone He would gather has the attributes taught by King Benjamin in their hearts. Once that is done, there will be time enough to gather.

But if you gather together and there is but one among you with a covetous, lustful and envious heart, there can be no Zion.

MARCH 28, 2014

Grand Junction Lecture

Where:

Grand Vista Hotel Ballroom

2790 Crossroads Blvd.

Grand Junction, CO 81506

When: Saturday, April 12, 2014 @ 9:30 a.m.

Seating: 125

MARCH 31, 2014

Throw My Hands Up

Today is the last day of my last temple recommend. The church didn't ask me to return it. I'm qualified to have it. But it will expire today. It can't be renewed, of course.

I was asked by a young fellow about sustaining leaders in the upcoming general conference. I replied, "the Lord recently said: "I'm kind of over gettin' told to throw my hands up in the air, So there."

APRIL 2014

APRIL 2, 2014

A Covenant with the King

King Benjamin had an objective. Better said, the angel of the Lord had an objective in mind when the king was told what to teach. The objective is more fully explained once the people had received the lesson.

And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had thus spoken to his people, he sent among them, desiring to know of his people if they believed the words which he had spoken unto them. And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually. And we, ourselves, also, through the infinite goodness of God, and the manifestations of his Spirit, have great views of that which is to come; and were it expedient, we could prophesy of all things. And it is the faith which we have had on the things which our king has spoken unto us that has brought us to this great knowledge, whereby we do rejoice with such exceedingly great joy. And we are willing to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things that he shall command us, all the remainder of our days, that we may not bring upon ourselves a never-ending torment, as has been spoken by the angel, that we may not drink out of the cup of the wrath of God. (Mosiah 5:1-5)

Here is the covenant-making King Benjamin had as his assignment. The Lord saves, but uses covenant-making as a part of His process. We don't get to make covenants, but we do get to accept them if the Lord offers them to us. It must be the Lord's offer and our acceptance for it to have effect. Here the words that were recited by the congregation were the words King Benjamin had asked them to accept: "And now, these are the words which king Benjamin desired of them" (Mosiah 5:6). Meaning they were exactly what they'd been asked to accept as the new covenant.

King Benjamin's record continues:

and therefore he said unto them: Ye have spoken the words that I desired; and the covenant which ye have made is a righteous covenant. And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters. (Mosiah 5:6-7)

This was the object. To extend the Family of God by adding sons and daughters. King Benjamin's ministry was producing fruit suitable to be laid up against the harvest (as Jacob quoted Zenos to describe).

King Benjamin expounds on the central role Christ plays in our salvation. Only by connecting ourselves to Him will we be able to qualify for what He (as our Father) has to offer.

And under this head ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives. (Mosiah 5:8)

Or, in other words, we always remember Him that we may always have His spirit to be with us.

He continues:

And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ. And now it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall not take

upon him the name of Christ must be called by some other name; therefore, he findeth himself on the left hand of God. (Mosiah 5:9–10)

Since Christ is the prototype of the saved man, all who would be saved must likewise be qualified to hold this same status or be called by this same name.

King Benjamin's religion is like the one Joseph Smith was restoring. He offered his people an authorized covenant with the King, established by heaven through King Benjamin. It is remarkable how much of the deepest Gospel truths are found in the Book of Mormon.

APRIL 7, 2014

Elder Oaks' General Conference Talk

I am trying to understand Elder Oaks' talk. Taking everything he said at face value, here is what I think he said:

1. Women don't hold the priesthood.
2. Those who hold "keys" can give assignments to others who then act under the authority of the priesthood of the key-holder.
3. In the temple sisters use the authority of the priesthood to perform washings and anointings, inasmuch as they were set apart by key-holders.
4. Therefore women use the authority of the priesthood.

From this it can be surmised: Sister missionaries will be able to baptize some day using the authority of the priesthood of a key-holder. This talk was designed to accomplish what the "Ordain Women" movement wants by approaching it in two steps rather than one. It is de facto ordination, incrementally adopted by careful measures.

APRIL 15, 2014

Abraham's Sons

Last night I was awakened by this:

Did not Ishmael and Isaac mourn together and bury their father Abraham? Was not their father's blood precious unto them both?

Does not the blood of Abraham run in both Isaac and Ishmael?

Does not the blood of Abraham run in both Esau and Jacob?

Let Ishmael today find the blood of his father, Abraham, precious still. Let Isaac likewise today find the blood of his father, Abraham, precious again. For Abraham's sake, let all the brothers who descend from Abraham now mourn when Abraham's blood is spilled by any of his descendants.

If Abraham's sons do not find his blood to be precious still, there remains nothing between them but the shedding of Abraham's blood. For all his sons who fail to find Abraham's blood to be precious will be held to account by God, who will judge between the sons of Isaac and the sons of Ishmael, the sons of Esau and the sons of Jacob for father Abraham's sake, with whom God covenanted.

The sons of Abraham will not be permitted to continue this disregard of their common father's blood without provoking God, who will soon judge between Abraham's sons.

APRIL 18, 2014

Grand Junction Transcript - Zion

The Grand Junction lecture has been transcribed and uploaded to Scribd. It is also available in *The Teachings of Denver C. Snuffer, Jr., Volume 2: 40 Years in Mormonism 2013-2014* and at www.restorationarchives.com.

APRIL 23, 2014

Name Calling

I have been called, among other choice words, “apostate” by some LDS folks in their indiscriminate, anonymous on-line rants. Name-calling by Latter-day Saints is a complete role reversal from where the Restoration began. When Joseph Smith was being abused by the religionists of his day, he observed

they treated my communication not only lightly, but with great contempt, saying it was all of the devil. That there were no such things as visions or revelations in these days; that all such things [were confined to and the sole right of] the apostles. (*JSH* 1:21)

The people who rejected Joseph’s beliefs were rejecting the Bible itself, which they pretended was the basis for their faith. Joseph did what James 1:5 instructed him to do, and got an answer. That is the faith he restored: A living faith in which God will speak to all who, like me, lack wisdom, liberally. I lack wisdom. I go to God with questions. So long as any of us ask in faith, He will answer. I know. He has answered me. Now Latter-day Saints think it is their right to denounce others who have asked God, and have been answered. If Latter-day Saints do possess the truth, then for those they think in error should be met with kindness, not reviling (See *JSH* 1:25). “If they suppose me to be deluded they ought to endeavor in a proper and affectionate manner to reclaim me” (*JSH* 1:28). Instead I read the accusation I am “apostate” by these smug Latter-day Saints. It must put a smile on the faces of authority and the devil. These disciples pretend to follow Joseph’s restored religion while acting the part of his persecutors. The saints have come full circle indeed.

Where exactly do you draw the line and begin to denounce others as “apostate?”

If we both believe in the Book of Mormon, are we of the same faith or is one of us “apostate?”

If we both believe Joseph Smith was called of God to restore the Gospel, are we of the same faith or is one of us “apostate?”

If we both accept the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price as scripture, are we of the same faith or is one of us “apostate?”

If we both believe in continuing revelation and that God has yet to reveal a great deal as part of the Restoration of all, are we of the same faith or is one of us “apostate?”

If we have all of the foregoing in common, is that enough to respect one another as fellow-believers? Or do you require much more of me than I can give in order to avoid being denounced by you? How much do you want to micromanage my beliefs? Do you ever feel any twinge of concern about not permitting others to worship “according to the dictates of their conscience, and allow others the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may?” (Paraphrase of 11th Article of Faith).

If I believe priesthood has no **authority** over me, and you believe as Elder Oaks declared from general conference that the “keys” are the right to exercise **authority**, are we of the same faith or is one of us “apostate?” What if my belief is based on the scripture “no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood” which I hold in higher regard than a declaration from a church official to the contrary? (See D&C 121:41)

If I believe *The Lectures on Faith* are still scripture, but you do not, are we of the same faith or is one of us “apostate?”

If I believe the LDS Church has changed dramatically in my lifetime, and even more since Joseph Smith died, are we of the same faith or is one of us “apostate?”

If I believe the scriptures were given to control and govern the faith, and you believe whatever comes from living church officials can contradict or disregard the words of scripture, are we of the same faith or is one of us “apostate?” If I can tolerate your view in this regard, even if I do not share it, are we of the same faith or is one of us “apostate?” If I use the scriptures and you use the scriptures, why are your views correct and mine incorrect? How did we arrive at the odd position that you get to call me “apostate” for believing the scriptures differently than you do? If you trust that “keys” are the thing that guarantees you salvation, what exactly are the “keys,” allowed by scripture, that bear that out?

If I will let you go in peace, why cannot you let me go likewise in peace. The LDS church is an institution of this world, not of the next. We should care less for the things of this world than we do. I am very content with my faith in God, and very much in harmony with everything He has asked of me. If you believe the same about yourself, then let that be your assurance and have the confidence to leave me to go my way in peace. Practice your beliefs in the way you think God wants, and I will do the same.

I will never again submit to another man’s priestly claim to dominion, control, judgment or oppression. It was denounced in scripture, and I reject such things (D&C 121:36–42). If you think there is a priest who has the right to demand things of you in exchange for saving you using some “key,” I do not share your belief, but I am perfectly willing to respect you if that is yours. Happy is the man who serves his God in faith and conviction. Happier still is the man whose God is Christ and therefore respects his right to voluntarily act for himself, accepting full accountability for his beliefs, and not expecting man to save him using authority to do so.

If, by your definition, I am “apostate,” then let me assure you I am content to be so. I am fully willing to accept whatever Christ’s judgment is for being so. More importantly, I am entirely satisfied I remain in harmony with what God expects of me, and I wish the same for you.

APRIL 26, 2014

Altered

In response to a question about whether my views have changed since I wrote *The Second Comforter*, I would say they have in some respects and have not in others. I do not intend to write a new edition and change what I wrote there. Believing Latter-day Saints should faithfully follow their religion. I was cast out of the church, and therefore have no reason to follow it lock-step any longer. But I do not resent the church, want back in, or hope to change it.

Even though the LDS Church is working very hard to put its leaders between the members and the Lord, I think a faithful, believing Latter-day Saint can endure that abuse while still honoring God. Christ did as much in His lifetime, and He is the great example. When you pass through all the rites of the LDS Church it begins and ends at almost the same point. The starting point is believing Joseph Smith, inspired by James 1:5, asked God and received an answer—and you can too. The ending point involves an ordinance which promises you further light and knowledge by conversing with the Lord through the veil. Both at the beginning and the end of the LDS journey you are told to speak with God. LDS expect an answer. If not for my belief in this promise, and the LDS Church’s teaching of it, I do not believe I would ever have conversed with God. So even now I see the LDS Church as having great value to its faithful members who can grow closer to God

despite the foolishness of its Correlation program and distorted elevation of mere men.

The energy and light given through Joseph Smith powers the LDS Church still today. Even though the church's leadership want to disregard, ignore, and even violate Joseph's teachings, they still benefit from his original ministry.

One of the clearest moments in LDS Church history came on August 8, 1844. Joseph was dead. There were multiple contenders to lead the church in the leadership vacuum left by Joseph and Hyrum's murders. When the critical moment arrived, the church took a profound, irreversible step. The church which was founded by revelation, proclaimed it was led by revelation, and held itself out as "true and living" because it was led by a prophet who received revelation, chose at that moment to ignore revelation. No one argued the choice should be made by God and then revealed to the church. Instead the church held an election and voted the 12 into power. At that moment the church decided to vote for its destiny, instead of letting God reveal to her His choice. Under the new direction Nauvoo was abandoned, the Saints fled into the wilderness, suffered, endured misery, were abused and blamed by the leaders for the leaders' failures, and received chastening from an unimpressed God.

Although the Saints descended into a salty wasteland, the discovery of gold in California, the railroad and the convenience of a mid-mountain stopover helped them to survive. With time and a larger American economy in the midst of an Industrial Revolution, the church was likewise elevated economically and politically. Each step along the way the church positioned itself to benefit until now it is a powerful, multi-billion dollar enterprise with political, economic and social clout to protect itself from ever

again enduring the early embarrassments and persecutions. It has diversified its product line from merely the “Mormon” religion, and has vast real estate, cattle, farming, business, banking, housing, educational, employment, television, radio, satellite, and other ventures. With all its leaders must manage, there is little time for and increasingly less attention given to the religion Joseph Smith was restoring. It is becoming increasingly clear to those who study the faith that it has undergone drastic changes since June 27, 1844. Those changes make the LDS Church much more like the rest of the world’s religions, and less like the revolution begun by God through Joseph.

I’m not sure the LDS Church today is even the same one I joined in 1973. I am certain it is not the same one Joseph Smith restored.

When I first joined the LDS Church there was a Presiding Patriarch sustained as a “Prophet, Seer and Revelator” in General Conference, which I understood was required for a fully organized church. He was subsequently released, his office left unfilled, and he has now died.

When I first became LDS the temple rites included roles, penalties and signs (I did not then understand) but which have subsequently been eliminated or changed.

When I first became LDS priesthood was restricted (which I hated but accepted), subsequently removed.

When I first became LDS there were 70’s in every ward who were regarded as having a distinct office, which has now been eliminated, confined to General Authorities, who are all now High Priests, the office of 70 having been essentially eliminated.

When I first became LDS doctrine mattered, scriptures were used as the primary source of teaching, and General Conference talks were not re-read in Sacrament, Priesthood, Relief Society and

Sunday School as the basis of lessons, unlike today. The adoration of church leaders is now almost the only “religion” practiced. Jesus Christ is a nominally mentioned party, appended at the end of talks and testimonies, as if mentioning Him at the end certifies everything remains His.

When I first became LDS we twice had the Sacrament blessed and passed each Sunday, we discussed openly the “mysteries” and had a very different Spirit within the community. There is a harshness to the LDS Church, and a hardness in its members which wasn’t there in 1973.

The list of changes is now over 120 items long and I won’t lay them out here. It isn’t important to do so. In the dedication of *The Second Comforter* I wrote: “Dedicated to the ‘few who are the humble followers of Christ’ (2 Ne. 28:14).” I hoped readers would go look that verse up and read it, and the surrounding verses. If they do they will read this description:

Because of pride, and because of false teachers, and false doctrine, their churches have become corrupted, and their churches are lifted up; because of pride they are puffed up. They rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries; they rob the poor because of their fine clothing; and they persecute the meek and poor in heart, because in their pride they are puffed up. They wear stiff necks and high heads; yea, and because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms, they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men. (2 Ne. 28:12–14)

The dedication at the beginning of *The Second Comforter* was deliberate. I have recognized the truth for many, many years. But

I honored every obligation I took upon myself. I have only joined one church organization in my life: the LDS Church. I am grateful to it and would not have left when they excommunicated me. But that does not mean I wasn't alarmed by what I saw the leaders doing to alter and misshape the church. I tried to be meek, and still to be so. Now, however, I am entirely free to be meek in relation to the Lord alone, and no longer need to be anything but a "humble follower of Christ" (to use Nephi's description). It is no longer necessary to be "led, that in many instances [I will] err because of the precepts of men." I can look to the Lord alone, and forget institutional demands on my attention, time and thought. Or, as our Lord once put it: I can be about my Father's business.

APRIL 30, 2014

Can't We Build a Bridge?

There is a gulf between two views regarding Mormonism which makes it very difficult for us to speak and understand each other. This gulf is problematic because it labels one group as blind and the other as faithless. It is possible to hold either view and still be very believing, committed and prayerful. Therefore, it is wrong to accuse one another.

Below is a contrast between the two sides illustrated by the **extreme**. There are shades between the extremes, but the extremes are the best way to illustrate the separation:

I call the first position the "brethrenites" because it is a shorthand way to capture the view: These Mormons believe that everything done since the death of Joseph Smith through Brigham Young and successors in the Presidency and Twelve of the LDS Church has been entirely conforming to God's will. They believe "keys" were passed and, as a result, these successors control God's

power and can seal on earth and in heaven. They believe the statements made by the successors are invariably in the status of “prophet, seer and revelator” and therefore inspired by God (or binding upon Him by reason of the “keys” held). The general authorities are able to give binding statements as mentioned in D&C 1:38. They speak the “mind of the Lord” as described in D&C 68:4. As part of this construct, any criticism of the Brethren is by definition ‘evil speaking of the Lord’s anointed’ and therefore criticism is apostasy. These people also believe the scriptures are secondary to a “living oracle” and therefore the scriptures are not as important as whatever the president of the church says now.

I call the second position the residue [of the saints]. These people believe the Book of Mormon and Joseph’s Smith divine calling, but do not agree that everything that began with Brigham Young conformed to God’s will. They believe the Lord spoke to this generation through Joseph (D&C 5:10) and it was binding on everyone, including all subsequent leaders and members. They are skeptical of the claims to “keys” and authority, and believe the leaders after Joseph are not his equal. They believe the scriptures hold a higher priority than church authorities and when the scriptures are contradicted, the advice or direction can be safely ignored. They do not think criticism is evil or apostasy, but believe all who claim to believe in the Restoration through Joseph Smith are similarly bound to accept the Lord’s will through Joseph until the Lord decides to call another like Joseph (if He does).

When the brethrenites quote long passages from Talmage, McConkie, Grant, Brown, Widstoe, Lund or Romney to make a point, it has no persuasive impact on the residue. Likewise, when the residue quote the scriptures, it does not persuade the brethrenites as long as there is something contrary from Snow,

Young, Taylor or Pratt. The arguments that one side believes should settle a question never succeeds in persuading the other because the underlying assumptions are so very different. Until the different groups decide to agree on what matters, what defines the faith, and whose statements carry authority and weight, there can be no agreement.

This is an odd gulf confronting Mormonism, because the brethrenites quote Eph. 4:11-13 (leaders given to bring “unity of faith”) and the residue believe D&C 38:27 (“if ye are not one ye are not mine”). Both ends believe sincerely in their position.

To the Brethrenites, I would pose this question: If apostles and prophets were given to bring “unity of faith” why do the doctrines differ so greatly between Brigham Young and Thomas Monson? What is this “in the absence of revelation” that changes very important doctrines?

To the residue, I would pose this question: If you believe your position, why do you remain silent in sacrament meeting, Sunday school, priesthood, Relief Society and YM/YW classes? (Your position will never unify Mormons if the strength of your position goes unarticulated.)

CHAPTER 11

Be Wise

MAY 2014

MAY 4, 2014

1 June 1830

On the 1st of June, 1830 a small meeting was held by about thirty people who comprised the church. The meeting was in a home. During the meeting Newel Knight was carried away in a vision. Only Brother Knight had the vision, but Joseph accepted it as true and had it put into the history.

Here is what Newel Knight's visionary experience included:

He saw heaven opened and beheld the Lord Jesus Christ, sitting [at] the right hand of the Majesty on high, and had it made plain to his understanding that the time would come when he should be admitted into his presence to enjoy his society for ever and ever. (*JS Papers: Histories* Vol. 1, p. 388, Draft 1; punctuation and insertions as in original)

That example shows how open Joseph Smith was to allowing others to both receive revelations and for their revelations to be regarded as authentic and trustworthy. Joseph trusted in this

visionary experience of Brother Newel Knight so much it was included in Joseph's history.

This experience would be described as Brother Knight's calling and election being made sure, since it includes the promise from God that he (Bro. Knight) will be able to enjoy Christ and the Father's "society for ever and ever."

It is not regarded as "too sacred" to discuss.

It is not regarded as impudent to have a visionary experience apart from Joseph.

It did not excite Joseph's jealousy or condemnation, but inspired his confidence and faith.

It happened in a home, although it was a church meeting. No church buildings existed among the Saints during Joseph's lifetime, other than the Kirtland Temple. The people met in homes or outside during Joseph's lifetime.

MAY 8, 2014

Be Wise

Why did Zion fail in Joseph's day? How can we avoid that today? In almost every respect we are no better than those in Joseph's time, and unfortunately in most respects we are not as good as they were. The only advantage we have is their failure. Provided, of course, we will learn from it. Their failure gives us great insight into what does not and cannot work.

The Lord counsels us to not attempt anything involving Zion in "haste." But we are also told to be diligent (See, e.g., D&C 59:3-4).

Read this advice from the Lord as if it were given to you about your day:

Verily I say unto you who have assembled yourselves together that you may learn my will concerning the redemption of mine afflicted

people—Behold, I say unto you, were it not for the transgressions of my people, speaking concerning the church and not individuals, they might have been redeemed even now. But behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them; And are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom; And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself. And my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be, by the things which they suffer. I speak not concerning those who are appointed to lead my people, who are the first elders of my church, for they are not all under this condemnation; But I speak concerning my churches abroad—there are many who will say: Where is their God? Behold, he will deliver them in time of trouble, otherwise we will not go up unto Zion, and will keep our moneys. Therefore, in consequence of the transgressions of my people, it is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season for the redemption of Zion—That they themselves may be prepared, and that my people may be taught more perfectly, and have experience, and know more perfectly concerning their duty, and the things which I require at their hands. And this cannot be brought to pass until mine elders are endowed with power from on high. For behold, I have prepared a great endowment and blessing to be poured out upon them, inasmuch as they are faithful and continue in humility before me. Therefore it is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season, for the redemption of Zion. For behold, I do not require at their hands to fight the battles of Zion; for, as I

said in a former commandment, even so will I fulfil—I will fight your battles. (D&C 105:1–14)

Now go back and read D&C 101:1–68. Remember the greatest challenge to prepare beforehand is the hearts of the people who are to gather. There is no reason to gather to fail again. Without appropriate preparation of people beforehand, angels will not gather them in (D&C 77:11).

Zeal and haste will prevent Zion from coming and will destroy it if it's here.

MAY 10, 2014

Never Been A Dissident

I am not and have never been a “dissident” in the LDS Church.

I do not want to reform the LDS Church. I do not want to manage it, or join in managing it, or change its management. There is no “cause” I advocate in the hope of altering a policy or procedure of the LDS Church. Their policies, procedures, programs, choices, how it spends its money, what it builds or who it employs are all matters I am indifferent to.

Those who want to get the LDS Church to ordain women are dissidents. Those who want to have the Book of Abraham abandoned, or want to wear pants (a convention, not a policy), or seek to have homosexuals married are the work of dissidents. There are many causes and many dissidents. I am not one. They are welcome to their causes.

I was converted to a religion which I understood was restored by Jesus Christ through Joseph Smith and contained the latest clarifications, corrections, additions and explanations God wanted me to understand. I am still converted to that religion.

At one time I briefly identified the religion with the LDS Church. But that lasted only a few months. With a little reflection, it was apparent the religion was not the institution. All the other organized religions I was familiar with held the Bible to be God's complete statement of faith. It was not to be added to or expanded upon. The new religion I accepted taught me to believe God spoke still, and revelation would continue. God likewise talked with me for the first time when I joined this new religion. If God hadn't spoken to me in answer to sincere prayer, I would not have become Mormon.

I believe "the extent of [our] knowledge respecting [God's] character and glory will depend upon [our] diligence and faithfulness in seeking after [Him]" (*Lectures on Faith*, 2nd Lecture, par. 55). Therefore I ventured to try to gain knowledge about God directly, by my own inquiries to Him. I pursued this in all sincerity of heart, believing God would answer me when I sought Him (James 1:5). I have learned it to be true that "the inquiry frequently terminated, indeed always terminated when rightly pursued, in the most glorious discoveries and eternal certainty" (*Id.* par. 56).

To practice this religion, I joined the LDS Church because I thought it welcomed and encouraged this kind of relationship with God. For a season it seemed to do just that. Over the course of four decades, however, it became increasingly difficult to pursue the religion inside an institution with ambitions which ran contrary to my desire to understand God and become acquainted with Him.

I did not resist the desire of the LDS church to control its meetings and pursue an ambitious course of controlling what its members could say. I did not dissent and petition for change. But neither did I cease from seeking God in the manner I found in Joseph Smith's example, Nephi's teachings, Jacob's sermons, Alma's

writings, Abinadi's warnings and Christ's discourses. It was my understanding that I was free to worship God "according to the dictates of [my own] conscience," and the LDS Church was likewise free to enjoy "the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may" (11th Article of Faith).

If they had permitted me to do so, I was absolutely content to remain a member of the LDS Church. Although I understood the religion differently than taught within the programs of the church, the church had the right to pursue its course without my interference. I do not believe I ever interfered. I studied the faith, tried to live the faith, tried to understand what it offered each of us when rightly pursued, and ultimately received "the most glorious discoveries and eternal certainty" from my pursuit.

Like others who tasted from this tree of life, once I learned the religion restored through Joseph Smith was indeed alive, and able to reconnect us to the True Vine (John 15:1-5), I wanted others to also know it was possible to eat from the Tree of Life (See 1 Ne. 8:12; also Enos 1:9). It should be welcome and appropriate for all Latter-day Saints to both belong to the LDS Church and to reconnect with heaven and be filled with knowledge from God.

I thought I was free to believe and teach others about how great things God offered to us all, liberally, if we ask in faith, believing. However, the LDS Church took the position I was out of harmony with the institution and should be excommunicated. They were free to do so. I do not challenge their right to remove me from their membership roles.

Now, just as before when I was part of the institution, I still believe and practice the religion restored through Joseph Smith. I believe I have always been free to practice this faith, and I intend to continue to do so. Now, however, I am unmolested by institutional

constraint and control, and therefore I needn't be concerned about some of the things I was before.

There is no office in either the LDS Church or the priesthood of God called "Prophet." Nor is there an office in the LDS Church or the priesthood called "Seer;" nor "Revelator" nor "Translator." There is an office called "President" and an office called "Apostle" and "High Priest" and "Elder" and others.

The role of a "prophet" comes as a gift from God, not from holding an office. To receive this gift, one must receive a prophecy from God, or a testimony from Jesus, to be delivered to people. Likewise revelation comes from God, and when it comes the person receiving it has received revelation and is therefore a revelator. It is a gift, not an office. Similarly the gift of seership is not an office, but a gift bestowed by God, and requires God's showing to the recipient something before the gift is held. In the case of Mosiah, the gift included "miraculous interpreters" (Mosiah 8:13), but in the case of Enoch, the Lord made the gift reside within his body (Moses 6:35-36). Likewise, translation of ancient languages to preserve truth previously lost to mankind is a gift from God, not an office.

When the LDS Church claims its presiding authorities are "prophets, seers and revelators" I took no issue with the claim, but understood this to be descriptive of a hope, or ambition, to be given by God as a gift to them if God willed to do so. I presumed sustaining them as "prophets, seers and revelators" did not empower them to make the claim to possess these gifts in the absence of God bestowing them. Therefore, I awaited God's hand to vindicate the expectancy, never dreaming that by merely voting I could elevate a mere man to possess what is God's right alone to give.

There is no official "creed" given to us by Joseph Smith. He advised all to search into God's mysteries: "I advise all to go on

to perfection, and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of Godliness” (*TPJS* p. 364). I have done that, and believe all should do likewise. No institution can do this for me, or for you. It is up to each of us to practice this faith.

I believe everyone ought to practice a living, fruitful faith by reconnecting to the True Vine, because it is only through Christ we are able to do anything. When any soul reconnects to Christ, they are alive in Him and should do as Christ would have them do. If this puts you into conflict with an institution, then I believe it is our duty to obey Christ and endure the insults, rejection and turmoil which follows.

When I joined the LDS Church I literally sacrificed all I knew before. My family and closest friends were all anti-Mormon. When I joined, I lost their friendship. Although I succeeded in reconciling with many of them, it was a difficult process taking years.

When I found Christ, I was threatened with the loss of everything I had come to know during the 40 years of membership in the LDS Church. I was even confronted by a Stake President’s threat of the “spiritual demise” of “my family” if I did not relent from doing as Christ asked of me. After 40 years of building a new life as a Latter-day Saint, once again I was threatened with the sacrifice of all I knew and enjoyed. It was no easier the second time than it was the first. There are a lot of lies about me, and false claims attributed to me.

I believe “that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things. It was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should

enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God” (*Lectures on Faith*, Lecture 6, par. 7). Because I have made these sacrifices, I have been called “proud” and “stubborn” and filled with “self will and ambition.” Nothing could be further from the truth. I mourn my losses, but believe they were made in obedience to Christ. Therefore I endure this, while wishing it were otherwise.

I have come to realize that criticism can be used by the Lord to accomplish what He wants to happen. There are many Latter-day Saints who will now read what I have written just because I was excommunicated. More has been done by that action to spread knowledge of what I believe than anything I have done. It stimulates curiosity and interest.

The LDS Church was entirely within its right to excommunicate me, and any of its members it considers unwanted. It is free to teach, advocate and alter what it does without any interference from me. I do not dissent from it, or hope in any way to change it or its course. That is between it and God. But likewise I claim the right to continue as I began, and believe in the faith restored through Joseph Smith and practice it according to the dictates of my conscience.

I likewise believe the LDS Church members who now spew venom against me are free to do so. They are not likely to persuade anyone by such tactics. I think the truth is more resilient than a lie.

If there were one scripture I could commend to my LDS critics it would be this: “And now I say unto you, Refrain from [this man], and let [him] alone: for if this counsel of this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God” (Acts 5:38–39).

MAY 13, 2014

Dates for Remaining Lectures

Ephraim - June 28, 2014

Las Vegas - July 25, 2014

St. George - July 26, 2014

Phoenix area - September 9, 2014, this will conclude the 40th year and will take place on day 365.

All talks will be in the morning.

MAY 20, 2014

Trust God Alone

Oliver Cowdery wrote a series in the *LDS Messenger and Advocate*, including Letter VII in July 1836 and Letter VIII in October 1836. In these letters Cowdery recounted early events and provided some of the first details of pre-church events in Joseph Smith's life.

Orson Pratt prepared a publication while in England in 1840 which drew on Oliver Cowdery's earlier account. Pratt's *Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions and of the Late Discovery of Ancient American Records* likewise retold early events. Pratt's account actually quotes Cowdery's account in the relevant part below.

I assume both Cowdery and Pratt believed the material, and trusted it contained important principles for others to likewise learn and believe. It is one detail which they included, but which Joseph Smith omitted from his own account, that stands out to me. I think this omitted detail holds doctrinal significance.

The angel visited Joseph Smith on the day following the all-night visits of 22 September 1823 in his bedroom. He returned when Joseph arrived at the site of the buried book. When Joseph opened the container by removing a top rock, according to both Cowdery

and Pratt, in addition to everything you are familiar with already, the following took place:

[T]he Angel of the Lord, who had previously visited him, again stood in his presence, and his soul was again enlightened as it was the evening before, and he was filled with the Holy Spirit, and the heavens were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about and rested upon him. While he thus stood gazing and admiring, the Angel said, "Look!" And as he thus spake, he beheld the Prince of Darkness, surrounded by his innumerable train of associates. All this passed before him, and the heavenly messenger said, "All this is shown, the good and the evil, the holy and impure, the glory of God, and the power of darkness, that you may know hereafter the two powers and never be influenced or overcome by that evil one. (See JS Papers, Histories Vol. 1, p. 527)

Both Cowdery and Pratt urge this to persuade others to trust Joseph Smith. It rings of a doctrine heard today. Essentially they claim Joseph could not be led astray, because he was enlightened in 1823 to such a degree that Satan could not thereafter deceive him.

This notion is, of course, false. It was as false when applied to Joseph Smith as it is false when applied to any man at any time, myself included. All men err. All men are tempted and fall victim to their weaknesses and foolishness.

Just five years after the event reported by Cowdery and repeated by Pratt, in July 1828 Joseph Smith allowed Martin Harris to lose the first 116 pages of transcribed material for the Book of Mormon. The Lord stated:

And behold, how oft you have transgressed the commandments and the laws of God, and have gone on in the persuasions of men. For, behold, you should not have feared man more than

God. Although men set at naught the counsels of God, and despise his word— Yet you should have been faithful; and he would have extended his arm and supported you against all the fiery darts of the adversary; and he would have been with you in every time of trouble. (D&C 3:6–8).

Joseph was persuaded by his weakness and financial vulnerability to disobey God.

That same summer the Lord also said this to Joseph Smith:

Behold, I do not say that you shall not show it unto the righteous; But as you cannot always judge the righteous, or as you cannot always tell the wicked from the righteous, therefore I say unto you, hold your peace until I shall see fit to make all things known unto the world concerning the matter. (D&C 10:36–37)

Joseph couldn't even tell wicked men from righteous men.

There is no guarantee against error. There is no fortification which makes a man, any man, invulnerable to mistakes. Though both Cowdery and Pratt wanted to give Joseph super-human ability to detect the Devil and avoid mistakes, Joseph still made them. When Joseph prepared his own history in 1838 and 1839 he omitted this claim from his own history. He knew he could and did make mistakes. Therefore he wanted no such claim to be made.

Trust God, not man. And for yourself, keep yourself aligned to heaven, so when presented with the opportunity to make a mistake, heaven can help you in your hour of need. Weakness is part of every man's life (Ether 12:27). To trade weakness for strength we must all “humble themselves before [God], and have faith in [God]” (*Id.*). That formula given by Christ to Moroni has no room for trusting or coming to a man. Nor does it require you to humble yourself

before a man. I fear my weaknesses and try to always guard against them. I know failure is always possible, and indeed more likely than success.

Cowdery and Pratt wanted the same kind of foolishness in their day as people now want in ours. They and we want some man to save us. Some trustworthy collection of leaders who cannot lead us astray or make errors in judgment which will deprive us of salvation. They were wrong, as are all those who similarly today espouse a similarly false doctrine.

Trust God alone. Fear your weaknesses. There is nothing any of us can take pride in. Nor is there anything we can trust other than our own fidelity to God alone.

MAY 21, 2014

Damned Again

An interesting FYI:

An email exchange received and responded to.

On Tuesday, May 20, 2014, xxxxxxxxx <xxxxxxxxx@xxx.xxx> wrote:

Hey Denver,

*I met with you in your office a few years ago after reading *The Second Comforter*. I was mostly impressed at that time by your recurring theme of obedience. Now you've been excommunicated for disobedience? Only possible through vainglory and a loss of the influence of the Holy Ghost. And perhaps other motives, which you yourself would only know about within your own heart.*

The fact that you cannot see the glaring oxymoron of your messagelactions—while anyone with the Spirit can—is no doubt just one example of what happens when one loses the gift of the Holy

Ghost aka light and intelligence. The most amazing, intangible reality/truth about members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints who truly and sincerely are submitting their will to the Lord's will with a pure heart is that they/we are unified in possessing the gift of the Holy Ghost (given when baptized, lost when excommunicated) and we are, as a body/church, able to discern who is among us that lacks that same Spirit. It was pretty obvious you lacked the influence of the Holy ghost when you wrote Passing the Heavenly Gift. Not knowing that, I bought it, started to read it, found nothing enlightening, skimmed and eventually discarded it as a book full of contradictions within itself. All this was months before any controversy about this book began. I did not need church leaders telling me your book was full of contradictions and even untruths. I was able to discern that by the influence of the Spirit.

Additionally, your blogs lack the Spirit. You have lost the Spirit and you can't even tell that you have. I suppose that is typical. The scriptures call it "spiritual blindness." I think you are an imminent spiritual train wreck and I am sorry for you and your family.

*Sincerely,
Jan Riley*

-----Original Message-----

From: Denver & Stephanie Snuffer <xxxxxxxxx@gmail.com>

To: xxxxxxxxxxx <xxxxxxxxx@xxx.xxx>

Sent: Tue, May 20, 2014 10:32 am

Subject: Re:

Thank you for caring enough to admonish me. I believe you to be sincere.

I try to be obedient and submissive. Sometimes that carries a price that is hard to pay. Nevertheless the same Spirit

that brought me into the LDS church informs me now, and I continue to pay a price for remaining true and faithful to The Lord.

I do not expect anyone other than The Lord to understand me. But fortunately I also know only The Lord can judge me. I look forward to His kind treatment of all my errors, and believe He will likewise look with mercy upon yours.

Denver Snuffer

XXXXXXXXXX

to me

Hmmm.....Sometimes obedience carries a price that is too hard to pay? Really? You actually just typed that? I don't recall reading anything that even comes close to that in The Second Comforter. That is just one example of how you have now become inconsistent with your own writings, changing your writings/paradigm to support your behavior, which is as common among those who lose their way as weak faith and a lack of testimony is common. You have become common, Denver. Even predictable. If I decided to check in on your blog five years from now I can almost predict what I will read.

Abraham's faith and obedience in the Lord is a perfect example that "Sometimes that carries a price that is hard to pay" is quite untrue. Obeying the request of the church and your priesthood leaders, which were as loving with you as they could have been, to cancel promoting Passing the Heavenly Gift (which completely lacked the Spirit) is hardly in the same league as the price Abraham was willing to pay in order to prove His desire to obey. I'm sure you would agree. Yet Abraham obeyed. Why didn't you? That should

actually give you a reality check/barometer on where you land in your desire to be obedient.

The same Spirit that brought you into the church actually does not and cannot inform you now, or every scripture in Old and New Testament, Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants is not true. If it did, those who are obedient and also possess the Spirit, would know and recognize that you have the Spirit and there would be a oneness of belief among all. Or perhaps you think you are the only one on the planet who currently possesses the Spirit?

You are being deceived by the Adversary who loves what you are doing for him. Like CS Lewis said, murder or cards, or in your case, disaffection from the LDS Church. It doesn't matter to him. It all works for his cause. You have been cast out and therefore you no longer have access to the constant gift of the Holy Ghost. Thinking that you do, thinking that your position is different, more honest, unique or enlightened than Sandra Tanner and Sonja Johnson, or Korihor for that matter, is the incredible power the Adversary has upon our paradigms, once we begin justifying/rationalizing our own very special reasons for disobedience. That is why it is called "spiritual blindness." But in reality you are headed down the same path and you will land in the same lonely place. It's a sad story but one that's been lived in every dispensation, by many people who thought they were every bit as enlightened as you.

Discerning between truth and evil is not a judgment call, by the way. Thinking those who are informing you of the truth are therefore somehow judging you is a bogus accusation. Actual judging only happens when we go so far as to tell each other what degree of glory we are going to ultimately obtain. I would never do that. I only know that you are today on track for an inevitable spiritual train wreck, like all the spiritual train wrecks that have

been on this same track before you, and hopefully you will wake up and recognize it before its too late for you and your loved ones. That would require an incredible admission of vainglory, which would indeed make you extremely unique.

XXXXXXXXXX

to me

Therein lies the rub for you, Denver Snuffer, Jr. "If you're not one, you're not mine." All the brilliant blogging you can crank out for the next decade cannot reconcile you to this profound doctrine taught by the Savior Himself. You may indeed be following a spirit that has brought you both into and out of the Lord's only organized body of covenant people in these last days, but it is not the same Spirit that the faithful members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints are following. Admit it and do whatever it takes to return, is my prayer for you.

MAY 25, 2014

Slavery?

I received this email from a friend:

I was wondering if you have ever written anything about slavery and would love to know where to find it. If not, what your take on it?

I responded:

I haven't written anything.

I think it was wrong because it limited agency and enthroned abuse and control by one human over another.

But 2 Ne. 1:6 forces us to ask the question of whether slavery was used by the Lord to bring some people to this land who

would not otherwise have come. If so, then even though it was an evil institution, it was turned to a purpose God intended to accomplish.

America's history of slavery presents an interesting question for Mormons because of Lehi's prophecy. The advent of African slavery in the Americas would come hundreds of years later when Dutch and Spanish slave traders would bring the institution into colonial America. By the time of American Independence, African slavery was woven into the economy of the southern states and economically impossible to eliminate without destroying the south. It took nearly another century before the nation could end the practice. If Lehi's prophecy is applied to the involuntary relocation of Africans, then Mormons must ask themselves how to understand Lehi's prophecy: "[T]here shall none come unto this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord" (2 Ne. 1:6).

My first job after law school I worked for a company that built television stations in Nigeria, Africa. One of the employees who traveled to Africa to help construct the facilities was a black engineer from California. After returning from a lengthy assignment, he was overcome with the conditions in Nigeria when contrasted with conditions he and his family enjoyed in California. He had mixed emotions. Although he knew his ancestors were forced to come as slaves to America, his life today was so much better than the lives he saw for the descendants of those left behind. He literally declared: "Thank God for slavery!" If I hadn't heard him say it I would not have believed that sentiment was possible. To me his reaction was completely unexpected.

The ebb and flow of history shows the obvious immediate results, and later, unanticipated consequences. People are driven

by one motivation at one point in time, but generations later their posterity live with the full results. After history unfolds, the earlier reasons may seem crude or even wrong, or they may seem noble and laudable. But life gets to be experienced in the immediacy of the day. We are not permitted to see the long-ranging effects over generations from our acts today. Unless the Lord shows it to us, only later generations will fully appreciate the effects of our choices.

MAY 25, 2014

Excommunication Does Not Remove Priesthood

Excommunication does not remove priesthood. When excommunicated the church requests that priesthood not be used during the period of exclusion from church membership. But priesthood itself is not and cannot be removed by an excommunication proceeding.

Priesthood can and is removed by God. He removes it when men who have been ordained use their authority to “cover [their] sins, or to gratify [their] pride, [their] vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men” at which point “behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man” (D&C 121:37).

So if a man has not lied, nor cheated, nor committed adultery, nor violated his covenants with God, but is excommunicated because he thinks something the church does not want him to think, it is possible priesthood may be forfeited if this man is excommunicated, but this would not be the man targeted for excommunication. Such a church court would exercise the control, the compulsion, and the dominion against the man. He is not and

cannot be responsible for wrongly using priesthood to control another, for he is not seeking to force others to think like he does.

If, therefore, excommunication affects priesthood, the way that would manifest itself is in the members of the court/council forfeiting their priesthood by their wrongful acts. Similarly, other priesthood authorities who participated, encouraged, ratified and sustained the court's wrongful deed would share in the responsibility and be similarly responsible for the abuse.

In every case of excommunication, the one on trial is not regarded by the church as losing their priesthood. They are instead requested to temporarily stop using it. Inside the church itself, they are not permitted to use it. But it is up to the individual to decide whether or not to use it in other circumstances. Before annotations were made to church membership records, the way excommunication was apparent was by comparing the date of baptism to the date of ordination. If a member had been ordained before their baptism, then it was apparent they had been excommunicated.

Orson Pratt was ordained an Apostle as one of the original Twelve on April 26, 1835. He was excommunicated August 20, 1842. He was reinstated on January 20, 1843. He was never re-ordained an Apostle when reinstated. However, his "seniority" in the Quorum of the Twelve was reckoned from the date of his readmission in January 1843 and therefore he moved down in seniority and Brigham Young became his senior.

Every other Apostle who was excommunicated was similarly readmitted without being re-ordained.

No one is re-ordained when re-baptized. Their original ordination stands.

Excommunicants are only requested to not use their priesthood. But they still possess it.

MAY 29, 2014

Themes from Email

I have been answering emails and I detect some themes. Apparently enthusiasm abounds and there are people who desire to lead others. Here are some thoughts:

Teaching your own revelations to others is easy. But that will produce vanity and pride in the teacher, and the student is prone to be misled and likely to displace worship of God to the teacher (See D&C 76:99–103). I confine what I do to expounding the scriptures. There is never any reason to notice the teacher if attention is focused on the scriptures which bear testimony of Christ.

Revelations come from many sources, only one of which is steadfast and true (D&C 46:7–9). Just because you receive a revelation does not mean it comes from God. You must labor even after you receive revelation to determine if what has been received comes from the right source. The scriptures are the best way to measure such things.

The result of faith in Christ should be that we are better servants to our fellow-man (Mosiah 2:17).

Since I have never attended a Jedi class, I cannot comment on them.

Doug Mendenhall's work in arranging events, scheduling rooms, and recording and distributing CDs enables me to come and talk and not worry about the logistics of the lecture. He pays his way, provides the recording equipment and fulfills deliveries. I pay for rental of the site.

The ordinances are eternal. They do not and cannot change. When changed, the covenant is broken. God cannot and does not change His word. When men change it, they break the covenant and have no promise (Isa. 24:5–6). [The addition of outward observances in the Law of Moses were merely added, and then fulfilled in Christ’s coming and sacrifice. Then, having been fulfilled, they were no longer necessary to observe (3 Ne. 12:17–18). When, however, they were being observed, they did not change. From Moses to John, they were unchanged.]

Any time a teaching, doctrine or precept appeals to the vanity or pride of the audience, it should be questioned. Flattery is of the Devil (2 Ne. 28:9–12; Jacob 7:2). On the other hand, if it brings you down into the depths of humility, provokes repentance and an abandonment of sin, it is from God.

The requirement for discernment is imposed on all of us. If you continue to follow a man who changes the ordinances, his teachings will eventually reach a point where he will demand you obey his revelations and submit to his will. Eventually you will have witness enough of where you are carefully being led.

I do not think it essential to understand “the manner of prophesying among the Jews” (2 Ne. 25:1–2). Nephi lived about a century and a quarter after Isaiah. He was informed by the visions of heaven. He saw what Isaiah saw. Therefore, he could interpret Isaiah’s prophecies from a higher source. If a technical understanding could provide an advantage, then the Jews would have avoided their Old Testament troubles and converted en-mass during New Testament times. I think Joseph was right: “Could you gaze into heaven five minutes,

you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject” (*TPJS*, p. 324).

Prophecy does not give us the details beforehand. We can only know the “season” of the times (Matt. 16:2–3). When the events are upon us, we will know how God intends to fulfill His promises.

If your search does not include your spouse, you are leaving behind the very means by which God exalts mankind (1 Cor. 11:11), You will not gain entry.

MAY 30, 2014

Can It Be Done, Lord?

Enthusiasm can lead to impatience. Impatience causes those who ought to await direction from the Lord to charge ahead and be destroyed.

But it is better for the impatient to be drawn away than gather to destroy the work of God.

A strait and narrow way will be found by only few (Jacob 6:11–12). To find it the few will confront dozens of voices imploring them to diverge from what God has underway (2 Ne. 2:11), crying “Lo, Here!” and “Lo, There!” (*JSH* 1:5). It is required for the few to reject false offers of salvation, purported higher knowledge, pacifying doctrines, flattery and errors coming from teachers who command people to hearken to their precepts (2 Ne. 28:20–32).

How the Lord can accomplish His work in this fallen place will be a wonder to behold. None in this generation seem to have the patience to allow Him to do as He has promised.

Can it be done, Lord?

Fear not...My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one (John 10:27-30).

CHAPTER 12

Regarding Christ...

JUNE 2014

JUNE 1, 2014

Christ's Sacrament

Christ instituted the sacrament during the Passover meal (See Matt. 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19–20; John gives no description in his account). It was His “last supper” with His closest followers. All the accounts agree on the purpose: to remember the body and blood He would sacrifice on our behalf.

When the Lord appeared to the Nephites, He proclaimed He had fulfilled the law (3 Ne. 15:5–8). All the rites and sacrifices added through Moses pointed to His great sacrifice of His body and blood.

Christ blessed the sacrament many times in His appearances to the Nephites (3 Ne. 18:3; 3 Ne. 20:3–8; and 3 Ne. 26:13). Just like the descriptions given in the New Testament, no prayer is recorded in the Book of Mormon accounts. But in both the New Testament and Book of Mormon, the purpose is the same: to remember His body and His blood, which were shed as a sacrifice for His followers.

The sacrament prayer is not recorded in any of our scriptures until Moroni chapters 4:3, for the bread, and 5:2, for the wine.

Mormon and Moroni lived four hundred years after Christ appeared to the Nephites. However, they learned from first-hand participants in Christ's sacrament. Three of the Disciples taught by Christ lived to minister to Mormon and Moroni (Mormon 8:10–11). Therefore, Moroni's account is taken from the very witnesses to whom Christ gave instructions regarding the sacrament prayers. There is only one blessing to be given for the bread, and one to be given for the wine. The prayers, like all the scriptural accounts, focus on Christ and His great sacrifice on our behalf.

The purpose of the sacrament is to remember Christ. It is to remind us of His body which was broken to fulfill the required sacrifice. It is to remind us of His blood which was shed for our redemption.

It is not an ordinance intended to:

- Praise us
- Assure us we are “chosen”
- Flatter us
- Make us feel we are better and more holy than others. These are corrupt ideas, coming from a false spirit intending to supplant Christ as the object of devotion and worship. They are, in a word, anti-Christ.

Any man claiming to have authority to change the sacrament through a higher revelation given to him is deceived, or a liar. There is no such thing. Nor did the Lord offer three different “levels” of sacrament when He appeared to the Nephites. Remember there were different people there the second day than the first. If He changed the ordinance the second day, then those newcomers

would have heard a different version than the day before. Christ would have introduced confusion and division as people debated among themselves which was approved. Basing the claim to have a new, higher “level” of sacrament because of the silence in the Book of Mormon regarding the words of the sacrament prayer, is foolishness and error. All confusion should be removed when Moroni recorded the prayers.

In our day the sacrament prayers were given to us in a new revelation. Those words are identical to those recorded by Moroni (See D&C 20:77, 79). Only a fool will trifle with the souls of men.

JUNE 1, 2014

Requests

I get lots of requests for endorsements, recommendations, for reviews, etc. Here is a recent one:

Denver,

I’ve found that the word “restoration” is a double-edged sword. The Book of Mormon uses it to mean a sort of “karma,” that what we send out ultimately comes right back to us. In our modern-day vernacular, however, we define it as what Joseph brought back. In other words, he “restored” the opportunity for man to touch heaven and visa-versa. I believe, however, that we can get into trouble using this term, because we are confused about exactly what is being restored. The modern-day Church tells us that it’s the “keys” and authority which are restored to us, but many reject that, saying that Joseph took the power with him to the grave, and we have been lost ever since. These “purists” I’ll call them (not going to say fundamentalists) look

at everything that happened until Joseph's death and seek to "restore" whatever it was that existed in that day (tithing, Word of Wisdom, etc.)

The question which keeps coming back to me is this: Why do we insist on restoring something that history proves did not work? We don't know how long after the "Book of the Lamb" came out of the "mouth of a Jew" that it became corrupted. It seems, though, that it wasn't much longer than a single generation. Yet, the Church insists that something called The Apostasy came along and merely put "the true church" on ice for 1700 years or so, and now we are just picking up where they left off. But if it didn't work for them and was perverted so quickly, why would it work for us? Likewise, if we attempt to restore ourselves to what Joseph had in mind, isn't it likely that we will fall into the same trap? While I have no doubts that Joseph was trying to tell us something important, how is it that we will come to understand it using the same failed approach? If we think we can know Joseph's mind based on the tampered records we have, aren't we going to repeat what happened with the "primitive church"? What's to stop a recurrence of that history? Are we so much more enlightened and special than those in Christ's or Joseph's day?

I would even suggest that we cannot rely completely on the model given us in the Book of Mormon after Jesus' death. Yes, the people had Zion on earth for three to four generations, but with that light came a higher degree of accountability, and ultimately they failed to the point that their whole culture was obliterated. So are we better than those Nephites, who had the pure record of the Brass Plates as well as (presumably) the

extended words of Christ given in Bountiful AND the three who tarried (actual witnesses to the events of Christ's day)?

If, as you say, "Mankind gets it wrong all the time. The great challenge is to finally get it right," (which I believe is true), then why do we insist on "restoring" the thing which experience has proven wrong? If you believe the prophecies of the Book of Mormon, the Gentiles will eventually succeed to the point that they will be forever brought out of "captivity." Sooner or later, they will take this "standard" to the rest of Israel, who will never again be "confounded" because of what the Gentiles teach them. I think that in order for these prophecies to be fulfilled, there needs to be innovation on the part of the Gentiles. I realize that this, too, can be a dangerous path to walk because the tendency is to become proud, puffed up, and to set ourselves up as a light. But I don't see that it can be done without using our creativity to form a vessel that the Lord can finally fill. Will there be failures with this course of action? Yes, of course. We should expect and even welcome them, because it is by seeing our weaknesses that they become strengths.

Thankfully, we have been given some excellent guidelines to keep us from going off-track. I think the best ones were given by the Savior Himself at the Sermon in Bountiful when He sums up "perfection" as things like blessing those who curse you, walking a mile with those who ask, and looking past the performances of The Law and into our own hearts. We know that the Spirit of Christ is given to every person so that they may know good from evil, and anything that invites and persuades to "believe in Christ" is approved of God. Since we have an outline of what it means to believe Him, it is very helpful. Surely, there is a lot of wiggle room in our efforts to

“finally get it right.” I believe we should be more afraid of not trying than of failure, because doing nothing means stagnation while failure gives us experience.

It is with this in mind that I would like to invite you and anyone else to participate in an “experiment” with me. Over the course of the last seven years, I have received a series of visions. In the process of searching to understand the meaning, I have developed a hypothesis of how the Lord manifests His heavenly gift to the world, and specifically how the Spirit has been “poured out” to the Gentiles. For the next 3 months, I will share what I have experienced with anyone who cares to read, at the following URL: www.i2visions.blogspot.com. I do not expect you or others to believe anything about what I have learned or what I share. In fact, I would like to remain anonymous and let the content speak for itself. On June 1, it will be exactly seven years since I received the initial vision, so that will be the day I post it.

The Book of Mormon tells us that someday the Gentiles and all the world will read a book containing the “words which were sealed...upon the house tops; and they shall be read by the power of Christ...” I wonder, what is this “power of Christ” which will give people the ability to comprehend something that had previously been “hid from the eyes of the world”? In my opinion, the only way to find out is to experiment until something sticks. While we should not and cannot innovate God’s word, perhaps there are ways of seeing and understanding it that we have not tried. I hope that you are open to exploring the possibilities with me.

I cannot be responsible for what anyone says other than myself, or what others believe. Therefore I do not visit other sites, review other blogs, or read other writers when they are advancing new doctrine. I study history, and read a good deal of historical works. I read all the *Joseph Smith Papers* volumes as they come out. My wife keeps me informed about things on the Internet, when she believes I should hear about them. But I have little time to keep up with all I must do. Therefore I doubt I will ever see this, or any other website discussing new doctrinal thoughts. I'm focused on a return to the beginnings of Mormonism.

JUNE 7, 2014

Details For Ephraim, June 28th

The seventh talk in the series will be on June 28th at Snow College in Ephraim, Utah.

Eccles Performing Arts Center

Concert Hall (seats 700)

Center Street and 300 East

Parking across the street

Opens at 8:30 a.m. Talk begins at 9:30 a.m.

JUNE 7, 2014

History of D&C Section 27

Joseph Smith received a revelation on August 28th, 1830. When it was originally received, here is how it read in the first handwritten version (Revelation Book 1):

*A Revelation to the Church given at Harmony Sesquehann
County State of Pennsylvania given to Joseph the Seer at a time*

that he went to punch wine Sacrament & he was stopped by an angel & he spoke to him as follows Saying

Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ your Lord your God & your Redeemer whose word is quick & powerful for Behold I say unto you it mattereth not what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink when ye partake of the sacrament if it so be that ye do it with an eye single to my glory Remembering unto the father that my Body which laid down for you & my blood which was shed for you the Remission of y sins Wherefore a commandment I give unto you that ye shall not Purchase Wine neither strong drink of your enemies Wherefore ye shall partake none except it is made new among you yea in this my Fathers Kingdom which shall be built up on the earth Behold this is wisdom in me Wherefore marvel not for the hour cometh that I will drink of the fruit of the Vine with you on the Earth & with those whom my father hath given me out of the world Wherefore life up your hearts & rejoice & Gird up your loins & be faithful until I come even so amen.

The first time it was put into print WW Phelps was the editor in Missouri. The paper was *The Evening and Morning Star*. He edited it and the version he printed read as follows:

A COMMANDMENT GIVEN SEPTEMBER 4, 1830

LISTEN to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Lord, your God, and your Redeemer, whose word is quick and powerful.

For behold I say unto you, that it mattereth not what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, when ye partake of the sacrament, if it so be that ye do it with an eye single to my glory; remembering unto the Father my body which was laid down for you, and my blood which was shed for the remission of sins:

Wherefore a commandment I give unto you, that you shall not purchase wine, neither strong drink of your enemies:

Wherefore you shall partake of none, except it is made new among you, yea, in this my Father's kingdom which shall be built up on the earth.

Behold this is wisdom in me, wherefore marvel not, for the hour cometh that I will drink of the fruit of the vine with you, on the earth, and with all those whom my Father hath given me out of the world: Wherefore lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins.

This printed version was from the Missouri press a mob destroyed. Some few copies still exist. But the press was destroyed and the effort had to be made again to publish the document. In Kirtland a new version was printed in the renamed paper. Whereas before it was "*THE Evening and Morning Star*" in Kirtland the paper was titled: "*Evening and Morning Star*" (no "The" in the title of this newspaper). This version was edited and updated by Oliver Cowdery. He made additions to many of the revelations "to reflect current organization, doctrine, and practice, which had continued to develop since the revelations were first dictated" (*Joseph Smith Papers, Revelations and Transcriptions*, Vol 2, p. 199). Below is the version Oliver Cowdery printed (which subsequently became the source from which the 1835 edition of the D&C was taken):

REVELATION

Given September, 1830

Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Lord, your God, and your Redeemer, whose word is quick and powerful.

For behold I say unto you, that it mattereth not what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, when ye partake of the sacrament, if

it so be that ye do it with an eye single to my glory; remembering unto the Father my body which was laid down for you, and my blood which was shed for the remission of your sins:

wherefore a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall not purchase wine, neither strong drink of your enemies:

wherefore you shall partake of none, except if is made new among you, yea, in this my Father's kingdom which shall be built up on the earth.

Behold this is wisdom in me: wherefore marvel not for the hour cometh that I will drink of the fruit of the vine with you on the earth, and with Moroni, whom I have sent unto you to reveal the book of Mormon, containing the fulness of my everlasting gospel; to whom I have committed the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim; and also with Elias, to whom I have committed the keys of bringing to pass the restoration of all things, or the restorer of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets side the world began, concerning the last days: ale also John the son of Zacharias, which Zacharias he (Elias) visited and gav promise that h should have a son, and his name should be John, and he should be filled with the spirit of Elias; which John I have sent unto you, my servants, Joseph Smith, jr. and Oliver Cowdery, to ordain you unto this first priesthood which you have received, that you might be called and ordained even as Aaron: and also Elijah, unto whom I have committed the keys of the power of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers, that the whole earth may not be smitten with a curse: and also, with Joseph, and Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham your fathers; by whom the promises remain: and also with Michael, or Adam, the father of all, the prince of all, the ancient of days.

And also with Peter, and James, and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry; and of the same things which I revealed unto them, unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last time; and for the fulness of times, in the which I will gather together in one all things both which are in heaven and which are on earth: and also with those whom my Father hath given me out of the world:

wherefore lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins, and take upon you my whole armor, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all ye may be able to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth; having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace which I have sent mine angels to commit unto you, taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of my Spirit, which I will pour out upon you, and my word which I reveal unto you, and be agreed as touching all things whatsoever ye ask of me, and be faithful until I come, and ye shall be caught up that where I am ye shall be also. Amen.

I will not type the version now in your D&C. Nor will I contrast these versions with each other. It should be apparent, however, that the version given originally and what the editors did with it has been a “growing concern.” The 1835 D&C took the last version and edited it. Joseph Smith was on the editorial board for that version, however, Joseph spent his efforts editing the *Lectures on Faith*, to be part of the book. He

apparently relied on others to do the actual typesetting and printing and possibly the bulk of the editing, arranging, and other intellectual work needed to prepare the revelations for print. (*Joseph Smith Papers, Revelations and Transcriptions*, Vol. 2, p. 305)

Therefore we do not know what Joseph thought of the editorial alterations made to Section 27.

CHAPTER 13

Fight Against the Darkness

JUNE 12, 2014

Church Discipline Top-Down

The LDS Church issued the following statement posted on its website. I have copied and pasted as it appears in the original:

SALT LAKE CITY —

The Church issued the following statement today in response to questions from the news media regarding Church discipline:

“The Church is a family made up of millions of individuals with diverse backgrounds and opinions. There is room for questions and we welcome sincere conversations. We hope those seeking answers will find them and happiness through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“Sometimes members’ actions contradict Church doctrine and lead others astray. While uncommon, some members in effect choose to take themselves out of the Church by actively teaching and publicly attempting to change doctrine to comply with their personal beliefs. This saddens leaders and fellow members. In these rare cases, local leaders have the responsibility to clarify false teachings and prevent other members from being misled. Decisions

are made by local leaders and not directed or coordinated by Church headquarters.

“Actions to address a person’s membership and standing in their congregation are convened after lengthy periods of counseling and encouragement to reconsider behavior. Ultimately, the door is always open for people to return to the Church.

It is not true that discipline involving controversial members is exclusively the responsibility of “local leaders” acting independent of influence from the hierarchy. The hierarchy imposes their will from the top-down by instructing the local leaders on what they *must* do. In my case the news came directly from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the twelve, who presides over the Strengthening the Members Committee. Usually the news comes through Elder Whitney Clayton, one of the seven presidents. He was also involved in my case, but the original pressure came through Elder Nelson directly.

The assertion by the church in their press release that “Decisions are made by local leaders and not directed or coordinated by Church headquarters” is false. In the case of public, controversial members, *IT IS A LIE.*

I am far more disappointed the church would lie about what they do than I am at their inappropriate top-down behavior. The reason they lie about it is because they are violating the scriptural pattern for discipline. LDS scripture requires discipline to be local. It isn’t, so they lie to make it appear that way. Morally, lying to cover up their wrong doing is worse than admitting they manipulate local leaders. Now they are responsible for doing both. They should be more honorable.

JUNE 14, 2014

Agreement Through Spirit

Any true doctrine or principal can be used for evil, oppression and excess. To rightly give measure to the matter in your own life you must be guided by the Spirit of the matter, not the mere letter of the doctrine. Each life is different. Each of us have our own responsibilities to our families, neighbors and communities. A true principal in operation in your life may look very different from its operation in mine.

Truth may be absolute, but lives are variegated and are lived in context. Hence the absolute requirement for individual revelation to guide each of us. And as a result we are all pathetically situated to judge one another, but ideally situated to show one another compassion.

We are only authorized to rebuke “when moved upon by the Holy Ghost” and then “showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved” (D&C 121:43). Given how little we should want to rebuke others, it should be a profound spiritual moment when it is required of us by the Lord. Though, in truth, even then we should take little delight in dispensing rebukes.

JUNE 20, 2014

The Facts

Some recent comments and emails have accused me of becoming increasingly hostile and angry about the LDS church. These accusations came as a response to my recent post that said the church’s press release about the hierarchy not being involved with discipline was “a lie.” I was not angry when I wrote that, and do not intend to insult anyone. It happens to be true, and since I am

acquainted with the facts, I believe I have an obligation to disclose the truth. In the long run, the LDS church is benefited by the truth, even if they can't see it now. So here are the facts:

In 2011 there were rumors circulating that I was to be excommunicated. My stake president at the time was a man of integrity and discretion. I am certain he was not the source of the rumors. But they were persistent and widespread. Strangers would ask me if I had been excommunicated yet. I got emails asking me if I knew the church was after me. Inside my own ward and stake, however, there was nothing threatened and no hint there was anything that would lead to a church court.

I was told by the stake president at the time that I had come to the attention of the Brethren. However, he said he defended me and explained to them he knew my heart was in the right place and I was a worthy church member. His last Sunday as stake president he spent the afternoon with me in the stake offices, told me there were some in the hierarchy who were angry at me, renewed my temple recommend so I wouldn't be required to be interviewed again for two years, and said the new stake president would not know me but he would do what he could.

Elder Russell Nelson of the twelve heads the Strengthening the Members Committee. He came to my stake and called the new stake president.

A member of the Draper Temple Presidency resides in my ward. In April 2012, he was ready to be released from teaching the Temple Preparation class before the next group of prospective missionaries needed the class. He recommended that I be called. The bishop called me and I accepted the call.

On the Sunday I was to be sustained to teach the temple prep class, the newly called stake president attended our sacrament

meeting. Before the meeting, when the bishop mentioned I was being sustained to teach the Temple Preparation class, President Hunt told him to hold off until he had the opportunity to first interview me.

After that sacrament meeting the bishop explained to me what happened, and asked me to begin the Temple Preparation class anyway, unofficially, in my home. I began to teach first one, then three of the priests in my ward to prepare them to go through the temple preliminary to their missions.

On Sunday, April 18, 2012 I had my first interview with President Hunt. He explained I had come to the attention of “downtown” and there had been complaints about me. He needed to meet me and report back. We talked for an hour-and-a-half that Sunday. He said he was “pleased with the interview and had no doubts that my intentions were good.” He ended the meeting by committing to read everything I’d written. In the interview I told him that although I had not been sustained, I was proceeding anyway with the Temple Preparation class and I didn’t want to do that without telling him. I was not going to be sneaky about it, and if he objected I would stop. He did not object.

Several people asked family members if I had “been excommunicated.” One person from Idaho called and asked me if the rumors were true. When I asked what rumors, he responded, that I was “being excommunicated.”

Shortly after that interview, my wife discovered and brought to my attention an on-line thread where someone purported to have inside information about me and my meeting with my stake president. I am certain President Hunt was not responsible for this leak. He has too much integrity to have done so, and I do not suspect him in the least. Therefore, the information must have

originated from “downtown” with whomever was provoking the interviews. A copy of the post was cut-and-pasted into a blog post on April 26, 2012 and can be found here. The blog-site, *LDS-Glo*, where the post originally appeared has removed it and therefore the copy cut and put onto this blog is the only place it can be found.

I believed the leak came from the Strengthening the Members Committee over which Elder Russell M. Nelson presides. I have since been able to confirm this. I learned the person who leaked the information was been disciplined for doing so.

President Hunt and I had another meeting April 29th. During the meeting the phone rang in the office, and I was asked to step into the hallway for a moment. When invited back in, I was told that “one of the Seven Presidents had called” and he instructed that President Hunt was “to do nothing” while he and Elder Christoferson of the Twelve studied what I had written. The interview was over and I was free to go.

The seventy who called was Elder L. Whitney Clayton.

I heard nothing further for months. Then I was asked to a meet in November 2012. On November 4th the entire stake presidency met with me and informed me that “Apostles and a President of the Seventy” were pressuring them to act. They felt “a good spirit” from me but the book I’d written (*Passing the Heavenly Gift*) was “faith destroying.” It needed to be rewritten to conform to the church’s claims or be withdrawn from publication. These were men of discretion, and I do not believe any of them were the sources of rumors. None of them were in the stake presidency when the rumors began.

In a follow-up email, President Hunt said one of the issues was my “witness of Christ” (meaning my unequivocal statement that the Lord had ministered to me). I responded by asking if that

meant the church expected me to deny my witness, or merely not to speak of it again. I have never received a reply to that question.

I quit posting on my blog.

On December 9, 2012 I met with President Hunt again and he said he had “defended me with one of the Brethren” since our last meeting. He asked if I had stopped blogging because of our last meeting, and I said I had. We discussed a missionary from our stake who had returned home early from his mission and he asked if I would work with him. I said I would. I stopped at the young man’s house on my way home from the stake office and invited him to come to my house. I began that Sunday to meet with him weekly to address his issues. I thought the conflict was over and the church was going to leave me alone.

In February 2013 President Hunt informed me he continued to “be pressured by Apostles” to hold a disciplinary court. He wanted to talk. We met and he had copied and highlighted pages from the Church Handbook of Instructions about when a church court was “mandatory.” We talked about the language. It identified “repeated criticism of the church authorities” [that is a quote from my journal and may not be accurate as to the handbook’s actual language]. I explained that I hadn’t ever criticized them, much less repeatedly done so. I quoted President Packer with approval, and praised President Monson on my blog. The “criticism,” if there was anything of the sort, was quotes taken from diaries, journals, letters and talks given by the leaders themselves. The worst of the comments was made by President Heber J. Grant’s mother, recorded in his journal. If there was a problem, then it was how they talked about themselves. He suggested I put some statement on my blog to help deflect criticism. I asked him to draft something and I would edit it into my words and put it up. He also said the book I’d written

was “faith destroying” to some readers. I said I had dozens, perhaps hundreds of letters and emails from those who were strengthened in their faith, who returned to activity, or who were going to leave the church but read the book and returned. I offered to let him read them. He said it was not necessary.

I distinguish between faith in Christ and faith in the church. It is essential to salvation that we have faith in Christ. Nowhere, however, do the scriptures ask or command us to have faith in the church. I believe everything I have written encourages faith in Christ. Whether it “destroys faith” in the church or not is irrelevant.

On February 22, I received an outline for a statement which I edited and put on my blog. He was not at all happy with the way it came out.

By March 5, 2013 I was losing hope this could be worked out. I recorded in my journal:

I do not think I will continue to fight the church’s effort to cast me out. The trends are all so distressing that I do not foresee any future...They do not want me...I do not intend to provoke them, but will not do anything to appease them.

In May 2013, several bishops and stake presidents offered to call my stake president to defend me. I called President Hunt and asked if that was something he wanted me to initiate. He said he did. After two bishops had called and both reported back to me that the conversations with President Hunt did not go well, I became alarmed. I worried that President Hunt might be gathering information about them, as callers, rather than listening to something which may help my cause. I called the rest of those who had offered to defend me and told them not to call because it was not doing any good.

On May 25, 2013 President Hunt called, he had received further “training” and now believed he must hold a church disciplinary council.

June 2nd President Hunt gave all the members of the high council, along with several high priests in the stake, copies of *Passing the Heavenly Gift* to get their response to whether this was “faith destroying.”

My home teacher (who is a member of the high council) called me the first week of June to tell me the book was apostate and must be withdrawn or I would be excommunicated.

June 16th there was an email exchange between President Hunt and I where he put several questions to me about the priesthood. I asked to meet with the stake presidency and to be permitted to explain my views.

June 20th I went to the stake offices and, using the whiteboard in the high council room, I spent two hours using the board and the scriptures to explain to the three members of the stake presidency my understanding of the priesthood, its history, and the doctrine as I understand it. I bore my testimony, explained my conversion, and the meeting was filled with truth and light. Two of these brethren had tears in their eyes. They all took notes. It was a wonderful meeting. I told them—from my journal,

I have studied the Gospel intently for 40 years, and found it delicious. I told them I had enjoyed every minute of being a Latter-day Saint and hoped they did not end my membership. But if they did it would not concern me, because I know my standing before God.

I ended by asking them to pray and ask God if I was one of His saints. I knew He would vouch for me if they asked.

July 8, 2013 I met again for three hours with the stake presidency and was told I was in peril if I did not withdraw *Passing the Heavenly Gift* from publication. They asked when the Lord had visited me. If I was awake. If He had touched me. If angels had visited me. If I tested them. Whether I thought the church's leaders had priesthood. Whether they held sealing keys. If I realized I was pitting myself against the institution of the church. And that "all 20 people who had read the book" in the stake thought it should be condemned. My journal records: "Essentially either I will put the book out of print or I will be thrown out of the church." I explained that I never intended to create faith in the church, because nowhere in scriptures does it tell us to have faith in the church. That everything I had written or taught was instead intended to cause faith in Christ. I asked to be shown where anything I had done would undermine faith in Christ. Therefore I rejected the complaint that I undermined faith.

August 22, 2013 I received a summons delivered to my door by two of the stake clerks, including a neighbor who lives on my street. On August 28, 2013 a copy of the summons letter was put on the blog so that anyone who would be concerned about reading anything written by someone under threat of church discipline would be aware of my status. I concluded that I should not hide the truth, and mislead anyone about my status.

In emails between the time of the notice and the time of the court, I confirmed with President Hunt that I would be bringing my family. One of my daughters was not able to come home from college that weekend. She was the only one who would not be attending. All the others would be driving home, some from out-of-state, to be with me during the court.

On September 8th the church disciplinary council was held. My journal has pages of entries from throughout the day. When the time arrived, my family and I went to the stake offices. After an hour of discussion, President Hunt refused to permit my family to witness the court. We all tried to persuade him to let us in. He refused. During the hour spent trying to change his mind, I asserted I was worthy of a temple recommend and he agreed. He said the decision to discipline me was “his alone” to make. In response to that I reminded him that we were interrupted by a phone call from one of the Presidents of the Seventy and he was instructed “to stand down. That he then did ‘stand down.’ And that if he really believed I was worthy of discipline he would never have stood down, but would have acted then.” Therefore, this was not his doing, but the doing of those in the hierarchy. He agreed he had been called, and that he had stood down when told to do so, but that he would be the one responsible for making the decision. I told him the decision had already been made, and not by him.

I reminded him that in emails beforehand I had been clear that my family was coming. I did not want them to be unaware of what happened behind closed doors. There would be rumors that this had to do with something other than the book, and therefore I wanted them to see and hear and witness what happened. He said that was a reasonable concern and he said to everyone of us that “this only has to do with a book.” One of my daughters responded, almost to herself but loud enough we all heard her: “A book! A book! Are you serious?” Later, all of my children said they thought President Hunt “looked sheepish and ashamed” at this remark. Because my family could not attend, we left without knowing if the court would proceed or be reconvened at another date. As we drove home all of my family said they felt sorry for President Hunt.

I agreed. I thought he was put on the spot and doing something he very much did not want to do.

September 10th at 10:30 a.m. as my wife and I were driving to Boise, I received a call from President Hunt. With his permission, I put the call on speaker. He told me I had been excommunicated and I would receive a letter informing me of the decision.

I wrote a few posts about this at the time of the events. President Hunt told me he had only one complaint about what I'd written. He thought I should have made it clear that this was his decision to make. Therefore, I've included that in this post several times.

It is true that church discipline must be taken at the stake level. However, in my case, NOTHING would have been done without the constant pressure from the hierarchy. Repeatedly the stake president and stake presidency were satisfied. Then the hierarchy would "train" them and the relentless pressure resulted in the outcome the hierarchy demanded.

So when I say the recent press release is a "lie," it is not to belittle anyone or to merely name-call. If the hierarchy wants to be involved then they should take credit for their behavior. They shouldn't lie about it.

Both bishops who called to defend me were subsequently interviewed and one of them has been released. Elder Whitney Clayton was responsible for the interview of the bishop who was released. I believe he was also involved with pressuring the stake president in the other case, as well. I am glad I did not have others call President Hunt.

There are two members of the seventy who, following my excommunication, have discussed in private the topic of my excommunication with others. One of these men serves on the Strengthening the Members Committee. The content of those

discussions has been passed along to me by friends. It is clear the hierarchy was directly involved and the moving force behind my excommunication. It is also clear that only a stake president can deliver the verdict. The fact that President Hunt was a critical, even necessary participant does not change the fact that the hierarchy had a moving role and overall responsibility for securing my excommunication.

I am not angry with President Hunt and have no animus toward him, the other members of the stake presidency, or the high council. One of the high council is my home teacher and my friend. He is welcome in my home. The facts of my case are plain, and in stating them I am not disparaging anyone.

JUNE 21, 2014

2014 Sunstone Symposium

I will be presenting a paper at this summer's Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City. The Symposium will be held July 30–August 2. The theme of the conference is “Mormonism Building Bridges.”

The title of my paper is “*Cutting Down the Tree of Life to Build a Wooden Bridge.*”

I will have a 90 minute time block. The paper will be read in the first hour, then there will be a short response from someone who has previewed the paper, followed by Q&A from the audience.

As more details become available I will post them here.

JUNE 23, 2014

Women Witnesses

At the time of Christ, culturally women were inferior to men. It was not that way from the beginning. Adam and Eve shared the labor equally (Moses 5:1).

In many ways the Lord deliberately challenged cultural and religious norms of His day. On the day of His resurrection, He made it a point to show His regard for women by appearing first to Mary (Mark 16:9; John 20:14–17). There were others who also saw Him before His apostles did. The Twelve rejected the testimony of both women and the others to whom He first appeared. This offended the Lord (Mark 16:14).

In Joseph Smith’s day, women were likewise thought to be inferior. Women were not considered “competent” to manage their own legal affairs, and when they married, any property belonging to them became their husband’s. When Joseph was required to have three witnesses (2 Ne. 27:12) to the plates, Urim & Thummim, directors, breastplate and sword of Laban (D&C 17:1), it only made sense to have three men be the witnesses.

The Lord, however, clearly showed His high regard for women. Before the three witnesses were shown the plates of the Book of Mormon, an angel showed them to a woman. In June 1829, just prior to when the plates were shown to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris, Joseph moved from Harmony to Fayette. During the move the plates were given to an angel for transport. Here is how the events then unfolded:

Whitmer later recounted that during their journey to Fayette, he, Cowdery, and JS briefly encountered a ‘pleasant, nice looking old man’ whom JS identified by revelation as a heavenly messenger transporting the plates. Whitmer also recalled that soon after their arrival in Fayette, his mother, Mary Mussleman Whitmer, was met ‘by the same old man, ‘who showed her the plates.’ (Joseph Smith Papers, Documents Vol. 1: July 1828–June 1831, p. 67)

This same volume published by the LDS Church Historian’s Press goes on to report: “*Though he did not become a witness of the*

plates for weeks, he [David Whitmer] reported years later that soon after their arrival, his mother was shown the plates by a heavenly messenger” (Id. at p. 83).

At that time, as in Christ’s, culture had little regard for a woman’s testimony. But in both of these cases, the Lord chose to first give a witness to women.

We should overcome whatever reluctance we have to listen to women’s voices. Women have been able to vote since 1869. The state legislatures have allowed them to own property post-marriage since the 1840’s. More importantly than those milestones, however, is the Lord’s clear preference to have women as witnesses of His great work. We should take note of this.

Since the days of Adam, the greatest single event was the Lord’s resurrection. And a woman was the first to witness the risen Lord. From the close of the New Testament, the greatest event has been the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Again a woman was chosen to be the first (after Joseph) to witness the plates in the hands of an angel.

The Lord trusts women and wishes we would do likewise.

On the other hand, when women focus on church office they may forfeit something a great deal more valuable. Given a choice, I’d trade away all church positions for a visit with the risen Lord. I would gladly exchange membership for a meeting with the heavenly messenger bearing the gold plates. Perhaps such an exchange is required. Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris all left the church, after all. Granted two of them were rebaptized shortly before their deaths. President Heber J. Grant valued his church membership more than heaven itself, and wanted no angelic appearance to come to him if it compromised his church affiliation.

The Lord has a “strange act” indeed (D&C 101:95).

JUNE 25, 2014

Sunstone Registration

Sunstone is an organization that sponsors symposiums and publishes a magazine. They charge for admission to their events.

Here are a few more details about their upcoming 2014 Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium:

For all three days, all workshops, and an MP3 recording of the talks the cost is \$225.

For all three days without workshops, the cost is \$90.

For a first time attendee, the cost for three days is \$75.

For a student with a valid current student ID the cost is \$35.

For a single day's admission, it is \$40.

The registration is available on the Sunstone site linked here.

I do not know what day or what time I will be speaking.

JUNE 26, 2014

Saturday June 28, 2014 Ephraim, Utah

This coming Saturday, June 28th at 9:30 a.m., I will speak at Snow College in Ephraim, Utah. The talk will take place at:

Eccles Performing Arts Center

Concert Hall (seats 700)

Center Street and 300 East

Parking is available across the street

Like the previous six talks in this series, admission is free.

The talk will be on the topic of Christ. It will be between 2 1/2 and 3 hours in length.

JUNE 27, 2014

Today Joseph and Hyrum Died

This is the day Joseph and his brother Hyrum were killed. To be more accurate, it is the day Hyrum first, then Joseph momentarily afterwards, were killed.

I spent some time speaking yesterday with a friend I baptized shortly after my own baptism just over 40 years ago. He was a member of the LDS Church for thirty years, and was then excommunicated. I was a member for 40 years, and was then excommunicated. Neither of us intend to ever return to LDS Church membership, and therefore have no reason to curry favor.

The truth is, however, that both of our lives have been fundamentally blessed by the time we were members of the LDS Church. Both of us have experienced the “fruits” of converting. The results include reforming how we lived, what we did with our time, how we pursued education and employment, who we associated with, even how we look at the world now in contrast to how we did before.

I am grateful for every moment I belonged to the LDS Church. I hold no resentments toward it and believe that struggling to remain a member of the organization is worth the effort. It saddens me that there will be a mass resignation to protest the LDS Church’s policies this coming Pioneer Day. That is not the way to leave.

Both my friend and I were excommunicated. I didn’t quit. I would never have quit voluntarily. I would have stayed and tried to work within the organization to persuade by example, by precept, and by my testimony. Inside my own ward and stake I was very quiet. When asked to teach, I taught. When asked to speak, I spoke. But I didn’t force my views on anyone.

It is true I wrote a book. But the book is overpriced to discourage its purchase. It is not easily available, not advertised, not promoted and I've never handed it out to anyone. I think it is true. But it was written to help, not hurt. I think it does help.

I believe Joseph and Hyrum died in a worthy cause. I think the energy and light that exploded onto the world through Joseph Smith's ministry has powered the LDS Church since his passing. Joseph's profound effect was so great that, even in the absence of any leader even a fraction of Joseph's stature, the LDS Church has been able to amass followers and do some considerable good. The absence of another leader like Joseph has slowed the momentum, and now the energy is almost entirely gone. But that does not change the goodness yet to be found inside the LDS Church still.

The forces who are in control of the organization are working harder to stifle what little light that still remains. But those who see this should not desert the battlefield. Stay and testify to what you know to be right. Fight against the darkness. You can be holy even if those around you are not. Read the circumstances in which Mormon and his son Moroni lived. We have not yet fallen to that state.

There are problems to be sure. Why run from them? Why not confront them by your quiet example, your goodness and firm testimony of truth? Why not bring to the attention of others what they have not yet noticed on their own? If they cast you out, then it is their doing, not yours. Let them be the aggressor, and you stay true to the Lord and His path. It is better to offend them by your example of righteousness than to take offense at their example of unrighteousness. Christ is your example.

JUNE 29, 2014

Sunstone August 2 @ 2:00

The preliminary program has set my Sunstone paper, *Cutting Down the Tree of Life to Build a Wooden Bridge*, for Saturday, August 2nd at 2:00. The session will last until 3:30 and include my paper, a response, and Q&A from the audience.

JULY 2014

JULY 1, 2014

Remember

For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift. (D&C 88:33)

From the moment Joseph Smith died, we have lost our memory of what God revealed through him. By forgetting we refuse the gift given by God.

First we must remember.

Until we remember what we were given, there is no reason for God to give more. Today we are being tested to see if we can be stirred to remember what came to light through Joseph.

It is up to God to decide whether the test is being passed. If we fail, there will be nothing further given this generation. We are on trial.

Will we remember? Will we finally rejoice in the gift and its giver?

Or will we cower in fear and look for every reason we can summon to ignore, oppose, dismiss and reject what we were offered?

As Christ put it: “O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken” (Luke 24:25). Nothing has changed. Mankind is the same now as ever.

JULY 2, 2014

One Talk

The series of lectures that began in Boise and will end in Phoenix are one talk. There are three left. Each one of the talks builds on earlier material.

If you are interested in understanding, then it would be beneficial to rehear or reread the previous ones. The later talks will connect things that were raised in the earlier ones. It is not possible to state everything at once. Pieces must be put together systematically.

JULY 10, 2014

Las Vegas and St. George

Las Vegas Lecture

Date: Friday, July 25, 2014

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Place: Fiesta Henderson Hotel & Casino

777 West Lake Mead Parkway

Henderson, NV 89015

Seats: Cancun Room A/B, seats 150

St. George Lecture

Date: Saturday, July 26, 2014

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Place: Lexington Hotel and Conference Center

850 Bluff Street

St. George, UT 84770
Seats: Ballroom, seats 275

JULY 11, 2014

Ephraim Transcript - Christ: The Prototype of the Saved Man

The Ephraim lecture has been transcribed and uploaded to Scribd. It is also available in *The Teachings of Denver C. Snuffer, Jr., Volume 2: 40 Years in Mormonism 2013-2014* and at www.restorationarchives.com. It is an expanded version and will read differently than the recording.

JULY 16, 2014

Email Response “Second Time”

I received an inquiry about my comment in the Ephraim talk about God’s hand “the second time.” The inquirer referred to a letter Joseph wrote, directed my attention there, and asked about the “second time.” My response appears below:

God may yet set His hand a second time in still another generation (or generations, depending on the reaction today), if the work required is not done today. When God begins to speak, we are obligated to inquire, listen and heed. At present I do not expect any success in the present generation. This world is so captured by a faithlessness and hardness that even the trump of an angel would fail to reach those alive today. If mankind knew what He offers now, we would all make the necessary sacrifice to receive it.

Joseph spoke as the Elias sent to prepare. He accomplished all that was required in his day. But he did not accomplish what might have been done if those who lived in his day had been faithful.

There will come another with the Spirit of Elijah, whom Joseph foretold. When that window opens it will require better response than in Joseph's day, or another generation will pass away unredeemed, but not un-warned. Right now the question is whether we are willing to still receive what Joseph in the spirit of Elias gave us. Hence the present series of talks. They are designed to let us remember. Before the Spirit of Elijah will be permitted to be heard, we must remember. God cannot give more when we forget what we already have received.

Then still another will come who is the Messiah. But all these are part of "the second time" in the Lord's economy. Likewise, they will all minister to a "generation" in the language of prophecy, while in the reckoning of men it involves generations.

I got a response saying the writer was trying hard, but seemed to be spending too much time with things like changing diapers to get any real breakthroughs. I responded:

changing diapers and being a husband and father are EXACTLY what will bring about both what you seek and what God wants to happen as well.

Daily, small acts of service to others, and in particular inside the family, are what we lack. We need better husbands and better fathers, more loving marriages and healthy families most of all. I will not get to that topic for two talks. But it is coming.

Too much attention is being paid to matters outside the family, where we have no control. It is family life, above all, where God's great work gets done.

JULY 17, 2014

Mormon In Context

Mormon, the abridger of the largest portion of the Book of Mormon, has an important context. He abridged the entire collection of prophetic and historic source materials. From Lehi to the time of King Benjamin, however, the abridgment was translated by Joseph Smith and then lost. That work was replaced by the Small Plates of Nephi, which he did not abridge.

Beginning with Mosiah and concluding with his own book, his abridgment remained intact. We now have that in the current Book of Mormon. His son completed the book, adding his (Moroni's) abridgment and translation of the record of Ether. Then he added his record.

Who was Mormon? What were the circumstances under which he compiled and abridged this lengthy volume of scripture? What things motivated his work?

Mormon was only 10 years old when he learned about the tradition of record keeping among his people. The records were handed down generation to generation. In his day, the previous record-keeper came to him and asked him to continue the work.

Mormon was chosen at 10 years old because he stood out. He was a "sober" minded child. Meaning he could contemplate serious matters in a mature way. He was also "quick to observe," meaning he would both understand what was needed and be willing to do it (Mormon 1:2). Society, at the time the hand-off to Mormon took place, was undergoing collapse. They were violent and "exceedingly wicked." There were so few left who would respect the old religion it had essentially vanished from the earth (4 Ne. 1:45-46).

Mormon's immediate predecessor (Ammaron) is referred to in only three verses before Mormon's record begins (4 Ne. 1:47-49).

Ammaron was inspired to hide the records from the people. He was then inspired to choose Mormon as the new record-keeper because of the qualifications set out above.

Mormon was told to get the records when he was twenty-four years old (Mormon 1:3).

When he was 11, his people fought a war and many died (Mormon 1:6, 8). War only hardened the Nephites, and the Lord withdrew the resident angels so they ministered no more among Mormon's people (Mormon 1:13). When they withdrew, miracles ceased. When the angels left and the gifts ended, the Holy Ghost also withdrew from the people (Mormon 1:13-14).

In contrast to the damned people all around him, Mormon was "visited of the Lord" and therefore he "tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus" (Mormon 1:15). Like Joseph Smith, Mormon tasted the fruit of the tree of life while still a teenager. He "knew" Jesus and therefore, despite the fact that the people were in darkness, Mormon stood in the light. Darkness among a larger population never hinders an individual from coming into the light.

When Mormon tried to preach to the people, the Lord stopped him. They had willfully rebelled, and were consigned to destruction (Mormon 1:16). If the Lord had permitted him to preach, it would have been an indication the Lord would still allow them to repent. Once the Lord forbid Mormon from preaching, the people were left to their destruction.

Mormon's people were filled with mischief, looking for power from the wrong source. When the Holy Ghost withdrew from them, they craved its presence and resorted to conjuring and witchcrafts to invoke the only spirits that would give heed to them (Mormon 1:19).

Mormon was only 16 when he was asked to lead the people into war. He knew Jesus, was prevented from preaching the truth about

Christ, and he was living a life of violence and warfare (Mormon 2:1–2). The war was bloody, the losses were great, and the people Mormon led were humbled by their losses. Mormon saw this terrible downfall and destruction as vindication of Samuel the Lamanite’s prophecies against the rebellious Nephites (Mormon 2:10).

When the people cried out in anguish from the burdens imposed on them by their awful circumstances, Mormon thought their cries were a hopeful sign. He supposed that perhaps the Lord would forgive them and reclaim them (Mormon 2:12). But these people were not repentant, merely self-pitying because God would not support them in their wickedness (Mormon 2:13).

Instead of looking to God and repenting, they resented God and cursed Him (Mormon 2:14). For them, “the day of grace was passed with them” and they could no longer be saved (Mormon 2:15).

There is a limit on the Lord’s forgiveness. When people claim they understand the Gospel, have the fullness, and therefore deliberately rebel against God’s messengers, driving the Holy Ghost out from among them, then the day of grace has passed.

Mormon was the great abridger of the Book of Mormon. But his life was lived in a society that was corrupt, vile, violent and void of the Holy Ghost. Yet he lived with God’s grace, as well as knowledge from Christ. These wicked and corrupt contemporaries were unable to even feel the Lord’s grace, but Mormon lived as one of the Lord’s friends.

From this, we can see just how little the social decay of a population affects the lives of the Lord’s followers. An entire nation can be blind, but that does not prevent disciples from seeing. Neither religions, traditions nor governments keep an individual from repenting.

Mormon was the perfect candidate to abridge the book. He lived at a time in where it was possible for him to understand us perfectly. He explained:

Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing. And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envyings, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts. (Mormon 8:35–36)

UPDATE:

I've received complaints from several people, including Symons Ryder, pointing out Mormon 8 was written by Mormon's son, Moroni.

JULY 21, 2014

Today and Yesterday

In Kirtland, Ohio the saints were too proud, foolish and vain for Zion to be established.

In Nauvoo, Illinois the saints were too proud, foolish and vain for Zion to be established.

In Salt Lake City, Utah the saints are too proud, foolish and vain for Zion to be established.

Those who are thinking about this topic today believe themselves to be something other than proud, foolish and vain. But if you read the historical events and compare our conversations, our ambitions, our desires and our self-promotion, you will see we

are no better than they were in their own day. WE are not even appreciative of what was restored. When we are asked to remember what Joseph Smith taught, it is opposed by traditions, fears and competing ambition.

Just like in Kirtland, there are many unclean spirits who will deceive you. Unless you anchor what you are taught in the scriptures, and require all truth to measure up, you can be deceived. That is as true now as then. Some people are so thrilled by having any spiritual experience that they accept anything.

Lying spirits appeal to your pride and vanity. God will chasten you and require you to be meek and serve both Him and your fellow man. Lying spirits will tell you that you are some great and mighty person. God will remind you that only He is strong, but He uses the weak things of this world to accomplish His work. Therefore, no one can take credit but Him for whatever is accomplished.

Proud, foolish and vain people have never built Zion. Only the penitent, the meek, and the humble can qualify to be around as God does His work.

JULY 22, 2014

Joseph Smith's Revelations

There is a passage often quoted from the D&C to support the idea that the president of the LDS church is entitled to have his teachings regarded as if they were God's word. The language is as follows:

Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me; For his word ye shall receive, as if from my own mouth, in all patience and faith. For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against

you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory. (D&C 21:4-6)

This revelation is referring to Joseph Smith. Period. Not to anyone who later happens to be elected by the vote of a group to become his successor. Doesn't apply and didn't apply to Brigham Young, John Taylor, Warren Jeffs, Ervil LeBaron, Rulon Allred or any number of other pretenders. It applied solely to Joseph Smith.

The revelation uses the personal pronouns "he" and "his" to refer to Joseph Smith throughout. If you want to put someone else into the passage above, then "he" must likewise heed all the requirements of D&C 21.

Wherefore it behooveth me that he [Joseph Smith] should be ordained by you, Oliver Cowdery mine apostle; This being an ordinance unto you, that you are an elder under his [Joseph Smith's] hand, he [Joseph Smith] being the first unto you, that you might be an elder unto this church of Christ, bearing my name. (D&C 21:10-11)

So "he" will then need to ordain Oliver if "he" is to be mentioned by the revelation.

It was Joseph Smith who "wept for Zion" (D&C 21:8). It was Joseph Smith who was "inspired to move the cause of Zion" forward (D&C 21:7). It was Joseph Smith whose "diligence I [God] know, and his prayers I have heard (D&C 21:7).

Therefore it was Joseph Smith whose words we are required to "give heed unto" and it is the "commandments which he [Joseph Smith] gave unto us" we are now required to obey. When we do not do this, then the "gates of hell shall prevail" against us, as they most certainly have.

From the beginning, all the various off-shoots uniformly disobey this commandment. Not only do they all refuse to “give heed” to what God revealed and commanded through Joseph Smith, but they have compounded their error by allowing others to interpose their commandments “as if they were from God.” The landscape today is exactly as it was when the Lord appeared to Joseph. We see churches who deny the power of God, and who teach for commandments the doctrines of men, having only a form of godliness, which heaven does not respect. The pretenders’ lack of power is for our protection. If it were otherwise, we would be damning one another.

JULY 23, 2014

Only One Doctrine Left

This is a personal message for one of the men on the High Council who advocated my excommunication. He is a friend. I spoke with him yesterday and, after reflecting on it overnight, have something to say to him and anonymous comments on my blog espousing similar beliefs:

In LDS Mormonism there is really only one doctrine left. Everything else is subordinate and changeable. But this single demand is paramount. If you disbelieve this position, then LDS Mormonism has no place for you. The doctrine:

We follow a man whom we call a prophet.

If you disbelieve this, and think you ought to follow Christ first, and the church’s “prophet” is secondary, then you are insubordinate and a threat. Believing Christ comes first opens the possibility that Christ could tell you the “prophet” is mistaken. That is intolerable.

In LDS Mormonism it is allowed for the current “prophet” to criticize and denigrate a former “prophet.” This happens frequently.

Even editorials now appear on LDS.org website rejecting Brigham Young's teachings as wrong, even immoral. The new, living leader has the "keys" and the contradictions are viewed by blinded followers to be "proof of continuing revelation." Therefore these contradictions are valued by the deceived. An unchanging God has error prone key-holders who can guarantee his contemporaries their salvation. This is even if later key-holders proclaim the earlier leader's mistakes. All of this is only consistent if you believe the central, single doctrine. If you question it, the whole construct begins to look foolish and riddled with error.

When I joined LDS Mormonism there were many doctrines. None of them put President Spencer W. Kimball into a position of a dictator. Indeed, President Kimball earned our loyalty and respect by his meek example and the content of his sermons. He denounced modern idols, and criticized the war-like nature of our country. But no one demanded a loyalty oath, insisting that veneration of him took precedence over worship of Christ. I believe if President Kimball heard of such a thing being taught he would have vocally and immediately spoken against it. He denounced Ezra Taft Benson's sermon about "Fourteen Fundamentals for Following the Prophet". But today these are taught in General Conference!

LDS Mormonism has changed since I first joined. So much so that I no longer belong in an organization that holds one and only one doctrine as its bedrock. I believe Christ alone is worthy of veneration. I do not believe I must follow a man to be able to follow Christ. I do not believe I should look to the example of some man in order to be able to see Christ.

This radical and false shift of the religion has happened in my lifetime. I never engaged in this idolatry while among the LDS

organization, and I refuse to accept that kind of religion now. It is false. I reject it.

Insofar as the LDS Church “believes” in the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith and the revelations through him, including the D&C and Pearl of Great Price, I honor them. Insofar as they testify of the Book of Mormon and preach from it, I believe and accept it. Therefore I see some considerable merit to the LDS Church. However, their current single fundamental doctrine is false. Utterly false.

If you extend the fundamental LDS doctrine to its logical conclusion, it is also satanic. It abrogates free will, requires obedience to a man even if he tells you to do something which you know to be wrong (a principle that has been taught in General Conference), and requires you to abandon your own agency. Since I believe everyone will be accountable before God for their choices in the Day of Judgment, the paradigm is false and will not protect you. You may think the “key holder” will absolve you of your mistakes, but God will judge you. If you are asked to do something wrong, and you do it out of veneration for a “prophet” you will not be spared, but you will be judged and condemned.

There are many good people in the LDS Church. There is also some considerable good done by the LDS Church. But when adulterers, liars, idolaters and the ignorant who preside in wards, stakes and areas of the church insist their personal unworthiness is excused because they are loyal to a priesthood line of authority, as we presently find in the church, then someone needs to proclaim faith in Christ and repentance. Even if only one voice will speak up, God will vindicate faith in Him in the end.

The Great Whore will always outnumber the few who are Christ's sheep. But that cannot detract from Christ's affection for those who hear His voice and defend His religion.

JULY 23, 2014

Pacific and Mountain Time Zones

The talks in Las Vegas and St. George this Friday and Saturday will be in two different time zones. Both talks begin at 9:30 a.m. But in Las Vegas that is in the Pacific Time Zone (an hour earlier) and in St. George it is in the Mountain Time Zone. Therefore if you plan to come, the scheduled times are in the local time zones.

JULY 31, 2014

Preparation for Phoenix

There is one talk remaining. I'm trying to get the transcripts up for the last two. The final talk in Phoenix will mean more if you have read or listened to the first nine talks. All ten are one talk, delivered in installments. The conclusion will presume the audience is already acquainted with what went before.

I speak at Sunstone on Saturday. Some time that evening I will put the paper up, linked on this blog. That paper will likewise be helpful to read before the final talk.

JULY 31, 2014

Messy History

History is very messy. While it is lived there are no "themes" the people actually living through the events can detect. The journals of the living record haphazard daily events, never knowing what comes next. These accounts are far more valuable than the later

narratives written by historians (and apologists) retelling the events to prove a “theme.”

Joseph was at the head of a church for 14 years. Brigham Young for 33. At the time of his death, Brigham Young’s influence was far greater on every living Latter-day Saint than Joseph’s ever was. Brigham Young faced challenges, overcame obstacles, fought wars (against both the US Army and Indians), kept order, and attempted to win court cases. He was a very busy man. By the end of his life the scope and sweep of his accomplishments overshadowed every Latter-day Saint and informed all their beliefs. Every stupid act, failed prediction, criminal act and embarrassing miscue was forgotten because of how very much the man accomplished. His greatest achievement was to preserve an organized church. Sheer force of personality made him indispensable for the survival of Mormonism. Even opponents and critics needed Brigham Young to help them to preserve their organizations. Nothing rallied splinter groups like Brigham’s success. Even today, many splinter organizations try to mimic Brigham’s rugged patriarchy as if it were the very example of God’s “true religion.”

By the time Joseph III and his brother David were a threat to Brigham’s organization, every Latter-day Saint living in the Utah Territory had an interest in Brigham winning the argument against the “Reorganized” church. It was imperative they proved the right choice had been made when the vote was taken in August 1844.

Affidavits were gathered from one to several decades after the events which “proved” Brigham was right and Emma and her sons wrong. It does not matter to LDS apologists that the affidavits are contradicted by earlier journals and diaries. They are “proof” and were given “under oath” and therefore, unquestioned. Sermons were preached defending the choices made in Nauvoo following Joseph

and Hyrum's deaths. Histories were written to defend the faith as it was changed by Brigham Young and his followers.

There are now libraries of material supporting both Brigham Young's leadership and the religion as he modified and handed it down. If you want a large bibliography, then the work of 170 years of Latter-day Saint apologists will win every time. Sheer bulk favors these traditions.

How, then, can someone now really claim these traditions fail to tell the whole truth? How is it possible for a believer in the Restoration through Joseph Smith to question these well-established "truths" held up as the very handiwork of God?

The only reason to question any of it is if you believe the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith's revelations. If you do that, and you let scripture tell you the "themes" of these events, then despite the great weight of LDS historical documentation, you can still sort it out correctly.

What is most surprising to me is the diaries and journals written while the events were unfolding contradict much of the apologist's "themes" and corroborate the scripture and prophetic account of the latter-day Gentile failing. If you want truth, you need to have a strong stomach. None of this is fun or cause for celebration. If you love the Latter-day Saints, as I do, then you find yourself torn between the truth and your sentiments. It is better to be in the company of God and the truth, than even good friends who believe falsehoods.

Thankfully, God is not jealous of the truth. He does *not* have a vested interest (despite claims to the contrary) in seeing a false tradition win the argument. He is a God of truth and hates even well-intentioned lies.

Anyone who attempts to undo beloved, but false, religious traditions will be hated in their generation. Thankfully, in the long run the truth will win out. God has decreed it. Therefore, even the smallest group of believers will ultimately not suffer from being outnumbered by disbelievers. God did not establish the Restoration through Joseph Smith to have it end in a pack of half-truths manipulated to support a false and incomplete narrative. The Restoration will, just as Joseph predicted, roll forth to fill the earth. But that prophecy does not establish a wealthy franchise, nor predict corporate success. The “Church of God” has always been beyond man’s ability to control; no matter what enthusiastic claims men may make to the contrary.

God’s hand is moving again. He will win the argument. Be patient and let Him finish what He has started again.

JULY 31, 2014

Las Vegas Transcript

The Las Vegas lecture has been transcribed and uploaded to Scribd. It is also available in *The Teachings of Denver C. Snuffer, Jr., Volume 2: 40 Years in Mormonism 2013-2014* and at www.restorationarchives.com.

AUGUST 2014

AUGUST 2, 2014

Sunstone 2014

"Cutting Down the Tree of Life to Build a Wooden Bridge" is up on Scribd. You can find the link on the right side of the blog under DS Talks. A copy of the paper is also available in *The Teachings of*

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr., Volume 3: 40 Years in Mormonism 2014-2016
and at www.restorationarchives.com.

Enjoy.

AUGUST 9, 2014

September 9 Mesa Location

The final talk will be held:

Sept. 9, 2014

9:30 am

Rockin' R Ranch

6136 E. Baseline Road

Mesa, AZ 85206

This location holds 700, plus, and is a semi-outdoor location. You might want to bring a pillow, as the seating will be at picnic tables.

AUGUST 14, 2014

St. George Transcript

The St. George lecture has been transcribed and uploaded to Scribd. It is also available in *The Teachings of Denver C. Snuffer, Jr., Volume 2: 40 Years in Mormonism 2013-2014* and at www.restorationarchives.com.

AUGUST 15, 2014

Sunstone Q&A

Below is a transcription of the Q&A from Sunstone. It will make more sense if you have read the paper first (which is on Scribd and titled, *Cutting Down the Tree of Life to Build a Wooden Bridge*), because the questions were provoked by the presentation. These

questions were asked and these answers given immediately following the paper and response:

Cutting Down the Tree of Life to Build a Wooden Bridge
Question & Answer - Sunstone Symposium

8-2-14 Denver Snuffer

[NOTE: This is the question and answer period that was held following Denver Snuffer's talk and after Dan Wotherspoon's rebuttal. I chose not to transcribe Dan's rebuttal because I do not have his permission to do so and therefore leave it out. I insert some clarifying words in brackets to make what was meant more clear.]

Tim Malone: Dan, thank you for focusing on the fruit of the Tree of Life. I was looking for that in Denver's remarks, but let me ask this question of Denver. My take away is that you stated that the LDS Church has changed fundamental doctrine, is changing, and will continue to change because of submission to social and governmental pressure for fear of losing tax status. Is that a correct take away?

Denver: The definition of fundamental doctrine is not something that I applied to the Church, it's what the Church has advocated (or defined) on its own (and for itself). I'm contrasting what the Church said at one time was fundamental doctrine, with what it has done to abrogate, denounce, renounce and even condemn unequivocally out of their own mouth, their prior practice. Their motivation for accomplishing that transition was the focus of the paper. I'm not trying to make a moral judgment. I'm trying to understand the events against the backdrop of why the events took place. Why change when they said it would be right or wrong (to do so), when they said it in the name of Jesus Christ, like the comment of Brigham Young that I read. I read his

claim on purpose because he was stating, “I’m telling you this as my status as a prophet of God. I’m telling you this in the name of Jesus Christ, and I’m telling you this will never change,” and (it has been subsequently) changed. And now the Church, after making the changes, has turned around and said, “We unequivocally condemn that.” That’s the purpose of the paper and also to highlight the fact that institutionally, this is a problem. The problem is that truth and love and purity does exist, but it exists primarily in a form that is not (and cannot be) institutional. According to the scriptures, there are only two ways, “there are save but two Churches only.” And one church, if it’s going to subject itself to institutional control, vagaries of the law, the pressure of the tax code, and everything else; that church will necessarily become sullied and soiled, tossed and pulled, and ultimately wind up contradicting itself. But there is another church that can remain pure, unsullied, untouched, untaxed, and unregulated. That purity can exist in your heart. That purity can be found between you and God. I think any institution is going to suffer the exact same history.

Voice: My question is, if the fruit of the Tree of Life is not available to homosexuals and to women once they are embraced within the Church, what will they find instead?

Denver: The problem addressed in the paper, and the turf upon which I feel very comfortable discussing, is the problem of Church doctrine, with fundamental positions being taken as if they were out of the mouth God Himself, and then contradicted (by church presidents) later. That is done to illustrate the problem of the institution. I don’t think that I can, or ever should, have looked for institutional approval for my relationship with God. There was a time I did. There was a time I cared a great deal about that. But

the institution has rendered that now an impossibility, because I can't serve within the church. That hasn't done a thing to deter my conviction, my relationship, my fidelity to God. Likewise, I think in every individual's life, this world is a terrible place, and this world is a wonderful place. It is precisely wonderful because it is so terrible. It doesn't matter what circumstances you find yourself in, everything down here is going to pull away at you. Eventually everything is going to wear out, and break down. There are going to be disappointments, challenges, disagreements and arguments. The comfort that you find, like Joseph Smith in Liberty jail, "Peace my son, this is only going to be for a small moment, and if you endure it well your going to be rewarded on high." I don't think that an institution can embrace with love, everyone, because some of us hate some others of us, and the institution would like to (claim that it) love(s) us all. And those who get control, get to use the bully pulpit for their purposes, and those that don't have it, get to resent it. I don't think, ultimately, that the fix will be institutional. I think it will be personal, and I think it will be individual, and I think there will be a gathering, and that gathering will be called Zion, and it will happen because the prophecies foretell it. But I don't think it's going to be after the fashion of something that can regulate or take control of others, because anytime you manage to get control, you wind up in politics and economics.

Dan: His (Denver's) fear of institutions, I argue the same sort of thing. But it's important that we work these things out in community with each other. So the fact that we have an institution that provides the buildings, that provides some of the structures in which we meet and interact with each other and learn from each other, to me, shouldn't be outweighed simply by this. But again, I think both of us would be in agreement, no matter what is said

there, it's you and your relationship with God. It's you and your relationship with the fire yourself, that has to be able to drive it, to not be simply interacting with it so far down the mountain where it's cooled, and that you can hardly tell that's it's there. So I do want to shout out that it's important that the primary actors in the world are not institutions, the primary actors in the world are people, and we're complex, and we go forward and we go backwards, and we halt and we run fast, and we stumble. When I see an institution changing the way the Mormon Church is, even though it's frustrating that it's not changing anywhere near the direction I want, and when they say stupid things that just make me want to go crazy, I still see it as an advance, because we as people are advancing. We are meeting each other, we are learning from each other, we're engaging, we are understanding what's going on, and this is sure revelation. This is sure revelation simply unfolding in a messier way. So again, I want to get us together as often as possible.

Voice: I think we can learn a lot from the community process, and discuss things, but that's not revelation. My question is, usually the best we can do with personal revelation, whether it is lay members or leaders, is a yes or no, magic eight ball kind of a thing. And I don't want to denigrate that, I'll take what I can get, but how do you move from that, to getting a complete sentence out of the Lord? [laughter]

Dan: I don't think it's possible. I don't think the Lord speaks in sentences. Seriously. Every powerful spiritual experience I've had has been so overwhelming, so much bigger, and beyond any kind of language. It's the downhill, it's the explaining it to you, to my friend, to my congregation or something, is where we put the words on it. And that's why it's so important to go back and constantly do the dialog. I honor Isaiah, I honor Abraham, and I admire them

because they're examples to us of going straight to the Lord and having that face-to-face relationship that Genesis describes Adam had with God in the Garden. I'm with that process, but just as I don't accept the cosmology of a flat earth, sitting on waters below and a firmament held up by the pillars of heaven, I don't except Abraham's pronouncements on cosmology. I don't feel the need to honor everything that they say. I honor their interaction with God, and I try to look at that as a model for my own life. And even in an institutional setting, we have to remember this, we have to go straight to the source.

Denver: You know, I was raised by a Baptist mother and got Bible verses read at me every morning before I went to school throughout my childhood. When Mormon missionaries came and told me about the Joseph Smith story, and when Mormon missionaries assured me that Joseph saw God, and that, if you follow James 1:5 and you ask God, He will give you an answer, and if you will pray about the Book of Mormon, God will make it known to you whether it's true or not. I accepted that. I was young, I was still a teenager, but I accepted that as literal. I accepted that as possible. I had faith that that could happen. I'm not a theologian, but I do believe God not only talks in sentences, but can make himself known to man. Literally! I believe all that. I believe that God did appear to Joseph. I believe that He did appear to Isaiah. So having that understanding, I did not think that there was anything unusual when an angel appeared to me, because an angel did appear to me. I thought that was the normal, usual, every day way that Mormon religion was practiced. Sitting in a Ward as a teenager, looking out at all these experienced Mormons, listening to the General Authorities, I thought they all were talking to God in the temple every Thursday. I thought this was common, ordinary stuff. I presumed that was

what everyone (experienced and therefore) walked around with (as their religion). It took a long time before I mentioned anything about any of the experience that I had had, before I realized that that's not usual, that's not normal, and that's not customary. And so, I'm (now) trying to make it usual, I'm trying to make it customary, I'm trying to say, Yes God is real! Because if I have seen Him, I think you can see Him, and (likewise) ought to. I think everyone should make the fiery ascent to God's presence. I think it should not be limited to an occasional "here," or an occasional "there." I think we should have an abundance of witnesses. And the prophecy that Moroni spoke to Joseph Smith, that the time is going to come when no one needs to say to anyone else, "Know ye the Lord, for they shall all know Him," needs to be fulfilled. It is lying dormant (still and should not be). [applause]

Dan: You can go with your symbol system, you are going to go with your expectations. A Buddhist will never have the experience with the angel, with Jesus, and things like that. What Denver is having is not the same experience as what Hershel had, what Mohammed had, and things like this. And so when we talk about whether God speaks in sentences, what language does He speak in? He speaks in the systems of ours that open up to this sort of level of presence. A deep dive through one symbol system is wonderful and it's pretty hard to get out of it, but I think we need to stay aware that there are so many people diving and meeting God, meeting the divine and so many other different ways. I honor Denver's experience, but I can't limit God to that single system. I'm with Mormonism's expensive views.

Denver: This much I know: The angel said, "On the first day, of the third month, in nine years, your ministry will begin, and

so you must prepare.” Those are the words! I can quote them still. He spoke in a sentence.

Voice: The more these situations are going on, I feel so strongly, more and more, I just keep getting that this is all about unity, and it’s an opportunity for us. And if unity is about “agreeing” then frankly God did a terrible job. So the more I see of this, what I keep going to is, the quest for Zion seems to me, to be the quest for open heartedness, and charity, and unity. And so when I see one side that says, An actively gay person will never come into the presence of God. This person will go to hell. And then on the other side, I see a person who is an active Mormon, or a person who doesn’t approve of homosexuality, who is an awful person because he’s a hater. And I see those two things. And I see Christians say that Mormons are going to hell. It seems to me that we more dig our feet in and say, I’m right, and I’m trying to push this agenda... we are working away from God, and away from Zion. More and more I think that if we could say, This is my experience, this is what I believe, and let me hear where you are, and what you believe, and let’s talk and consider. I think that’s great. Even though I may disagree with you and think you’re wrong, I trust God to lead you to what is right, and I trust the atonement of Christ to take care of whatever you’ve got wrong, just like I trust that for me. I think that truth exists, but I think when we all know all truth, we’ll all agree. And in the meantime we are trying to find a way. So my question is, first of all, is that possible? I mean do you agree?

Denver: I agree very much. In the first book I wrote I said, “Religion was intended to be applied internally only.”

Voice: Thank you. My other question is, my theology for the issue of our day, homosexuality, is that I believe that homosexuals are a gift to us, to teach us great things. I think we need to learn

charity. I also believe that God does have a standard, but I want to know if those two things can coexist. Can we say, I truly love you, I'm thankful for you, I accept you, but this is my theology and morality. Can we be in this place where we love each other and seek unity without agreement?

Denver: I grew up in a little town in Idaho. Homosexuality in the 1960s was almost a nonexistent issue (and even though it existed, it was not a source of fighting). There was a restaurant in Mountain Home, Idaho that was owned by a gay man and his boyfriend, who lived together (in a house about two blocks away from my parents' home). Everyone knew that they were "funny." They were comfortable living in a community that was full of a bunch of retired military and active military people in Idaho in the 1960s, where I suppose, they were just as Republican then as they are in Idaho now. It was known, it was not talked about, I mean there might be a passing reference, but that was it. I worked in those guys' restaurant. One of my first jobs was washing dishes in a restaurant owned by a gay fellow and his live-in lover. It was no big deal. There was no politics involved, there was no agitating on the issue.

One of my law school classmates is here. A few years ago he wound up on a drive (to a business meeting in) Idaho with a fellow who was gay. (The gay fellow) announced (to my classmate) that he was attracted to him. It was one of those awkward moments. [laughter]

When (he and I subsequently talked about it), we kind of chuckled about it. But the fact of the matter was that both he and I had a business relationship with that fellow and (his announcement) was essentially a nonevent. It was strange. It was, (however, merely) "Thanks, but no."

I think we ought to be ginger about the way in which we deal with one another's weaknesses and problems. I think we ought to be firm in what we believe, and apply it rigorously internally, and then have compassion on every idiot you are going to meet—because we are all idiots, myself included. I agree with you.

Dan: I agree with you too, but where you pushed to be a little too far is when you said, "I love you but these are my standards" To me, I'm simply willing to say, I'm going to hear you, I'm going to be with you, I'll see as much of your life as you will show to me without trying to have a resolution. When I talked about the Hegelian dialectic, it's a process, and I'm completely fine for it taking forever in my own heart.

Cathleen Gilbert (Moderator): We are out of time. Thank you to Denver Snuffer and Dan Wotherspoon. [Applause]

CHAPTER 14

Laying on Hands

AUGUST 19, 2014

Laying on Hands

An interesting question:

Are you familiar with when the church decided to combine receiving the gift of the holy ghost by the laying on of hands and confirmation into the church? Reading 2 Nephi 31 I do not understand why these 2 are linked. I know Joseph explained that being baptized and not receiving the Gift of Holy Ghost it is like baptizing a bag of sand. But was he talking about confirmation? Or receiving the commission to receive the holy ghost? Or did Joseph truly have the power to give the Holy Ghost (because of his true priesthoods) and it is different now because we only act as ordainers and do not truly have the power thereof? The reason I wonder these things is because I feel that the church is damning itself and the missionaries by having them go out and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ and then set forth rules to be baptized because not only are you being baptized but joining the organization. Should the 2 go together? Should you have to believe in Joseph Smith to be baptized unto repentance? Should

you have to stop drinking coffee and tea to be baptized for the remission of your sins? To me baptism, receiving the holy ghost, and confirmation into the church should be separate. But what do I know?

Baptism and the Holy Ghost have always been linked together, but laying on hands has not always been included. Baptism and the Holy Ghost are linked whether or not there is someone who can lay on hands to give the gift. Understanding the scriptures and our history is necessary. The answer will contradict the traditional narrative. For many, traditions are preferred. Speaking the truth makes people uncomfortable, afraid and accusatory. If you replace the traditions with studied truth and give an answer that challenges the false tradition then you are “preaching false doctrine”, or you are ignorant. Those who believe false traditions think everyone is as ignorant as they are. Those people never take the opportunity to study and discover the truth.

Baptism precedes the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost always follows if the baptism was proper. The only condition for receiving the Holy Ghost is sincere repentance before baptism. If a person is sincere, then the gift follows automatically.

Nephi taught this plainly. His teaching was based on a dialogue between him (Nephi) and Christ and Christ’s Father. [The fact this conversation involved all three tells us a great deal about Nephi’s ascent up Jacob’s Ladder, because conversing with both Christ and the Father is only possible once a man has made the ascent. Another topic.]

On baptism and the Holy Ghost, Nephi relayed the truth:

And he [Christ] said unto the children of men: Follow thou me. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus save we shall

*be willing to keep the commandments of the Father? And the Father said: Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son. And also, the voice of the Son came unto me, saying: He that is baptized in my name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me; wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism—yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel. But, behold, my beloved brethren, thus came the voice of the Son unto me, saying: After ye have repented of your sins, and witnessed unto the Father that ye are willing to keep my commandments, **by the baptism of water, and have received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, and can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels, and after this should deny me, it would have been better for you that ye had not known me. And I heard a voice from the Father, saying: Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved** (2 Ne. 31: 10–15).*

Therefore, according to Christ and the Father, as reported by Nephi, the steps are:

1. Repent
2. Be willing to take upon you the name of Christ
3. Be baptized

4. If you do then the Holy Ghost will come upon you.

There is no mention of laying on of hands because the process and promise given by Christ and the Father does not require laying on hands. It only requires exactly what Nephi reported from conversing with Christ and the Father.

Likewise, in modern revelation the Lord explained His Gospel while omitting any requirement for laying on hands for the Holy Ghost:

And verily, verily, I say unto you, he that receiveth my gospel receiveth me; and he that receiveth not my gospel receiveth not me. And this is my gospel—repentance and baptism by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which showeth all things, and teacheth the peaceable things of the kingdom. (D&C 39:5–6)

Similar to Nephi's explanation, Christ makes no mention of laying on of hands in this revelation to Joseph because it is not required.

In another revelation it is revealed:

Yea, open your mouths and they shall be filled, saying: Repent, repent, and prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; Yea, repent and be baptized, every one of you, for a remission of your sins; yea, be baptized even by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost. Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel. (D&C 33:10–12)

Three verses following this, the laying on hands to confirm into the church is then mentioned, along with the Holy Ghost. But the formula given in the verses above is not changed by confirmation.

This was the pattern when Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were baptized. The *JSH* account makes it clear when they received authority from John the Baptist that it had no authority to lay on hands for the Holy Ghost.

He said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter; and he commanded us to go and be baptized, and gave us directions that I should baptize Oliver Cowdery, and that afterwards he should baptize me. (JSH 1:70)

Despite this, when they were baptized both Joseph and Oliver immediately received the Holy Ghost (without the laying on of hands).

Immediately on our coming up out of the water after we had been baptized, we experienced great and glorious blessings from our Heavenly Father. No sooner had I baptized Oliver Cowdery, than the Holy Ghost fell upon him, and he stood up and prophesied many things which should shortly come to pass. And again, so soon as I had been baptized by him, I also had the spirit of prophecy, when, standing up, I prophesied concerning the rise of this Church, and many other things connected with the Church, and this generation of the children of men. We were filled with the Holy Ghost, and rejoiced in the God of our salvation. (JSH 1:73).

This leads then to the question asked about laying on hands to give the Holy Ghost. This practice does appear in the Book of Mormon, and did start during the restoration. In the Book of Mormon it began when Christ personally laid hands on His Twelve and gave them this authority.

And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of these sayings, he touched with his hand the disciples whom he had

chosen, one by one, even until he had touched them all, and spake unto them as he touched them. And the multitude heard not the words which he spake, therefore they did not bear record; but the disciples bare record that he gave them power to give the Holy Ghost. (3 Ne. 18:36–37)

What Christ said to these Twelve is later reported by Moroni.

The words of Christ, which he spake unto his disciples, the twelve whom he had chosen, as he laid his hands upon them—And he called them by name, saying: Ye shall call on the Father in my name, in mighty prayer; and after ye have done this ye shall have power that to him upon whom ye shall lay your hands, ye shall give the Holy Ghost; and in my name shall ye give it, for thus do mine apostles. Now Christ spake these words unto them at the time of his first appearing; and the multitude heard it not, but the disciples heard it; and on as many as they laid their hands, fell the Holy Ghost. (Moroni 2:1–3)

Even when Christ gave this “authority” it was conditional and required the Twelve to take these steps before they could act on this commission:

- Call upon the Father
- Using Christ’s name
- In mighty prayer
- Only then could they have the right to give the gift (through authorization from Christ’s Father).

If you understand what is involved it makes sense for this right to come directly from both the Father and the Son. The Holy Ghost is the “mind of the Father and the Son.”

...possessing the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit that bears record of the Father and the Son. These

three are one; or, in other words, these three constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme power over all things. (Lecture 5, P. 2)

Christ set the example. He was baptized and immediately received the Holy Ghost. No one laid hands on Him. The gift was given because of His qualification for baptism. But there have been those who were given conditional authority to bestow the gift. They could only do so by consulting with the Father and Christ beforehand to insure it was God's decision, not man's, to give the gift.

In the restoration, the practice of laying on hands began in June 1831, the same month the "High Priesthood" was restored. The "High Priesthood" was restored in a meeting of elders that month, but was only later called the Melchizedek Priesthood. At the time of the conference it was correctly called the "High Priesthood."

This event has been misinterpreted by the LDS Church, and re-characterized as restoring the office of High Priest. That is wrong. The office of High Priest has always been an Aaronic Priesthood office, held throughout the Dispensation of Moses by the eldest sons of Aaron in a line of succession. By New Testament times it was a political office, bought and sold by Roman influence, and belonged to the house of Caiaphus. This Aaronic Priesthood office had one occupant at a time. He presided over all the Aaronic and Levitical priesthood holders and ran the Temple at Jerusalem. Sidney Rigdon wanted the office of High Priest. According to David Whitmer, Sidney Rigdon persuaded Joseph to incorporate it into the church as an office which could be held by many, not just the presiding Aaronic Priesthood official. So today there are numerous "High Priests" in the LDS Church, all claiming they are

of the Melchizedek Priesthood order, completely contrary to the Old and New Testaments. Another topic.

As to the laying on of hands, when the High Priesthood (later called Melchizedek Priesthood) was restored in June 1831, Joseph Smith recorded: “*The authority of the Melchizedek priesthood was manifested and conferred, for the first time, upon several of the elders*” at the June 1831 conference (See *JS Papers, Documents* Vol. 1, p. 320, citing *JS History* Vol. A1, p. 118). This also clarifies that “elder” is a church office (not related to the High Priesthood because these church “elders” were already serving in their church offices before the High Priesthood was restored. Another subject.)

In the June 1831 Conference Joseph Smith ordained five, and Lyman Wight ordained eighteen, for a total of twenty-three. The results which followed were not altogether satisfactory. Subsequent performance by the ones ordained did not prove to mirror Melchizedek or Enoch. Of the five Joseph ordained,

- Lyman Wight was excommunicated in 1848
- Harvey Whitlock was excommunicated in 1835
- Thomas Marsh left the church in 1838, signed an affidavit against Joseph and contributed to his imprisonment by Missouri and was excommunicated in 1839
- Parley Pratt apostatized and was excommunicated in 1842, but reinstated in 1843.

Of the eighteen Lyman Wight ordained,

- John Whitmer was excommunicated in March 1838
- Sidney Rigdon was excommunicated in September 1844
- Edward Partridge died in 1840
- Ezra Thayer refused to follow the Twelve following Joseph’s and Hyrum’s deaths

- Joseph Wakefield was excommunicated in January 1834
- John Corrill was excommunicated in 1839
- Jacob Scott denied the faith
- Wheeler Baldwin joined the RLDS Church in 1859
- Martin Harris left the LDS Church, followed James Strang, but returned to the LDS Church and was rebaptized in 1870.

It is apparent that “ordination” to even the High Priesthood cannot guarantee a recipient will have faith sufficient to gain power in the priesthood. For that, like every other blessing, it is always required for the man to obtain it directly from heaven. The priesthood is predicated on a relationship with “the powers of heaven.” If the one ordained does not secure such a relationship with the Powers of Heaven, then the ordination will not produce the expected results.

Brigham Young was not among those who received this authority.

The first mention of the practice of laying on of hands to give the Holy Ghost followed the June 1831 Conference when, on June 14th, convert WW Phelps was told he *would* receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands (See *JS Papers, Documents* Vol. 1, p. 337, D&C Section 55). This was because he was given the gift by one having the authority.

WW Phelps was promised the Holy Ghost (he was to receive it from one of those who received the authority earlier that month). But he was also told he would be ordained a church elder, and then he could likewise conditionally give the Holy Ghost to others if they repented and were first baptized and “were contrite” before God (*JS Papers, Documents* Vol. 1, p. 339, D&C Section 55).

The High Priesthood had been forfeited by the LDS Church (but not by Joseph Smith) as of January 1841 (See D&C 124:28).

Today church elders “confirm” new members and admonish them to “receive” the Holy Ghost. This is much like WW Phelps was told he could do in June 1831. For a man to hold the right to confer it, however, it must come by being given to the man by Christ and then confirmed by Father following “mighty prayer.”

In D&C 20 this right is confined to “an Apostle”— meaning one who qualified like the Twelve during Christ’s ministry to the Nephites. It says:

*An **apostle** is an elder, and it is his calling to baptize; And to ordain other elders, priests, teachers, and deacons; And to administer bread and wine—the emblems of the flesh and blood of Christ—And to confirm those who are baptized into the church, **by the laying on of hands for the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, according to the scriptures; And to teach, expound, exhort, baptize, and watch over the church; And to confirm the church by the laying on of the hands, and the giving of the Holy Ghost; And to take the lead of all meetings.*** (D&C 20:38–44)

The LDS Church does not read that as limiting the power to do this to “an Apostle,” but instead focuses on “an elder,” and then extends the right to every man holding the church office of an elder. However, the Gospel, like God, is the same yesterday, today and forever. The language in Section 20 should be read to mean what is reported in 1 Nephi (in the dialogue between Nephi, Christ and the Father), 3 Nephi and Moroni, as set out above. Otherwise the Gospel changes.

In any event, the “gift” as given today by LDS elders is entirely conditional. It is an admonition to the newly confirmed member to “receive” the influence. It is much like what is available to anyone, anywhere, including investigators. If the Holy Ghost were not

available to everyone then the promise in Moroni 10:4 would not be given. No one could pray and get an answer about the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon by the power of the Holy Ghost if they were required to first have hands laid upon them.

There is no single denomination and no valid incantation that provides access to the Holy Ghost. No authority can remove it from the honest in heart. Nor is there authority, apart from that given by Christ and the Father (following mighty prayer and supplication) which can confer the blessing as a gift to a recipient. But the commandment to be baptized, when done in faith following repentance, will bring this gift to everyone. This is Christ's Gospel.

AUGUST 20, 2014

Laying on Hands, Part 2

The best explanation of the relationship between baptism and the Holy Ghost comes from Alma's record. He is an odd source, however, because he had been "consecrated a priest" by the wicked King Noah. King Noah chose him because he was "lifted up in the pride of his heart" (Mosiah 11:5). Therefore, using some of our present false belief system we would conclude his "authority" was compromised and his heart too hard for God's purposes.

Repentance is a wonderful thing. Clearly it was Alma's repentance which then qualified him to be useful to the Lord. Although he was one of King Noah's priests (Mosiah 17:1-2), when he heard the testimony of God's messenger, Abinadi, he knew what he heard was true (*Id.*). Therefore he knew he must respond to it, despite his record of wickedness and unbelief.

Alma recorded Abinadi's testimony, and then taught it to others as the truth. When a small number began to believe, Alma followed the pattern we saw in the last post. He asked God for the necessary

authority for his own (and those who believed him) to repent. He asked God to recognize their baptism as a sign of repentance, and to send the Holy Ghost to be with them:

*And he did teach them, and did preach unto them **repentance**, and redemption, and faith on the Lord. And it came to pass that he said unto them: Behold, here are the waters of Mormon (for thus were they called) and now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light; Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life—Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being **baptized in the name of the Lord**, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you? And now when the people had heard these words, they clapped their hands for joy, and exclaimed: This is the desire of our hearts. And now it came to pass that Alma took Helam, he being one of the first, and went and stood forth in the water, and cried, saying: **O Lord, pour out thy Spirit upon thy servant, that he may do this work with holiness of heart.** And when he had said these words, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he said: Helam, **I baptize thee, having authority from the Almighty God**, as a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve him until you are dead as to the mortal body; and may the Spirit of the Lord be poured out*

upon you; and may he grant unto you eternal life, through the redemption of Christ, whom he has prepared from the foundation of the world. And after Alma had said these words, both Alma and Helam were buried in the water; and they arose and came forth out of the water rejoicing, being filled with the Spirit. And again, Alma took another, and went forth a second time into the water, and baptized him according to the first, only he did not bury himself again in the water. And after this manner he did baptize every one that went forth to the place of Mormon; and they were in number about two hundred and four souls; yea, and they were baptized in the waters of Mormon, and were filled with the grace of God. (Mosiah 18:7–16)

Alma did not baptize until he first, just as Christ instructed His twelve to do, prayed in “mighty prayer” asking for God’s acceptance and approval. God gave it to Alma as He would later do with the twelve disciples. Then, with the Spirit of the Lord upon him, Alma had God’s authority to act. Or in other words he was qualified by God’s priesthood to proceed. Thereupon “having authority from Almighty God” Alma baptized. The efficacy of the ordinance was proven by the result it achieved: Helam came out of the water “being filled with the Spirit.” Or, in other words, the baptism resulted in the gift of the Holy Ghost.

This ordinance performed by Alma was exactly as Christ’s ordinance at the hands of John the Baptist. a baptism that was recognized and accepted by heaven and proven effective because the Holy Ghost was the witness.

The 4th Article of Faith says:

We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third,

Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

We do believe that, don't we? However, the way the "Laying on of hands" is to happen must be in conformity with the Gospel of Christ. Meaning that if Christ lays hands on a man and commissions him to do this work, and then instructs him to pray to the Father in mighty prayer to be authorized to proceed, and the man follows through and obtains that authorization from the Father, it is possible for him to then "lay on hands" and bestow the gift. If it were otherwise we would have a "changeable God" (Moroni 8:18) and He would "cease to be God" because He cannot change (Mormon 9:19).

Christ's Gospel requires man to connect with God for it to be effective. Baptism is an ordinance belonging to heaven, and is designed to reconnect man to heaven. Baptism does not induct a person into an organization. It is between the individual and God.

The LDS Church may perform baptisms, but when a candidate has been baptized they are not yet a member of the LDS Church. It requires a "confirmation" to induct the person into the LDS Church. If it were otherwise, then participation in the organization would be paramount to salvation, It is not.

Baptism remains independent of organizational membership and participation. A person could be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and never belong to any earthly church organization (LDS, RLDS, COC, FLDS, etc.). This is in spite of what all these organizations may claim for themselves or how much they may want to control people, beliefs, and the resources of believers. Believers and converts may be told there is a need to belong to an earthly organization, but that is not required if the Book of Mormon is

true. Saving belief is predicated on a relationship between the individual and God. Baptism demonstrates this is the case. Even an LDS Church baptism demonstrates this truth. If a convert were baptized, and then refused to be confirmed a member, they would still be baptized. If they were repentant and had faith in Christ, they would still receive the Holy Ghost. However, they would not be a member of the LDS Church if they are not “confirmed” as a member.

Now in the case of Alma above and in Christ’s instructions about baptism (3 Ne. 11:25), the ordinance is performed by someone who has “authority” given to them from Christ. The ordinance as Christ directed it to be performed requires these words: “*Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen*” (Id.).

In contrast, the baptism rites of the LDS Church do not use these words, but substitutes the word “commission” for “authority.” The LDS ordinance is as follows: “*Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen*” (D&C 20:73).

This LDS baptism can be effective, if the conditions of repentance and faith in Christ are met by the candidate. However, it is not effective if these conditions are not met. The same Section of the D&C describe the conditions to be qualified for baptism:

All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of

Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church. (D&C 20:37)

These are the same conditions Alma referred to before he performed baptisms at the Waters of Mormon.

The “confirmation” process used by the LDS Church requires laying on hands to “confirm [you] a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” and is accompanied by the admonition to “receive the Holy Ghost.” This is done by church elders holding the office of “elder” through common consent.

There is no such thing as “elder” priesthood. Elder is a church office. It is obtained by common consent, just like relief society president, and Sunday school teacher, and scout leader. There is no priesthood called “teacher” or “deacon” or “patriarch” or “seventy” or any of the other offices in the church associated with priesthood. There are three kinds of priesthood. The LDS Church claims to have two: Melchizedek and Aaronic (including the Levitical) priesthoods. This is based on the language in Section 107 describing the priesthood that was in the LDS Church at the time the revelation was given: “*There are, in the church, two priesthoods, namely, the Melchizedek and Aaronic, including the Levitical Priesthood*” (D&C 107:1).

This statement in Section 107 would be akin to saying: “Obama is the President of the United States.” It is true—at this moment. It will not be true after January 2017. But it is true at this moment. Likewise, it was true in April 1835 that there were, at that moment, some people in the church as then constituted who had been given the Melchizedek Priesthood, and others who had been given the Aaronic Priesthood. But it is equally true that NOT EVERY member of the church in April 1835 had one or the other. Nor is it true that

the condition of the church in April 1835 is the same as it is at this moment. Something that is a fact at one moment can change in the next. It is not appropriate to quote a statement about April 1835 to claim something in August 2014.

In the preceding post is a list of the twenty-three men who received High Priesthood (later called Melchizedek Priesthood) in June 1831. Their history shows that most of them abandoned their right to High Priesthood. If they could lose it, then anyone could. If you doubt that then you do not believe the scriptures. Do you really think Section 121 is untrue? Do you really believe once it is conferred it cannot be lost? Have you not likewise learned by sad experience that it is the nature of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority as they suppose, will begin to immediately exercise unrighteous dominion? Do you think they remain approved by the Powers of Heaven when they exercise control, dominion and compulsion on the souls of men? If you believe the conditions in the LDS Church today are exactly the same as in April 1835, or even was the same on the morning of June 28, 1844 when we lost Joseph and Hyrum, then you do not understand the scriptures (D&C 121:34-41).

We lost Joseph and Hyrum June 27, 1844. This changed the authority inside the church. The survivors thought they needed a leader. They voted to follow Brigham Young and the Twelve. No one attempted to resolve the question by revelation from God. Once they gave common consent, we forever after have proceeded on the assumption that was enough to keep intact everything heaven gave through Joseph Smith. Even more, we thought we could then forget, ignore, discard, contradict and/or change what heaven gave to us through Joseph Smith, even when the revelations commanded us not to do so.

The offices of the LDS Church have been filled by common consent, and the office holders have gone forward relying on a “commission” from Jesus Christ to perform LDS Church ordinances for nearly two centuries. When a candidate comes forward repenting of their sins, believing in Christ, and asking for God’s approval of their baptism, they qualify for baptism. Then the gift of the Holy Ghost comes upon them and they can progress in truth and light by obedience to the principles of the Gospel of Christ. This is His Gospel.

Baptism and the Holy Ghost happen prior to and independent of membership in any church institution, even in the LDS Church’s process. The organization does not get to assert itself until the person is “confirmed” into the church. Once that happens, the person is entitled to all the benefits of membership in the organization, including common consent voting to fill offices in the church. However, removing them from membership cannot affect baptism. That ordinance came before their confirmation and before they are members of the LDS Church. Throwing a person out of the church may remove entitlement to vote in common consent proceedings, but cannot affect the person’s repentance, gift of the Holy Ghost, or standing before God. Some LDS Church members have conflated all these things into one and then allow the hierarchy to insert themselves between them and their salvation. That is Telesstial, false and will damn those who believe it, and greatly condemn those who teach it. Ultimately they will suffer God’s wrath on this earth and eternal fire when dead, being filled with regret for their misbehavior (D&C 76:99–104).

The Gospel requires God’s direct involvement. It always has and always will. Commandments and promises given to others in the New Testament do not belong to us. Likewise, specific individuals

given specific promises by God in Joseph's day do not belong to us. We do not "inherit" covenants belonging to others. We must have God's covenant given to us if we are going to be saved. Otherwise we are no different than the Lutherans, Presbyterians and Catholics denounced by Christ as teaching for doctrine the commandments of men, only having a form of godliness lacking power (*JSH 1:19*).

AUGUST 22, 2014

Laying on Hands, Part 3

On the topic of receiving the Holy Ghost, there is more said and far more claims made about the "priesthood" than the scriptures justify. As I have explained, the lowest form of priesthood was given primarily to condemn those who received it. It involves performing outward ordinances, and regulates physical conduct. I will add that because of intermarriage, there is almost no one alive today who does not have Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Judah and Levi in their ancestry. Levitical priesthood is almost universally available to every male alive today, no matter their ethnicity. The bloodlines are there, even if the man is unaware of it. This is why declaring a lineage in LDS Patriarchal Blessings is appropriate and invariably merely selecting one out of twelve (thirteen if you separate Manasseh and Ephraim) possibilities.

If you go back far enough, there is a tradition in my family that we had a line of Rabbi's on the German side. I've been back through the 1400's and so far haven't identified any Rabbinical predecessors. WWII destroyed much of the records from the time before that. My Scottish side seems safely Ephraimite in their ancestry. There are so many mixtures in all of our ancestries that I doubt you can find someone alive who is not part-Israelite. Ironically, because of the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests, almost all of Iran, Iraq,

Syria, and Jordan are more Israelite than the nation of Israel today, because the Diaspora put Jews into all parts of the globe. These “Arabs” and “Persians” reject and fight against their own bloodline.

Higher priesthood is a rare thing, appearing only intermittently in scripture and history; never persistent or widespread. The greatest success, from Adam to Melchizedek, involved ten generations and was the longest single perpetuation of the authority. However, those Patriarchs served among a small, righteous population overshadowed by the larger, wicked population. By time Adam came to his end of days, all the righteous could gather into a single valley.

The purpose of these Patriarch’s original priesthood was (and is) to bless and protect. The temptation to use authority in ways that would offend God makes this original priesthood (belonging to the Patriarchs) something few men have ever been given and easily forfeited for the protection of the recipient and mankind generally. The original twenty-three given high priesthood in June 1831 distinguished themselves by near-uniform failure.

We must learn from this recent history. We must avoid repeating what clearly cannot work. If we take the same path, the destination will not change. Zion must be found by traveling in a different direction.

The Holy Ghost is not controlled by man. Even when the High Priesthood is given by God to a man, that man must obtain heaven’s approval before conferring any blessing. He must not ask for something based on self-will, ambition or personal glory. He must be a servant. He must be like our Lord, in that sense, or his ordination will be revoked.

Returning to the original question (in the first of these three posts):

Because the Book of Mormon was restored through Joseph Smith, I think it is necessary to respect his status as a messenger used by God to do a work. But the question “*Should you have to believe in Joseph Smith to be baptized?*” was phrased such that I have a problem with answering “yes.” I do not think anyone needs to “believe in Joseph Smith” because that implies men are worthy of our “belief.” It is God alone who is the object of our adoration, belief and faith. Joseph was an instrument, and therefore belief in him will not yield anything of value and could well be an impediment to developing faith in God.

That having been said, God’s message through Joseph Smith is something we need to believe. There was no coherent statement of Christ’s Gospel in existence before Joseph Smith’s ministry. Therefore, to know how to obtain salvation, we need to “hear the True Shepherd’s voice” in the ministry of Joseph Smith. We are saved no faster than we gain knowledge. We cannot ignore the knowledge restored through Joseph.

Joseph was flawed. But God used him to accomplish some necessary things. It is the Lord’s message, using Joseph, we must believe.

The other question (*Should you have to stop drinking coffee and tea to be baptized?*) involves the Word of Wisdom which was not given “by commandment or constraint” (D&C 89:2). Therefore, it need not be obeyed as a condition of baptism. It would be wise to do so, but not as a mandatory condition prior to baptism. In saying this, I refer only to the scriptures and language of Section 89, not to the mandates of the LDS Church. To be baptized by a representative of the LDS Church you must stop drinking coffee and tea, because that is how they manage their organization.

I think “hot drinks” refers to “strong drink” meaning whiskey, bourbon, and similarly “hot” drinks (one time called “fire water” by Native Americans) (D&C 89:5, 7, 9). I do not think it refers to coffee or tea. Pioneers were expected to include coffee and tea in their supplies. Even handcarts had space for hauling coffee and tea.

I think “mild drinks” using barley and grain refers to beer, and that is approved in Section 89 (D&C 89:17). Likewise, “wine” refers to alcoholic wine, not grape juice (D&C 89:5). In New Testament times the presence of alcohol in the drink was hygienic, and purified the water by killing unwanted organisms. Praise for the quality of the “wine” produced by Christ in John’s account of the wedding at Canaan, is praise for an alcoholic drink of quality and effect (John 2:1–10).

I think wine is to be used for “sacraments” (plural, see D&C 89:5) which include wedding celebrations, an association the New Testament makes (John 2:3). It makes for conviviality and joy in celebration. We are prudish about this because of our history of amending the Constitution to adopt Prohibition. LDS sermons delivered in support of the amendment and opposing its repeal are how we became prohibitionist teetotalers, not because of the scriptures.

That having been said, I also believe “wine is a mocker” (Proverbs 20:1) and alcohol can do a great deal of damage if used improperly and in excess. The drunken fight in the Kirtland Temple, for example, was something those involved regretted. They used wine for the “sacrament” and “drank to their fill” after fasting all day beforehand. It proved to be a foolish combination and resulted in fist fighting in the newly completed temple. Therefore I conclude that if we must choose between making ourselves foolish or being a teetotaler it is best to adopt the LDS Church stance and refrain

altogether. If a person can use wine and mild drinks moderately, prudently and not in excess, then there is nothing in the Word of Wisdom to condemn it. There is language which recommends it. But let me reiterate, this is what the scriptures say, not what the LDS Church says. If you belong to that organization, you ought to respect their rules and do as they expect as a condition for receiving their fellowship, Temple Recommend, etc.

I do not believe, however, the scriptures can be used to support a requirement to avoid coffee, tea (at all) or avoid alcohol in wine and beer as a pre-condition for baptism.

Understanding the scriptures sometimes requires more than just study. In my case I gained understanding by experience which then reshaped my understanding of scripture. I received the Holy Ghost immediately following baptism on September 10, 1973 as I knelt on the cold beach sand beside the Atlantic Ocean. It has departed briefly only on two occasions (when I failed to testify of the truth and was rebuked by its withdrawal).

When excommunicated forty years to the day from baptism, I wondered if the church's proceeding would have an effect on my access to the Holy Ghost. It did not. In many respects the series of talks I have given this year required a greater outpouring of the Holy Ghost. It has been given.

It took life's experiences for me to look deeper into the scriptures to understand in what way my own experiences were consistent with the pattern there. Had these experiences not been given I would not have looked and found the truth of these matters. As things unfold, they become rather self-evident.

AUGUST 22, 2014

Question on Preceding Post...

QUESTION:

Levitical priesthood is almost universally available to every male alive today, no matter their ethnicity.

Do you mean that, by virtue of lineage, almost all men already have the right to OFFICIATE in Aaronic priesthood ordinances, or just that almost all men have the right to RECEIVE the Aaronic priesthood? I.e., they all HAVE it or they all have a RIGHT to it? If the former, why did John the Baptist have to confer it on Joseph and Oliver?

(Related topic: If Joseph held the higher priesthood from before the foundation of the world, why did John the Baptist confer upon him a smaller portion of the larger whole he already had?)

I think 'hot drinks' refers to 'strong drink' meaning whiskey, bourbon, and similarly 'hot' drinks (one time called 'fire water' by Native Americans) (D&C 89:5, 7, 9). I do not think it refers to coffee or tea."

Could you elaborate on how you came to this conclusion? a) Why would the Lord come back to the topic 4 verses later and introduce a new term for the same thing? b) What about the supposed interpretive statements by Joseph ("I understand that some of the people are excusing themselves in using tea and coffee, because the Lord only said 'hot drinks' in the revelation of the Word of Wisdom. Tea and coffee are what the Lord meant when he said 'hot drinks' ") and Hyrum ("There are many who wonder what this can mean, whether it refers to tea or coffee, or not. I say it does refer to tea and coffee.")

MY RESPONSE:

There is always an “ordination” involved. It is twofold, as I explained in the Orem talk. One is done by man (or an angel) and the other by God. Both are required.

Lineage qualifies, foreordination is necessary, ordination here is required, and heaven must confirm or ratify the ordination. All are necessary.

- Lineage is almost universal.
- Foreordination is known only to God and revealed by our experience.
- Ordination is easily accomplished and has been widely performed.

Heaven, however, is the final arbiter of whether a person will be authorized to perform beyond the merely outward ordinances and officiate in fulfilling God’s work of redemption in the fullest sense.

Read Section 89 and pay attention to the “and again” —then ask yourself if “and again” is a return to the topic discussed before. If it is, then these “and again” references are to alcoholic drinks. I know what Hyrum said. He offered it as his opinion. No one has ever said what God meant, including Joseph. They offered their interpretation. However, if you were to give strong alcohol to a child, the child’s reaction would be to call it “hot” —because that is the normal first reaction.

CHAPTER 15

Illusion, Love and Truth

AUGUST 23, 2014

Pantomime

The LDS Church has been extremely important in my journey back to God. I am grateful to them, even if others do not understand this. I doubt that I could have succeeded in understanding much at all about God if not for the LDS Church.

However, I realize now that the LDS Church has been a pantomime portraying the truth, and not the real thing. It is possible to learn from watching an illusion. The illusion portrays truth. It equipped me to visualize the true pathway and to lay hold on it through faith. A church that can accomplish that for its members is a valuable thing indeed.

When mimes act out a pretense that there is a wall on the stage, the audience accepts the premise because it is portrayed by the actors as such. When a new character enters the scene and walks toward the pretended wall, we all expect a collision. We *know* there is a wall there. The new character doesn't. They can't see it, but the pretense governs the action. Sure enough, when the character hits the wall and falls down, we all laugh. We *know* there is a wall there

because we've seen how every one of the actors have portrayed it to us. They've touched it, pushed against it, and walked around it. They made it "real" to us. We laugh at the new character who was unaware of it and had to be knocked down before joining in the group awareness of the pretended wall.

In the Broadway play *Harvey* (later a Jimmy Stewart movie), the title character was an imaginary giant rabbit. His existence was dependent on pantomime by the other characters. Pantomime is not confined to comedy. It can be used to stage anything, including history. The art is valuable because it allows imagination to provide the walls, chairs, dishes, telephones, food and drink, all at no cost.

The LDS Church has been extremely useful in depicting a house of order, prayer, fasting, faith, learning, glory and sacrifice. We can visualize God having a controlling hand in it. We can imagine what it would be like to have a prophet to guide us in these latter days. We can imagine mantles put on, staffs of power wielded, and unseen forces supporting the rolling forth of a great work. It is a great act. There is value in beholding it. It can ignite with fire our ability to see that it is possible for God to provide the real thing. Even if we must substitute one for another, we can use brick, mortar, gold and silver as if it were spiritual achievement. Because of our worship of wealth, we are easily led to substitute one for the other. If the pretense succeeds, this should be temporary.

I admire and appreciate the LDS Church. It has been indispensable for me to develop faith in God. I hope it lasts for some time yet, and succeeds in keeping its programs and publishing scriptures. I hope it keeps its temples running and performing the rites done there. I hope great numbers participate in the pantomime and pretend they are God's chosen people as they faithfully serve within the organization. No one is hurt from serving others. The

pantomime is based on something true, and represents what we might have if we are faithful. I expect that as faith in God increases, the pantomime will give way to truth. The LDS Church is a useful tool, and should be used. But the true connection to God should be at the end of that path.

One pantomime used by the church is the pretense of “keys” (although that is not well defined, merely claimed). In the LDS Church all of the “priesthood keys” are claimed to be held exclusively by the highest officials (First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve) who are sustained as “prophets, seers and revelators.” The church has published, as the copyright holder, a volume of teachings by President Joseph F. Smith titled *Gospel Doctrine*. This was originally compiled as a priesthood manual. It was recently abridged and reused as a Melchizedek and Relief Society Manual (link: <https://www.lds.org/manual/teachings-joseph-f-smith?lang=eng>), part of the teachings of the presidents series. I mention this because the quote fits even the very narrow definition given by a member of the church correlation committee last week at BYU’s Education Week. It was from a President of the Church, given in general conference. It was then published by the First Presidency, approved by the First Presidency and Twelve, used in official church teaching to Melchizedek Priesthood quorums and therefore “doctrine” in even the most narrow of definitions

Here is a quote from *Gospel Doctrine* (which I could not find in the most recent manual) from President Joseph F. Smith about priesthood:

Then again, if it were necessary, though I do not expect the necessity will ever arise, and there was no man left on the earth holding the Melchizedek Priesthood, except an elder—that elder, by the

inspiration of the Spirit of God and by the direction of the Almighty, could proceed, and should proceed, to organize the Church of Jesus Christ in all its perfection, because he holds the Melchizedek Priesthood. (Gospel Doctrine, p. 148)

Any and every elder could completely and fully organize the church. Implied is that nothing special would be lost. No keys would go missing. Any elder could do it. What is the pantomime? What is the pretense? The great pantomime of “keys” held only by the president of the church in a fullness, is, when reduced to its final substance, the right to run the entire organization because of common consent. Brigham Young was right after all. He claimed he acquired his authority by being elected to the same office as Joseph Smith. People have been testifying they “know” Brigham and his successors have the very things claimed about them. The pantomime has become reality.

The Book of Mormon has a great deal to say about “keys” because of what is NOT there. The book contains the “fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” but only mentions the word “keys” a single time. That mention is to the servant of Laban who had the keys to the treasury where the brass plates were stored (1 Ne. 4:20). If “keys” were essential to the fullness of the Gospel, we should expect a great deal more to be said in the Book of Mormon on the topic.

To define “keys” Elder Oaks recently in General Conference (link: <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2014/04/the-keys-and-authority-of-the-priesthood?lang=eng>) could not do so without resorting to using the word “authority.” He stated: “Priesthood keys are the authority God has given to priesthood [holders] to direct, control, and govern the use of His priesthood on earth.” Yet the scriptures contradict this definition. They state plainly “no power or influence can, or ought, to be maintained by virtue of

the priesthood” (D&C 121:41). The priesthood is only to be used by “constraint.” It belongs to God alone. Unless He directs, we cannot act. Alma taught this in an example where lives were lost because he would not use priesthood due to constraint (Alma 14:8-11). Christ’s disciples would “judge” the people, but only according to the judgment given to them by the Lord (3 Ne. 27:27). Moses was required to perform a specific service in a specific way, and failed to do so. As a result, Moses did not pass over Jordan with the Israelites (Num. 20:7-13, also Deu. 31:2).

The “keys” are never defined by scripture. They get used as a shorthand way to refer to a number of very different subjects with apparently very different meanings. In one instance, they are called the “keys of the mysteries” (D&C 28:7: Joseph Smith was given “keys of the mysteries” allowing him to receive revelations which were otherwise sealed. D&C 35:17-18: Joseph Smith had the “keys of the mysteries” to unseal knowledge kept hidden from the foundation of the world.) This appears to be a way to describe what Joseph could do as part of his ministry. It was apparently not transferable or even repeatable.

Other scriptures refer to the “keys of the holy priesthood” which were to be given in the Nauvoo Temple (D&C 124:33-34). Although the revelation of January 1841 says the temple was necessary, the LDS Church claims it has these “keys,” and got them in Joseph’s red brick store. This theory negates the language of the revelation (D&C 124:28). The LDS Church’s claim involves the temple endowment, which has been widely published. Therefore, if the claim were true, every endowed Latter-day Saint and every voyeur on the Internet now hold these “keys.”

Scripture also refers to the “keys of the kingdom” in an answer to questions Joseph asked God concerning the meaning of verses

in Isaiah. These, however, were “lost” and would not return until a specific descendant “unto whom rightly belongs the priesthood, and the keys of the kingdom” would come. This was a future event during Joseph Smith’s life (D&C 113:5–8). Joseph had these keys and they were his to keep even if he died (D&C 90:2). But the references to “kingdom” are confusing, having been used by various people using different definitions. It once meant the Council of Fifty. Then it meant the State of Deseret. Then it meant the political division over which Brigham Young was Governor. Then it morphed into the LDS Church. Now it is almost universally used by the LDS Church to mean the LDS Church, but the LDS Church is not the institution God will preserve and protect. God’s protection is over “the church of the Firstborn” (D&C 93:22; 85:5; 76:67; Heb. 12:23; D&C 107:19). Nephi also refers to the “church of the Lamb” with apparently the same group in mind (1 Ne. 14:10–14).

The priesthood is for service, not control. The greatest priesthood holder was Christ. He condemned the gentile tendency to rule, control and exercise lordship. He came only to serve and offer His life as a ransom for others (Mark 10:42–45).

It is easier to seize control and demand obedience to authority than to persuade using gentleness and pure knowledge (D&C 121:41–42). So the pantomime of “keys” substitutes organizational control for common consent, amalgamates authority and then demands uniformity. At some point perhaps the saints will tire of the pantomime, obtain control through common consent, and repent. But if not, the Lord has the ability to move His great work forward with or without a pantomime running alongside. He has something real to accomplish. When He does, we will all be required to choose between the pantomime and the reality.

AUGUST 24, 2014

Phoenix Venue UPDATE

We lost the first announced location in Phoenix because, as Doug informed me:

Due to threats, nasty phone calls & emails, Rockin R Ranch has canceled the venue. Will get another. Ward & stake people threatened to boycott the business if they allowed the talk at their place. Phone calls with the same thing.

We now have a replacement and will be signing the agreement later today. When it is locked down we will announce it here.

For those who made suggestions for replacement locations, we appreciate it. And we bear no animosity for the Rockin R Ranch and hope they are not discomforted by anyone who was disappointed by their refusal to allow the talk to happen there.

AUGUST 26, 2014

September 9 Lecture Location

Date: Sept. 9, 2014

Time: 9:30 am

Place: Hilton Phoenix/Mesa

1011 West Holmes Ave

Mesa, AZ 85210

Seats 700 plus

60 Fwy and Alma School Road

PLEASE NOTE THAT ARIZONA DOES NOT HAVE DAYLIGHT SAVINGS. THE TIME IS ALWAYS LOCAL AT EVERY LOCATION.

SEPTEMBER 2014

SEPTEMBER 7, 2014

Tuesday Lecture

The final lecture will be on Tuesday beginning at 9:30 a.m. in Mesa. The time is local, which in Mesa is Mountain Standard.

Each of the lectures make sense as a “stand alone” but the final installment assumes anyone attending will be familiar with the content of the nine prior talks.

SEPTEMBER 14, 2014

Phoenix/Mesa Transcript

The Phoenix/Mesa lecture has been transcribed and uploaded to Scribd. Also, I fixed the link for the St. George lecture. You can find links for them on the right hand side of the blog under DS talks. It is also available in *The Teachings of Denver C. Snuffer, Jr., Volume 2: 40 Years in Mormonism 2013-2014* and at www.restorationarchives.com.

SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

Mighty, Strong, Davidic

I have never claimed, in public or private, to be anything other than a weak and foolish man.

The notion that I think I am anything other than that repulses me.

For years I have said that until someone actually accomplishes something, they have no right to claim they are something great or wonderful, that they fulfill prophecy, or are God’s chosen anything.

Nobody has accomplished anything since Joseph Smith. There is a great hill to climb. Until someone climbs it and serves to guide

others, we are left with pretenders, ego-maniacs, fools, impostors and villains.

Something is underway. Nothing has been accomplished. **You** need to participate. Starting a project, and getting 1% of it accomplished, and then claiming you are a “great” anything is not just a mistake, but it takes the eye off of the unfinished project—a very difficult project. Getting to your own 2 yard line still leaves 98 yards to go.

Without the refining of a transition phase, we will be utterly unprepared. But the refinement itself will be very hard, and there will be many who fail.

If a few succeed, then those can be gathered. Once gathered, there is still work to be done. Those who believe we can take a giant step do not comprehend how natural the evolution of God’s work is. It requires effort every day, and will require as much of latter-day Zion as was required for Enoch and Melchizedek. It’s difficult to imagine how much needs to be left behind and how much needs to be added.

If you think I’m something great and important, you miss altogether what is **YOUR** responsibility. The restoration belongs to **YOU**. No one is going to invoke a magic spell and spare you the development, maturity, selflessness, patience, growth and determination needed to be part of a healthy, functioning society worthy of the presence of God and angels. It is **They** (God and angels) whose company we seek. Not mine.

SEPTEMBER 19, 2014

Questions?

From an email I received. This is an exchange between third-parties.

I've attended many of the ten lectures and I've listened to all of them. I was at the Phoenix lecture. At the conclusion of the lecture, different people had different understandings of what was communicated, what was to be done, and what they were to do. It is interesting to see all the discussion online and in the social media about what "Denver said." Some of what I've seen is a reasonable, fair summary. Some summaries are downright wrong and could only be spread with malicious intent to confuse or deceive others. Reading either fair or unfair summaries lead to poor understanding.

Most people interested in these things are familiar with Mormon investigators who tell the missionaries or members that they heard X, Y, or Z about the Book of Mormon and the Mormon church from their pastor. The typical response is to encourage the investigator to read the book themselves and to make up their own decision and ask God for wisdom over the matter. I think the same thing applied here.

If anyone is curious about what was said in Phoenix, they should listen to, or preferably read, all ten parts of the one talk that culminated in Phoenix.

I'm getting a lot of questions. I will not be answering. So far as I know, I have completed everything asked of me concerning those talks. Until asked to do something else, I wait on the Lord, and will only proceed when told to do so.

If you re-read the earlier 9/10ths of the talk you will find there are answers to be found there. Let me refer you to the Orem talk on priesthood. In the beginning there was one priesthood, not three divisions. That same priesthood which was in the beginning will be in the end of the world, also. Read the talk.

If I were ordaining anyone to any priesthood today as part of a community, I would ordain them to “the Holy Order” and leave it to God and the angels to decide how far the individual is permitted to progress in their association with the Powers of Heaven.

When the high priesthood was first restored in the June 1831 conference, those ordained failed. (I have already given an account of this in the post on August 19, 2014 titled “Laying On Hands.”) Later that year, in a conference held in October 1831, another group was ordained to high priesthood. They likewise failed.

Joseph was undeterred by the persistent failures. He believed anyone could rise up if they were taught how. Joseph believed it was ignorance that damned us and a man is saved no faster than he gains knowledge. Boise lecture.

Rather than throw his hands up at the failure, he set to work compiling a series of lectures to be given to these prospective “prophets” in a School of the Prophets in Kirtland, Ohio. By 1835, he carefully edited the lectures to print them for the entire church. *The Lectures on Faith* were the first part of the Doctrine and Covenants, published in 1835, and vouched for by Joseph Smith. This was the Idaho Falls lecture. The *Lectures* tell you what the religion was designed to accomplish. They were composed in an effort to get the early church to rise up and reclaim power from heaven.

The failure to secure power in the priesthood was so complete, widespread and thorough that by 1921 *The Lectures on Faith* seemed only to mock the church. So a committee took them out of the scriptures. Idaho Falls.

There are many answers to the questions you may have because of the 10th lecture found in the previous 9. Read them.

The struggle, questions and dilemmas you face are good. Hopefully they will take you to God looking for answers.

SEPTEMBER 20, 2014

Utopia

Sir Thomas More titled a 1516 book *Utopia*, coining a term used forever after for an ideal society. Sir More may have coined the term but Utopian ideas go back to Plato's Republic for scholars, and Enoch for Christians and Jews. Fiction writers often try to describe an imaginary perfect society, and Hollywood regularly uses the theme. Mankind yearns for it.

There will be a latter-day Zion. The scriptures give little description, and the smallest of criteria for Zion. "The Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them" (Moses 7:18). That is the list:

- one heart
- one mind
- dwelt in righteousness
- no poor among them.

Seems simple. The list is so short it begs the questions: Why haven't we done this? Why aren't WE doing this?

There are a lot of "rich, learned, wise and noble" (D&C 58:10) who think they are going to be residents of Zion because, well, they're rich, learned, wise and noble. They believe they came here with noble heritage making them elect, special, chosen and endowed with great power. I hope they gather. I hope they move right into their Utopian experiment and get to enjoy each other's prideful company.

The ideas given by a kind and patient Lord in Mesa were not mine. I am trying to understand them myself. Here is what I think at present in my struggle with the material:

Families need to develop independent and strong faith in God by worshipping together, praying together, studying the scriptures, performing ordinances like baptism using power given by God, and the sacrament. They should pay tithes and help those in need among them. If there is excess, reserve it for a worthy purpose. There will be some challenges, and some divisions will no doubt require study, faith, prayer and humility to overcome. Eventually they will become one.

When families expand by marriage the new sons-in-law, daughters-in-law and their families should likewise fellowship with one another and practice their religion. As soon as anyone new joins an association, everything fractures again. But time, patience and careful repetition of what went before will eventually restore unity.

If several extended family groups unite in fellowship, disunity returns and rough edges will need to be smoothed out, feelings respected, and different views discussed. Because families have an existing order and likely have a father whose priesthood is known and respected, these groups will require some mechanism for resolving cross-family priesthood questions. **Outside a family**, a man does not get an automatic recognition to perform an ordinance or render priestly service. The means for recognition of a man's right to serve was provided in Mesa. No fellowship automatically respects any man's claim. Approval will need to be given. Unlike present methods, in these fellowships since only men will have recognized priesthood, they will receive approval to perform by the sustaining by **at least** seven women. Once this has been done, the combined groups of multi-family fellowships have the means to continue to perpetuate religious service, perform unifying ordinances and worship God together.

At this point I think of the early experiences Joseph Smith had. There was an outstanding, well educated, and politically astute man who helped negotiate the Nauvoo Charter through the Illinois Legislature. He impressed everyone. He was admired, trusted and immediately accepted by the Saints. Joseph added him to the First Presidency. He was elected the first Mayor of Nauvoo. He was the Major-General of the Nauvoo Legion. All of Nauvoo took pride in John C. Bennett and thought themselves blessed by having a man of his stature among them.

His meteoric rise ended in May 1842 when he was excommunicated for adultery. In addition to adultery, he was suspected of polygamy, homosexuality, and performing abortions. The abortions were part of the underground practice of polygamy, terminating unwanted pregnancies to prevent public notice of these sexual improprieties. Joseph Smith learned of these underground sex rings as he presided over Nauvoo High Council proceedings. He was later accused by some of the participants of having approved it in the first (and only) edition of the *Nauvoo Expositor*.

I also think of the earlier ambitious and enthusiastic Mormon converts who shone brightly for a brief season, then turned cold and dark. Kirtland itself rose in spiritual splendor and promise, only a few years later to drive Joseph and Sidney away under the cover of dark, while a mob gave chase for 200 miles. Kirtland became a community-wide failure.

What has changed? How have we become so much better than they? It is because we have abandoned communitarian ideals and are now stratified into economic divisions, educational divisions, hierarchical divisions, and the “haves” take their status for granted while the “have nots” accept their fate while awaiting a glorious afterlife? Is it because we have pseudo-stability? We have an accepted

status quo? Is it because we tolerate a disparate society and that is proof we live in peace?

But one heart? One mind? Living in righteousness? No poor among us?

We are no better than Kirtland, and may be a lot worse. There are just as many Wilson Laws, John C. Bennett, Chauncey Higbees, William Marks and Ezra Booths among us today as during Joseph's time. Our pride and haughtiness is just as fractioning now as you will find in any generation among any people. We will have to LEARN to be one. Such a distant and guarded mountain peak seems unlikely for us to scale. (At least without considerable individual Divine assistance.)

We have a chance, but only a chance. Required work begins among the people who are the very closest to you—your own family. There you begin to develop the skill to work out interpersonal conflict and resolve turmoil. These are the people you are closest to and should have the greatest willingness to compromise with to problem solve.

We grow incrementally. We develop in stages. We learn skills then use them to solve greater problems using the same skill set we learned through experience.

There may be some great, towering lights who do not need to develop skills at problem solving and who are ready to found Zion today. If so, they should do so. Let us all stand back and admire them. Surely they have much to show the world. Many of these self-proclaiming great ones never sacrifice their name by stepping forward and letting themselves be identified, their reputation attacked, their motives questioned, and their church membership threatened or lost. As *The Lectures on Faith* inform

us, without sacrifice we have no faith, for faith comes by sacrifice and in no other way. Read *The Lectures on Faith*.

The lecture in Mesa drove many people away and will continue to do so. That is a good thing. Those leaving will not make the required sacrifice, and therefore will not develop faith. They will not be able to gather. God will not allow it.

The lecture, parts 1 through 10, give us the means to develop incrementally. It was to help those who, like me, are not part of the great, towering nobility needing no refinement. It allows me and my fellow poor, lame, blind, and deaf associates (D&C 58:11) a chance to grow as we struggle to overcome our weaknesses and many shortcomings. I need to work on a great deal. To me, it does not seem easy.

There will be impostors. They will be exposed so they can repent, or they will be sent away. There will be those who are cruel, proud and unkind. They need the opportunity to overcome their character flaws. If they refuse to reform, eventually they will stop associating with us and we with them. Malignant hearts are not easily concealed. Ambition and pride destroy, not build, communities.

I have had high hopes in the past for some seekers I have met. People who have made strong, favorable impressions, at first. A few years later, some of these people I had high regard for prove themselves proud, controlling, dictatorial and unworthy.

Similarly, I have seen some who did not stand out at first but who, over time, have proven themselves godly, self-sacrificing and brave. Time and experience change people. Even now some who are “great” stand in peril before God and may fall. Those who exalt themselves have never been candidates for Zion. Gradually,

by degrees, we will see maturity, repentance, kindness and even charity become part of these communities.

The great ones who can bypass such effort should do it now, if they can. They should be the shining example so we can learn. They ought to point the way and let us admire their greatness. Show us Utopia, ye noble and great! I won't ask to be permitted to come in, I only want to admire your accomplishment in the hope I may learn from you.

As for the residue, where I believe I remain, I hope to work out my own development with fear and trembling before God. One day I hope to be gathered. If that day comes, I hope to present no threat to the community because of ambition or pride. I hope to come already disposed to be of one heart and mind with them, having made enough sacrifices along the way to crawl in upon my knees as one of the least. I hope to have developed the skill to be an adept problem solver and an aid to my fellow saint by practicing the things I learned in Mesa in the ways suggested there.

When there is a gathering, I do not think the people invited will believe they are better than others. I doubt very much they will think they have accomplished anything extraordinary. Instead they will marvel at how simple it was to work it out peacefully beforehand, and wonder why mankind has not lived in peace continually since the fall of Adam. Zion will not be proud of itself, because it cannot.

Small choices change destinies. Those who gather before skills have been refined, and before the proud, learned, noble and rich have left, will produce nothing other than Kirtland, Jackson County, Nauvoo and Salt Lake. People need to be driven away, and people need to be refined. This happens simultaneously. It is for a good and wise purpose.

I gave a talk about Zion years ago. In it, I took note that the description in 4 Nephi of the Nephite generations of peace following Christ's visit included three levels of harmony:

One Level:

“there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another” (4 Ne. 1:2).

A Second Level:

“And it came to pass that there was no contention among all the people, in all the land” (4 Ne. 1:13).

A Third Level:

“there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people” (4 Ne. 1:15).

I think this pattern will need to be repeated. We will not get to a third level of harmony among us unless we first work out and resolve contentions in our families, and then in fellowship groups before we have the ability to do so as a gathered community. Zion must have

- one heart
- one mind
- dwell in righteousness, and
- no poor among them.

If that is not us then we are not Zion.

SEPTEMBER 21, 2014

Two Ways

There are two opposing powers which use two different forces.
There is love and fear.

Love invites, encourages, waits, supports and rejoices in progress. Love is undeterred by setbacks. Instead, love finds a way to address obstacles and tries again. Love creates.

Fear inhibits, controls, discourages and limits progression. Fear offers setbacks and looks for obstacles to end creativity. Fear rejects what love offers.

If we were all motivated by love, we would never demand anything of one another. Instead we would request, and then be grateful when we received.

Love allows differences in religious views to be shared in a mutual search for harmony. Fear prevents this. Indeed fear causes religious differences to descend into hatred.

Religion cannot bring Zion if it uses fear. It must reject it and allow itself no tool other than love to overcome this world. God is love.

CHAPTER 16

Looking Forward— Get Your Motor Runnin’

SEPTEMBER 22, 2014

Will Fail Again

I got an email asking why I thought this new direction would be any better than the many prior attempts launched through Joseph Smith. My response is given below:

Unlike the institution Joseph left us (which may not have been the end of his work had he gone to the Rocky Mountains), the new opportunity is diffused, non-hierarchical, incapable of central control, and free to permit the Spirit to guide.

Unlike Joseph’s successors, I have nothing to take, nothing to envy. I paid a great deal to give the talks. Not just in time, but also in money. I had to rent these venues, and allowed the public to come attend for free. Anyone wanting to do likewise will have to incur losses, not obtain gain.

Unlike Joseph’s institution, there is no profit in this new restart. Money is not gathered, but used directly among the

Saints to help the poor. No one will aggregate money, and therefore no one will likewise aggregate influence, control or political status.

Unlike the many prior groups claiming Joseph as their point of origin, this is entirely equal among all who participate.

Unlike the prior order, this can spring up anywhere in the world at the same time, if but one person there decides to take action. It is instantly global.

Unlike the prior nearly two centuries, it returns only to the essential, basic doctrine of Christ, allowing all to freely come and accept what is essential, basic and saving. That agreement can unite any of the many divergent faith-traditions, even if they are not otherwise “Mormon” in any sense. Agreement on what is essential allows all to come and partake freely.

This is Christ’s work, not man’s. Men participate, respond, and seek for God’s approval. But the divergent nature and requirement to connect with heaven before even attempting baptism shows it requires a connection to heaven to even begin. The rudimentary first step is taken with heaven holding the participant’s hand. They are NOT and cannot rely on some strongman to guide them, but instead they become strong in their own right to participate.

These steps were given to allow us to avoid, not repeat, the errors. We will make new ones, but will avoid the big ones from before. Because it is diffused, however, some spirit-filled groups will be allowed to rise, even if others are corrupted by vain and proud participants. There is no overall “organism” that can be co-opted. It will require every single one of the fellowships to all become corrupt before it can fail. Then, too,

it can revive again among a worthy fellowship on the same terms still later.

SEPTEMBER 30, 2014

Standing Aside

I love the response to the lectures (one talk). But I must stand aside now or wound this process. There are still important things left for me to do. Taking a role in establishing communities would harm, not help. I have had numerous requests to baptize people. When I refuse, then someone else will step up. They will ask God for authority, receive permission by the power of the Spirit, and gain familiarity with a process they need to help them. A process that will empower others through that first step to take another step, and then another. I've spoken with the Lord face to face, as one man speaks to another. Now you need to do likewise.

Joseph Smith spoke to the Relief Society on May 26, 1842:

the people should each one stand for himself, and depend on no man or men in that state of corruption... applied it to the present state of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—said if the people departed from the Lord, they must fall—that they were depending on the Prophet, hence were darkened in their minds, in consequence of neglecting the duties devolving upon themselves. (*TPJS*, pp. 237–238)

Ask yourself this: If Joseph Smith had it all to do over again, and wanted to avoid the problem that darkened the minds of believers, how could it best be accomplished? There seems to be an obvious conclusion—just refuse. Refuse to do what caused their dependence in Nauvoo.

Joseph's lament in 1842 was too late. He had a twelve-year practice of being the answer-man, and he would die just two years later. If he wanted to avoid this problem, he needed to begin many years earlier.

It was easy for Joseph to make himself indispensable. It was tempting to do so. But he and the saints would have been better off had he refused to shoulder responsibilities that belonged to others. There are incidents along the way that can be identified as moments when Joseph could have seen a pattern emerging. One example was in November 1831 when a conference was convened to approve publication of the Book of Commandments. The book would need a preface. A committee was assigned to draft the preface.

[William] McLellin said that he, Sidney Rigdon, and Oliver Cowdery had been given the assignment to write the preface to the Book of Commandments, but when they presented their draft to the conference, the 'Conference picked it all to pieces' and requested that J[oseph] S[mith] petition the Lord for a preface. After J[oseph] S[mith] and the elders bowed in prayer, JS, who was 'sitting by a window,' dictated the preface 'by the Spirit,' while Rigdon served as scribe. (*Joseph Smith Papers, Documents* Vol. 2: July 1831–January 1833, p. 104)

He then dictated what has become D&C Section 1.

What if Joseph had refused? What if he told them God had a revelation, but the committee should receive it? What if Joseph insisted others perform their duties, rather than relieving them of their responsibility? Had he declined in November 1831, would the talk given in May 1842 have been necessary?

We are going to make mistakes, but we should not make the same ones. Sometimes the only way for people to become better

acquainted with the Lord is for those who know Him to remain silent and allow others to go before Him in prayer for themselves. Why intervene to prevent others from gaining strength and experience for themselves?

Joseph handicapped the saints by taking too much of their responsibility on himself. The saints refused to let him alone and required him to be their answer-man. The best thing Joseph could have done would have been to keep riding when he crossed the Mississippi River with Hyrum. He should have headed to the Rocky Mountains. He didn't. The saints continued to depend on him. When he died, they were unable to call down a revelation for themselves. No one proposed to solve succession by revelation.

Consider that for a moment. A church, which was ostensibly founded and based on revelation, gave no thought to asking God for a revelation when Joseph and Hyrum were slain. They held a convention, and several aspirants electioneered to gain control. The campaign speech by Brigham Young won. Then the saints, already conditioned to "follow the leader," trudged off into the wilderness, dutifully submitting to a strongman to guide them. It has been exactly the same since that time.

How can you be strong if you depend on another to speak with God for you? Moses sought diligently to sanctify his people so they might behold the face of God (D&C 84:23). But they hardened their hearts and could not endure God's presence (D&C 84:24). They demanded Moses speak to God for them. This was a catastrophe which ended any possibility for Zion in Moses' day. Moses could not get those he led to enter God's presence. Joseph failed to have God come to dwell with the saints of his day.

We may fail also. But we will not fail because I accepted a role that has never worked before. We need to repent, be baptized in a

way authorized and accepted in heaven, receive the Holy Ghost, and bear one another's burdens so they may be light.

Some are going to be seduced by false spirits. They may or may not repent. Whether they repent and press forward to be ministered to by a messenger from God, and then find God, will depend on how closely they follow truth and light. False spirits prop up egos and pride. Anything of that sort will lead to darkness.

True messengers and true messages conform to a pattern: «

Behold, that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God. (Moroni 7:13).

More importantly, they have a central focus that will NEVER change:

Every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God. But whatsoever thing persuadeth man to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil. (Moroni 7:16)

Any preacher, leader, bishop, president, apostle, seventy or elder who asks you to believe in men, trust men, accept authority of men, is most certainly *not of Christ* (See D&C 76:99–101). Anyone who points you to Christ, asks you to seek to know Christ, invites you to struggle to hear and follow Christ, you can know is of Christ.

Those who boast of their own spiritual prowess as a credential to have you notice them are dangerous. Those who testify of Christ, preach of Christ and ask you to know Him, while admitting their own insignificance, are worth hearing. Everything I believe is anchored in the scriptures.

Those who are deceived as they struggle to find Christ can repent as soon as they realize they have listened to a false spirit. Joseph was overcome by “thick darkness” before he called upon God and was delivered. Lehi walked behind a man dressed in white for the space of many hours in a “dark and dreary waste” before he called upon God and was delivered. When Adam built an altar and called upon God, it was Lucifer who replied, “I hear you, what is it you want?” Adam had to refuse the offer and await true messengers sent from the Father.

You will encounter false spirits, as well as true ones if you will persist. You need to be familiar with both in order to choose. These opposing forces are part of the process of becoming competent and adept. No one lacking knowledge of these things can be saved.

A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power. (*TPJS*, p. 217)

Do not fear learning and experience. Fear ignorance. Ignorance will damn you.

OCTOBER 2014

OCTOBER 2, 2014

Interesting Things on the “www”

Criticism of Mormonism/Online documents/Denver Snuffer

(https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Criticism_of_Mormonism/Online_documents/Denver_Snuffer)

Criticism of Mormonism/Books/*Passing the Heavenly Gift*

(https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Criticism_of_Mormonism/Books/Passing_the_Heavenly_Gift)

Enjoy.

OCTOBER 9, 2014

What's Wrong

An email.

My wife and I, with some other believers, were baptized recently. I fully expected that now I could receive the power of the Holy Ghost. I believed what you said, that "today is once again a day of salvation, and He has set His hand again." If today is a day of salvation then surely He will now hear my prayers and pour out His Spirit upon us who are striving, with all our hearts, to come unto Him.

It has been over two weeks since my baptism. The entire time I have been pleading with the Lord to forgive my sins and allow me to enter in at the gate. I have felt nothing. I talked to one of the other couples that were also baptized that day. They told me that they had felt their baptism was pleasing to God, as they saw a white dove fly by their car as they drove to the chosen spot that day. Yet, they likewise have received no outpouring of the Spirit. This has been very discouraging for them and for me. The husband of that couple remarked to me that he has been thinking, "Is this just another pantomime? Have we been following another illusion?" I have also read the experiences of others on forums, Facebook, etc. who have been similarly baptized since your last lecture. There seems to be a lack of outpourings of the Spirit or baptism of fire experiences.

Your words from your books and your recent talk speak to me, as they do to others. I'm willing to accept that they come from God. I just don't understand why He isn't following through with His promises.

I desire to receive the baptism of fire and to take the Holy Spirit as my guide. I've tried to keep the commandments to the best of my knowledge and I believe others have as well. I don't know what we are doing wrong.

I gave this response:

The Holy Ghost has as the primary effect giving intelligence to man. It is true there are many “gifts” from the Holy Ghost, but the first, most important and clearest effect is to increase intelligence, or in other words light and truth.

The Holy Ghost “grows” in light as we give heed and diligence to the light. (These are all paraphrases of *TPJS* and *D&C.*)

Ask yourself:

- Do you believe you understand better now than before your journey began?
- Do you believe you can see more clearly what you need to do next?
- Do the scriptures reveal more to you now than before you began this process?
- Is there any more “intelligence” or light and truth in your life today than before?

If you can answer any of these “yes” then do not doubt, but press on. I have labored decades to learn what I have learned, and I spend some time daily now studying, praying, contemplating and pondering. Although I have had remarkable experiences, I continue to study because the things of God are deep, and require careful, patient, solemn and ponderous thought to acquire some of what He has made available.

I believe He will not give an original revelation to reveal what He has already revealed to us in scripture. Instead He requires us to first study His words, then when scripture becomes unable to answer the inquiry, He shows us by revelation how to see what is there before us. Some of the greatest things I have beheld by revelation I have then found to be already described in scripture. I just did not have the eyes yet to see it.

Trust God, but follow His pattern.

If on the day of His resurrection Christ spent the day expounding scripture;

And if Moroni spent the night teaching and reteaching from the scriptures;

And if I spent a year on an assignment expounding scripture;

THEN look to your scriptures. See if you have any assistance studying them. Let them prove to your satisfaction the Holy Ghost can and will speak to you.

As I reflected further on this email and my response I thought of Oliver Cowdery's effort to translate the Book of Mormon. The Holy Ghost does not relieve us of great effort, but instead equips us to obtain truth as the yield from our effort.

Joseph Smith proved the pattern true. He investigated all the religions. He attended their meetings, spoke with the ministers, and paid attention to their claims. He could not determine the truth. Then he "labored" over the scriptures. "At length" he finally decided to do as James asks and prayed. His prayer was answered because he did the preliminary work, the required study, and put in the necessary labor.

For three decades I studied and taught the scriptures. Each week between 10 and 40 hours were invested as I prepared to teach

a 50 minute class. I labored, the scriptures yielded to study, and I learned more and more about God. The Vision of the Redemption of the Dead found in Section 138 was likewise obtained by study and prayer.

The scriptures are a Urim and Thummim designed to provoke revelation. You cannot divorce the process of getting revelation from necessary scripture study. God made no such thing known to Laman, Lemuel or us when we do not search the scriptures and invest our heart and mind in learning His ways.

I have studied the scriptures for years. By now, they inform most every thought.

Fill yourself with scripture and see what the Holy Ghost can do then. Read them now and see how they open to you. If you take no thought except to ask and expect God to do the work, you do not understand the difference between “magic” and salvation. We are saved no quicker than we gain knowledge.

Study the scriptures. Include The Lectures on Faith as part of that curriculum. Study Joseph Smith. Prepare your mind first, then see what God will reveal to you.

OCTOBER 15, 2014

Baseball

Baseball, like life, makes improbabilities seem like inevitabilities.

NOVEMBER 2014

NOVEMBER 3, 2014

History is Not a Sin

I have provided a link to the FAIR website where they amalgamate criticism of me. The criticism is fine, but there is one point where I believe they crossed a line. It needed a response.

I have said I was worthy of a temple recommend when I was excommunicated. FAIR has denounced this as “false” and “dishonest” and included their analysis which I copy below:

Snuffer’s claim is false—by his own description of his behavior, he was not “worthy of a temple recommend.” He either does not understand the temple recommend questions, or he is being dishonest with his readers, the First Presidency, and perhaps himself.

He also says:

“I had a current temple recommend at the time of the disciplinary council. I was not asked to return it before the council, nor asked to return it even after the council’s decision. It expired in March, 2014, six months after excommunication.”

Snuffer’s recommend would have been automatically deactivated upon his excommunication; this is done electronically, and should not be interpreted to mean—as Snuffer implies by raising it—that he was known to be worthy and no one dared say otherwise.

Snuffer’s letter from his stake president (published on his website) makes it clear that he may not wear temple garments or exercise priesthood functions: both prerequisites for entering the temple:

You should not engage in activities which require an exercise of priesthood power. You should not pay tithing or wear the temple garment. (http://en.fairmormon.org/Criticism_of_Mormonism/Online_documents/Denver_Snuffer/Excommunication/Temple_worthiness_claims)

This point of criticism by FAIR should be withdrawn from their website because:

1. They do not grant or deny temple recommends. That is the responsibility of bishops and stake presidencies.
2. My bishop and stake president at the time considered me worthy, as did I.
3. From the time the disciplinary council was noticed until the decision was made there was never a request for me to return my recommend. I could have attended the temple up to the day of the council.
4. The interview questions were put to me, and I answered truthfully, fully, candidly and without any dissimulation. The bishop and stake president accepted my answers and issued the recommend.
5. On the day of the council, one of the two whose opinions mattered (my stake president) agreed I was worthy of a temple recommend at the time of the council. As astonishing as this may seem to the people at FAIR, I believe he was correct. I spent three hours with the entire stake presidency a few weeks before the disciplinary council in the High Council room. I used the whiteboard to lay out my understanding, the scriptures, my testimony and various experiences. It was very clear to those three members of the stake presidency that I was a devoted convert to the faith.

I was not dishonest, as FAIR suggests. It is foolish and wrong for anyone to label another as “apostate” because of disagreements about Mormon history. It is offensive for FAIR to declare that I am “dishonest.” These sound bite arguments and labels damage open and healthy discussion about remarkably important issues. We should be deeply involved in carefully re-examining Mormon history to see why the present state of Mormonism is so markedly different from where it began.

Incremental changes do not startle people as much as contrasting the beginning with the end/now. The contrast between what Joseph was doing with the religion and what we are now doing with the religion is important. The LDS curriculum hides these things from average members. They need to be revisited. It is not a sin to study and search for the truth of events.

The idea that history is not a sin would make a good bumper-sticker to respond to the bumper-sticker mentality that consigns study to apostasy. Indeed, understanding things differently is never a sin. A bumper-sticker stating “History is Not a Sin” will be available through the Publishing Hope website and Confetti Books. I do not receive anything from the sales, but I support the idea expressed on the sticker. Study and discussion of LDS history is not sinful.

NOVEMBER 6, 2014

Mysteries and Truth

Joseph Smith taught that it is critical for us to know the mysteries of God. “Knowledge saves a man; and in the world of spirits no man can be exalted but by knowledge” (*TPJS*, p. 357).

“A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world” (*TPJS*, p. 217).

Joseph understood we are saved by gaining knowledge about God's mysteries. When we are ignorant of them, we cannot be saved. No one can be saved in ignorance. It is not possible.

Joseph's knowledge mirrored what is taught and reflected in the Book of Mormon:

Alma 12:9–11 explains:

It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him. And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full. And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell.

The definition of being taken captive by the devil is to “know nothing concerning [God's] mysteries.”

When a person knows nothing concerning God's mysteries, they are then “led by his [the devil's] will down to destruction.”

When they are taken captive by their ignorance, they are then bound “by the chains of hell.”

The result of ignorance of God's mysteries is “destruction” and “captivity.” The ignorant will remain devoted to falsehoods, blinded leaders, and guides who give no truthful accounts of the awful situation faced by the ignorant because they do not understand truth.

D&C 93:24–25: And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come; And whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning.

We must know the truth. The truth informs us how things are (now, today, in the peril we presently face—unvarnished and in all its terrible meaning).

The truth informs us of how things were (by accurate history, revealing exactly what happened, without mythical or political overlay, with its disappointments and tragedies candidly depicted).

The truth informs us of the things to come (even if the prophecies and promises dash our hopes, crush our vanity and expose our foolishness).

Truth can be startling, but it is necessary. Without the truth it is impossible to repent. We will never change while trusting a lie. But we will never fail to repent when the truth is laid bare before us.

In order to take people captive, all that is required is for people to be content with their ignorance. The greatest threat to salvation does not come from teaching false doctrine, but instead comes from ignoring doctrine altogether. Substituting platitudes and truisms for careful, ponderous and solemn investigation of the deep things of God will suffice to keep people in the chains of captivity. It isn't necessary for the devil to convince you of lies, only for him to make you content in your ignorance, or fearful of the search for truth.

NOVEMBER 21, 2014

God's Great Work

There are many great things underway. I want to encourage and reassure those involved. The greatness of the gospel has nothing to

do with our human weakness and limitations. Our weakness is a given, and anticipated by God. His plan requires only a willing and penitent heart. He can do great things with the penitent. In some ways our weakness stands as proof this is God's work.

Those who are now suffering rejection and persecution should rejoice, for so persecuted they the prophets who went before.

To the South American missionary sent home 37 days early for having an inadequate testimony of Thomas Monson: Rejoice in the Lord. Know that the district leader, mission president and area authority seventy will mourn for what they have done.

To the parents in Boise, who after their meeting re: excommunication, are waiting to hear from the twelve whether their 9 year old and 14 year old children will be excommunicated for their rebaptism: Rest assured God hears your prayers and knows the goodness of your heart. Nothing can separate you from His love.

To the man whose excommunication was recently announced in sacrament, relief society and priesthood meetings where your children and grandchildren attend: Know that this violated the church's policies and makes a sham of the appeal process, but you are nevertheless now better acquainted with our Lord. Those who hope to be like Him must endure some of what He endured from His fellow man.

To the tithing groups who have blessed the lives of the needy among them with thousands of dollars of assistance monthly: Many have heard of this and know if there were more doing likewise the world would be a better, healthier place to live. Children in your group see these acts of devotion and have more confidence in Christ's Gospel.

To those who meet over the Internet because there are not enough of you in an area to meet personally: Be patient. This is just beginning.

To the thousands who have been rebaptized: This is a sign you are not an idolator and will not be destroyed at the Lord's coming.

To those who are informed by your fears: The Lord works through love, not fear. When you allow your fears to inform your choices, the distance between you and God widens.

To the former Mormon fundamentalists who have always been willing to endure difficulty for what you believe: You will bring a great wealth of information into any of the fellowship groups you may join. Plural marriage shouldn't be practiced, but your families should be kept together.

The spiritual experiences many people are receiving for the first time are what the restoration was intended to produce.

Proceed in faith. Practice the principles of the Gospel in your individual lives. Leave the rest in God's hands.

NOVEMBER 24, 2014

I Post Here

I do not post on other blogs either in my own name, using an avatar, or anonymously. Someone has posted using my last name on another blog, the blog owner inquired and I responded that it was not me. This morning I checked and he clarified on his blog that the comment wasn't mine.

Also, I was told some stake president now claims I advocate killing children or wives, or some other such nonsense as part of his effort to deter people from reading anything I've written. When I stopped laughing about it last evening, I thought about our Lord's blessing upon us when all manner of false things are

said about us. Inadvertently this ill-motivated stake president has invoked the Lord's blessing upon me once again. (And the Lord's ire upon himself.)

NOVEMBER 25, 2014

LDS Church Not Exclusive

In a Press Release by the LDS Church on their website on April 18, 2008 titled "Respect for Diversity of Faiths" (link: <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/respect-for-diversity-of-faiths>), this church has explained how God works with others outside the limited membership of the LDS faith:

We honor and respect sincere souls from all religions, no matter where or when they lived, who have loved God, even without having the fullness of the gospel. We lift our voices in gratitude for their selflessness and courage. We embrace them as brothers and sisters, children of our Heavenly Father. ... He hears the prayers of the humble and sincere of every nation, tongue, and people. He grants light to those who seek and honor Him and are willing to obey His commandments."

The late Krister Stendahl, emeritus Lutheran Bishop of Stockholm and professor emeritus of Harvard Divinity School, established three rules for religious understanding:

- (1) When you are trying to understand another religion, you should ask the adherents of that religion and not its enemies;*
- (2) don't compare your best to their worst; and*
- (3) leave room for "holy envy" by finding elements in other faiths to emulate. These principles foster relationships between religions that build trust and lay the groundwork for charitable efforts.*

The spiritual and physical needs of the world require goodwill and cooperation among different faiths. Each of them makes a valuable contribution to the larger community of believers. In the words of early Church apostle Orson F. Whitney, “God is using more than one people for the accomplishment of his great and marvelous work. The Latter-day Saints cannot do it all. It is too vast, too arduous, for any one people.” Thus, members of the Church do not view fellow believers around the world as adversaries or competitors, but as partners in the many causes for good in the world. For example, the Church has joined forces with Catholic Relief Services[.]

Krister Stendahl’s three rules for religious understanding are ones we all should apply. In particular, LDS members should accept them when viewing others who do not share their understanding of latter-day history, scripture or doctrine. Tolerance for differences is a customary courtesy. But, increasingly, tolerance for a different view of LDS history is met with closed minds, open mouths, and insulting questions about motives and ambitions. It is just possible that a difference in viewpoint can be the product of sincere inquiry, humble acceptance, and broken hearts by those seeking.

Similarly, the acknowledgment that “God is using more than one people for the accomplishment of his great and marvelous work” should limit LDS criticism of all others, including those who believe in the restoration and accept Joseph as a prophet of God.

This certainly allows for the possibility God will do something more with someone else.

DECEMBER 2014

DECEMBER 1, 2014

Patience and Faith

I received an email from a fellow struggling with a spouse who opposes his understanding of the institutional church and the present state of the restoration. What can be done when one person views the present circumstances (and these will continue to change), the church and needed preparations differently from their spouse or other family members?

Families are and must be a priority. Children are owed a duty by both parents. Spouses and children deserve our unconditional love, support, and encouragement. The most important arguments are never won by words, but by our deeds. Live true principles and the example, not your words, will convert others.

The changes will continue apace. There are many reasons for this. The LDS church is not the same today as it was 10, 20, 30 or 40 years ago. The church makes decisions using models based on business and political theories. This is ill-fitted for a religious movement. The result is that changes are made hastily and without careful consideration given to doctrine or how abandoning doctrine affects members.

The LDS church sells the product “Mormonism” to a target market of the unconverted or non-members. Their present customer base (members) have been put through jarring changes. These include changes in temple rites, exclusion/inclusion of blacks for priesthood, stripping women of control of their own organization through correlation, and others. Despite these dramatic changes, the institution has largely managed to keep their loyal customer base. This gives the leadership confidence that the greatest part

of their customer base is secure and will never leave. Therefore, their adaptation is tailored to their target market. This includes a demographic who are in large part younger, liberal, progressive, self-centered, emotional, and noticeably lacking in the ability to think critically. This is the future Mormon consumer or target audience.

To make this work, the church pares down its teachings, and reassures the loyal customer base that the radical changes are okay because the church cannot lead its customers into error or apostasy. There are two important tenets that have superseded all others: the church is led by a “prophet” and the leaders “cannot lead you astray.” These MUST emerge as the primary themes. Any dedicated study of doctrine and history shows the church is riddled with contradictions, mistakes, missteps, changing and untrue claims regarding history and non-scriptural dogma. This is excused and rationalized by the propounding of the two mandatory teachings of a “prophet” who “cannot lead you astray.”

Inadequately prepared young men and women are now shouldering the missionary burden. As the older ones cycle through, and the youngsters fully man the missionary effort, the numbers of missionaries out will decrease back to the pre “hastening” numbers. (The math is simple: The population of prospective missionaries was expanded one time. Those who would have waited another year were able to leave a year earlier because of the change in age eligibility. Those already serving, who had gone out at the older age were in the mission field at the time the policy changed. So an additional year’s missionaries were immediately eligible and added to the ranks. Within three years, all the older missionaries who were serving when the change was made will be back home. Those who were able to serve a year younger will also return, leaving at that time only the younger population as missionaries. The willing and

available number within any given two-year block is about 50,000. Within three years the temporary increase to 88,000 will subside back to the pre-change number. However, when that happens the maturity and commitment problems caused by the younger missionaries will remain.)

The timing of the age change was to increase the missionary force for the Mitt Romney Presidency. The age change was announced in October general conference before the election in November. Presidents are sworn in in January. By January the policy-change surge in missionaries was well underway, but Romney lost. The surge is not repeatable, unless, of course another age-lowering change is adopted.

Historically the Lord sends a message. Then He awaits the reaction of the people to the message He sent. After an appropriate amount of time has passed, and a fair chance has been given for people to heed or ignore the message, the Lord will preach His own sermon. His sermon is in the gift of tribulation and calamities to afflict us and refocus our attention onto more important, even eternal things.

In our patience we possess our souls. So be patient. Be steady. Be believing and do what you believe God bids you to do. You will not be disappointed. Those who judge the truth through you need your example to show them what faith looks like, what faith acts like, and what faith truly is. Display it in meekness and they will be persuaded far more than through any sermon you can deliver. Sermons are for the believing. Your life lived becomes the means to persuade others.

DECEMBER 14, 2014

Received Email

I received the following email, which I believe worth sharing:

This is as good a spot, and manner, as any to thank you for staying aloof recently, and for resisting the urge to be a strong man. In the last month, I have had a vision and have been led by God in several ways. I now feel that I have a calling in life. I thanked you because, after the vision, one of my first thoughts was to send it to you and ask what you thought. If I'm being honest, I still would like to know your thoughts... but I instead went to the Lord, and have received much more than just that initial opening. There have been other experiences (like after my recent rebaptism) where I reached out to my friends to share the experience. It was harder than going to a 'strong man,' but both they and I have been strengthened by exercising those spiritual muscles. Keep going strong brother. May enough of us arise from the dust to actually see Zion brought about in our lifetime!

I rejoice in the strength of others. All who rise up to know God will understand the source of the words I have spoken and written.

CHAPTER 17

Things Now Underway

DECEMBER 22, 2014

Strange Incense

Light won the annual battle with darkness yesterday on the Winter Solstice. I wish light could win the battle in mankind's dark heart.

God requires holiness and cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance, as explained in D&C 1:31.

If we fail to keep God's ordinances exactly as prescribed, they are broken and no longer effective (Isa. 24:5).

God's House is always to be built for His presence. When accepted by Him it must remain exactly as He ordered it, or there are only two results:

1. If the ordinances are not kept, He withdraws and the house is no longer His. Men are then free to do what they choose within the temple because God neglects it.
2. If He still claims it, then those who offend within His House offend God, and they will die.

Nadab and Abihu were the oldest sons of Aaron, Nadab being the oldest (Num. 3:2). They had been in God's presence with Moses on the Mount (Exo. 24:9-10)

Despite their standing, they chose to practice a rite within God's House (at that time it was a temporary tabernacle) without God's sanction or approval. God had commanded what was to be done, how it was to be done, and who was to perform the rites. These two were apparently worthy and qualified to have seen God and enter His presence. Despite this, they apparently thought of some additional way to honor God, perhaps by incorporating what they sincerely thought was a worthy act of devotion. They were, after all, within the tabernacle and "before God" when they acted.

Since they came out of Egypt, it is probable the offering they made was taken from the Egyptian practices with which they were acquainted. No doubt they thought some particularly impressive portion of the Egyptian rites would evidence their sincere admiration and veneration for God.

The problem is that the Lord's House is His, not theirs. They are not justified when they presume they can take just any impressive rite and practice it before God to earn His respect. They were showing disrespect, even rebellion, by incorporating into their rites a foreign idea not commanded by Him.

When they went into God's House and offered before Him a rite He did not command to be done within His House, they were trespassing and rebelling. They took Celestial behavior within a site hallowed by God to be His, requiring a Terrestrial law. Like those who will be unprepared for His presence at His return, they were killed by the "fire" or glory of God's presence (Lev. 10:1-3). Moses reminded their father, Aaron, that those who come to God must be "sanctified" by the means He prescribes, and no other.

There is no accepted House on earth today wherein God dwells. We are therefore free to observe whatever we think will please God in our individual houses of worship. But when He establishes a

House and His presence is to be found there, nothing can be done apart from what He commands to be done, when He commands it to be done, and in the manner He commands it to be observed. If anything varies, then the results will be:

1. He withdraws and it is no longer His House; or,
2. Those who violate the conditions for entering His House will pay with their lives for their rebellion; even if they have been in His presence before.

Given the vanity and pride of mankind, it seems unlikely there will ever be people who are willing to strictly observe only what He asks as He asks it. It is a mistake to think we can improve on what He gives us, and yet we do.

When there is a House built for God (and some future people will build one), it will necessarily be through people of restraint, meekness, humility and patience who take no credit and think themselves no better than their fellows. It will be an undertaking requiring a heart like our Lord's, full of the virtues He displayed. There will need to be a priest, like Moses, who was the meekest of all men (Num. 12:3). There will need to be someone, at last, who knows the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the Powers of Heaven, and when the heavens are offended, they withdraw. When withdrawn, other false spirits rush in to please and reassure us in our vanity and pride.

There have been so many generations of disappointment for heaven. Even if God sent another like Joseph Smith, it is doubtful anything more could be accomplished today than was done in Nauvoo. Like Nadab and Abihu, we stray, offering up our strange incense rather than strictly observing what God asks, how He asks it to be done, when He asks it of us.

Moses took Israel out of Egypt because God knew the traditions of that culture were corrupt. A new and more correct pattern was revealed to Moses. But Nadab and Abihu took it upon themselves to bring Egypt with them, and thought they could please God with their pleasant, but unauthorized, worship. They died.

Why are many called and so few chosen? Why can we not learn from past failure enough to avoid repeating it in our day?

Vanity, pride, looking beyond the mark, self-will, arrogance, and reckless enthusiasm all proceed from a lack of gratitude to God for what He gives us. Instead of accepting in gratitude and practicing it with patience, we demand more, insist we can improve on His ways, and charge ahead into the pass to be destroyed by the beast. The chosen of God remain scatterlings, unable to dwell in the House of God with Him, because it cannot be built with the unclean hands of a wayward generation.

We have moved into a season of increasing light now. But I do not think mankind has yet reached its winter solstice. From all I have seen, darkness continues to hold sway among even the very elect.

DECEMBER 23, 2014

MP3s

With help from a volunteer the *40 Years in Mormonism* has now been converted into a downloadable MP3 format. We hoped to release those before Christmas (and still may). This blog site is not equipped to handle that kind of service. Therefore, we have secured a new website from which all the papers and the recordings will be made downloadable. There remain some technical details to coordinate on that website, and so we may not make the Christmas target. But it is coming, and as soon as we can solve the issues of

uploading and authorizing the downloading, a link will be put here on this blog.

I appreciate all the work done by everyone involved to record, copy and preserve the talks. I also appreciate the work done to convert the material so it can be made available.

I am working to produce a book based on the talks and some other material from the blog and the Sunstone paper delivered this year. The book will be different than the talks. It a different and more extensive project involving thousands of additional hours of editing and writing to add additional scriptural and historical support to the topics discussed. It is the most work I have ever invested into a single volume. There is no projected completion date. At present I am only finished through the Las Vegas talk in a first edit. It will go through approximately 3 edits. Completion of the book will likely be sometime mid-2015, at the earliest.

DECEMBER 23, 2014

Answers/Email

I received an email that refers to some specific people, events, places and individuals. Therefore I will not put the email up. But the response has a broader application and it is copied below for anyone who is interested to consider.

The reference to the "light winning over darkness" on the Winter Solstice is based on natural ebb and flow of sunlight on this planet. The longest night and shortest day are the day before the Solstice. The beginning of light returning, and lengthening daylight, is the Solstice.

I understand the dilemma you mention. I also think that Joseph rushed in to correct errors and preserve the group too quickly,

and with too much centralized control. Had he allowed others to wander away, the restoration may have included fewer people, but they would have had a greater chance of achieving Zion. For Joseph, the mission was global and he wanted to have the entire human family reached by his ministry. It is apparent, now in hindsight, that the world will never qualify to be gathered. Now the focus must be to find only the very few who, by their patience and heed can qualify to be true, faithful, patient, meek, humble and willing to allow the Lord's timing and not their own control the events.

I know of all the things you mention. I am acquainted with the various things underway, and have some understanding of the errors of each of these various groups. I have not, and will not intervene. They must be allowed to take their own course. In the end, there will be only a few gathered. Those who qualify will have proven themselves true and faithful in all things and prepared to converse with the Lord through the veil.

In response to a question about God not presently having a house on earth, it should be clear this is not a reference to men as the temple of God. God does dwell with some now living.

Nor is it a reference to the various synagogues, cathedrals, chapels, temples and religious facilities constructed by all the various religions in which men practice their rites and devotions to God. Some of those are lovely, quiet and filled with reverence and beauty.

It is a reference to a House God will visit and accept as His. He will appear there, send His messengers (angels) to visit and open a fiery corridor between heaven and earth. Or, in other words, a place where a pillar of fire will dwell.

This was not a criticism of places of worship used by men today. It is an observation of present conditions and a description of what

will need to be built and accepted prior to the Lord's return. It will need to be constructed strictly, in accordance with the pattern God requires, and not something men presently construct as their places of worship.

Everything from the location to the details of the design must be according to God's instructions. It will be proof on the earth for heaven to behold, showing to the Powers of Heaven that mankind (however few) are listening to Him and are now willing to do what He asks. God will control if and when it will be done, and who will be permitted to construct His House. This will not be a volunteer project. God alone will bring it to pass, using means determined by Him.

There must be a site prepared, and an invitation extended, before the Lord's return. That place must be hallowed. It is a necessary precondition for His return. It is from that site the sanctification of the earth will proceed. Eventually the whole earth will be renewed.

DECEMBER 24, 2014

Christmas

We celebrate our Lord's birth tomorrow.

What a wonder He was and is. Although He was the greatest and "more intelligent than they all," (Abr. 3:19) He came to serve, kneel and wash the feet of the unworthy, bless, instruct and endure abuse. He was meek and lowly (Matt. 11:29), yet spoke as one having authority (Matt. 7:29).

He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

He bore our infirmities.

With His stripes we are healed.

The world took little note of His arrival on that Spring day. He was born in the springtime to herald new life, resurrection, and rebirth. We celebrate it in the darkness of the winter which can likewise testify of the end of darkness and increase of light—for all things testify of Him (Moses 6:63).

The heavens themselves were stirred at His birth. Stars aligned, signs appeared, heavenly choirs sang, and prophecies, covenants and promises were vindicated through His birth, lowly life, exalted teachings, and sacrificial offering. All this before the eyes of a blind, murderous generation, who would kill their God (2 Ne. 10:3).

He preferred Isaiah and the Psalms to other scripture of His day. He used a small canon of scripture to expound and teach.

How wonderful.

How mighty.

How meek.

How lowly.

How great.

How kind.

How worthy was the Lamb!

There is none like Him, dead or alive. We are all lost to the grave and prison without Him.

His rescue mission extends to all mankind. We will all be rescued from the grave. He intends to work to bring about our immortality and eternal life (Moses 1:39), even if this requires worlds without end (D&C 76:112).

A Roman centurion and his cohort said it best: “Truly this was the Son of God” (Matt. 27:54).

DECEMBER 25, 2014

Things Now Underway

For the first time since Joseph and Hyrum died, there is actual progress now being made. Instead of the atrophy of three and four generations merely marking time, we now see new life begun. There are two important, interrelated challenges before us.

The first is remembering the restoration and reclaiming its truths, ordinances and vitality. This began in earnest with the final talk given in Phoenix on September 9, 2014. Since then, hundreds have gone through the simple but necessary process to reclaim authority and obtain the now required sustaining vote to exercise that authority with God's approval.

Fellowship groups are collecting tithing and using it to assist the poor among them, and when their group's needs are met they support others who are in need. I have received wonderful accounts of how local groups are organizing themselves.

One group has two boxes when they meet. In one they deposit tithing, all in cash to make it easy to distribute immediately. In the other, those with needs write down their need. Following sacrament, the needs are reviewed and prioritized based on the group's agreement of greatest need requiring the most immediate attention, and then ranking second, third, and so on. After agreement is reached, the tithing money is counted and, if all needs can be met, the funds are given to those in need. If only part of the needs can be addressed, the money is distributed according to the agreed priority.

In some accounts sent to me, children of the fellowship see the gospel in action and are impressed with the power of faith to bless and care for one another's needs. They see this immediately. They

see people ministering to one another as the result of the faith they share in Christ and the effort to obey Him.

This renewal allows the great financial power of Christ's teachings to be fully devoted to immediate needs. No one administers the tithes, nor does anyone control the resources. Common consent is used to accomplish good and address immediate needs. No one is paid to serve, and nothing is required to support an administrative or professional class.

In this new pattern the great evil of priestcraft condemned by the Book of Mormon is avoided. No one can profit, and no one can obtain money and earn their living through this system. The poor alone receive the benefit of the tithing collected.

This pattern mirrors the one commended by the Book of Mormon:

Alma 1:26: And when the priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God, they all returned again diligently unto their labors; and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did all labor, every man according to his strength.

It avoids the practice of priestcraft condemned in that same chapter:

The man Nehor preached in favor of a professional and popular clergy.

Alma 1:3: he had gone about among the people, preaching to them that which he termed to be the word of God, bearing down against the church; declaring unto the people that every priest and teacher

ought to become popular; and they ought not to labor with their hands, but that they ought to be supported by the people.

Nehor was popular because he did not preach repentance. Quite the opposite, he reassured his audience that they would certainly be saved, appealing to their pride.

Alma 1:4: And he also testified unto the people that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life.

In competition with this false priestcraft, there was an unpaid clergy offering an unpopular message. These true priests warned people to repent and follow God. The Book of Mormon shows in plain simplicity the religion Christ wants mankind to follow.

The simple but necessary steps have been declared again with God's approval. In response hundreds now have authority and several thousand have returned to the root of the restoration. These will survive the Lord's return, because their authorized and authoritative baptism is the sign now accepted by God as proof of faith by obedience.

This will continue to roll forward. Even in this cold weather, over the last two weeks there have been baptisms in the Boise River, northern Utah, and elsewhere. It is delicate and vulnerable, but I do not believe it will go backward. The season is upon us.

This vital new growth from a dead root is a sign heaven told us to watch for in the last days. It is fulfilling the prophecy of Zenos, and the promises given by Christ. This is a new beginning. With this beginning, I think there is every reason to rejoice and take heart.

The second challenge is to see Zion gathered from among the scattered into a single place in the mountains where an ensign will

be built. There the Lord will gather some under His wings, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. However, Zion must wait for strength to develop in the first fellowships.

Like men in all generations, I too want to see the foundation of Zion built in my day. This desire sometimes leads me to have unreasonably high expectations for others. This is wrong of me, and leads to my disappointment. Disappointment is always a product of expectations. Because I expect more, when I should not, I am led to want more than is possible for others to give or do. That is wrong of me, and I acknowledge my misplaced expectations.

The Lord is patient, and He knows what will follow and how it all will unfold to fulfill His promises. I have seen the potential of some of you and want that to turn into more than perhaps it ever will or can. For the last few days I have reflected on Sidney Rigdon. He was so important, useful and valuable to Joseph's work as it began. With time, Sidney became a hindrance. So much so that Joseph asked the church to vote him out as a counselor to Joseph—but instead, the church reelected Sidney. Like Sidney, many others of Joseph's inner circle proved themselves incapable of rising up and realizing the opportunity presented to them. In the end, Sidney and others skewed the restoration, and in many ways opposed and hindered what the Lord might have accomplished with more obedient and humble people.

In the same January 1841 revelation reminding the church it had forfeited the “fulness of the priesthood” (D&C 124:28), the Lord confirmed upon Hyrum “the office of Priesthood and Patriarch” (D&C 124:91). In Hyrum, like the prophets of old, God gave us a “prophet, and a seer, and a revelator unto [God's] church” (D&C 124:94). Hyrum was a man who could “bind on earth, bind in heaven, loose on earth, and loose in heaven” (D&C 124:93). He was

the means to preserve the restoration, had he lived. By June 1844, it appears to me only Joseph and Hyrum were equal to fulfilling the Lord's requirements.

But Joseph and Hyrum were brothers, and therefore both "pure blooded Ephraimites" (*JD* 2:269; see also *Ensign*, January 1991, "Of the House of Israel"). The ancient covenants required this bloodline to bring forth the Book of Mormon and commence the restoration. However, they, and the priesthood line through them, needed to end before other covenants could be fulfilled. Zion will come through both Judah (king) and Joseph (priest), to fulfill the promises of our Lord (D&C 113:5–6; Isa. 11:10). Accordingly, both Joseph and Hyrum were taken, Hyrum the first to fall.

Hyrum's line was to be kept "in honorable remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever" (D&C 124:96). Even after the Patriarch's office, held by Hyrum's descendants, was discontinued in 1979, the church still held some tenuous claims. In 1979 Eldred G. Smith was released and never replaced, but he lived on for decades. The office has now altogether ended according to church publications.

Upon his death in April 2013 at 104 years of age, the sign of the passing of the fourth generation was given. By April of the next year the Lord concluded His work through the LDS Church and set His hand to begin something new, now underway.

The first process of fellowshipping in local groups today is saving souls. It is a required first step, and therefore anyone who claims to have faith in Christ must now come and receive their baptism as a sign of faith in Christ through this required manner. Even if the recipient chooses to continue activity in the LDS Church, or any other church or group, all people of faith must receive the baptism now being offered.

But the second challenge, to have Zion return, is the true object of our Lord's heart. For that to come, the challenge is an order of magnitude greater than fellowshipping, and will require much of us.

One word of caution: new things taught using the scriptures always give pretenders, ambitious and cunning men an opportunity to improve their deception. Information can be abused, and there are those who are eager to deceive to get power, popularity and financial gain. You must assume the burden of distinguishing light from darkness, truth from error, and pretenders from those sent by the Lord with counsel from Him. Trust no man. Go to God and ask Him about everyone who teaches and everything taught.

CHAPTER 18

The Truth of All Things

JANUARY 2015

JANUARY 7, 2015

Freedom to Worship

I have written over 2 million words explaining my understanding of Mormonism. It has largely been an exposition of the scriptures to show how they anchor all my beliefs. The scriptures are a library of material about Christ, written by those who knew Him and had understanding given to them by Him. The value of scripture is directly related to the writers' proximity to our Lord's mind and words.

Not all scripture has equal value. The Book of Mormon has the greatest value because of its origin. Its prophecies are more relevant to us than those of the Bible.

Other than the scriptures, the sources I trust most are approved or written by Joseph Smith, or his brother Hyrum, and others that include the earliest contemporary accounts of beginning LDS history. The further away the source is from the actual events, the less reliable they prove. There are some accounts that have become

“history” that were not even written by a witness. They were fanciful recreations intended to promote belief in the religious systems that followed Joseph’s death. They are not true.

Lately, more reliable source materials about early LDS history are available to the public for the first time. Older accounts written without using the new source material are unreliable and outdated. Defending LDS historical accounts using unreliable source material no longer persuades those who are well read in new material. I have tried to make a positive statement of what I have learned and how events can be better reconstructed using what is now available.

The contradictory clutter of post-Joseph contentions advanced by church apologists are neither consistent nor coherent. Those who prize these sources and find virtue in them have courage. I confess I lack the courage to trust myth without searching to discover truth.

Even after all I’ve written, I still have venomous critics who attribute to me the opposite of what I believe.

- Although I condemn plural marriage, I’m accused of wanting it.
- Although I abhor concentration of power in church leaders, I’m accused of seeking to establish my own organization to control.
- Although I spend my own money to teach and serve, I’m accused of somehow wanting to profit from these expenses I bear.
- Although I have told people to remain LDS if they are happy with their situation, I’m accused of driving people away from the church. (I really like Latter-day Saints. They are among the best people I know. If they follow their faith, they are upright, decent and moral people for whom I hold high regard. They only bother me when they ignorantly and vocally damn me for things I do not believe or advocate. Apart from that, I have no complaints.)

- Although I harbor no ill-will to any church authority, I'm accused of railing against them.
- Although I recommend we return to the original name for the priesthood, I'm accused of wanting to rename priesthood after myself.

As the Lord said, "blessed are you when men shall say all manner of evil against you FALSELY for my name's sake..." It seems I qualify. The critics do not bother to say what I actually advocate, choosing instead to spread false accusations suggesting I believe the opposite of what I actually believe.

The 11th Article of Faith declares:

We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.

I believe this. I also claim this right. I appreciate the opportunity claimed by every "Mormon" sect accepting the Articles of Faith as part of their beliefs. When others want to attack this right, let's band together to oppose them. Let everyone be free in their beliefs and worship.

It should be no concern to anyone what, how or where I choose to worship. If I am wrong, that is between me and God. I am only sharing what I have learned with those who are interested. You are free to reject my beliefs. If you are right, then you should rejoice in the truth you have found and try to persuade others to see the truth as well.

No one should "own" a religion. It is morally corrupt to claim anyone can dictate what others believe, what they should believe, how they should worship or what they must do to satisfy a man's demand in order for God to offer salvation. If you think a Pope, or Priest or Prophet can save you, then by all means go get yourself

saved, as you understand it. If I think only God can save me, and that too by the grace of Christ, then permit me to seek for my salvation at the feet of the Lord whom I worship.

If we are both deluded then let's permit each other the joy of our delusions without rancor or contention. You revel in what brings you hope and satisfaction, and allow me to do the same. If we are all wrong, the least we can be is accommodating and happy.

Because of our limited time in mortality, we will all know soon enough the answers to all the questions. While we are here, let's be courteous to one another. When at last we arrive, we can compare notes and see what other insights we can share with one another.

Until you have done what I have done, you cannot possibly fully understand my faith, and likewise, since your experience is foreign to me, I cannot possibly fully understand your faith. We ought to resign ourselves to peacefully allow one another the privilege to worship according to the dictates of our own conscience, and trust that we all take seriously the obligation to search for truth.

Assuming we all act consistent with our conscience, then why damn each other for our good faith beliefs and efforts? Why not be open, even with disagreements? Why feel threatened when someone understands our history, scripture, and God's will differently? When we allow one another the freedom of belief, an open discussion helps us understand the reason for a different view, and lets us reconsider our own views in a healthy, useful way. Over time we inevitably grow more unified by open discourse.

It arouses my curiosity when someone offers a new understanding of scripture. Curiosity is a very good thing. It is perhaps the most childlike thing about us; something Christ said was required for us to see His Kingdom. When we react in fear and anger at other religious viewpoints we are really submitting to

the enemy of our soul. Fear is ungodly. Faith casts out fear. Can you imagine a child who refuses to consider anything new because they fear to hear about it?

We should allow everyone to state what they believe and why—in THEIR own words. Redefining them, attributing motives they do not claim, or questioning their good faith can never lead us to an understanding of one another.

JANUARY 14, 2015

About the Tree of Life

In response to an email about the Tree of Life in Lehi's dream, and the potential for John the Beloved to be directly involved in latter-day events, I responded with the following:

During the time when their natural lives had ended, the ministry of the Three Nephites was not public. They ministered to Mormon and to Moroni, but did not minister openly. This is a type of how John also will minister. I do not expect him to openly minister again. The challenge is for mortals to cope with the mortal condition, aided by ministering angels (one of whom is John, others include the Three Nephites, and the cities of Enoch and Melchizedek, and Elijah). The list in Section 128 includes some of the identities.

But the point is that Mormon as a mortal ministered to mortals. Moroni as a mortal likewise did so. The Three Nephites ministered to the ministers. This is the pattern we see likewise with Joseph. Christ and various other ministering angels ministered to Joseph, and Joseph ministered to the believers.

The challenge is to elevate others without elevating yourself. The idea of having a strong leader with everyone looking to them for salvation

is a demonstrably inadequate model. It did not work with Moses. It failed in the New Testament. It failed with Joseph. It will fail if used again now.

The successes are Enoch's and Melchizedek's. Both of them confined themselves to the role of preaching and teaching repentance. That's it. Repentance and faith in God. The meekness of Moses notwithstanding, he failed to bring Zion. The prophetic and productive work of Joseph the Seer notwithstanding, he failed to bring Zion.

The challenge is to get people to take that step of partaking of the fruit. No one fed it to them. No one got the fruit from the tree, took it out to the wandering and wayward people and handed it to them. No one other than the individual themselves could partake.

We are left with the only approved tools:

- persuasion
- kindness
- meekness
- love unfeigned
- pure knowledge

THESE must typify the ministry of whoever will bring again Zion. Use of any other means will not succeed in allowing the individual to make their own choice to come and partake.

JANUARY 21, 2015

Thoughts on Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost can and does speak to everyone, Baptists, Lutherans, and Catholics included. C.S. Lewis could not have written and comprehended what he wrote and understood, unless the light of the Holy Ghost shown upon his mind. He declares the light of eternal truths in his writings. This is one of the manifestations of the Holy Ghost, or Comforter.

Therefore it is given to abide in you; the record of heaven; the Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice and judgment (Moses 6:61).

This is in contrast to the power given by Christ to lay on hands for the Holy Ghost. For power to do that, Christ touched (*and must touch*) the man given that power. When Christ actually gave power to give the Holy Ghost, the Book of Mormon account stresses repeatedly that He touched them: There is a difference between a visit by the Holy Ghost and having its presence always to be with you. *“A man may receive the Holy Ghost, and it may descend upon him and not tarry with him”* (D&C 130:23). This difference accounts for the Holy Ghost being available to all, on the one hand, and the power to lay on hands to confer the gift given by those upon whom Christ has laid His hands, on the other hand.

Many people believe they have the Holy Ghost with them when their emotions are stirred, or they are thrilled by some appealing talk, comment, praise or flattery. However these incidents do not increase light and truth, comprehension or intelligence and are not the Holy Ghost. They are only emotional experiences. Emotional experiences can be replicated in a number of ways. Music, movies, television commercials, general conference talks, books, testimonies, prayers and any number of physical experiences can create tears, goosebumps, or other things that we have incorrectly associated with the Holy Ghost.

Very often the truth conveyed by the Holy Ghost is hard to hear, difficult to follow, and breaks your heart. Sometimes the truth is bitter. But bitter truth is better than pleasing lies and flattery. It is a profound misunderstanding of the “Holy Ghost” when a person

concludes it can never convey a message that condemns, convicts or challenges you. Much of what the Holy Ghost will convey—light and truth—causes pain, provokes change and repentance because you are convicted of errors.

Alma was tutored by the Holy Ghost and it convicted him of his sins. He described it as *“my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror”* (Alma 36:14). *“For three days and for three nights was I racked, even with the pains of a damned soul”* (*Id.*, v. 16). He said *“I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins”* (*Id.*, v. 17). He repented because he received accurate information by the power of the Holy Ghost showing him exactly where he stood before God. This enabled him to repent and return to God.

It is a mistake to conclude that only good feelings, reassurance and praise comes through the Holy Ghost. It is likewise a profound error to assume a message that challenges you, tells you bad news about your present mistakes, and warns you to change course is dark, evil or cannot be from God.

There is no organization controlling the Holy Ghost.

Missionaries quote Moroni 10:4, and admonish everyone to pray and ask God if the Book of Mormon is true. Investigators are promised that God will manifest the truth of it unto them “by the power of the Holy Ghost.” These are unbaptized, unwashed, and uninitiated investigators who are told they can hear the Holy Ghost speak truth to them. The Holy Ghost does, can, and will speak to anyone.

The claim an organization has a franchise over the Holy Ghost is hollow. The idea the Holy Ghost can be controlled is false. The fact LDS Mormons are acquainted with the Holy Ghost means very little. That acquaintance does not distinguish Latter-day Saints, and it

does not separate others from the Holy Ghost and its ministrations, no matter who they are.

The Holy Ghost does not thrill, it informs. It gives understanding. Thrilling music can rouse you. A great TV show can give you goose bumps. That is not the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost enlightens minds, it enlivens senses, it brings light and new and more complete understanding.

“The first Comforter, or Holy Ghost has no other effect than pure intelligence” (TPJS, p. 149).

“No man can receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelations. The Holy Ghost is a revelator” (TPJS, p. 328).

There are some people who have the Spirit with them in such abundance, that to be in their presence is to understand things better. Understanding, comprehension, light and truth—these are the effects of the Holy Ghost.

The word “apostle” means someone sent. An apostle of Jesus Christ must be sent by **Him** to claim to be **His** apostle.

Christ gave the power to baptize in 3 Nephi 11:19–21 by telling Nephi (and later others) He empowered them:

And Nephi arose and went forth, and bowed himself before the Lord and did kiss his feet. And the Lord commanded him that he should arise. And he arose and stood before him. And the Lord said unto him: I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people when I am again ascended into heaven. And again the Lord called others, and said unto them likewise; and he gave unto them power to baptize.” Christ did not touch them because it is not required for this authority to be given by Him. He only said to them, “I give you power to baptize.

Although the record does not mention any prior ordination, these disciples in all likelihood had been previously ordained. But

when Christ came to the Nephites, He was renewing His church. All that was needed for Him to convey the power to baptize was (and is) for Christ to tell the recipient of the power that it is given.

And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of these sayings, he touched with his hand the disciples whom he had chosen, one by one, even until he had touched them all, and spake unto them as he touched them. And the multitude heard not the words which he spake, therefore they did not bear record; but the disciples bare record that he gave them power to give the Holy Ghost. And I will show unto you hereafter that this record is true. (3 Ne. 18:36–37)

The Book of Mormon does show how it was given:

And he called them by name, saying: Ye shall call on the Father in my name, in mighty prayer; and after ye have done this ye shall have power that to him upon whom ye shall lay your hands, ye shall give the Holy Ghost; and in my name shall ye give it, for thus do mine apostles. (Moro. 2:2)

Laying on hands for the Holy Ghost is an ordinance belonging to an “apostle” or witness to whom Christ has ministered and empowered. Acts 1:22; see also Oliver Cowdery’s February 1835 charge to the twelve found at *DHC* 2:192–198, reproduced in part below.

In our own dispensation the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost was likewise an ordinance to be performed only by an “apostle” upon whom Christ laid hands:

An apostle is an elder, and it is his calling to baptize; ...And to confirm those who are baptized into the church, by the laying on of hands for the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, according to the scriptures....” (D&C 20:38, 41)

Section 20 was given in April 1830 when the term “apostles” was not associated with an organized church administrative body. At the time the revelation was given, the likely candidates for properly claiming the title of “apostle” were Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris. These four previously had the heavens opened to them. They had seen the plates of the Book of Mormon, and heard the voice of God declaring a message to them. However, there were many others in the earliest days who claimed to be “apostles,” and the term had no settled meaning in April 1830.

Today many Latter-day Saints associate the term “apostles” with a quorum that did not exist in 1830. Reference to this “quorum” could not have been the meaning used in Section 20. When this revelation was given, all the elders in the church called themselves “apostles” of Jesus Christ. That practice gradually changed after the quorum of twelve had been organized. Reinterpreting the term used in Section 20 because in 1835 there was an organization of a church quorum of twelve is not justifiable.

Arguably members of an administrative body, even if given the honorific title “Apostles,” would still need to qualify as “apostles” to have the power to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The quorum of twelve were chosen by the Three Witnesses and ordained as Apostles by them. Oliver Cowdery gave them a charge that imposed the same obligation on the quorum as would be expected of any “apostle.” Cowdery’s charge told them it was necessary to have Christ lay hands on them to complete their ordination:

It is necessary that you receive a testimony from heaven to yourselves; so that you can bear testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon, and that you have seen the face of God. That is more than the

testimony of an angel. When the proper time arrives, you shall be able to bear this testimony to the world. When you bear testimony that you have seen God, this testimony God will never suffer to fall, but will bear you out; although many will not give heed, yet others will. You will therefore see the necessity of getting this testimony from heaven. Never cease striving until you have seen God face to face. Strengthen your faith; cast off your doubts, your sins, and all your unbelief; and nothing can prevent you from coming to God. Your ordination is not full and complete till God has laid his hand upon you. We require as much to qualify us as did those who have gone before us; God is the same. If the Savior in former days laid his hands upon his disciples, why not in latter days? . . . The time is coming when you will be perfectly familiar with the things of God. . . . You have our best wishes, you have our most fervent prayers, that you may be able to bear this testimony, that you have seen the face of God. Therefore call upon him in faith in mighty prayer till you prevail, for it is your duty and your privilege to bear such a testimony for yourselves. (DHC, 2:192–96, emphasis added)

LDS practice does not limit laying on hands to an apostle Christ has touched and given power. Nor do members of the quorum of the twelve receive the charge given by Oliver Cowdery to the first apostles called by the Three Witnesses.

Many people foolishly conclude that the Holy Ghost is telling them something is “dark” or “evil” if it causes discomfort, pain or disappointment. The emotional response should be separated from deciding whether it comes from the Holy Ghost, or if the message is truthful. Does it enlighten? Does it impart knowledge? Does it cause a desire to change? Repent?

JANUARY 23, 2015

Further Thoughts on the Holy Ghost

The purpose of the Holy Ghost is to convey truth, understanding and knowledge. Our reaction may be emotional, but the Holy Ghost is informational.

The information we obtain from the Holy Ghost checks emotions, and produces self-control. Paul explained that our flesh is prone to lusts (Gal. 5:19) and to “hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, ...envyings” (Gal. 5:20–21). But the Spirit helps check those through self-control. A healthy appreciation of our limitations leads to “longsuffering, gentleness, ...faith, meekness, temperance” (Gal. 5:22–23) which are gifts produced as a byproduct of recognizing our weakness.

If there is a consistent experience produced by an encounter with God while filled with the Holy Spirit, it would be “dread” or “fear.” Comparing our fallen nature to the purity of God causes shame. (The language used by those who experience this include these accounts: “racked with a consciousness of your guilt”—Mormon 9:3–5; “Woe is me, I am undone”—Isa. 6:5; “a great quaking...they fled to hide”—Daniel 10:7; “an horror of great darkness”—Genesis 15:12.)

We become meek, temperate and long suffering with others as we comprehend how little we are in comparison to God. We have no reason to boast after we have encountered purity and intelligence. It is a fearful thing to come into contact with the Living God (Heb. 10:31).

Intelligence is light and truth (D&C 93:36). Truth is knowledge of things as they are, were, and are to come (D&C 93:24). We clearly see our weakness when in contact with God (Ether 12:27). But

the purpose of showing us our weakness is to cause “weak things become strong” (*Id.*). This “strength” does not produce bragging, assertiveness or boasting. To the contrary, it produces recognition, meekness and fear.

When an authentic encounter with God happens, the person will be filled with anxiety for the salvation of others. (See, Lehi’s immediate concern for his family: 1 Ne. 8:12; Enos’ desire for his brethren and his enemies, the Lamanites, who he viewed as “brethren” also: Enos 1:9, 11; the Sons of Mosiah, who after their own conversion could not bear to have any soul lost if they could convert them: Mosiah 28:3; and the Apostle Paul, who went from persecuting to proselytizing; among many others).

The results are not magic. It is a natural progression based on knowledge and understanding. God shows us something, and we take it into account. We know more, understand more, and have a far more realistic recognition of what is happening here in this fallen world. Then, with that increased understanding, we look to contribute to saving souls (our own included). This is comforting, because it is real.

The frequent testimonies declaring that a person “knows” something is true because the speaker or writer was stirred with emotion is not enlightening, enlivening, increasing understanding, bestowing knowledge, telling us saving truths, or based upon an actual encounter with God. God awakens us from slumber; which can be distressing and even alarming.

But we need to awaken. And we ought to be alarmed.

(I have used the terms Holy Ghost, Spirit and Holy Spirit interchangeably. I have previously explained how I understand the terms are correctly used in scripture.)

JANUARY 27, 2015

Incompatible

It is impossible to have religious freedom of expression and protection of gay rights without requiring the religious expression to include endorsement of homosexual conduct.

Can gay rights be protected without demanding churches stop denouncing homosexuality as “sin” or as “offensive to God” or “evil?”

If a church believes homosexuality is sinful, offensive to God and evil, but cannot say what it believes because law protects against “discrimination” against such conduct, how are the two reconciled? One must trump the other. One must be given priority over the other. Which? How?

Can a church be called “hateful” when it expresses its honest view that homosexuality is morally wrong and sinful without any legal protection against the “hate?”

Should we be free to hate?

If a Muslim hates a Jew, does he have the right to say it publicly? Advocate for others to likewise hate Jews?

Should ideas be free from legal control? If they are, will we see KKK rallies, jihadist news broadcasts, black liberation ministers advocating revolution, white supremacists denouncing “mud people?” Is that sort of fall out bad? Bad in an absolute sense, not in a relative sense. Is foolishness portrayed as insight bad in a relative sense? That happens everywhere and all the time. Should the limits of free speech be nearly absolute?

The Supreme Court set a limit using the analogy of “crying ‘Fire!’ in a crowded theater” that results in injuries and even death. That analogy has been adopted to limit speech elsewhere by saying “hate” will result in injuries and even death, and therefore it is no different.

When it comes to freedom, however, there must be absolutes or freedom will continually be eroded and eventually lost.

We must allow people to say things we disapprove of, disagree with, resent and wish were never said. Tolerance has no meaning if we only permit things we like to be done, said or thought. The meaning of “tolerance” is to permit what I absolutely disagree with to be “tolerated.” I don’t have to love it, nor do I have to approve it. I only need to “tolerate” it.

If we “tolerate” it, is there an obligation to leave it unmolested, uncontrolled and uncurtailed by law? Whether that is homosexual conduct or condemnation of homosexuality.

The role of legislation is not to carve out ideas for suppression and punishment. Until someone actually assaults another, shouldn’t he be able to think what he wants, and say what he thinks? If anyone assaults another it is a crime. Whether the crime was motivated by hatred of homosexuals, hatred of Jews, or Catholics, or Hindus, or Mexicans or Mudbloods or any other group, no one is allowed to assault another person. The crime consists in the act, not in the thought.

Thought should be as near to absolutely free as possible. No matter how peculiar or offensive, thought ought to be unrestricted. It is not possible to police thought without losing other freedoms.

JANUARY 30, 2015

Follow and Receive

We should only “Follow” Christ. See, e.g., Matt. 4:19; 9:9; 16:24; 19:21; Mark 2:14; 8:34; 10:21; Luke 5:27; 18:22; John 12:26; 21:19.

Prophets are not to be followed; only “received” or, in other words, to be heard. See, e.g., Matt. 10:14; Mark 16:11; D&C 76:101. If sent by Him they testify of Him and not of themselves.

If you will not receive Christ's prophets and apostles, you will be condemned. See John 3:10–11.

But you are under the burden of determining whether a man is a true or false prophet, true or false apostle, because following a false one will condemn you. Christ will expose the false prophets and apostles. D&C 64:39. But that will be by-and-by, for they must be given their season to claim falsely to be prophets and apostles.

If you will not hear a prophet, you will be rejected. See D&C 1:14.

Those who claim you should “follow” them put themselves in the place of Christ. They are, in effect, a false Christ. We were promised they would come in the last days to deceive the “very elect” as false Messiahs. See, JS-Matt. 1:22.

The trial is underway. The world must choose correctly.

FEBRUARY 2015

FEBRUARY 18, 2015

Babylon

The God of Heaven tells me all the world should pray that Baghdad does not fall.

FEBRUARY 21, 2015

Apostles and Assumptions

A quorum of twelve apostles did not exist in Mormonism until February 1835. Even though no quorum existed, the term “apostles” was used and many individuals were identified as “apostles.” The term meant someone sent with a message from God. The term was used to identify all the missionaries sent to preach the Book of Mormon and restoration.

The revelations given through Joseph Smith specifically identified the following men as “apostles” in the following sections and dates:

Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, D&C 18:9 (June 1829)

Joseph Smith, D&C 20:2 and Oliver Cowdery, D&C 20:3 (April 1830)

Joseph Smith, D&C 21:1 and Oliver Cowdery 21:10 (April 1830)

Sidney Rigdon, Parley Pratt and Leman Copley, D&C 49:1, 11 (March 1831)—sending them forth “like unto mine apostle of old, whose name was Peter”

A series of revelations likewise referred to “apostles” and included the following admonitions, instructions, and commandments to the following audiences:

3. November 1831 - D&C 1:14: *“the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people.”*

This **did not, indeed could not**, refer to a non-existent quorum of the twelve. At that time, it referred to any of the “disciples” he sent out as missionaries in the early church as explained in the same revelation, D&C 1:4–9.

4. March 1830 - D&C 19:8: refers to giving information to Martin Harris because *“it is meet unto you to know even as mine apostles.”*

Meaning that Martin Harris was entitled to have a mystery revealed to him.

5. The language in D&C 27:12 *is not part of the original revelation* given in August 1830. It was added apparently by Sidney Rigdon sometime between 1834 and 1835.

6. December 1830 - D&C 35:6: informs Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon that they could then give the gift of the Holy Ghost *“by the laying on of the hands, even as the apostles of old.”*

This is consistent with everywhere else in scripture which associates “laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost” with the status of “apostle.” See, e.g., D&C 20:38, 43; 3 Ne. 18:36–37; Moroni 2:2–3.

7. September 1831 - D&C 64:39: *“they who are not apostles and prophets shall be known.”*

Given to the elders of the church, many of whom were calling themselves “apostles” as is mentioned two months later in the November 1831 revelation (D&C 1:14, discussed first above). All the missionaries called themselves “apostles.” The revelation meant that the unworthy who were sent as missionaries will be exposed to be unworthy.

8. September 1832 - D&C 84:63: *“you are mine apostles”*

Given to the missionaries who were now returning, having been sent out the prior year. All the missionaries were identifying themselves as “apostles” and the Lord was acknowledging and confirming this was true.

9. June 1833 - D&C 95:4: *“For the preparation wherewith I design to prepare mine apostles to prune my vineyard for the last time,”*

Referring to the Kirtland Temple the Lord wanted built (and they had delayed commencing). He said it was necessary to prepare all these “apostles” who were serving missions.

10. February 1834 - D&C 102—minutes of a meeting written by Oliver Cowdery which identifies the “traveling high council composed of the twelve apostles.” This council would not come into existence for another year.

11. March 1835 - D&C 107:23: The twelve apostles are identified as “twelve traveling councilors”

These particular “apostles” were a traveling council with authority equal to the many other “apostles” in the church. The apostles in the first presidency, and in the seventy, and in the other standing high councils are all equal in authority to these traveling high council apostles.

In 1835, the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, were asked by Joseph Smith to choose the first twelve members of the newly announced quorum of the twelve. The witnesses made their choices at a meeting on February 14, 1835. The three witnesses were also the ones who ordained the twelve chosen men as apostles between February and April 1835. Ordination was accompanied by a charge given by Oliver Cowdery that explained their ordination was not complete until they qualified. In part it included:

It is necessary that you receive a testimony from heaven to yourselves; so that you can bear testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon, and that you have seen the face of God. That is more than the testimony of an angel. When the proper time arrives, you shall be able to bear this testimony to the world. When you bear testimony that you have seen God, this testimony God will never suffer to fall, but will bear you out; although many will not give heed, yet others will. You will therefore see the necessity of getting this testimony from heaven. Never cease striving until you have seen God face to face. Strengthen your faith; cast off your doubts, your sins, and all your unbelief; and nothing can prevent you from coming to God. Your ordination is not full and complete till God has laid

his hand upon you. We require as much to qualify us as did those who have gone before us; God is the same. If the Savior in former days laid his hands upon his disciples, why not in latter days? . . . The time is coming when you will be perfectly familiar with the things of God. . . . You have our best wishes, you have our most fervent prayers, that you may be able to bear this testimony, that you have seen the face of God. Therefore call upon him in faith in mighty prayer till you prevail, for it is your duty and your privilege to bear such a testimony for yourselves. (*DHC*, 2:192–98)

Oliver's charge was nothing new. Joseph Smith had already explained to the "School of the Prophets" that to be an "apostle" required a visit from Christ and the Father. Oliver was just repeating what everyone already knew.

So when the language of D&C 1 (*"the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people"*) is put into context, it really has nothing to do with a non-existent, traveling high council that was formed later. That later group displaced and overthrew church government, establishing itself as a controlling oligarchy that is non-scriptural, non-historical. Fortunately, we can know the Lord intends that "they who are not apostles and prophets shall be known." If we compared the claims being made now to the scriptures, I suppose that might be possible to accomplish even now.

FEBRUARY 22, 2015

Jos Smith Letter Sept 1833

Below I have copied and pasted a transcription from the *Joseph Smith Papers* publication of the LDS Church Historian Press. The

letter is written in September, 1833, while Joseph was working on a series of lectures which would eventually become scripture. They would not be published until 1835 as *Lectures on Faith*. But the thinking of Joseph in September 1833 shown in this letter to his uncle show how the analysis of the later published *Lectures on Faith* came from the mind of Joseph Smith. This version is taken from the website, but a printed version appears in *JS Papers, Documents* Vol. 3, pp. 303–308.

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Kirtland Mills, Ohio, Sept 26th, 1833

Respected Uncle Silas:

It is with feelings of deep interest for the welfare of mankind which fill my mind on the reflection that all were formed by the hand of Him who will call the same to give and an impartial account of all their works in that great day to which you and myself in common with them are bound, that I take up my pen and seat myself in an attitude to address a few though imperfect lines to you for your perusal.

I have no doubt but you will agree with me that men will be held accountable for the things they have, and not for the things they have not, or, that all the light and intelligence communicated to them from their Beneficent Creator, whether it is much or little, by the same they in justice will be judged; and that they are required to yield obedience to, and improve upon that, and that only, which is given; for man is not to live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.

Seeing that the Lord has never given them to understand by anything heretofore revealed that He had ceased to speak,

forever, to his creatures, when sought unto in a proper manner, why should it be thought a thing incredible that He should be pleased to speak again, in these last days for their salvation?

Perhaps you may be surprised at this assertion. That I should say for the salvation of his creatures in these last days, since we have already in our possession a vast volume of his word, which he has previously given

But you will admit that the word spoken to Noah was not sufficient for Abraham, or it was not required of him to leave the land of his nativity, and seek an inheritance in a strange country upon the word spoken to Noah, but, for himself he obtained promises from the hand of the Lord, and walked in that perfection that he was called the friend of God.

Isaac, the promised seed, was not required to rest his hope alone upon the promises made to his father Abraham, but was privileged with the assurance of his approbation in the sight of Heaven, by the direct voice of the Lord to him.

If one man can live upon the revelations to another might I not with propriety ask, why the necessity then, of the Lord's speaking to Isaac as he did, as is recorded in the twenty sixth chapter of Genesis? For the Lord there repeats, or rather, promises again to perform the oath which he had previously sworn to Abraham, and why this repetition to Isaac? Why was not the first promise as sure for Isaac as it was for Abraham? Was not Isaac Abraham's son, and could he not place implicit confidence in the veracity of his father as being a man of God?

Perhaps you may say that he was a very peculiar man, and different from men in these last days, consequently the Lord favored him with blessings, peculiar and different, as he was different from men in this age.

I admit that he was a peculiar man, and was not only peculiarly blessed, but greatly blessed.

But all the peculiarity that I can discover in the man, or all the difference between him and men in this age, is, that he was more holy and more perfect before God, and came to Him with a purer heart, and more faith than men in this day.

The same might be said on the subject of Jacob's history. Why was it that the Lord spake to him concerning the same promise, after He had made it once to Abraham, and renewed it to Isaac? Why could not Jacob rest contented upon the word spoken to his fathers? When the time of the promise drew nigh for the deliverance of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt, why was it necessary that the Lord should begin to speak to them?

The promise or word to Abraham, was, that his seed should serve in bondage, and be afflicted, four hundred years, and after that they should come out with great substance. Why did they not rely upon this promise, and when they had remained in Egypt, in bondage, four hundred years, come out, without waiting for further revelations, but act entirely upon the promise given to Abraham that they should come out?

Paul said to his Hebrew brethren, that God might more abundantly show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, He confirmed it by an oath. He also exhorts them, who, through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Notwithstanding, we (said Paul) have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us, which hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail, yet he was careful to press upon them the necessity of continuing on until they, as well as those who

then inherited the promises, might have the assurance of their salvation confirmed to them, by an oath from the mouth of Him who could not lie; for that seemed to be the example anciently, and Paul holds it out to his Hebrew brethren as an object attainable in his day.

And why not? I admit that by reading the Scriptures of truth the Saints, in the days of Paul, could learn, beyond the power of contradiction, that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had the promise of eternal life confirmed to them by an oath of the Lord, but that promise or oath was no assurance to them of their salvation; but they could by walking in the footsteps and continuing in the faith of their fathers, obtain, for themselves an oath for confirmation that they were meet to be partakers of the inheritance, with the Saints in light.

If the Saints in the days of the Apostles were privileged to take the Ancients for examples, and lay hold of the same promises, and attain to the same exalted privilege of knowing that their names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life and that they were sealed there as a perpetual memorial before the face of the Most High, will not the same faithfulness, the same purity of heart and the same Faith, bring the same assurance of eternal life, and that in the same manner, to the children of men now in this age of the world? I have no doubt but that the holy Prophets and Apostles and Saints in ancient days, were saved in the Kingdom of God; neither do I doubt but that they held converse and communion with Him while they were in the flesh, as Paul said to his Corinthian brethren that the Lord Jesus showed Himself to above five hundred Saints at one time after His resurrection. Job said that he knew that his Redeemer lived and that he should see Him in the flesh in the

latter days. I may believe that Enoch walked with God and by faith was translated. I may believe that Noah was a perfect man in his generation and also walked with God. I may believe that Abraham communed with God and conversed with angels. I may believe that Isaac obtained a renewal of the covenant made to Abraham by the direct voice of the Lord. I may believe that Jacob conversed with holy angels, and heard the voice of his Maker, that he wrestled with the angel until he prevailed and obtained the blessing. I may believe that Elijah was taken to Heaven in a chariot of fire with fiery horses. I may believe that the saints saw the Lord and conversed with Him face to face after His resurrection. I may believe that the Hebrew Church came to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the Living God the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. I may believe that they looked into eternity, and saw the Judge of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant. But will all this purchase an assurance for me, and waft me to the regions of eternal day and seat me down in the presence of the King of Kings with my garments spotless pure and white?

Or must I not rather obtain for myself by my own faith and diligence in keeping the commandments of the Lord, an assurance of salvation for myself? And have I not an equal privilege with the ancient Saints? And will not the Lord hear my prayers and listen to my cries as soon as he ever did to theirs, if I come to him in the manner they did? Or, is he a respecter of persons?

So I must close this subject for want of time, and I may with propriety say at the beginning

We would be glad to see you in Kirtland, we would be glad to see you embrace the New Covenant and be one with us, we sometimes think you are now one with us in heart.

I remain yours affectionately

Joseph Smith Jun

MARCH 2015

MARCH 2, 2015

Equinox

The earth's orbit is ecliptic and asymmetrical. Science prefers neat divisions and imposes symmetry.

This Vernal Equinox is set by the calendar for March 20th. But nature is going to put the sun in the spot crossing the plane of the celestial equator on March 18th.

There are a lot of these differences in nature, planets, star fields that varies from man's desire for even divisions. We have split the Zodiacal constellations into 30 degree increments, despite the fact that some constellations are quite a bit bigger and their star fields occupy much more than 30 degrees (Pisces, Virgo and Aquarius for example) and some are much less than 30 degrees (Aries, Gemini and Cancer for example).

The incongruities between the mathematical order we prefer in contrast to the "chaos" of nature means something if Genesis 1:14 is to be trusted. Despite mankind's desire to make everything fit neatly, God has decreed events to happen on His time-frame.

Star fields overlap. We think we know when one age ends and another begins because of the 30 degrees allocated to each of the twelve constellations. But in the heavens above, Leo invades Cancer,

and Pisces invades Aquarius. There is no neat division allowing anyone to say with certainty when God believes one age ends and another has begun. God may have one age begin before another ends for His reasons. Very rarely does man see this.

So you are left to decide if the coming Equinox is March 20th (based on neat divisions of the year) or March 18th (based on the movement of the sun overhead). And also to decide when Pisces ends and Aquarius begins — or if Aquarius has already begun. Many things begin and the world barely notices they are underway. Heaven testifies and men fail to notice.

MARCH 4, 2015

New Website Completed

The new website is finally completed and hopefully operational. It is located at denversnuffer.com

The new site will allow you to download mp3 versions of the talks. All 10 talks from the Forty Years in Mormonism are now there. Other recordings are not yet there, but will be added. You will be able to download but not stream in an effort to reduce bandwidth requirements and associated costs.

All the papers which have been made available through Scribd are now also downloadable from the new site as PDF versions.

The content of this blog has been imported. The old posts from this blog are searchable on the new website.

This blogger site will remain up, but I will not be adding new material here. Future posts will be made only on the new website.

I appreciate all of the help I have received from others that have made this new website possible.

MARCH 4, 2015

WELCOME!

Welcome to the new website. This has been months of effort and took more work than we ever expected. We had hoped to bring this online for Christmas last year, but missed that mark. Well, Merry Christmas anyway.

I sincerely thank all those who have made this possible and have donated their time to assist.

MARCH 6, 2015

Never Disaffected

I've said it a number of times and want to reiterate: I am not "disaffected" from the LDS Church. I was evicted, but hold no ill-will.

I am not a critic either. But since I have no membership interest in the LDS Church, my only objective is to understand the truth about Mormonism, its past and present, no matter the cost.

Loyalty to the truth does not endear me to anyone who has a cause to defend. Everyone accuses me of having an "agenda" when I disagree with their point of view. I'm not trying to curry favor with anyone other than God and only seek the truth—even painful truth.

MARCH 7, 2015

This Site's MP3s

The reason the MP3 recordings are 'zipped' is if we leave them as straight MP3 recordings then people can stream them, causing heavy bandwidth use. We zipped them to prevent streaming so that visitors do not wind up exceeding the bandwidth I am paying for, resulting in slow, or stopped interaction on the website. However,

there may be other ways we can go around this issue and we are investigating alternatives.

I appreciate suggestions. Right now the website has been months in creating, and diverted attention that I now want to give to finishing a manuscript so it can be in print. I will add content here, but I am spending time on another project that will reduce the rate at which improvements and additions will happen here.

Also, there was a “warning” for the website which some ISPs put up when connecting through their server. This is likely due to the fact that denversnuffer.com was a parked site while being developed, and could not be accessed. Some ISPs automatically flag a site like that, and the issue should be resolved shortly after this site went live.

from the desk of
Denver Snuffer

VOLUME 7

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Denver Snuffer

VOLUME 7

MARCH 12, 2015—MAY 19, 2017

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

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CHAPTER 1

It's Time to Remember

MARCH 12, 2015

New Book

Work on a new book is taking a great deal of my time. It is the most labor intensive book I've written. Below is a draft of the Preface to the book (which is likely to be changed before it is finalized), but which explains why so much time is being required. The "footnotes" appear as endnotes below:



Preface:

In 1832 the Lord posed this question: "For what doeth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given him, neither in him who is the giver of the gift."¹ From the moment Joseph Smith died those who believed he was a prophet began to lose memory of what God revealed through him. Recently the pace of forgetting is accelerating.

This book begins discussing Joseph Smith's 1838 history, followed by the topics of faith, repentance, covenants, priesthood,

¹ D&C 88:33.

Zion, Christ, King Benjamin's example, prayer, coming to Christ, marriage, family, the cultural and legal forces that have eroded the institutional church, and concludes with a discussion of how to preserve the religion. Our obligation to respect Joseph's revelations is very clear from the Lord's declaration, "no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses."² Upon his death, the church wanted a replacement strong figure. When Joseph was unavailable, an imitation served.

In the initial decision made August 8, 1844 the quorum of the twelve were voted to lead. By December 1847 Brigham Young no longer wanted to share power with eleven others, and against Wilford Woodruff's recommendation and the active opposition of John Taylor and Parley Pratt, Young successfully won a vote at Winter Quarters making him the church's second president.³ From Young till David O. McKay in the 1950's, when the word-title "the Prophet" was used it still meant only Joseph Smith. But rhetoric matters, and the word-title began to be used to first secure acquiescence, then to compel compliance by LDS Church leaders.

Elevating the church's presidents to claim they too, could communicate "commandments and revelations... even as Moses" began the process of accelerating forgetfulness⁴ of Joseph's words. He became less important as successors claimed equality. Who cannot see the logic in preferring a "living" prophet to a deceased

2 D&C 28:2. The revelation allows for the possibility for someone else to be later appointed "in his stead" (28:7). It would be through Joseph, however, the power was given "to appoint another in his stead" (D&C 43:4). That appointment came in January 1841 when Hyrum Smith was appointed (D&C 124:91-96). Hyrum, however, was slain moments before Joseph, and therefore no one else has been appointed to amend, supplement, disregard, alter or reject commandments and revelations given through Joseph Smith.

3 Technically he was the third, but no one counts Hyrum Smith despite his actual appointment and service.

4 Forgetting includes re-interpreting the language by divorcing it from context, supplying new meaning not originally intended, and improperly using Joseph to vindicate later improper innovations.

one? Ignoring Joseph means forgetting. Through forgetfulness we have refused the gift God offered. Our first obligation now is to remember. Until we remember what was given before, there is no reason for God to give more.

The primary repository of Joseph Smith's work has been The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. There are others, of course, who retained valuable parts of Joseph's work. Emma Smith kept the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, something Joseph explained was necessary for the church to have or it "would yet fall."⁵ The translation became the property of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. It was not until the 1980 edition of the LDS Bible that the Joseph Smith Translation was first used by the LDS Church, but only in footnotes and an appendix.

As soon as Joseph Smith died, a spirited competition developed to control both documents and access to information. As one writer described the conflict:

"The official History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints⁶ was published in book form under the direction of the First Presidency in 1902. The introductory assurance that 'no historical or doctrinal statement has been changed' is demonstrably wrong. Overshadowed by editorial censorship, hundreds of deletions, additions, and alterations, these seven volumes are not always reliable.... The nineteenth-century propaganda mill was so adroit that few outside Brigham Young's inner circle were aware of the behind-the-scenes alterations so seamlessly stitched into church history. Charles Wesley Wandell, an assistant church historian, was

5 The minutes of a conference on October 25, 1831 meeting tell of Joseph Smith's need for assistance while he worked on "the fulness of the Scriptures." This reference to scriptures is defined by the LDS Church Historian as "JS's Bible revision" (*JS Papers, Documents* Vol. 2: July 1831–January 1833, p. 85, footnote 76). The minutes include this statement by Joseph Smith: "God had often sealed up the heavens because of covetousness in the Church. Said the Lord would cut his work short in righteousness and except the church receive the fulness of the Scriptures that they would yet fall" (*Id.*, p. 85, as in original).

6 Often referred to as the "*Documentary History of the Church*" or the "DHC."

aghast at these emendations. Commenting on the many changes made in the historical work as it was being serialized in the *Deseret News*, Wandell noted in his diary: ‘I notice the interpolations because having been employed in the Historian’s office at Nauvoo by Doctor Richards, and employed, too, in 1845, in compiling this very autobiography, I know that after Joseph’s death his memoir was ‘doctored’ to suit the new order of things, and this, too, by the direct order of Brigham Young to Doctor Richards and systematically by Richards.’” The Quorum of the Twelve, under Brigham Young’s leadership, began altering the historical record shortly after Smith’s death. Contrary to the introduction’s claim, Smith did not author the *History of the Church*. At the time of his 1844 death, the narrative had been written up to 5 August 1838.”⁷

Today the challenge is two-fold: First, finding the truth through the deliberate efforts to conceal and modify the record. Second, once found, whether we will accept in gratitude what God offered by repenting and returning to His path. We fail these tests when we ignore, oppose, dismiss, reject and allow our fear to control us. As Christ put it on the day of His resurrection: “O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.”⁸ Nothing has changed. Our challenge is identical to that faced by all believers since Adam.⁹

As a public act of remembrance I spent a year, beginning September 10, 2013 giving a series of ten lectures reiterating the faith’s foundation. These lectures ended 365 days later on September 9, 2014. The lectures marked 40 years as a faithful, believing Mormon.¹⁰ At the conclusion of 40 years of faithful membership

7 Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess*, Signature Books (Salt Lake City, 1994), p. 322.

8 Luke 24:25.

9 Satan’s original and continuing urging remains the same: “Believe it not” (Moses 5:13).

10 I learned I had been excommunicated from the LDS church because of a book I had written about

in the LDS Church, I was sent by the Lord¹¹ to preach the restoration so others would also remember.

This book was written using transcriptions of those lectures as a starting point to prepare this reference work on the restoration. This book is a separate project. The lectures were given entirely within the Mormon Corridor, and addressed only to the residents there. This is written for a different audience living outside the Mormon Corridor as a reference work on the foundation God provided through Joseph Smith.

The lecture transcripts are insufficient, both as a reference work and as something intended for a different audience. The talks were not written in advance, but given spontaneously using only a scripture citation outline. Therefore many redundancies and asides in the lectures needed to be eliminated to focus on the essential content in a readable book. Editorial refinement and many additional footnotes have been added to support and clarify core content. The recordings and transcriptions will always remain available and can stand on their own. This book is not a repetition of the lectures in a third format. It is more, and addresses all who are interested in the restoration through Joseph Smith. The lecture material has been expanded to include more about the various topics, while eliminating unimportant personal information. Time constraints for lectures do not exist for a book. Therefore additional explanations have been added. Asides, humorous recollections, and personal stories distract more than they contribute for this format. Therefore they have been eliminated to focus only on the restoration.

The order of the discussion has been changed where appropriate. Subject matter has been consolidated, moving some of the material

Mormon history as I was driving with my wife to Boise to give the first lecture. The excommunication and lecture were exactly 40 years to the day of my baptism.

11 The yearlong ministry was not my idea, nor the locations, or the subjects. I was sent by the Lord and told what to discuss. The talks were the first step addressed to the first audience.

originally delivered in one lecture into a chapter based on another lecture.

During the same year I wrote a series of blog posts about King Benjamin's sermon between the 4th lecture in Orem, Utah (Priesthood) and the 5th in Grand Junction, Colorado (Zion). Those posts have been added as the 5th chapter in this book.

Finally, a paper delivered at the 2014 Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium after the 9th lecture in St. George, Utah (Marriage) has also been edited and added as a chapter. With the addition of the King Benjamin and Sunstone materials, there are 12 chapters.

The restoration is not the property of an institution. Although dozens of churches claim the role of succeeding to Joseph Smith's 'true and living' church, the restoration belongs to us all. Whether you belong to some denomination claiming Joseph as a founder, or you are a traditional Christian, the things restored through Joseph Smith came from God as a gift to us all. Because of this, we all have the responsibility to remember and respect the inspired work of Joseph Smith.

The restoration is God's call to action and offer to renew His direct contact with mankind. The response during Joseph's day was less than adequate. The restoration was founded on revelation, but when Joseph and Hyrum were martyred no one suggested revelation could solve the succession crisis. Instead the crowd in Nauvoo voted, the quorum of the twelve received the majority of the votes, and the most successful version of the restoration, LDS Mormonism,¹² has perpetuated itself by voting to install leadership continuously ever since.

¹² Meaning The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints headquartered in Salt Lake City. They are referred to throughout this book as "LDS Mormonism."

LDS Mormonism leadership have increasingly ignored and replaced the commandments and revelations given through Joseph with a new model in which church leaders claim the right to issue commandments and direction, followers fall in line, and the various denominations morph into increasingly altered forms varying from the original. Gordon B. Hinckley institutionalized a public relations oriented management style for LDS Mormonism. The opinion polling and focus group testing for decisions and campaigns has increasingly taken hold until now, LDS Mormonism is changing at a stunning pace reflecting the shifting opinions of the society around it. The LDS Mormon tradition now repudiates its history, curtails its curriculum, and discards essential elements of its earlier belief system to be more acceptable to others.

If the restoration is to have any chance to be remembered, then the time to do so has come. If we do not soon awaken and arise there will be far less chance to keep ahold of the restoration with each passing decade. The potential of Mormonism has never been realized. Until the restoration is remembered, it cannot continue to its completion.

This work is more than a tribute to the Mormon faith. It is an effort to restate the religion and recover its original potential. The destiny of the Mormon religion has become imperiled by neglect, deliberate alteration, and increasing forgetfulness. Mormonism was never intended to merely be another Christian denomination. Instead it is destined to reunite the all mankind into one great whole. Truth is Mormonism. All truth, wherever located and in whatever form it is presently practiced, belongs to the Mormon religion.¹³

¹³ "One of the grand fundamental principles of Mormonism is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may" *Discourses of Joseph Smith*, p. 199, Kindle Book, (Deseret Book, Salt Lake City, 2009).

Mormonism requires study and contemplation. Social change, educational disintegration, and the lack of critical thinking have made modern Mormonism a shallow relic unworthy of the original. Across the board, society has surrendered to the “sound-bite mentality” in which quick and quotable phrases substitute for deep understanding. The restoration cannot be understood that way. It requires contemplation, thought and study.

I was converted to the Mormon faith through The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For forty years I belonged to that church and served in it faithfully. The day I drove to Boise, Idaho to give the first lecture in the Forty Years in Mormonism series, I learned I was excommunicated. My stake president called as my wife and I were driving to Boise and we heard the sad news together.

I hold no animosity toward the LDS Church. Instead I am grateful to it for introducing me to Joseph Smith and Mormonism, which remains my religion, though now I practice it independent of institutional control.

There are many churches claiming Joseph Smith as their founder. None of them adequately practice the original faith. This book is written to persuade all to believe in the restoration, and remind all who already believe Joseph Smith was a prophet and accept the Book of Mormon as scripture, of the original greatness this revolutionary religion. Mormonism should once again become revolutionary.

It is time for the Mormon faith to begin a new phase. One in which all are equal before God, and believers are free once again to worship Him according to the dictates of their own conscience. Priesthood should not rule over any man, but should serve. “No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood.” In the LDS version of Mormonism, that limitation

has been reversed. LDS Mormonism today has been reduced to nothing other than “priesthood”¹⁴ dominion and control through the “correlation” process. It is unscriptural, indeed anti-scriptural.

Mormonism in its purest form can only attempt to persuade you, gently, to believe its precepts. This book will attempt to persuade you to believe once again in a dynamic, truth-filled, confident and powerful religion. Mormonism should free your soul, and reunite you with heaven itself.

In this book, unlike all those I previously wrote, there are many scriptures only cited in footnotes, and the full text is not included. This deliberate departure from my earlier books is because the LDS church has deemphasized the scriptures in their curriculum.¹⁵ I feel compelled to invite readers to use their scriptures to check scripture references in this book. Hopefully the footnotes will inspire you to review all of the verses cited.

Mormonism must become alive again. It belongs to all of us. We should all believe in the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith’s status as a prophet sent by God, and become willing to approach God directly. In the final analysis, the entire restoration is nothing more than a modern affirmation of the New Testament promise found in James 1:5.

MARCH 17, 2015

Recorder

I do not think I have any right to determine or appoint a recorder. There have been three different people who have asked me about being the central recorder. I have told all of them the same thing.

¹⁴ I put the word “priesthood” in quotes because it is the LDS Church’s claim, and therefore I use their word. However, as this book will clarify, the claim is not the reality.

¹⁵ See, Peggy Fletcher Stack, “New Mormon Curriculum Divides Scholars”, *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 28, 2014.

It would be fine for them to proceed. I think they may all have some of the names and do not know if they have been consolidated.

There have been enough baptisms that names should be compiled, and the need is great enough there should be a recorder elected. The elected recorder must have the common consent of those involved, and no one has the right to appoint someone to the position.

Because of some recent developments I want to nominate Keith Henderson to be the recorder. These developments include:

Disciplinary actions have taken place or are threatened because of re-baptisms of active LDS Church members. Therefore, the names should be kept confidential to prevent this. Keith Henderson is a man whose discretion I trust.

Keith Henderson has been re-baptized and excommunicated. There is no pressure that can be leveled by the LDS Church against him that would either motivate him or make him fear.

Keith Henderson is willing and has time to do the work.

He has been active with others in fellowship meetings, has baptized a significant number of people, and has shown his love of others and of this work.

I leave it to all those involved to make the final determination by your common consent, but nominate Keith Henderson for your consideration.

MARCH 18, 2015

Recorder Voting

I received an email that made this observation and suggestion:

Your blog is the only site that nearly all who are taking part in this resurgent restoration have in common. There are at least 4 forums, 2 Facebook groups, and two chat groups, and an unknown number of ‘gatherings’ where your readership communicate. We have no central place to vote. There are many persons, as you know, who don’t participate in any forum or group. Your nomination of Keith, therefore, has unbalanced influence. Is that what you want?

If you genuinely want to nominate Keith Henderson as one voice among many and allow others the real opportunity to do the same with equal weight as your own nomination, then you need to use your blog in some way to allow others the opportunity to voice their own nominations and provide a means to tally votes. That responsibility to tally votes could go to any number of people, but contact info for such a person would need to be posted on your blog, otherwise it’s just a shouting match where timid voices aren’t heard.

I suggest nominations go to Ken Jensen’s email. —kenjensen.insurance@gmail.com.

He’s willing. If you like you could post this:

For any wishing to nominate another recorder, contact Ken Jensen at kenjensen.insurance@gmail.com. He will take nominations and tally votes.

MARCH 22, 2015

New Talk on Plural Marriage

Today I gave a talk in my home to a small group on the subject of plural marriage, focusing on Joseph Smith alone. The talk was recorded digitally and is available as a downloadable MP3 on the “Papers and Lectures” tab on this site for anyone interested to hear.

MARCH 23, 2015

Another Recorder Email

I got the following request by email:

Although Ken is capable of receiving inbound information, he has no vehicle for disseminating information on who has been nominated, your blog remains the only way to logistically get information "out" as earlier pointed out.

Can you please post that Jonny Durfee has been nominated. I am not sure if any more information matters but if you like further information

Jonny is:

willing

able

has time

able to maintain confidence

rebaptized

sustained

excommunicated

active in fellowshipping.

MARCH 23, 2015

Records

We do not yet have a temple in which to do actual work for the dead which would be acceptable to God. However, the principles regarding the living are the same, and therefore Joseph's instructions about the dead can be applied equally among the living regarding ordinances for the living:

D&C 128:2–9:

That is, it was declared in my former letter that there should be a recorder, who should be eye-witness, and also to hear with his ears, that he might make a record of a truth before the Lord.

Now, in relation to this matter, it would be very difficult for one recorder to be present at all times, and to do all the business. To obviate this difficulty, there can be a recorder appointed in each ward of the city, who is well qualified for taking accurate minutes; and let him be very particular and precise in taking the whole proceedings, certifying in his record that he saw with his eyes, and heard with his ears, giving the date, and names, and so forth, and the history of the whole transaction; naming also some three individuals that are present, if there be any present, who can at any time when called upon certify to the same, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

Then, let there be a general recorder, to whom these other records can be handed, being attended with certificates over their own signatures, certifying that the record they have made is true. Then the general church recorder can enter the record on the general church book, with the certificates and all the attending witnesses, with his own statement that he verily believes the above statement and records to be true, from his knowledge of the general character and appointment of those men by the church. And when this is done on the general church book, the record shall be just as holy, and shall answer the ordinance just the same as if he had seen with his eyes and heard with his ears, and made a record of the same on the general church book.

You may think this order of things to be very particular; but let me tell you that it is only to answer the will of God, by conforming

to the ordinance and preparation that the Lord ordained and prepared before the foundation of the world, for the salvation of the dead who should die without a knowledge of the gospel.

And further, I want you to remember that John the Revelator was contemplating this very subject in relation to the dead, when he declared, as you will find recorded in Revelation 20:12—And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

You will discover in this quotation that the books were opened; and another book was opened, which was the book of life; but the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works; consequently, the books spoken of must be the books which contained the record of their works, and refer to the records which are kept on the earth. And the book which was the book of life is the record which is kept in heaven; the principle agreeing precisely with the doctrine which is commanded you in the revelation contained in the letter which I wrote to you previous to my leaving my place—that in all your recordings it may be recorded in heaven.

Now, the nature of this ordinance consists in the power of the priesthood, by the revelation of Jesus Christ, wherein it is granted that whatsoever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Or, in other words, taking a different view of the translation, whatsoever you record on earth shall be recorded in heaven, and whatsoever you do not record on earth shall not be recorded in heaven; for out of the books shall your dead be judged, according to their own works,

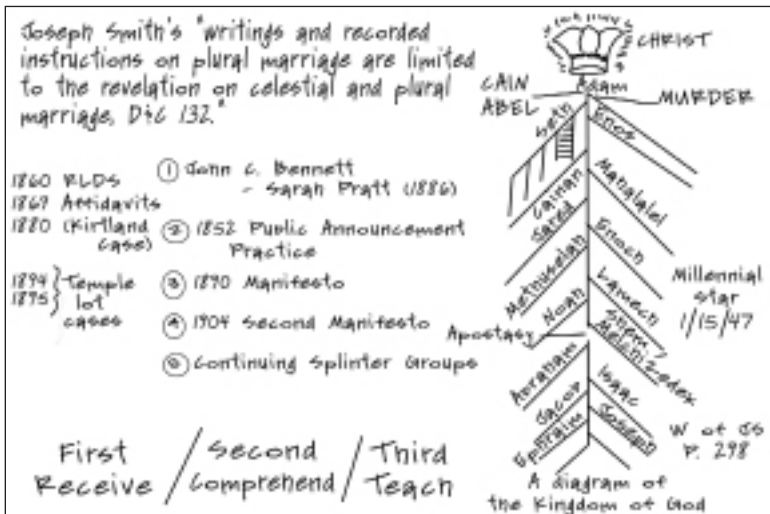
whether they themselves have attended to the ordinances in their own propria persona, or by the means of their own agents, according to the ordinance which God has prepared for their salvation from before the foundation of the world, according to the records which they have kept concerning their dead.

It may seem to some to be a very bold doctrine that we talk of—a power which records or binds on earth and binds in heaven. Nevertheless, in all ages of the world, whenever the Lord has given a dispensation of the priesthood to any man by actual revelation, or any set of men, this power has always been given. Hence, whatsoever those men did in authority, in the name of the Lord, and did it truly and faithfully, and kept a proper and faithful record of the same, it became a law on earth and in heaven, and could not be annulled, according to the decrees of the great Jehovah. This is a faithful saying. Who can hear it?

MARCH 23, 2015

Board Illustration from Plural Marriage

This was on the board while I gave the talk on Plural Marriage.



When I referred to the diagram from the Millennial Star I was referring to the right side of the diagram. If you click on the board picture, it should enlarge.

MARCH 25, 2015

Ancient Gospel

The original Gospel taught from Adam down to Enoch has not been recovered. Joseph Smith was working backward in restoring the earliest teaching, scripture, covenants and ordinances as part of his brief ministry. That ended abruptly with his death.

The future of the Gospel will return us to the original body of information, covenants and ordinances which were revealed in the beginning to the first fathers, who are now resurrected, and in heaven as a result of their obedience to the covenants and ordinances of God.

This cannot be judged until it is understood. It cannot be understood until it has been returned. There was such haste and foolishness in Joseph's day, it hindered God's work. Then fear of what Joseph was doing made even those closest to him wonder if he was "fallen" or egomaniacal and untrustworthy. The ignorance and superstition of his contemporaries were great obstacles. Aspiring men wanted to further their ambitions without comprehending what was really involved with God's plan for mankind.

The Gospel requires virtue and righteousness. No one can please God with a heart that is not contrite and broken, willing to receive or "suffer" everything God will require of them.

We are nowhere near Zion and only a small fraction of what needs to be recovered has been given. Unless this generation is patient enough to allow God to do His "strange act," and humble

enough to support what He provides as He provides it, another future generation will need to accomplish Zion. The “jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among” us are no different than what destroyed all hope for Zion in Joseph’s time (D&C 101:6).

Why want what is not understood? How can we judge the Gospel taught directly by God to Adam and renewed by God with Enoch face-to-face when it has not been shown unto us? It is as if the only motivation of men is ambition and envy, without stopping to consider how great a price is demanded by God as a sacrifice before anything can be gained. Lectures on Faith really is an accurate description of the burden required for our development to become faithful.

In God’s plan there are provisions made for everyone. Every soul in every state of development will be given what a loving and kind God has made possible. It is vast enough to accommodate the development of each person who has lived in this estate, regardless of the time, location or opportunities they had while here. It is far greater, and more thorough than what we can see.

CHAPTER 2

Circumscribed

MARCH 26, 2015

A Great Whole

It is impossible to re-establish the earliest form of the Gospel of Christ with its associated teachings, rites, ordinances, covenants and organization if we insist it fit into our current prejudices. We think so many things are necessary that are not, and we think many necessary things cannot possibly be required.

In the beginning, the Gospel was disseminated through a family. A church was added later. The church was an imitation of the family of Abraham. Abraham-Isaac-Jacob imitated by First Presidency. Twelve sons of Jacob imitated by the Twelve Apostles. Family of Israel entering Egypt (Exo. 1:5) imitated by the Seventy. Church is an imitation, not the real thing.

We think the “priesthood” must be organized into quorums and groups with presiding authorities, presidencies and then integrated into the church. But in the beginning there was a family, and the family had a father who was set at the head by covenant (Moses 6:3–27; D&C 107:40–55). The covenant required the father to teach and serve, with God’s approval and authority, in ways to bless his

family and have it accepted by God. He taught as a father, mirroring the Father above, filled with the Spirit of His Son, as it was in the beginning. The order of the family is heavenly. God rules through a family structure in eternity. He established a family on earth through Adam. For the first ten generations, it remained intact as a family organization. It eventually ended in apostasy. Then Abraham sought to reconnect to that original priesthood belonging to the fathers, and succeeded in reuniting with the original family line despite generations of apostasy (Abr. 1:2). Abraham's restoration lasted five generations before it was compromised. Moses was not able to bring any other than himself into the family (D&C 84:19–25). Moses was able to connect to himself Joshua, Caleb and his immediate family, but Israel did not benefit.

We think ordinances are required and everyone can receive them ad hoc and be saved. Heaven does not have unorganized crowds milling about, arriving fresh from receiving and accepting vicarious ordinances and claiming the right to be rewarded by entering Celestial glory. If anyone enters the kingdom of God, she will be there as part of God's family, not as a freelance believer. Those faithful who received the assurance before death that they would one day enjoy a glorious resurrection (D&C 138:14) were unable to leave the spirit world with Christ, but remained behind to minister to others there (D&C 138:30).

We think the temples are primarily a place for work for the dead. It is required mainly to organize the living into a family. The organization cannot happen outside a temple. That is the only place God will allow the restoration, rites, ordinances, and covenant to be ministered. Heaven and earth will reunite and angels will attend to many of the required things when an acceptable temple is built. We think a temple can be built following a pattern based on current

ordinances. There is no understanding of the ordinances necessary to organize the family of God again.

Trying to fit the original Gospel plan into our incomplete and corrupt model, and make it conform to our expectations will not work. There is not enough information to understand this Gospel, but that does not stop people from complaining and jarring one another with foolish reactions.

Hopefully people will realize there is something now moving forward which will become God's family on earth. Something far greater than the apostate, fallen and corrupt systems of this world. But ambitious men and women want to mirror the corruption and power of earthly organizations with which they are familiar. Or they fear what is coming will be likewise corrupt and degrading of those who participate. Our fears and experiences become obstacles to what God offers.

We know almost nothing at this point. Even all that came through Joseph is but a glimpse. We are not worthy of the full view (3 Ne. 26:9–11; Ether 4:4–7). The question is whether we will become meek and humble enough to endure giving it a hearing before we corrupt it with a flood of errors based on unbelief.

Recall Joseph Smith predicted that although a return to the law of Moses would never happen, the Gospel as practiced before Moses (among the fathers) would return:

Thus we behold the keys of this Priesthood consisted in obtaining the voice of Jehovah that He talked with him [Noah] in a familiar and friendly manner, that He continued to him the keys, the covenants, the power and the glory, with which He blessed Adam at the beginning; and the offering of sacrifice, which also shall be continued at the last time; for all the ordinances and duties that

ever have been required by the Priesthood, under the directions and commandments of the Almighty in any of the dispensations, shall all be had in the last dispensation, therefore all things had under the authority of the Priesthood at any former period, shall be had again, bringing to pass the restoration spoken of by the mouth of all the Holy Prophets; then shall the sons of Levi offer an acceptable offering to the Lord....

It will be necessary here to make a few observations on the doctrine set forth in the above quotation, and it is generally supposed that sacrifice was entirely done away when the Great Sacrifice [i.e.,] the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus was offered up, and that there will be no necessity for the ordinance of sacrifice in future; but those who assert this are certainly not acquainted with the duties, privileges and authority of the Priesthood, or with the Prophets.

The offering of sacrifice has ever been connected and forms a part of the duties of the Priesthood. It began with the Priesthood, and will be continued until after the coming of Christ, from generation to generation. We frequently have mention made of the offering of sacrifice by the servants of the Most High in ancient days, prior to the law of Moses; which ordinances will be continued when the Priesthood is restored with all its authority, power and blessings...

These sacrifices, as well as every ordinance belonging to the Priesthood, will, when the Temple of the Lord shall be built, and the sons of Levi be purified, be fully restored and attended to in all their powers, ramifications, and blessings. This ever did and ever will exist when the powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood are sufficiently manifest; else how can the restitution of all things spoken of by the Holy Prophets be brought to pass? It is not to be understood that the law of Moses will be established again with

all its rites and variety of ceremonies; this has never been spoken of by the prophets; but those things which existed prior to Moses' day, namely, sacrifice, will be continued.

It may be asked by some, what necessity for sacrifice, since the Great Sacrifice was offered? In answer to which, if repentance, baptism, and faith existed prior to the days of Christ, what necessity for them since that time? The Priesthood has descended in a regular line from father to son, through their succeeding generations. (October 5, 1840; DHC 4:207–212; TPJS pp. 172–173)

Joseph only hinted at some of the remaining doctrines of the restoration that will be required to walk back to the beginning. We hardly yet comprehend the Lord's plans. But to fulfill all that has been foretold, we or some future generation will need to build a temple acceptable to God in the boundary of the everlasting mountains, which will tremble at their presence, where all scattered Israel can return to receive an inheritance at the hands of Ephraim (D&C 133:31–32). The promised inheritance can only be received in a temple. It will include uses, layout, design and elements which will themselves testify of God and His Gospel in a way we do not presently have here on earth.

You can choose how much to receive or reject. You can walk away from the gathering by Christ—a hen gathering her chicks. This is not the first generation that has done that. But God has promised that some generation will receive what He offers, allow themselves to be gathered, and receive an inheritance as a part of His Covenant with the Fathers.

You may think this can be done in isolation as a faithful individual, but Zion will not be built by solitary souls. Nor will the required covenant be offered to an isolated individual. This is about God's FAMILY. This is why the jarring and contention, envying

and strife of Joseph's time was so toxic. Heaven weeps at us when it might instead rejoice over us.

MARCH 27, 2015

A Clarifying Question

I got this email asking for clarifications:

Can you clarify these statements?

Here Denver seems to be saying we can obtain salvation now.

"You're hedging up the way of your own salvation, and of the salvation of others when you say no one has the privilege in our day yet, to lay hold on salvation. You're hedging up the way, you are damning yourself, and you are damning those who will listen to you when you say, people in our time are not yet authorized to exercise faith in God unto salvation because you are authorized. I have done so. I have spoken with Him as a man speaks to another. He speaks in plain humility, reasoning as one man with another. He will reason with you. (40 Years, Faith).

Here he seems to be saying that we can come into the presence of the Lord and by so doing, obtain covenants.

But in terms of someone whom the Lord has struck a bargain with and made a covenant at the moment we are looking at in 1829, that person was Joseph Smith. Our Lord is a Man of covenants. Our Lord enters into covenants on a regular basis. To know Him is to covenant with Him. And Joseph when section 5 was revealed had one. (40 Years, Be of Good Cheer, Be of Good Courage)

Sounds like priesthood must be obtained in a previous probation or it cannot be obtained here. If it cannot be obtained in this life unless it was had before, how is it ever had in the first place?

So here priesthood has its beginning before this world even was organized. There is a necessary link between those hallowed days and power here. No person has authority here unless it was first obtained there. (<http://denversnuffer.blogspot.com/2010/06/alma-133.html>)

Zion can come to individuals:

The Lord has been willing to bring individuals back into His presence on the same conditions throughout all time. Read again The Second Comforter if you do not remember what those conditions are. He is as willing to make you a citizen of Zion, member of the church of the Firstborn, and part of the general assembly today (D&C 76: 66–69) as in the future established Zion spoken of in the verses we have been reviewing. Many have done it in times past. Some have done it in our day. All are offered the same opportunity, but always on the same conditions. (<http://denversnuffer.blogspot.com/2010/07/3-nephi-21-25.html>)

Zion can't come to individuals:

You may think this can be done in isolation as a faithful individual, but Zion will not be built by solitary souls. Nor will the required covenant be offered to an isolated individual. This is about God's FAMILY. (<http://denversnuffer.com/2015/03/a-great-whole/>).

Response:

People are authorized to exercise faith, just as *Lectures on Faith* explain. That includes coming back to God's presence here and now. It likewise includes obtaining covenant status with God and

the promise of exaltation. All that is true. Many have done this in mortality. All who have done so depart this life firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection (D&C 138:14). But do not assume you have a correct picture in your head about what happens between the time of the promise (covenant) and when the day of your exaltation will arrive.

One statement by me or in scripture is not EVERYTHING. Never assume you can reduce it to one, simple picture when you are talking about the landscape of eternity, and endless lives.

(It amuses and frustrates my wife when people assume I have disclosed everything I think, understand or know about a subject when I give a two- or three-hour talk.)

Why did the apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration “look upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies to be a bondage?” (D&C 45:16–17) [Because going to the Spirit World means a lengthy tenure there, awaiting the resurrection.] Why did John the Beloved (who was among those on the Mount) then ask to “tarry until [Christ] comes in His glory?” (D&C 7:3). [Because he would rather be here working than in the Spirit World trying to bring people along there.] Why did three Nephites likewise ask that they not “taste of death; but [to] live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men?” (3 Ne. 28:6–8). [They had the same concern as John.] What were the other nine Nephite disciples really asking when they requested to “speedily come unto [Christ’s kingdom]” instead of either living here or waiting in the Spirit World? [They wanted to rise quickly from the dead and resume the journey as those who had arisen from the dead with Christ.]

These were all men who were in Christ’s presence and had the promise to be exalted. Yet they were either: 1) remaining here without death to minister, or 2) going to what they thought would

be “bondage” in the Spirit World to await their eventual resurrection, or 3) dying but then proceeding “speedily” [or immediately] into Christ’s kingdom.

Every one of them would be exalted. But that does not change the distance and paths which must be crossed between here in the flesh and rising to exaltation, or the potential choices that can be made.

Likewise, as a living mortal you can have an association with the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn (a priestly reference that requires you to understand about the “rights of the fathers”) here, now. If you do this you become one of those solitary souls who live as a stranger and sojourner on earth. Your association is with heaven, not with earth. But that does not fulfill the prophecies and covenants regarding Zion. You can have the same kind of life—but if it is *your* life alone if you live without bringing others with you. You will live without a city, a community, all things in common, no poor among that community, a temple, rites, and the completion of the restoration of all things. You may have a life worthy of Zion, but it will not be a City of Zion, the New Jerusalem. You can be a “citizen” but you will be a sojourner in exile here.

If you want to find out how you get priesthood in the “first place” ask God.

Please keep EVERYTHING in mind together. Do not think one isolated statement or paragraph explains EVERYTHING. Further, do not think everything has yet been revealed that needs to be revealed. Thus far I am only taking the things already before us in scripture and weaving them together to persuade some few to believe the restoration can continue. When the time comes, a great deal more can be taught if the restoration does continue.

MARCH 28, 2015

Button, Button: Who's Got the Button?

Now I have email questions about priesthood. Before setting this aside for more important things, let me add only:

Priesthood has never been confined to one individual. Remember that from Adam to Enoch there were seven living generations with many unnamed priests. Every righteous son of the family of Adam held the priesthood. He led a priestly family. But the names of these other righteous sons have not been fully preserved. Nevertheless, they were “the residue of his posterity who were righteous” (D&C 107:53).

The sons of Adam who **were** named were descended in a direct line from Adam. All of those sons held the same Patriarchal Priesthood, at the same time as their father Adam. There was not a “single individual” who held priesthood. But in each generation, from Adam until Noah, there was one who stood at the head of that generation. This direct line were the Patriarchal heirs, and stood in the position of the Patriarch for that generation. Only one on earth occupies that role for each generation, unless there is an apostasy. In that case, the one would default back (a completely different topic not important to us nor worthy of causing a lot of speculation if I were to give only a brief explanation).

The first seven generations of Patriarchs all held exactly the same priesthood and lived concurrently. Gentiles, in their pride, always want to be “top-dog.” They are unwilling to be saved in the Kingdom of God unless they, like Lucifer, can be at the top of the sides of the north sitting on the Throne of God (Isa. 14:13). Fools all. No comprehension of how great a price will be required

to ascend there. Utterly forgetting that you must be “exactly” like the “prototype of the saved man” to be there (*Lecture Seventh*, ¶9).

Try to keep a few things in mind about priesthood:

There are three different degrees of priesthood. Two of those were in the church in 1835 (D&C 107:1). Discussed in the Orem talk. (Transcript and audio links on the website)

Although there are different degrees of priesthood, the Patriarchs all held the same at the same time. Check who did the ordaining in the scriptures (D&C 107:41–53), and you will discover that it is always the oldest living (most often Adam during the Patriarchal era) because he stood at the head.

Priesthood can be given, held, and spread widely even though only one will stand at the head of a generation. It is also possible to have generations who have priesthood without a return of the original order held by the Patriarchs. Priesthood and the organization of God’s family on earth are NOT the same thing. Throughout history the absence of this order is the rule. The return of this order is the exception.

As things wind down, there will need to be a return to the beginning. The term “Adam-ondi-Ahman” is a description of an event, not merely a name of a location. When the event happened the first time, the event was used to identify the place. When the final ceremony occurs, it will be “Adam-ondi-Ahman,” no matter what spot in the mountains it is located. It will require a living heir with the same rights as the original Patriarchs, so the return of governance can authorize Christ to return as the “King of kings” and “Lord of lords” (Rev. 19:16).

These things are explained in scripture. Study them. If you can’t figure it out, then PRAY AND ASK GOD, who gives to all men liberally and does not upbraid. He will manifest the truth of it unto you

by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost you may know the truth of all things. But ask in faith, for if you waiver you will be tossed to and fro like the waves of the sea.

Ordination can and does happen in the Spirit World (D&C 138:30—this is why it is unnecessary to “ordain” on behalf of the dead; because they can be ordained in the afterlife).

For the most part this is terribly unimportant for now. It is something I mentioned in passing *ONLY* for one purpose: to suggest that Joseph Smith had a much bigger concern than just getting women into bed when he rolled out the idea of sealing, eternal families, exaltation and the eternity of the marriage covenant (all part of Section 132). A tiny, tiny part of that picture involved the subject that subsequently fixated Mormonism. Brigham Young wanted to breed, and wanted to establish it as a “fundamental part of his religion” so it would pass the legal challenge under the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Joseph Smith was not Brigham Young. Brigham Young did not comprehend the things Joseph comprehended. It is time to throw away the detour Brigham Young imposed on Mormonism and to search into and reclaim what began with Joseph. You cannot get into heaven without sealing, eternal families, exaltation through the eternity of the marriage covenant. Satan has controlled Mormonism through this distraction and caused incalculable harm to the work God began with Joseph Smith. Plural marriage is hell.

It is a distraction to be fixated on the issue of how to get what the Patriarchs had. We are like Abraham, our “fathers, having turned from their righteousness, and from the holy commandments which the Lord their God had given unto them,” (Abr. 1:5) and are now left to go back across the apostate generations separating us, like him, from the Patriarchs. We must become “one who possessed

great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge” (Abr. 1:2). He had to first search for the truth. THAT is our big challenge. Until it is accomplished we needn't concern ourselves with how to obtain the ordination from the last holder (Melchizedek in Abraham's day D&C 84:14). Melchizedek had tarried to hand off the Patriarch's status to a descendant, and when Abraham finally returned to claim the right, Melchizedek conferred it and then departed. Do not worry about how God plans to accomplish this. Just know He will.

Before any of this is important a great deal more pressing challenges must be addressed. In fact, the more fully it is explained, the more likely it is that pretenders will begin to make false claims to hold something God has not given and will not give to the vain, ambitious, aspiring, and proud gentiles who think themselves chosen by Him. God requires a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Love one another and serve one another and leave God's work for His hand to accomplish.

We need to repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and learn to become “one” with each other through the Doctrine of Christ. That is a formidable challenge. It will require patience and kindness towards one another. Community participants are much abused, hold many legitimate complaints and are fearful that abuse will continue in yet another gathering of believers. We need to be patient and loving to one another. We need to give each other the opportunity to come out from the corrupt, manipulative and compulsive congregations we have fled or been cast from.

Learn from our errors. Give each other the kindness and respect of allowing legitimate fears gained by sad experience to be overcome. The return and reconstruction of God's family will not be necessary unless we are worthy of it. Leave it for God to

decide when we have done enough to justify Him moving His hand again to restore that which was lost. What need is there for a family head if there is no family to organize? When He does that, it will be through “a descendant of Jesse, as well as of Joseph, unto whom rightly belongs the priesthood, and the keys of the kingdom, for an ensign, and for the gathering of my people in the last days” (D&C 113:6). There will be people “whom God should call in the last days, who should hold the power of priesthood to bring again Zion, and the redemption of Israel, and to put on her strength is to put on the authority of the priesthood, which she, Zion, has a right to by lineage; also to return to that power which she had lost” (D&C 113:8). God will send one who “holds the scepter of power in his hand, clothed with light for a covering, whose mouth shall utter words, eternal words; while his bowels shall be a fountain of truth, to set in order the house of God, and to arrange by lot the inheritances of the saints whose names are found, and the names of their fathers, and of their children, enrolled in the book of the law of God” (D&C 85:7). Become that person. Work on your own faith, spirit and challenges and allow God to fulfill His promises in His own due time through His way.

It will happen. But you may be left without a part of that inheritance if you neglect the duties now devolving on you. Stop running about to hear every new thing offered by those willing to fill your itching ears. Stop listening to toxic flattery about your greatness. Stop listening to fables, conjecture, half-truths, vanity, foolishness and the philosophies of men mingled with scripture. We are a failure until we see Zion. And we are a long, long way short of that mark.

APRIL 2015

APRIL 1, 2015

Impressed by These Two

In a recent post I suggested Keith Henderson be approved as the recorder, recognizing it would require common consent because no one has the right to appoint anyone. The name of Jon Durfee was then suggested as another possible recorder. I received an email proposing Ken Jensen take votes on-line, and I put that up on this website also.

In the aftermath of my suggestion a vote be taken, there were intemperate comments made about the process, and also about both of these men. From my distance I only observed with interest the reactions.

Both Jon Durfee and Keith Henderson have individually contacted me and offered to withdraw their names to end any further conflict. I have told them both in separate conversations that I would not encourage them to withdraw. I think a choice is good and they should see it through.

The fact that both of these men offered to withdraw because of the reactions from others has impressed me. We are fortunate to have both of these men. We cannot do better than what I have witnessed in each of them.

Both of them have paid a price for their faithfulness. Both of them have suffered because of unwanted attention. Both of them would rather serve and obey God than appease improper demands by their fellow-man. Both of them have every quality I would want, you should want, or God should expect in the recorder, and both have my trust and confidence.

Rather than keep this to myself, I thought while voting was still taking place I would make this comment. There are good men and women among us, and Jon and Keith are two of them.

APRIL 2, 2015

Plural Marriage Document

I have prepared a document based on the transcript of the talk on Plural Marriage. The document is footnoted, expanded and clarified and therefore does not exactly mirror the recording. It is available on this site under “Papers and Lectures” under the title: *Plural Marriage* (The link is at the top of the papers section).

APRIL 2, 2015

A Choice Seer

Joseph of Egypt was a prophet, seer and Patriarch. He was a remarkable and gifted prophet. God promised through him a last-days seer would be sent to the world. The promise was accomplished through Joseph Smith:

Joseph truly testified, saying: A seer [Joseph Smith] shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins. Yea, Joseph truly said: Thus saith the Lord unto me: A choice seer [Joseph Smith] will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins. And unto him will I give a commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins. And unto him will I give commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins, his brethren, which shall be of great worth unto them, even to the bringing of them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers. And I will give unto him a commandment that he shall

do none other work, save the work which I shall command him. And I will make him [Joseph Smith] great in mine eyes; for he shall do my work. And he shall be great like unto Moses, whom I have said I would raise up unto you, to deliver my people, O house of Israel.... But a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and unto him [Joseph Smith] will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins—and not to the bringing forth of my word only; saith the Lord, but to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them.... Behold, that seer will the Lord bless; and they that seek to destroy him [Joseph Smith] shall be confounded; for this promise, which I have obtained of the Lord, of the fruit of my loins, shall be fulfilled. Behold, I am sure of the fulfilling of this promise. (2 Ne. 3:6–14, emphasis added)

I reject the accusation Joseph Smith was ever a “fallen prophet.” He was promised by God, sent by God, commissioned, guided, directed, inspired and led by God. His life was foretold in prophecies almost as many centuries beforehand as Christ’s life was foretold. We diminish Joseph Smith and his ministry at the peril of being “confounded”—as the prophecy of ancient Joseph of Egypt promises.

Where does the prophecy God gave to Joseph of Egypt foretell the promised seer’s failure? Instead of failure it promises the seer “will the Lord bless” and the Lord will “make him great in mine eyes” and he would “be esteemed highly” among people of faith. God said to Joseph, “I am the Lord thy God, and will be with thee [Joseph] even unto the end of the world, and through all eternity” (D&C 132:49). Those who testify against him do not persuade me to disrespect him.

God blesses and visits those who take seriously the Book of Mormon, which we only have because of the latter-day seer, Joseph Smith.

Joseph was not without his faults. But they were acknowledged by Joseph publicly, condemned by God in revelations, and apparent in the history. For example, he lost the 116 pages, was reprimanded and lost possession of the plates, Urim and Thummim, and gift temporarily as a result. God rebuked Joseph: “behold, how oft you have transgressed the commandments and the laws of God, and have gone on in the persuasions of men. For, behold, you should not have feared man more than God” (D&C 3:6–7).

He admitted his foolishness (*JS-H* 1:28).

He failed in business with the Kirtland Anti-Banking Society in 1837, and had a pending bankruptcy when he died in 1844.

He was told by God he could not judge between the righteous and wicked (D&C 10:37). That would plague him throughout life, and lead him to foolishly trust John Bennett.

Joseph made other mistakes and had other failures. Weaknesses are nothing, for all men are subject to weakness. For our part, we should “take no advantage of [any man’s] weakness” (Ether 12:26). Weaknesses are unimportant to me because we are all imperfect (Ether 12:25–27). Joseph Smith was great in God’s eyes (2 Ne. 3:8) and therefore great in mine also.

APRIL 5, 2015

He is Risen

This is the holy day on which the Lord rose from the dead. He lives. I know because I have seen Him and He has ministered unto me.

Not everyone knows He has risen, yet believe it to be true. Those who believe witnesses, whether in scripture or living, “might also have eternal life if they continue faithful” (D&C46:14).

He will return again, descending from heaven (Acts 1:11). He “cometh not in the form of a woman, neither of a man traveling on the earth” (D&C 49:22) but now appears in glory.

He sits on the throne of the Father, and offers us that same throne if we overcome: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Rev. 3:20–21)

APRIL 6, 2015

Recorder Voting

The voting on the Recorder has concluded and Ken Jensen sent me an email confirming the outcome. His email is below:

According to the nominations and votes submitted to me at kenjensen.insurance@gmail.com, Keith Henderson is now the elected Central Recorder by the Common Consent of those Involved.

86% of the participants voted for Keith Henderson

10% voted for Jonny Durfee 4% were satisfied with either and gave their general consent to whoever is elected

Many of those who did vote for either Jonny or Keith also indicated their consent to whomever actually was elected.

I shared the google spreadsheet with you so you can see the details and pass along to the central recorder, if desired.

I know of a bunch of people who have been re-baptized, but did not actually send an email to vote/participate because they were likewise satisfied with whomever the group decided upon.

I can certify that the results & tallying of the votes and nominations is accurate and true according the best of my knowledge.

I asked Keith Henderson for his contact information and permission to post it here. He gave the permission and provided the following:

Email address is: keelhenderson42@gmail.com

You can post this phone number: 801-825-5822

Our mailing address is 1178N. 1500W. Clinton, Utah 84015

If you maintain records for any group, please forward the names of those baptized and the year of the baptism to him at the above contact locations.

APRIL 6, 2015

Hales Responds

Brian Hales has responded. His response misstates my position, teaching, testimony and message, but it is nevertheless his response. For those interested you can find it at:

(<https://josephsmithspolygamy.org/response-to-denver-snuffer/>)

His biggest error in the response is to cite as authoritative a number of sources I would question. Brigham Young's ability to ignore revelations of others does not contribute to whether the revelations of others *should* be ignored.

The sharp differences in views are useful. I leave it to the reader to sort out the truth from error.

APRIL 7, 2015

Truth Will Win

Whether we welcome or oppose it, the truth is going to win. Monuments and cultures erected on lies will weaken and fall to the dust. But truth has a strength that does not decay. Lies cannot defy it, greed cannot corrupt it, lust cannot tempt it, and wicked men cannot for long successfully imitate it.

The times of the gentiles is ending, and truth has begun to break forth; just as Christ explained to His disciples while living among them (and then repeated to Joseph in 1831):

And when the times of the Gentiles is come in, a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness, and it shall be the fulness of my gospel; But they receive it not; for they perceive not the light, and they turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men. And in that generation shall the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be men standing in that generation, that shall not pass until they see an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land. But my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die. (D&C 45:28–32)

When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering, O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? (Matt. 16:2–3)

The Lord described our day. But we live in it and do not see it right before our eyes.

APRIL 10, 2015

A Reminder

I want to reiterate what was said at the end of the ten lectures (as it has been edited for the forthcoming book). Below is an excerpt dealing with the problems I warned were coming:

There are so many potential mistakes we can make we ought to remember the early problems in Kirtland.

D&C 50:2–25 Behold, verily I say unto you, that there are many spirits which are false spirits, which have gone forth in the earth, deceiving the world. And also Satan hath sought to deceive you, that he might overthrow you. Behold, I, the Lord, have looked upon you, and have seen abominations in the church that profess my name. But blessed are they who are faithful and endure, whether in life or in death, for they shall inherit eternal life. But wo unto them that are deceivers and hypocrites, for, thus saith the Lord, I will bring them to judgment. Behold, verily I say unto you, there are hypocrites among you, who have deceived some, which has given the adversary power; but behold such shall be reclaimed.” [This is not referring to the hypocrites, because He will not reclaim them. But He will reclaim those who are deceived by the hypocrites.] “But the hypocrites shall be detected and shall be cut off, either in life or in death, even as I will; and wo unto them who are cut off from my church, for the same are overcome of the world. Wherefore, let every man beware lest he do that which is not in truth and righteousness before me. And now come, saith the Lord, by the Spirit, unto the elders of his church, and let us reason together, that ye may understand; Let us reason even as a man reasoneth one with another face to face. Now, when a man reasoneth he is understood of man, because he reasoneth as a man; even so will

I, the Lord, reason with you that you may understand. Wherefore, I the Lord ask you this question—unto what were ye ordained? To preach my gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth. And then received ye spirits which ye could not understand, and received them to be of God; and in this are ye justified? Behold ye shall answer this question yourselves; nevertheless, I will be merciful unto you; he that is weak among you hereafter shall be made strong. Verily I say unto you, he that is ordained of me and sent forth to preach the word of truth by the Comforter, in the Spirit of truth, doth he preach it by the Spirit of truth or some other way? And if it be by some other way it is not of God. And again, he that receiveth the word of truth, doth he receive it by the Spirit of truth or some other way? If it be some other way it is not of God. Therefore, why is it that ye cannot understand and know, that he that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth? Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together. And that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness. That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day. And again, verily I say unto you, and I say it that you may know the truth, that you may chase darkness from among you; He that is ordained of God and sent forth, the same is appointed to be the greatest, notwithstanding he is the least and the servant of all.”

This is how we should edify one another, how we should be preparing our children. This is what we should seek: truth, light, understanding, knowledge of the principles of truth by the power of the Holy Ghost.

False spirits will come among you. Proud and pretentious people will ask you to give them honor. Honor God instead. Do not let a personal revelation displace your attention from the scriptures. Our scriptures are sufficient for our day. I hope this new book demonstrates that. I have expounded the scriptures as Moroni did to Joseph, and as Christ did on the road to Emmaus the day of His resurrection. We must first remember and observe. Preserving the restoration requires us to be very familiar with the scriptures of the restoration. At present we should fear most our ignorance of them.

APRIL 12, 2015

What Would You Change?

Recently, I was asked, “What would you change in your writings if you had it all to do again?”

If I were writing *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil* today, I would write it differently. But I do not regret having written it in its present form, and will not go back and edit it to change the content. It is an accurate book for the moment in time it was written. It is important to preserve that moment in time.

When I wrote it, I was an active, faithful member of the LDS Church. The book was written inside that environment and represents a triumph of the faith. The triumph was achieved inside the institution. For that reason, the book continues to remind me, and every reader, that it is possible to devote yourself to Christ under challenging circumstances.

Nephi’s Isaiah is also a book I would not change, because it likewise demonstrates that an active, faithful LDS Church member

can awaken to the terrible circumstances of our plight. It is a key book. It shows a pattern: God passes information forbidden to be revealed as a new, original revelation, and leaves Nephi to the task of teaching by using earlier writings. Nephi used Isaiah, Zenos and Zenok to deliver new revelation using old, familiar scripture. It is a key to understanding Nephi; and a key to understanding a modern burden I carry.

Things are changing rapidly. The books I have written reflect changes underway. Circumstances changed affecting the content of later books. The changed conditions and changed response are chronicled in the series of books. It is important to leave them as they are, reflecting the different moments in time.

As things continue to change, what I write will reflect the events taking place. Nothing is static. Everything is in motion.

APRIL 14, 2015

Joseph's History

Joseph Smith wrote this counsel in a letter to the church in March 1834:

[T]he commandments of our Lord, we hope, are constantly revolving in your hearts, teaching you, not only his will in proclaiming his gospel, but his meekness and perfect walk before all, even in those times of severe persecutions and abuse which were heaped upon him by a wicked and adulterous generation. Remember, brethren, that he has called you unto holiness; and need we say, to be like him in purity? How wise; how holy; how chaste, and how perfect, then, you ought to conduct yourself in his sight; remember too, that his eyes are continually upon you. (*JS Papers, Documents*, Vol. 3, p. 474)

This is consistent with his many other letters and public sermons. He denounced sexual impurity and promoted chastity in word, deed and thought.

In that same letter he wrote:

[T]hough we cannot claim these promises which were made to the ancients ...we can approach the Father in the name of Christ as they approached him, and for ourselves obtain the same promises. These promises, when obtained, if ever by us, will not be because Peter, John and the other apostles, with the churches at Sardis, Purgamos, Philadelphia, and elsewhere, walked in the fear of God and had power and faith to prevail and obtain them; but it will be because *we, ourselves*, have faith and approach him in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, even as they did; and when these promises are obtained, they will be promises directly to us, or they will do us no good; communicated for *our* benefit; being our own property, (through the gift of God,) earned by our own diligence in keeping his commandments, and walking uprightly before him. (*Id.*, pp. 483–484, italics in original)

This explanation is consistent with *Lectures on Faith*. He urged us, like the ancients, to all approach God. He believed the religion of antiquity could be lived again by us.

In 1839, the Lord predicted the following regarding Joseph: “fools shall have [him] in derision, and hell shall rage against [him]; While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under [his] hand” (D&C 122:1–2).

More than two centuries after his birth, he remains controversial and misunderstood. Even those who acknowledge him to be a

prophet fail to understand the man. His legacy was entrusted to a group of people in Nauvoo. In his last general conference, April 1844 he said this about the members in Nauvoo:

You don't know me; you never knew my heart. No man knows my history. I cannot tell it: I shall never undertake it. I don't blame any one for not believing my history. If I had not experienced what I have, I could not have believed it myself. I never did harm any man since I was born into the world. My voice is always for peace. . . . When I am called by the trump of the archangel and weighed in the balance, you will know me then. (*TPJS*, pp. 361–362)

If those he lived among never knew him, then what they bequeathed to us only makes our challenge to understand him even greater. Many people, even believing Mormons, attribute to him the worst of malignant conduct. They believe him to be morally corrupt, lacking virtue, an egomaniac and a liar. Can anything good come from a man such as that? Fools hold Joseph in derision still.

APRIL 16, 2015

Recorder's Website

To facilitate record submissions, the Recorder has a new website now operating. It is named Recorder's Clearinghouse.

The link to the site is www.recordersclearinghouse.com

It will be used for announcements from time to time as needs arise.

APRIL 19, 2015

The Son of David

David was a man “after the Lord’s own heart” (1 Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22). But David “hath fallen from his exaltation” (D&C 132:39).

If A=B then B=A. Therefore it can be likewise said that Christ was a man “after David’s own heart.” Was the Lord considering David’s situation when He refused to use power given Him to satisfy His hunger? (Matt. 4:3–4). Was David on the Lord’s mind when He instructed those He healed to “tell no man?” (Matt. 8:3–4; Mark 7:32–36; Luke 8:54–56). Did the Lord know admiration and praise had been toxic to David and would likewise be toxic to Him?

Was the Lord thinking of David when He refused “all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them?” (Matt. 4:8–10). Was David on the Lord’s mind when He declared His “kingdom was not of this world?” (John 18:36). Did He remember David when He explained His example of servitude after kneeling and washing His followers’ feet? (John 13:4–16).

Christ knew and stated He was “greatest of all” (D&C 19:18). He has explained He is “more intelligent than they all” (Abr. 3:19). Yet He came without crown, wealth, or earthly power. He was “meek and lowly of heart” (Matt. 11:29).

Did Christ know if He were made great by men He, like David, could be drawn away into the same sad end? He was tempted, as all men are. But He prevailed because He “gave no heed unto them” (D&C 20:22).

Did Christ remember David when He rebuked a man who praised Him and called Him “good.” He retorted, “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God” (Matt.19:16–17).

If our Lord refused honor, acted as if a servant, and rejected praise from others, shouldn't we also? How can anyone "aspire to the honors of men" or hold any "vain ambition" or seek to exercise "control or dominion or compulsion upon" others or claim to have "power or influence... by virtue of their priesthood"? (D&C 121:37-41).

Christ behaved wisely and meekly. If He is the prototype of the saved man, who among us can be great without kneeling, serving, persuading, enduring with long-suffering, and relying on gentleness to bring others to come to Christ? Who would want to place themselves above their fellow-man, when the Lord knelt to wash men's feet?

We should weep over our plight, and deal in kindness toward each other in our lost and fallen state. I hardly have the strength to speak when I consider what confronts us in this dark place. I think of David and the Son of David and fear for my own weaknesses, foolishness and pride.

APRIL 20, 2015

YouTube: 40 Years in Mormonism

The *40 Years in Mormonism* talks available on this site are being put onto YouTube as well. They will be available there and remain available here. At this moment, the first two of them have been put up.

APRIL 26, 2015

Baptism Name Submissions

If you have already submitted a name to a local recorder, please do not rely on them to give the information directly to the central

Recorder. Please resubmit it directly. Any duplications will be sorted out there.

Some local recorders have not been able to get permission to pass names along, and therefore the names have not been passed along. Do not assume that your name has been submitted. Go and submit directly on the Recorder's Clearinghouse website: <http://www.recordersclearinghouse.com/>

APRIL 26, 2015

His Sheep

The Lord's hand moves and it is largely unrecognized by the world. Most of those who see it reject outright what they see. Generations pass, and finally acceptance comes too late. Christ's kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). Those who belong to it are strangers and sojourners here. Nuisances to those who do not see.

Christ was born in a small Roman-controlled province, far from the world's power, governmental and social center. During His life, few people knew of Him. Of those who knew of Him, most rejected His message. Even more obscure was His forerunner, John the Baptist.

Christ explained that John the Baptist was "more than a prophet" (Luke 7:26). He declared, "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (Luke 7:28). This messenger, although sent by God, was rejected by those in authority, while accepted and followed by the "least" among them:

"And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being

not baptized of him” (Luke 7:29–30). The people, including the lowly publicans, believed and were baptized. But the proud leaders rejected God’s counsel delivered by John. God’s counsel condemned them and told them to repent. They would not accept that counsel because it was “against” them.

Christ reflected on the sad state of affairs:

Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! (Luke 7:31–34)

It does not matter how the message is given, nor who the Lord sends, the world rejects, criticizes and judges.

Christ formally began His ministry in Nazareth in His local synagogue. He had been there many times before. Like He had done many times, He participated in the Sabbath service. This time, however, He offended those who heard Him because of His message:

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, [He was in the habit of regular attendance at this synagogue. This Sabbath He would begin a new ministry.] and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place [He searched for these verses. He had a message to deliver and found where it was foretold.] where it was written, The Spirit

of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me [**He was the Messiah, or one anointed by God.**] to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. [See Isa. 61:1–2] And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of *all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.* And he began to say unto them, [**He start[ed by unequivocally declaring He was the fulfillment of the prophecy.]** This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him *witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.* [**The rest of His words are not recorded, but they were gracious and filled with light.**] And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? [**The idea someone as common as Jesus, who grew up among them, could be God's anointed was too difficult to accept.**] And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: [**Which would be fulfilled as He was on the cross (see Luke 23:25; 27:41–42).**]. whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily I say unto you, *No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.* [**Not every one was saved, and not every one knew about it as it happened. Obscurity at the time it happens is never an accurate way to measure God's hand.**] And many lepers were in Israel in the time of *Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman*

the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way, And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power. [They could sense something powerful in His message]. (Luke 4:16–32)

The fact that God sends a messenger, (or even His Son), does not mean the world will notice or accept it while the message is being delivered. Only a few are ever willing to hear His voice. But the few who do are always chosen by God and acknowledged by Him as “His sheep” (John 10:27). They suffer rejection but then learn to understand the Lord through experiences shared with Him. He does not leave them comfortless. He manifests Himself to them, (John 14:18) because their hearts are broken and their spirits contrite. This is His gospel and it was meant to be lived. Very few people notice. Great things in God’s eyes are not the same thing as great things to this world. But those who choose to notice are given treasures of understanding. They hear, see and understand things which are entirely hidden from the world.

CHAPTER 3

At What Cost?

APRIL 28, 2015

Harvest

Which one of you, having a garden with both good and bad fruit, when the harvest comes will gather into your home both the good and the bad? Would you not gather the good, and leave the bad behind to be burned?

MAY 2015

MAY 1, 2015

Thought, Argument and Disagreement

The oral arguments this week before the US Supreme Court were interesting. They foreshadow a trend advanced by legal activists intent on taxing and punishing churches opposed to homosexual marriage. It is doubtful they will succeed in a single step (although they may), but their objective is now clear.

The cultural and social trends are headed in the direction advanced by pro-gay legal activism. Those under age 25 are overwhelmingly either indifferent or favor legalizing gay marriage.

That includes Latter-day Saints. The LDS leaders know if they can delay the legal trend for another decade-and-a-half then they could accept gay marriage without any significant opposition by its membership. By that time, open acceptance will produce the same “it’s about time” reaction to gay marriage as did the 1978 change in priesthood for black members.

The paper I presented at last year’s Sunstone Symposium (*Cutting Down the Tree of Life to Build a Wooden Bridge*) is available on this site. It anticipated these trends.

The reason some will embrace all changes made to the church can be summarized as: “Jesus is in control and the leaders follow Him. Therefore, making the change to open acceptance of gay-marriage will be acceptable to Jesus. It is God’s will.”

The reason others will oppose the change can be summarized: “The scriptures unequivocally condemn homosexuality. God is the same yesterday, today and forever. Therefore, God cannot accept homosexuality without changing; which is impossible. If the leaders make this change they are not in harmony with God.”

Cultural Latter-day Saints view the topic of gay rights without any concern about God. They doubt God cares one way or another. But they’d like to see the church open to everyone, including homosexuals. The debate is unlikely to produce consensus among Mormons any more than the US Supreme Court ruling on the present appeal will produce a consensus in the country. We are no longer able to agree and so we look for those in power to provide an answer. We are polarized and intolerant even as we insist we are more tolerant.

If we were actually “tolerant” we would allow one another to defend and attack homosexuality as both uneventful and normal on one side and abhorrent and vile on the other. One side could

defend it as the product of love, while the other condemns it as sinful and offensive to God. We would allow everyone to believe as they will, and openly declare what they believe and why they believe it. We would consider what everyone has to say on the subject and allow the ebb and flow of the discussion to continue while we seek for a consensus we may never find. But we don't do that. We sue. We want the crude ax of legalism to force an outcome because we are unable or unwilling to persuade one another. Institutional Mormons want the leaders to dictate an answer for them, and expect everyone to jump aboard. Getting someone in authority to decide, relieves them of the painful process of reasoning, doubting, struggling and considering opposing views.

Our society is divided against itself, and tearing itself apart.

We have lost the capacity for critical thinking and suspending judgment while carefully considering a subject. Differing views are shouted down. It is painful for us to allow a competing thought to have an open venue for discussion. It threatens our security. When an idea threatens those who want power to enforce "truth," then the idea is subversive, dangerous and hateful. Important ideas are dismissed as "phobic" and "hate-speech" when they have a legitimate right to be heard and considered.

Are there cultural, social, even biological differences between races? Are we permitted to discuss them? Is it racist? If so, is racism actually improper? Was Jesus racist when he referred to the Greek woman as a "dog" and the Jews as "children?" (Mark 7:24–28). Was Abraham, the father of the righteous, racist when he instructed his servant to keep Isaac from intermarrying with Canaanites? (Gen. 24:1–4). Was God the Father racist when He sent His Son only to the lost sheep of Israel? (Matt. 15:22–24). Do any of these stories in that old book matter any longer?

Does history matter? Do recent inequities matter more than inequities suffered long ago? Are we responsible for the conduct of our ancestors. Does one generation owe another (long dead group of people) anything for the conduct of their progenitors. Are the circumstances of our birth accidental? Did God have the right to divide nations and assign them their circumstances? (Deu. 4:19). Did God have the right to give some nations more, and others less, of His word? (Alma 29:8).

What ideas are illegitimate? Which ones should be censored? Why does a secular society ever have “heresies” that cannot be talked about? If there are “heretical” ideas, can the society ever claim it is secular? Is it not just practicing another religion while claiming the opposite?

The trends we see unfolding are part of a false religion designed to control our minds and rob us of freedom. It falsely claims to be advancing the agenda of eliminating evil. Disagreement is not evil. It is essential. Opposing ideas are not vile, nor are they harmful. They are required.

The US elected a “community organizer” to lead it, and now reaps the reward of that ill-advised choice. Community organizing is grounded in stirring up discontent, protest and even violent reactions to mobilize social change. The community organizer does not have the skills to lead. It claims to be able to “lead from behind,” but that is not true leadership. The idea is to cause social exhaustion. Once enough people are upset, a dramatic and foolish solution can be adopted by people weary of dealing with the anger, protest and complaining. This is never a wise way for a society to conduct itself. It collapses thought, censors ideas and harms itself. Ultimately, it opens the door for a desperate population to choose poorly and accept bad solutions to end the chaos.

There is little chance we can make the necessary changes to be more reasonable, thoughtful and open with ideas. We are stricken and bound in chains because our minds are incapable of seeing the lies that imprison us. It is just a small step from where we are to a complete social collapse. To liberate ourselves from that terrible end, we need to repent and return. We do not need fewer ideas, we need more. We do not need less discussion, we need much more. We need to remember Joseph Smith's description of how souls are saved,

...the things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity—thou must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God, than the vain imaginations of the human heart! None but fools will trifle with the souls of men. How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations—too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of the called and chosen of God. (TPJS, p. 137)

MAY 2, 2015

***PTHG* Kindle Edition**

A Kindle edition of *Passing the Heavenly Gift* is now available. It does not come up on the “Book” site on Amazon as yet. That will happen in due course. But if you go to the Kindle Store on Amazon, it is there.

MAY 6, 2015

Rebaptism

A minister named Nephi was preaching in the years preceding Christ's visit to the Americas. He was clearly authorized by God, as we read in Mormon's abridgment. This is the description:

we know our record to be true, for behold, it was a just man who did keep the record—for he truly did many miracles in the name of Jesus; and there was not any man who could do a miracle in the name of Jesus save he were cleansed every whit from his iniquity—. (3 Ne. 8:1)

Thus passed away the thirty and second year also. And Nephi did cry unto the people in the commencement of the thirty and third year; and he did preach unto them repentance and remission of sins. Now I would have you to remember also, that there were none who were brought unto repentance who were not baptized with water. Therefore, there were ordained of Nephi, men unto this ministry, that all such as should come unto them should be baptized with water, and this as a witness and a testimony before God, and unto the people, that they had repented and received a remission of their sins. And there were many in the commencement of this year that were baptized unto repentance; and thus the more part of the year did pass away. (3 Ne. 7:23–26)

Two years later Christ visited the **same people** Nephi had been preaching, ministering and baptizing. However, once Christ appeared, the earlier, authoritative **baptisms were redone**. Here is the record of what Christ required:

And Nephi [that same man] arose and went forth, and bowed himself before the Lord and did kiss his feet. And the Lord commanded him that he should arise. And he arose and stood

before him. And the Lord said unto him: I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people when I am again ascended into heaven. And again the Lord called others, and said unto them likewise; and he gave unto them power to baptize. And he said unto them: On this wise shall ye baptize; and there shall be no disputations among you. Verily I say unto you, that whoso repenteth of his sins through your words, and desireth to be baptized in my name, on this wise shall ye baptize them—Behold, ye shall go down and stand in the water, and in my name shall ye baptize them. And now behold, these are the words which ye shall say, calling them by name, saying: Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. And then shall ye immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water. (3 Ne. 11: 19–26)

Nephi had authority to baptize before Christ came. When Christ came, He gave Nephi the authority to baptize again. Nephi baptized a group of people, then **he baptized the same group of people a second time**—he **rebaptized** them. Rebaptism is a sound gospel principle and is practiced every time God sends a message. The correct way to accept and proceed is to renew baptism, just like these people in the Book of Mormon did.

MAY 9, 2015

Sustaining in 1837

On November 7, 1837 a general assembly of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was held at Far West, Missouri. The minutes of the meeting recount the following:

[Sidney Rigdon as the Moderator of the meeting] *nominated Joseph Smith jr. the first President of the whole Church, to preside*

over the same. All were requested (males and females,) to vote—who was unanimously chosen. He then made a few remarks, accepting the appointment requesting the prayers of the Church in his behalf.

President Smith then nominated Prest. Sidney Rigdon to be one of his counselors—who was unanimously chosen. He then nominated Fredrick G Williams to be his next counsellor who was objected to by Elder Lyman Wight in a few remarks referring to a certain letter written to this place by the said Frederick G Williams Also Elder Marsh objected to Prest Williams Elder James Emmet also objected to Prest Williams

Bishop Edward Partridge said he seconded Prest. William's nomination and should vote for him; and as to said letter, he had heard it, and saw nothing so criminal in it

President David Whitmer also made a few remarks in Prest. Williams' favor.

Elder Marsh made further remarks.

Elder Thomas Grover also objected to Prest. Williams.

Prest. S. Rigdon then nominated Prest. Hyrum Smith to take Prest. Williams' place. He then called for a vote in favor of Prest. Williams' who was rejected. He then called for a vote in favor of Prest Hyrum Smith, which was carried unanimously. (Minutes of the Far West High Council, November 7, 1837)

In those days dissenting votes did not make headlines. They were normal, even expected. The views of members were considered important, and leaders were not above criticism or rejection.

MAY 12, 2015

God's Oath for Melchizedek Priesthood

There are two variations in the scriptures of the same concept regarding the Melchizedek Priesthood. One in the New Testament and the other in 1832.

From the New Testament, Hebrews 7:12 – 21:

*For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law **was administered without an oath and made nothing perfect**, but was only the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. And inasmuch as this high priest was not without an oath, **by so much was Jesus made the surety of a better testament.** ~~he was made priest.~~ (For those priests were made without an oath; but this **with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.**)*

(In addition to the emphasis of bold and underlines, I have shown the JST changes to this text in a different font and cross-out.)

The reference in Hebrews to the Lord swearing the oath to confer this priesthood is a quote from Psalms 110:4: “*The Lord hath*

sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” It is part of a Messianic Psalm and describes Christ.

Then in 1832, D&C 84:33–40:

For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies. They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God. And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord; For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me; And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father; And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him. And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood. Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved.

In both cases the “oath” is God’s. God is the one who confirms upon the recipient this priesthood and makes him to be His priest. When God makes this oath it is after the recipient has been so thoroughly proven that God “will not repent” and remove the authority given to the recipient.

Those who receive it likewise “receive” Christ, because they know Him and have stood in His presence. After receiving Him, Christ then brings them to the Father and the Father likewise “receives” the recipient. The Father is the one who then swears to the recipient that “all He [the Father] has shall be given to the recipient” because this is God’s oath to those few mortals who ever receive this priesthood. They are on a course which will lead them to become like His Son and like Himself.

Some men imagine this happens when a young man gets approval by a local congregation and some quorum leader “confers” this priesthood. That is fanciful imagination. The reality is that this is a very rare event, happening infrequently in mankind’s temporal history. God has made provision to deal with the frequent absence of this authority among men by having some linger here, as John the Beloved has agreed to do.

Christ serves as the model for these recipients, and He is the one who best exemplifies the kind of man to whom God the Father would declare, “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Vanity is a poor substitute for redemption. As Joseph Smith put it, “How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God, than the vain imaginations of the human heart!” When men get a little authority, as they suppose (or in other words, as they imagine), they begin to abuse one another.

Those God trusts are like Moses, who “was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3). This is why the 1832 revelation calls the recipients “the sons of Moses” (D&C 84:34).

When pretenders exercise control, dominion and compulsion over one another it discourages the hearts of those who seek for God. The poor example makes everyone wary of the idea of “authority” given by God. Remember the Great Example of the Great High Priest, Christ. He knelt and washed others’ feet. He did not seek out the chief seats. He was cast out and associated with the least, proclaiming that it was they who were favored by God. He was despised and rejected because He held no position, rank or authority in the social order of His day. He called the presiding authorities of His time hypocrites, whited sepulchers filled with death and decay.

Christ came to serve, not to rule and reign with violence and intimidation. HE is the model of what real authority looks like. Real authority elevates others. It kneels to serve. It has others' best interests in mind to the point of sacrificing everything to serve and save others. It is impossible to imagine Christ escorting the self-important into God the Father's presence to have him given authority. The stink of such a man's death and decay would contaminate the halls of heaven.

It is almost always the case that non-scriptural, anti-Christ ideas are likely to be rejected—until it is the “doctrine” or “dogma” of an institution. Then, because of mankind's insecurities, falsehoods get propped up beyond all criticism because of the influence the institution holds in this world. It is the worldliness of the lie that makes it so appealing, so reassuring. Lies enjoy success which are so very unlike the example of the itinerant preacher Jesus, who submitted to others, paid the temple priests, paid taxes to Caesar, was cast out of the synagogues— and who founded the religion now profaned by wealthy men saying, but not doing, as He commanded.

MAY 18, 2015

Trust and Patience

Trusting God and being patient go together.

Knowledge enters our life incrementally, a little at a time, as we notice it and focus on it. Light grows brighter and brighter because we become more sensitive to it. Oddly, we choose how much light we have by how much we notice.

The entire “universe” was once thought to be nothing more than our Milky Way galaxy. But our ability to detect has been magnified by lenses, greatly expanding our ability to see more. The universe

did not change, but our ability to see more of it did. We have only recently been able to see the same distant lights that have shone overhead for thousands of years.

The scriptures have been with us for thousands of years (in some cases) and over a hundred years in almost all cases. But our sensitivity to them is so dull we are unable to perceive the light they contain.

Incorporating light into our minds is not accomplished only by hearing, reading or watching, but grows as we act on it. The scriptures are a guide to allow us to have our own experiences walking the path God's people have walked since Adam.

MAY 20, 2015

Emma, Lucy and Brigham

I have reconsidered a great deal while searching deeper and deeper into Mormonism, history, and teachings. It is very challenging to remain open to new ideas. This is particularly so when the object of Mormonism is to obtain further light and knowledge by conversing with the Lord through the veil.

For more than three decades I repeated and concurred with what Brigham Young said of Emma Smith:

To my certain knowledge, Emma Smith is one of the damnedest liars I know of on this earth; yet there is no good thing I would refuse to do for her, if she would only be a righteous woman; but she will continue in her wickedness. Not six months before the death of Joseph, he called his wife Emma into a secret council, and there he told her the truth, and called upon her to deny it if she could. He told her that the judgments of God would come upon her forthwith if she did not repent. He

told her of the time she undertook to poison him, and he told her that she was a child of hell, and literally the most wicked woman on this earth, that there was not one more wicked than she. He told here where she got the poison, and how she put it in a cup of coffee; said he ‘You got that poison from so and so, and I drank it, but you could not kill me.’ When it entered his stomach he went to the door and threw it off. He spoke to her in that council in a very severe manner, and she never said one word in reply. I have witnesses of this scene all around, who can testify that I am now telling the truth. Twice she undertook to kill him. ([*Utah Historical Quarterly*, vol. 48, Winter 1980, 82] October 1868 General Conference, also found at *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, Vol. 4, p. 2378)

I no longer hold Brigham Young in the same high regard I used to. He is not always a reliable source for truthful history. He viewed Emma as a competitor, who threatened property he wanted. She ultimately assisted a rival church which potentially undermined the organization he headed. He NEEDED to discredit her. His campaign worked so well that apart from the few paragraphs mentioning her in the 1933 Relief Society Magazine (a woman’s publication then controlled by women) there was nothing favorable published about her by the LDS Church for more than a century after her death. It was on September 16, 1978, when the *Church News* ran a favorable article, Two Great Women. The other Great Woman of that article was Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph’s mother.

Brigham Young’s damnation of Emma influenced others. Brigham’s story about Emma poisoning Joseph has drifted into conventional wisdom and become “the truth” for LDS Mormonism. Acute indigestion, ulcers, food contamination, gallstones, an allergic

reaction or any number of things could have caused Joseph's symptoms. In an age without refrigeration, the conclusion it was poisoning seems hasty.

Joseph's journals do not support Brigham's claim because a few hours after vomiting he attended a prayer meeting. All the poison available in that day that would have been strong enough to induce immediate vomiting would not have allowed Joseph to recover to the point of attending a meeting a few hours later. This incident is discussed by Linda King Newell in *Mormon Dialogue*, "The Emma Smith Lore Reconsidered", Vol. 17-3 (Autumn 1984) pp. 87-100.

Brigham Young's campaign against Emma included accusations that she was responsible for Joseph's death. He characterized her as a semi-apostate opponent to Mormonism before Joseph's death and a renegade, wicked woman after. Her place in Mormon history has been forever marred by his campaign. Others who knew her testified of her devotion, loyalty and love of her husband, Joseph. When Joseph had another bout of stomach ailment the next month, it was Emma who nursed him back from this episode. Given his repeated stomach ailments in the immediate time frame, it is doubtful Emma poisoned him, and doubtful Joseph would accuse her of that and then trust her the following month to nurse him back to health when suffering worse symptoms.

Of all the injustices to our history, perhaps Brigham Young's worst offense was alienating Emma from the Mormon people in a way to leave her a legacy of harsh, judgmental condemnation for nearly two centuries.

Neither Emma Smith nor Joseph's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, had any economic, social, or personal reason to distance themselves from the body of Saints. The 18,000 or so Mormons would have cared for them, protected them, and given them assistance for

the remainder of their lives. Yet both of them declined to follow Brigham Young and the twelve. The conventional LDS Mormon wisdom is that it was because of their apostasy. But LDS Mormonism uses that charge against anyone and anything that does not praise LDS leadership. It is more likely that the frequent charge of “apostasy” has been and is a cover for institutional insecurity. It is a highly charged term which closes minds and prevents rational thought.

Only by open acceptance of criticism, even inviting criticism, can a person, institution or group remain healthy. Every idea or teaching should be openly discussed, tested against scripture and common sense, weighed for its effects, and held open for refinement, correction or reconsideration.

I have come to the conclusion that Brigham Young is not reliable. If he told me the sun was shining I would want to look out a window before believing him. He may have told the truth on occasion, but other sources should be audited to see if he is corroborated before taking his word on anything. Even the LDS Church has “unequivocally condemned” him in their essay on Blacks and the Priesthood. He deserves the LDS Church’s unequivocal condemnation. He also has mine.

MAY 25, 2015

LDS Temple Ordinances

Can LDS Temple ordinances have “power?”

It is an interesting question. The answer depends on each individual who participates. The ordinances can be either meaningless (or worse) or they can be beneficial.

Temple rites communicate information through symbols. If we look at the underlying meaning, and see more light and truth through them, then they can powerfully instruct and edify.

The rites warn us we need to be “true and faithful in all things” when we seek “further light and knowledge by conversing with the Lord through the veil”—which is very good. Faithfulness to what light we’ve been given is a prerequisite for getting more light. Knowing that gaining further light and knowledge is possible, actually expected, is essential. Believing that God will converse with us is also foundational to salvation.

Perhaps the greatest idea is that we can converse with God through the veil preliminary to entering into His presence. In that idea is found the promise of communication with God, followed by Him allowing us to visit with Him through the veil. Every soul who has faith in that and acts consistent with their faith will obtain the most glorious assurances from God. They will not be barren or unfruitful in their knowledge.

If the rites are viewed as some authoritative guarantee of something in the afterlife, without regard to our need to search, they can be destructive. Instead of a humility and meekness before God, the false idea that the rites make you special, chosen or better than others can lead to pride and arrogance. That separates us from God. It increases the distance between ourselves and the light of truth. Such an approach makes the rites a tragic and negative misstep instead of a blessing.

I would encourage everyone to reflect on the message of the temple rites. In the right frame of mind, their symbols are useful. The form presently presented in LDS Temples is still a useful collection of symbolic teaching about the mortal quest to find God.

MAY 26, 2015

Follow Up Questions

Questions can be endless. Therefore I largely ignore them. But I responded to an email today and post it here because a few others may be interested:

1. Can these ordinances be acceptable to the Lord due to the faith of the participants even if they occur in a general environment of “rejection” and condemnation? (My mind is drawn to Hannah seeking a blessing from Eli as an example).

If you re-read the lecture in Ephraim this was the point I made there. I even used Hannah and Eli as the example of faith of a recipient justifying the acts of a wicked and unqualified priest.

2. Is there a difference between performing the ordinances of the preparatory gospel for the deceased, and the higher ordinances? Does the Lord accept the lower, but declines the higher? Similar to ancient Israel being permitted to continue in the lower order unto our condemnation. And if the Lord declines the higher, why were your ancestors asking for it?

The only ordinances that have ever been required for the dead are baptism and washing—because they require a physical body and they are intended to preserve the body into the resurrection. The other ordinances can all be, and do get, attended to in the spirit world. Remember Christ ordained others in the spirit world (D&C 138:30). LDS rites include ordination, but that is not necessary because Christ did it in the spirit world. The rest of the ordinances are informational, and can be done as readily with as without a body. Joseph’s remark about performing “all the rites for the dead” would not cause any mischief and serves as an opportunity for the living

to repeat the ceremonies (an aid to memory and understanding). But the truth is that all the rites are not required for the dead. The final temple built will have work done for the dead in the separate, ceremonial font area apart from where other rites for the living will be performed. The dead and living will only intersect in that ante-chamber or area.

3. Is this “rejected” status of the church and her dead a newly realized status that has taken multiple generations to develop and culminate with certain recent events and signs? Therefore what was once acceptable in recent years to the Lord is no longer acceptable to Him today?

The rejection was incomplete until recently. But the manner of “sealing” done by LDS rites since Joseph died will not elevate anyone to be resurrected. Instead they confine all of the living participants to lie with their kindred dead until some later work is done for them all.

Given the reaction of those now living to the reestablishment of the restoration, however, it seems unlikely many of those now living would or will accept the gospel when declared to them, as required for D&C 137:7–8 to apply for their good.

The conditions are ever the same. They refuse to accept the truth at their peril. They will be possessed of the exact same spirit when dead as when living. Therefore nothing can be done to change their destiny in this cycle of creation because they are taken by a false spirit and possess a hard heart. They claim to know, and therefore will be judged as if they did know.

4. When your ancestors requested that you stay so they could receive their robes of righteousness, what good was the endowment to them, if that ceremony we’ve inherited is but a remnant of what

Joseph was restoring , and a product of some of Brigham Young's interpretations? Is there a significant value to us and those deceased to practicing the fragments of the ceremony that we do have?

All symbols are useful and reflect on our willingness to accept the truth had they been permitted to tarry (D&C 137:7–8). There is no better proof of willingness to accept than to actually accept even an incomplete, partial ceremony. It measures their hearts in a way that proves them worthy of receiving more. They surely will receive more, including the robes of righteousness indeed—not merely a ceremonial clothing but actual covering by the atonement of Christ.

5. Were your ancestors able to receive the ordinances because of a special covenant or allowance you received personally from the Lord? Or in other words, your kindred dead would seal to you, because you received a sealing from the Father? (I apologize for asking this, I understand that I may be asking for things I cannot yet comprehend).

The ancestors involved identified themselves to me. I now know that when a full restoration happens in the future, those 11 ancestors are worthy of the rites and the essential work will be done here for them.

As to rites for the dead themselves, originally the work was not done for the dead. It was done for only three categories:

- Those personally known to the one doing the ordinance as someone who would have accepted the truth had they been permitted to tarry, and they can bear personal testimony of the character of the deceased.
- Those persons who left a record from which it can be judged they would have accepted the truth had they tarried. The same

standard as the first category, but the evaluation is based on their written record, rather than the personal knowledge.

- Those who, by revelation, are known to be willing to accept the truth had they tarried.

The later practice of indiscriminate ordinances for everyone deceased is an innovation and not a correct practice.

MAY 28, 2015

Lamentation for Baghdad

Days of distress are upon Baghdad and the days of their troubles are begun. Distress shall overtake them, for those who come shall have no pity.

MAY 29, 2015

L. Tom Perry

L. Tom Perry of the twelve is now in advanced stages of terminal cancer. He will be receiving hospice care and is expected to pass in a few days.

He was the first General Authority of the LDS Church I met. After baptism on September 10, 1973 I traveled to Salt Lake City for General Conference the following month. I was told by ward members in New Hampshire that Elder Perry had been the stake president over the New England area before it was divided, and therefore many of them remembered him as their stake president. I was urged to try to see him and pass along their regards. Accordingly, I went to the Church Administration Building (without any appointment) and asked the guard if I could visit with L. Tom Perry. The guard was unfriendly, discouraging me from making the attempt, but reluctantly contacted Elder Perry about my request.

To his surprise, Elder Perry came down quickly to the front door and escorted me inside for a visit.

He was gregarious, with a big-smile and warm, welcoming demeanor. He may seem a bit stiff on TV, but in person he was kindly, even disarming. For a less-than-a-month convert I was taken by how welcoming this high-up church leader was. He may have been “up” atop the organization, but he wasn’t at all uppity. I passed along the regards of those in New Hampshire and he seemed to genuinely appreciate them remembering him.

Within two months of that visit with him in October 1973, President Harold B. Lee died, and the following April L. Tom Perry was added to the twelve. His passing will mark another milestone in the loss of leaders who were there when I first joined the LDS Church. The only ones remaining now in leadership who were there at the beginning are Thomas S. Monson, Boyd K. Packer and L. Tom Perry.

I wish him and his family well. It saddens me to see him depart.

MAY 31, 2015

Baptism for the Dead

Baptism for the dead belongs in a temple, built to the Lord and accepted by Him.

Baptism for the dead by the Mormon community was rejected by the Lord because of the failure in Nauvoo (D&C 124:31–32). We are not going to cure the problem until the original conditions are met. A temple must be accepted and visited by the Lord as His House (D&C 124:28) for Him to restore the fullness. Baptism for the dead belongs only there.

We cannot meet the requirements for acceptable baptism for the dead on any other basis than what has been revealed.

JUNE 2015

JUNE 2, 2015

Response About Us All

I got an email from a friend complaining about Keith Henderson's recent communications with him. The specific complaint is not important (or I would include it here). But the issue raised other thoughts which I think important enough to copy and post here. This was my response:

I have a couple of observations:

Keith is in his 70's and comes from a more blunt, candid and honest era than the "politically correct" era of today. He has a golden heart, but his candor is sometimes taken to be harsh. It really isn't. But you have to spend more time around him to see the difference between his language/demeanor in different circumstances.

He takes the role very seriously and wants to do a good job and present the record to the Lord in a faithful and true a manner as he can possibly do. He is quite prayerful about what he's doing, and despite how it may seem on the surface it is a very big job requiring a great deal of work. He's spent his own money to have books handmade that will last for a thousand years: acid-free 100% cotton, goatskin leather covers (they are longer fiber leather and much more durable than cow leather), hand sewn gatherings, archival ink, etc. His devotion and work has been something no one knows about, and no one will probably ever hear about from him.

It seems to me that as we move along toward something much greater that is coming soon, we have many opportunities to disappoint one another, to offend and show impatience with one another, and to take offense when none is intended. We all have to be patient and loving—even when we think someone is being impatient, rude and unloving. Most people are only interested in this whole endeavor because they love God and want to follow Him.

I don't think anyone wants to follow ME. I mean that. What they are trying to do is follow God, and they have some level of trust in me to help clarify what God is doing. I try very hard to not have that trust misplaced. I remind myself constantly about how limited I am, how fallible I am, how prideful and prone to selfishness I am. My wife is a constant critic in the most useful sense of that word. Her criticism is directed at improving my perspective, not in tearing down. She is a guardian I trust and she has never betrayed that trust.

We are facing one of the greatest challenges mankind has faced since the creation. It is almost inevitable we will fail. But the prophecies foretell success. Therefore we must move forward, despite all our individual weaknesses, our vulnerabilities and our foolishness. We must seek to do what the Lord intends to bring to pass. We are left without excuses if we do not attempt, even in our own convictions about how unlikely we are to succeed. For there will be success. It is prophesied and it is the Lord's work to cause it to happen. It will happen. Therefore however weak we may seem before this daunting task, Zion is going to come and is likely to do so before we pass from this scene. The question is whether we can have faith enough in God to

allow Him to work through even so unworthy and inadequate
a vessel as you and I.

JUNE 12, 2015

Necessity of Baptism

There can be no doubt baptism is necessary. As explained in the Book of Mormon:

And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfil all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water! And now, I would ask of you, my beloved brethren, wherein the Lamb of God did fulfil all righteousness in being baptized by water? Know ye not that he was holy? But notwithstanding he being holy, he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments. Wherefore, after he was baptized with water the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove. And again, it showeth unto the children of men the straitness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them. And he said unto the children of men: Follow thou me. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father? And the Father said: Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son. (2 Ne. 31:5–11)

It is required of us for our salvation because Christ made it so and the scriptures unequivocally state that is the case. There is no question about its necessity. The only question is: is your baptism sufficient as the Lord is preparing for His return? Ask yourself these simple questions: Would you be willing to participate in a rite designed by God to show you have repented? Is there any merit for you to establish a record today to show that you have repented?

Do you acknowledge baptism a required sign requested by God for us to perform as a sign of our repentance?

Remember the Lord's warning in 1831: "I say, hearken unto my voice, lest death shall overtake you; in an hour when ye think not the summer shall be past, and the harvest ended, and your souls not saved" (D&C 45:2).

Recall Jeremiah's vision of the end when the Lord returns again: "Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jer. 8:19–20). "Graven images" can include anything and anyone which offers itself up as an object of devotion supplanting Christ. "Strange vanities" include well reasoned arguments fashioned to build up false faith or tear down true faith. Either one will leave us unsaved at the coming harvest if we do not repent, and accept the terms Christ established, including baptism.

Please consider whether the day may come when you may want to have been baptized to show your current repentance by the act Christ established as necessary for everyone's salvation. Even His own.

JUNE 17, 2015

Friends and Spokesmen

I have a number of thoughtful and very religious friends I respect and discuss many subjects with, but with whom I have significantly differing views on many matters. I make no effort to change their way of thinking, and afford them the freedom to explain their views without interruption or disagreement. If I am pressed, I will offer my own contrary views, but for the most part I am not pressed and I do not comment on their "causes." I regard them as friends

and value their views. It is possible many of our conversations are as a result of them calling and wanting my input, assurance, or approval about something they are studying or discussing with others. For my part, I am not inclined to discuss with them anything other than what I believe. That does not include disabusing them of their strongly held beliefs. According to Joseph Smith, “It does not prove a man is not a good man because he errs in doctrine” (*DHC* 5:340). Below are a few of the major points friends of mine emphasize without necessarily having my agreement with their viewpoints:

Multiple-Mortal-Probations: Several friends believe almost all scriptural dilemmas are solved by using the “multiple mortalities doctrine” to explain events. They think many of the characters in scripture are the same individual returning again and again on missions to serve others. For them, it is very important that one know their prior life’s identity and from that everything else falls into place. I have friends who speak about the topic almost at every turn, and I listen to their thoughts, explanations and exegesis of scripture. I do not agree with their understanding of the subject. I doubt very much that anyone (let alone everyone) returns to this sphere in the normal course of history, although I do think the scriptures support the inevitability of progression by degrees through different estates. If returning were an option, it would be unlikely the Lord’s disciples would have looked upon “the long absence of [their] spirits from [their] bodies to be a bondage” (*D&C* 45:17). If His disciples were going to have a “long absence of their spirits from their bodies” (meaning they were to die and remain in the spirit world), then a frequent recycling back into mortality was not going to happen for them. Hence their desire to escape

the spirit bondage by either resurrection (coming quickly into the Lord's kingdom) or translation (linger in the flesh) to remain of service as a ministering angel here.

It seems unlikely to me that we have more than one turn in any given creation for a mortal experience. When, however, a new creation is made, it seems inevitable that those who will populate it are chosen beforehand, participate in the planning, and are assigned to come live there as another "estate" in the long path of progression.

I dismiss the idea someone has been told by God that he is the former King Solomon returned to mortality, in part because I know of at least three claiming to be "King Solomons" living now. I know of several "John the Baptists," enough "Peters" to form a congregation, and the plentiful "Jeremiahs" could play a college football game filling both rosters.

Most importantly, the concept of returning and knowing your prior identity seems counter-productive to me. The claim to have been some prior prophet, king or apostle returned again can quickly lead to arrogance, or complacency. Even if it were true, what good does it do? Does some past experience relieve you from passing the test now underway? If not, then what does it matter? No one claims to be the lowest ranking Roman soldier responsible for crucifying Christ. No one I know espousing this idea claims to have been an obscure, disease-ridden serf whose short life ended in filth or violence. They prize the idea because they were great before, trusted by God, and are now returned as a personal favor to the Divine King to slum with us a while for our good. It is vanity.

Devils: I say very little about opposing Satan and his minions by direct combat. For me the topic creates more mischief than if I leave it alone. I have a friend who spends a great deal of time dealing with the subject and actively working against such influences. Clearly

the Lord's ministry included confrontations, rebuking and freeing others from demons, and directly confronting the adversary. For me in helping others, the greatest problem created by our adversary is the confusion, false ideas, and subtle errors. Far greater harm is done with the general population by convincing people to believe a mixture of truth and error than through suffering from demonic possession. False traditions, priestcraft, and mixing philosophies of men with scripture is the wholesale way mankind is afflicted and harmed. The small retail operation of possession is a great concern, but only to a very few. I leave that issue for others to battle.

There is a paper written by the attorney Ron Poulton dealing with mental health issues and evil spirit possession. It is a very interesting work, written for psychologists. Ron has a rigorous mind and is a thoughtful man. His ideas are consistent with scripture. There are those who have been cured of mental afflictions using that approach. If it works, even for a few, then the benefit is worth it. I think his paper is available on-line.

Ancient Egypt: I have a friend who is extremely interested in ancient Egypt and all things Egyptian. There is a great deal of truth preserved by the ancients of Egypt, and he is intent on harvesting it. I applaud his efforts, but leave that work for him to pursue.

Egypt was founded as an "imitation" and not the real thing (Abr. 1:26). What the founder of Egypt sought to imitate was the original "order established by the fathers in the first generations" including Adam (*Id.*). We do not have that original, even in the Restoration. We have discussions of the original religion's effect, but not its rites, practices and particulars. So an imitation may be useful to us. But by the time Abraham migrated to Egypt, the imitation was so corrupted that Abraham was sent to lecture on missing, confused, incorrect and misunderstood elements of the

Gospel (See Fac. 3). In Facsimile No. 3 Abraham is depicted with a crown “representing the Priesthood” which he actually held. **The Pharaoh, on the other hand, was “of that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood”** (Abr. 1:27). Therefore, what Abraham imported to Egypt came when they were already corrupted and off the mark. Depending on how you date Egypt’s dynasties and how you fix the date for Abraham’s life, he entered Egypt anywhere from as early as the Third Dynasty or as late as the Sixteenth Dynasty. The earlier the dating, the more severe the problem was for Egypt to preserve the original order.

When you compare what Joseph Smith was doing just four generations ago with what “Mormonism” looks like today, you can see how quickly things are altered, forgotten and supplanted. That is a cautionary tale to us about relying on the past as a guide to inform our understanding. If the Egyptians were like us, then by the Third Dynasty things were in disarray because their faith had been altered, important truths had been forgotten, and many original practices were supplanted by innovations and incompletions. By the Sixteenth it would have been quite a mess.

So the search goes back from the late Book of Breathing (perhaps an Abraham-era product/which would put things more toward the Sixteenth Dynasty than the Third), to the earlier Coffin Texts, to the earliest Pyramid Texts to try to get the most accurate version. But in the end even the stone of the pyramids could have been recarved, repainted, and altered by later dynasties to comport with what they later believed. **So the fact something is carved in stone is no guarantee it had not been altered.** The disparate dimensions of the head and body of the Sphinx, for example, suggest tampering with stone structures to supplant the earlier depiction of the constellation Leo with the head of a later Pharaoh.

Was it the product of Khafra, Khufu, Djedfre or someone else? I appreciate the insights this friend recovers from his study. But I do not share his affection for Egypt, founded as it was by one excluded from the patriarchal line and only able to imitate it.

Keys to Interpret: I have friends who believe they have stumbled onto the absolutely reliable, completely infallible key to interpreting scriptural prophecy. These friends believe they can understand all the details, dates and sequence of future events, including some in the very near future. They believe they can calculate exactly what the prophecies mean, because their “key” unlocks the truth. Using their analytical approach, they believe they can “prove” their interpretation of scripture. They rule out, or rule in, what is possible for God by their “key” of interpreting. But there is no such thing, and interpretation belongs only to God. He alone will decide how to vindicate His word, His covenants and His promises.

I do not believe there is any ability to use prophecy to establish beforehand detailed knowledge of the events they foretell. Prophecy does not have that purpose. The purpose is to show *ONLY* that God knows the end from the beginning (Abr. 2:8). He proves He is God by declaring beforehand (Isa. 42:9). It is for one purpose: To prove God knows beforehand (Isa. 48:3–5). It is not to allow us to know, only to prove after the event has happened that God knew of it beforehand.

For example, when Christ was here, the scriptures did not inform His followers in sufficient detail for them to recognize who He was or what He was sent to do. They did not understand the need for Him to die at Jerusalem (Matt. 16:21–22). They did not expect His resurrection and did not believe it when first told it had

happened (Luke 24:9–11). When He expounded the scriptures to Cleopas and a companion on the Road to Emmaus the day of His resurrection, they did not understand the scriptures foretold all the events until after He explained it for them (Luke 24:13–32). Even after seeing Him they did not understand the prophetically foretold new dispensation and their obligations to act in spreading the word. They returned to fishing (John 21:1–5). These were the ones most directly in contact with the most important, most prophetically foretold figure in history. But they were unable to understand Him or recognize His role when He came. It was only after His ministry ended that He acquired the identity, the recognition and the role that vindicated prophecy.

Prophecy is not understood until after it is fulfilled. Those friends who think they have a “key” to interpret events and know how God will fulfill the prophecies cause them to miss what happens in plain sight right in front of them. Their “key” is another form of conceit.

Buddhists: I have friends who are Buddhist/Mormon or Mormon-Buddhists. They think their study of eastern mysticism gives them an advantage in enlightenment. I have had several conversations that illustrate the difficulties of a mere transcendent enlightenment experience.

In visionary encounters, friends have seen themselves as an enlightened beings, and in that role experienced peace, joy and love. They have overcome the pains, jealousies and distress of the mortal sphere, and believe this reflects great credit upon themselves. In fact, almost all come to see themselves through enlightenment as having independent worth, no longer in need of a savior or the Christ. They think themselves equal to the Christ and responsible for their own salvation.

The frequent comment I have heard from these transcendental meditation practitioners is that there is no need of a savior. We are all god.

With newfound enlightenment they have become more dissatisfied with LDS Mormonism than before, ceased activity, and within a few years disassociated altogether from Mormonism. This has caused problems in their family relationships as they seek for something more.

We all have need of a savior. None of us come to the Father apart from Christ. Salvation depends on our rescue by Him. Seeing ourselves in that role does not make it our role. We are given a glimpse of what He is like for the purpose of making us appreciate Him, seek for Him, model Him, and understand Him. When we are relieved of pain it is because He knows how to succor each of us in our weakness and sin (Alma 7:12). Experiencing that relief is not to make us proud and independent, but to draw us closer to Him.

These Buddhist friends, as many others who seek for and obtain visionary encounters, neglect their responsibility to then take what has been shown them and integrate the understanding of it into the pattern set out in scripture. If they use the scriptures to guide their understanding they would have known that Christ is the only one who can deliver us, forgive sins, heal afflictions and provide us comfort. Instead of accepting the truth in scripture, many of them assume the newfound Buddhist explanation negates the need for a savior. But it is the Lord, not mere man, who was God. And abandoning Christ because of an encounter with “enlightenment” is going backward, not forward.

Progressive Social Ideas: I have a friend whose feminist leanings inspire all of his analysis of scripture, Joseph Smith’s sermons, and the temple rites. He advocates for a Divine Feminine

Christ figure, and even names her. His keen insights into inequities and priestly exploitation of women are valuable and much of what he notices is entirely accurate. His solutions do not persuade me. They create more problems, in my view, and are contrary to the very scriptures he uses to support his arguments. I do not dispute him, and find a great deal of value in reading his ideas and analysis. He at least has the commitment and desire to search carefully, think deeply, and advocate forcefully about gospel topics. His voice should be allowed to add to the discussion. He uncovers the problems and makes them undeniable.

I do not have an agenda, political goal, or social cause. I want to conform my thinking to what I can understand of God's will. It is more important to me to learn of God's will than it is for me to change God's will. I doubt very much my own insights will ever be wiser, more compassionate, or better informed than God's. In that regard, all ideas (including my friends') must first be advocated by God, and not opposed by scripture, before I could accept them.

I do not verbally or openly disagree or argue with any of these friends. Their ideas are interesting to me, and I enjoy their passion. I do not share their viewpoints, nor believe their ideas are necessary for me to either accept or correct. I try to do what I am asked, when I am asked, and how I am asked. I leave all else for the Lord to manage. I am but a single individual, and no one person can accomplish what God alone controls.

I say only a tiny fraction of what I understand, even with all I have spoken, written and published.

Friends have many strongly held beliefs, insights and opinions. They belong to them, not to me. I have no spokesman. **No one should replace what I have taught openly, published and recorded (in now publicly available sources) by another, purportedly private**

discussion as what I “really think” about some mystery. I do not and have not ratified or endorsed any of the causes, claims or precepts advanced by others.

I speak for myself directly and without an agent. I let others speak for themselves.

JUNE 18, 2015

KUTV Interview

Yesterday Channel 2 news (KUTV) interviewed me in my office for a news story they broadcast yesterday and again this morning, titled “LDS church holds special meeting to denounce ‘false prophets’” (<https://kutv.com/news/local/lds-church-holds-special-meeting-to-denounce-false-prophet>). Their broadcast contained three excerpts from the interview. An audio recording of the entire interview is now available on the Downloads page.

JUNE 22, 2015

Disputations

I have been contacted now twice by people who are either involved or witnessing a dispute in southern Utah. I do not know the parties, but have had contact with both and know one side’s principal players.

When I first got a call about this about a week and a half ago I declined to be involved. I suggested to the caller that they let the matter die, and if any offense has been given to just let the offense rest there, and return good for evil.

I know very little about the substance of the claims being made. As I consider the problem it appears to me that the whole one side

vs. the other approach is doomed to cause nothing but turmoil. Having a “winner” will alienate the “loser’s” supporters.

The approach suggested by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount is to dismiss the whole winner/loser approach and instead admonish both sides to forgive the other and suffer the abuse they’ve received, returning good for evil. I’ve been advocating that approach to anyone and everyone involved in this conflict.

I think more is at stake here than just deciding the winner. The conflict is being used to foster another, much larger and more effective problem. It has been forged by an opponent to the incipient restoration movement designed to frustrate and polarize everyone involved. It is designed to create enduring conflict, serious alienation among believers and thwart the purposes of God.

It is hard for those whose hearts have been broken by abuse from an institution to begin to trust others in fellowship when they encounter yet another round of abuse, accusation, frustration and imposition at the hands of those claiming to be their brothers and sisters.

I try to be a peacemaker. I try to avoid participation in conflict and to do my best to take abuse but never return it. I probably fail in this, but it is my honest objective and deepest intent.

We are facing the same kinds of conflicts that drove the saints to incur God’s condemnation early in the restoration. I now rejoice only in the fact that we have made no effort to gather. The lesson I draw from this conflict is that everyone on both sides, as well as those who choose a side and work to amplify the conflict—every participant would be a dangerous neighbor to have living alongside others in any New Jerusalem.

If we are not wise enough to avoid conflicts, then we should bear abuses and insults with grace, kindness and charity when they

force themselves upon us. I do not know how we can be gathered if we are quarrelsome, accusing and insulting of one another. How can that please God?

Maybe it is impossible to avoid taking sides. Maybe we need to choose, even with a great deal of ignorance of any facts, understanding of the parties, familiarity with the events, or knowledge of these people's hearts... But to me that seems more a formula for recreating Kirtland, returning to Missouri, repeating Nauvoo or marching into the salty wasteland of the Great Basin than following Enoch to the mountains and meeting with our Father and our God.

If it is possible for you to take the role of the peacemaker, please do. If you can help restore harmony, please make the effort. It will be worth the effort to try, even if you fail.

Thanks to each of you for all you have done and all you do to help bring this work along according to God's desire for us all. Let us go on to defeat the jarrings, contentions, strifes and envyings among us. We have a perfect opportunity with this challenge to at least make the attempt. Do not let it pass you by without the effort to address it in a godly and meek way.

CHAPTER 4

Truth: The Ultimate Lodestar

JUNE 25, 2015

The Search

The search for the truth is individual. Everyone must undertake it for themselves. One woman's search is never the same as another's. One man's experiences will never be another's. That does not mean there are never common elements. Mileposts along the way are common to almost all searches.

Where is the most valuable place to start the search? This question requires us to answer others. For example, was Joseph Smith divinely inspired to translate and publish the Book of Mormon? Were his revelations and translations of other records also divinely inspired?

Since I believe Joseph Smith was divinely inspired, the search for me begins there. It requires me to then proceed in these steps: **First**, find information about Joseph's teachings, translations, discussions, revelations and beliefs from the most reliable sources. This is not as easy as it once seemed. The materials made available through *The Joseph Smith Papers*, for example, require some assumptions and conclusions to be revised, discarded, modified or perhaps

even noticed for the first time. A great deal of information about Joseph's life, his words, even his revelations has not been accurately transmitted across a mere two centuries. But this is the best and most recent place for the search to begin.

Second, Joseph's paradigm must be adapted, modified and corrected by what the new view of Joseph Smith's ministry reveals and recovers. This is not easy because traditions and presumptions are part of our internal thinking. We hold on to presumptions until forced to abandon them. Even if we think we can begin with a blank slate, we cannot. We do not know what we do not know, and therefore proceed blind to these defects. It requires us to be ever willing to admit we need and must accept correction. This is not easy, but it is necessary.

Third, we must live our lives in conformity with the truth as we understand it so that we gather light and truth from heaven. We cannot live hypocrisy and expect divine aid. We cannot abuse our neighbors and expect divine favor. We are helped by God as we are clean before Him. He (and we) know if we have clean hands and a pure heart.

Fourth, until we have done the work of the first three, there is no justified expectation to discover or have revealed to us something new. Revelation comes at the end of the search, not at the beginning. When, however, the revelation comes, we must be willing to accept it and then reconsider everything in the first three steps in light of what we have gained in the fourth. Even if we think we are living true to the light we had before, once we have more light we must reflect that in our lives. What we did, said, believed or thought before may no longer be consistent with what was just learned.

Likewise, the work of the second step (adaptation, modification and correction) may be wholly inadequate for what new truth has

been gained. And finally, the first step (source interpretation and understanding) may change because of the new light.

Every one of us is put through this same process. None of us are spared.

This leads to the question of how to integrate what has been gained in this process with other important information. The best example of a faithful search I can think of is Hugh Nibley. His relentless searching was always informed by the primacy of Joseph Smith and the restoration. He believed in the Book of Mormon even when the LDS Church and its leaders did not. This is discussed in *Eighteen Verses*. Brother Nibley was himself a restorationist who amplified our understanding of antiquity. However, Hugh Nibley died three years before a single volume of *The Joseph Smith Papers* was in print. He died five years before the five volumes of *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* were available in print. He never had an opportunity to see or read most of what Brigham Young said. He died before many of the journals of church leaders and apostles were made available. Brother Nibley's work sought to harmonize the restoration with antiquity. He did a great work. But he lived and died without having at his disposal a great body of additional material now accessible to us. It begs the question of whether he would (or should) have reconsidered the content and meaning of the restoration and Joseph's teachings if he learned new information by that process. From all that can be said about Hugh Nibley, it is apparent to me he would have rethought everything he learned if new revelation of the restoration suggested it ought to be done.

There was a prominent anti-Mormon radio preacher named "Dr. Walter Martin." He had a radio call in show I listened to for years. He got most of what he said about Mormonism from

dubious source material and he made bombastic claims that were unconvincing to anyone who had read the widely available book *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, by LeGrand Richards—still a very good book. But Dr. Walter Martin had a constant refrain: “It is the first principle of Biblical hermeneutics that you interpret the old in light of the new.” Meaning, you understand the Old Testament by study of the New Testament. It is a sound principle. Of course, he violated this first principle when it came to the Book of Mormon and Joseph’s revelations. He discarded the new and judged it only by the old.

This is the one rule Dr. Walter Martin and I agree upon. I apply that across the board with all learning, study and meditation. To recover the past we do not begin the search there, but we begin the search with the latest revelation and attempt to recover truth as we measure it beside what we have received in our day from God.

If the search and accompanying conclusions into Joseph and the restoration are much different now than they were just a few years ago, and the intervening traditions and practices are clearly divergent from Joseph’s in just four generations, what does that tell us about caution for antiquity’s remaining documents? Even our understanding of New Testament times is only fragmentary. The historian Norman F. Cantor wrote about how little we really understand the middle ages in his book titled, *Inventing the Middle Ages*. He explains how traditions rather than proof inform much of our re-creation of the period in the relatively recent past. Going back another millennium to the New Testament is even more difficult. And the earliest ages are more challenging still.

The farther back we journey the more we need the restoration to guide, inform and set the framework for the search. This is why Joseph Smith was a necessary figure in this late date in history.

We will not get far if we do not accept him as the indispensable milestone marker for the correct path that God would ask us to follow for the walk back to His presence.

I advocate study of the past, including Egypt. What I do not suggest is we measure Joseph Smith by beginning with the New Testament, Old Testament or Egypt. We work backward to test for truth. I think anyone who believes in the restoration would agree with that.

JUNE 26, 2015

Hugh Nibley

Hugh Nibley was an apologist. He did not expand, alter, amend, or correct anything Joseph Smith accomplished. He defended Joseph's work and labored to better understand it. His life's work focused on antiquity to demonstrate the restoration through Joseph Smith was authentic. Antiquity was useful in recognizing that Joseph was the real thing, an authentic prophet. Nibley's work confirmed there were details of the restoration that were mirrored throughout the ancient world in past, fallen civilizations. He never preferred the ancients over Joseph, but showed us that Joseph "restored" what was lost from earlier ages. Hugh Nibley did not presume to change Joseph's work, instead he tried to change our appreciation for it.

JUNE 27, 2015

Alterations and Emendations

To a crowd in Nauvoo two months before he died Joseph Smith declared:

You don't know me; you never knew my heart. No man knows my history. I cannot tell it: I shall never undertake it. I don't

blame any one for not believing my history. If I had not experienced what I have, I would not have believed it myself. I never did harm any man since I was born in the world. My voice is always for peace. (*DHC* 6:317)

He was talking to believers. They assumed Joseph was like them. They projected onto him all their misapprehensions, desires, and ambitions as if they were his. But the crowd who was prideful, quarrelsome, arrogant, and foolish accepted among their ranks those who were engaged in adultery, conspiracies, financial speculation, and counterfeiting.

June 27th, two months after his public lament, Joseph was slain. His legacy was in the custody of the very group who did not know him. Those same people have now bequeathed to us their misapprehensions and errors. When we get to the anniversary of Joseph's martyrdom we mourn the loss of a man who remains, for most, a misunderstood stranger on whom we project the errors of that same Nauvoo group.

The challenges with Joseph's history began early. When John Whitmer, Church Historian and record keeper, left the faith in 1838 he took the history he had been keeping with him. That required a do-over.

But telling Joseph's history was entrusted to others. The Publication Committee members believed they had the right to make clarifications and emendations, and proceeded to do so. Today we have a conventional account of plural marriage handed to us by the proud descendants of the Nauvoo crowd who never knew Joseph. When that view is challenged, their descendants rise up in their pride to challenge and condemn a truer view of the prophet who never did harm to any man since he was born into the world.

Following Joseph Smith's death, there was an aggressive effort to change the records to support the new polygamous administration of Brigham Young. A recent author wrote:

The official *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* was published in book form under the direction of the First Presidency in 1902. The introductory assurance that 'no historical or doctrinal statement has been changed' is demonstrably wrong. Overshadowed by editorial censorship, hundreds of deletions, additions, and alterations, these seven volumes are not always reliable.... The nineteenth-century propaganda mill was so adroit that few outside Brigham Young's inner circle were aware of the behind-the-scenes alterations so seamlessly stitched into church history. Charles Wesley Wandell, an assistant church historian, was aghast at these emendations. Commenting on the many changes made in the historical work as it was being serialized in the *Deseret News*, Wandell noted in his diary: 'I notice the interpolations because having been employed in the Historian's office at Nauvoo by Doctor Richards, and employed, too, in 1845, in compiling this very autobiography, I know that after Joseph's death his memoir was 'doctored' to suit the new order of things, and this, too, by the direct order of Brigham Young to Doctor Richards and systematically by Richards.'" The Quorum of the Twelve, under Brigham Young's leadership, began altering the historical record shortly after Smith's death. Contrary to the introduction's claim, Smith did not author the *History of the Church*. At the time of his 1844 death, the narrative had been written up to 5 August 1838. (Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess*, Signature Books (Salt Lake City, 1994), p. 322)

I believe the unpublished text of Section 132 (the revelation on eternal marriage including plurality of wives) may have been one of the texts deliberately altered before its publication. Clearly, there were differences between Joseph Smith and Brigham Young on the subject of plural wives. **Compare these two passages from the text published by Brigham Young in 1852:**

First, the tight controls which must be in place before any authorized additional wife could be taken (in the second part of the revelation):

Verse 29: “Abraham received all things, whatsoever he received, *by revelation and commandment, by my word, saith the Lord...*” [God directly commanded him.]

Verse 39: “David’s wives and concubines *were given unto him of me*, by the hand of Nathan, my servant, and others of the prophets who had the keys of this power; and in none of these things did he sin against me save in the case of Uriah and his wife...” [A prophet specifically authorized the marriages.]

Now compare these limits with the any-thing-goes-if-you-can-talk-the-virgins-into-it language later in the same transcript:

Verses 61–62:

And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood—if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery for they are given unto him; for he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else. And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified.

The contrast between the strict limitations of verses 29 and 39, which seem to have been what was underway during Joseph Smith's lifetime, with the much broader license of verses 61–62, which seem to be a description of what happened with Brigham Young's practice, raises questions of alterations and emendations with the text. Brigham Young expanded the practice further (perhaps because of the short supply of additional virgins) to include widows, divorcees, and other men's wives (if you held more keys than her current husband). The published revelation seems to have cross-purposes and cross-motivations.

We know how Brigham Young advocated and practiced taking additional wives. What we have about Joseph Smith is very limited, and there is little first-hand information tying him to something definite.

Contrast these verses:

Verse 7: "... (and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and *there is never but one on the earth at a time* on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred)..."

Verse 39: "...by the hand of Nathan, my servant, *and others of the prophets who had the keys of this power...*"

The first publication of Section 132 had the parenthetical statement limiting it to "one on the earth at a time." Nathan was younger than David, and likely would have been functioning as a prophet throughout David's lifetime. **If others gave David wives, in addition to Nathan, while Nathan was still living, then there was not "only one at a time."**

Brigham Young fought Parley Pratt over who was able to authorize plural marriages. The dispute began before Section 132 was published. When Brigham Young called for his election as

“president” in December 1847, part of his reason for wanting the office was to make it clear that Parley Pratt did not have equal right to authorize plural marriages. He wanted sole control. He claimed that right as president, and verse 7’s parenthetical insertion justifies his claim to exclusivity. If it were not there, Brigham Young could not thwart other apostles’ claims to the right to seal marriages. Brigham Young elevated his rhetoric about unauthorized plural marriages by asserting they were “adulterous” if HE alone did not authorize them. When Parley was murdered by Elenor McLean’s husband, Hector, in 1857 Brigham Young remarked the killing was justified because of Pratt’s adultery.

Section 132 is the only substantive evidence originating directly from Joseph Smith on the subject of plural wives. **What if it does not actually contain an unaltered text? What if the best proof we have is compromised by lds leaders between Joseph’s death in 1844 and publication eight years later?**

The overwhelming body of now accepted proof about what Joseph did, said and thought about the practice is taken from information gathered, produced or composed **after** the public announcement in 1852, and much of it decades after that.

Almost everyone has their mind made up about this topic, so it is unlikely for any new opinions to be formed on this subject by the present generation. But I believe the LDS Church has done a poor job of protecting the name and reputation of Joseph Smith. Had the record not been flooded with post-1852 advocacy for Brigham Young’s practices, it is much more likely Mormons would share Emma Smith’s explanation of Joseph’s conduct than the one commonly accepted today.

Reclaiming Joseph's name and reputation on this topic seems like an unlikely battle to win today. The Nauvoo descendants continue to impose on Joseph their inherited misapprehensions.

I mourn Joseph's death today. But I mourn every day the sometimes grotesque caricature that the proud descendants of Nauvoo pretend is an authentic picture of a man they never knew.

JUNE 28, 2015

Section 132

Any complex subject involving Mormon history, doctrine or practice is always part of a larger picture. If that larger picture is not part of the analysis, things can be confusing. It is impossible to lay out everything in a single comment. Might I remind you that I never make any attempt to tell everything I think, believe or know in a single post or book.

The discussion about Section 132 has provoked additional questions. Those questions, if answered, will lead to still more questions. In response to the current round of questions I've received I would add:

1. It is the LDS Church and "fundamentalists" who claim Section 132 authorizes their past and present practices. Therefore, they must accept it as is, intact, and deal with the issues raised for their practice by the very revelation they claim justifies their behavior. They can't really begin to question or limit the language. For both of these the "one man at a time" issue is fundamental because it identifies who they must follow. The questions I posed to the polygamists about who authorized their current practice (as the "one") remains the right question for them to sort out.

2. The meaning of “one man at a time on the earth” was interpreted by Brigham Young (and all subsequent believers in Section 132) to mean only one man can authorize plural marriages. The language is in the transcript as a parenthetical inside verse 7. This raises the question of whether it was there in the first place, or if it was there but located somewhere else in the transcript originally and was moved there, or if it was not there at all in the original. Looking at the surviving document won't help (see point 6, below).

3. There is an idea that the term “one man at a time on the earth” is part of the earliest gospel. It has nothing to do with plural wives. It has to do with the original Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God, which has a single individual in each generation in the family structure. But that has nothing to do with the way Section 132 is generally interpreted or understood. In practical terms, the way Section 132 uses “one man at a time on the earth” should be interpreted as a unique elevation of a single individual elected by God to become the Holy Spirit of Promise. In most generations, the office of the Holy Spirit of Promise belongs to and is filled by God. Understanding of this subject did not survive Joseph's martyrdom. Explaining it would only invite the deceivers to step forward and claim they are such an officeholder and are entitled to respect (and probably money and more sex partners given what we've seen from the fundamentalists).

4. I do think there was a revelation concerning plural wives. I think Section 132 is an altered text and probably not what was given to Joseph.

5. The practice of adoption (or what was sometimes called “man-to-man sealing”) appears to have been a very late development and was not preserved in a way that we can understand what Joseph was doing. Before that very late development, the idea of eternal “sealing” seems to have been confined to marriages. When

Joseph organized family relationships, it seems to have been entirely by intermarriages at first. This allowed a family to be sealed to Joseph Smith by his marrying the daughters, then sealing parents, etc. together as an extended family unit. The record of Joseph's "proposals" for marriages to some church leader's daughters (if the accounts are reliable) seem to have been worded by Joseph with this idea in mind.

Marriage sealing would also allow a married couple to be sealed to Joseph by sealing the wife to Joseph, then the husband and wife together, and then sealing them all together as a single family unit. The idea this could be changed to a form of sealing by adoption of a man to another man as father/son seems to have been a very late development, poorly explained, and not preserved with an ordinance that survived Joseph's death. This has left the topic to scholarly debate and speculation. Much of the confusion about what Joseph was doing in sealings of marriages, and confusion about "adoption" of men to men or what was called "man to man sealing" is because Joseph died before he clearly established the practice. It died with him. Perhaps that was in the wisdom of God to prevent abuse and pretensions by the people left behind in Nauvoo.

6. Since William Clayton wrote the original, and was still alive and close to Brigham Young when Section 132 was made public, it is possible the original was re-written by Clayton before its publication in 1852. The *Joseph Smith Papers* project may be of some help. But at this late date, given Charles Wandell's diary, it is probably hopeless for us to untangle the questions from a search and examination of available records.

7. Until Passing the Heavenly Gift, everything I wrote was intended to leave the LDS Church claims unchallenged. I was an active member of the institution and felt inclined to sustain

the organization's claims. Everything in *The Second Comforter*, *Nephi's Isaiah*, *Eighteen Verses*, *Beloved Enos*, *Come, Let Us Adore Him*, *Remembering the Covenant* (5 Vols.), and *Ten Parables* was composed by me as a faithful and loyal Latter-day Saint. In *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, I asked questions and proposed another framework for the events of the restoration. In the book, the issues were explored as possibilities, missing or unmentioned historical evidence was set out, and the reader was left to choose for themselves what to conclude. After that book, I was excommunicated and no longer felt the need to defend or sustain the organization. The content of *Essays: Three Degrees* is compatible with traditional LDS beliefs, although the Brigham Young essay does not flatter President Young. It is not unfair to him, but would not please his fans. Now, however, what I write, say or teach is done without any need on my part to consider what, if any, effect it may have on the church. The next book will address the foundational beginning of the restoration, its prophetic future, and what is still required.

The restoration is about to be completely compromised by the institutional LDS organization. If we do not establish another way to avoid the coming catastrophe, the restoration will utterly fail. The movement begun now will seem very prescient in a few years. In coming days many people will want a place to land as the LDS Church undergoes changes to retain their standing, favorable tax status, popularity and wealth. People need a place to fellowship where they can function and learn how to preserve the restoration in a place that will be a refuge for those fleeing an increasingly corrupt organization.

What has begun may seem small, unnecessary and even rebellious at present. It will not be long before it is viewed very differently.

JULY 2015

JULY 1, 2015

Record Keeping

The Recorder has posted a notice he wanted me to flag here. The “Notice” concerns submission of names for recording and appears here: <http://www.recordersclearinghouse.com/2015/06/>

The names for 2012, 2013, 2014 need to be submitted today, July 1st, to allow the record for those years to be arranged alphabetically in the book he is now preparing. Late submissions will never be rejected, but will not appear in the alphabetical order (or perhaps in the appropriate year) as the handwritten record is kept. The scriptures always speak about “blotting out”—which is an apt way to describe a handwritten record. You cannot erase or expand a handwritten record as it can be done with an electronic data base. So when the Record is prepared by the Recorder, it is done also by hand (as instructed) and therefore once a year is completed, any later submitted missing names will be added in another year’s list. Alphabetizing each year’s names makes locating a name much easier if it ever needs to be located in the future.

JULY 5, 2015

Pursuing Happiness

As a society organized under a common government, our society is dependent on agreement on principles, including a common set of morals. As John Adams correctly put it, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

Thomas Jefferson was given credit for these words of the Declaration which marked the formal decision to rebel from British rule: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” John Locke advocated freedom of life, liberty and property. Jefferson did not use John Locke’s “property” but changed it to “happiness.”

Those words were written against an ecclesiastical, intellectual, philosophical, legal and governmental background that assumed a meaning for the word “happiness.” The idea of happiness envisioned in the Declaration of Independence incorporated the notion of virtue and the existence of a natural moral law established by a Divine Creator. This moral law was knowable through reason which would permit us to detect objective norms of right and wrong. It revealed to us God’s eternal law, the same God who created the natural order, and revealed Himself to mankind in Christ.

We are not solely dependent upon reason and the Bible to understand the means to gain happiness. We have this from Alma 41:10–11:

Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness. And now, my son, all men that are in a state of nature, or I would say, in a carnal state, are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity; they are without God in the world, and they have gone contrary to the nature of God; therefore, they are in a state contrary to the nature of happiness.”

However much men may seek happiness in wickedness, it cannot be found there.

Not only is it contrary to the nature of happiness to live contrary to the nature of God and godliness, it is likewise contrary to our ability to govern ourselves peaceably. When we as a people cannot agree on morality, and decide what is, to a large segment of the population considered to be immoral, to then be supported, justified, protected and sustained by the Constitution, the Constitution becomes wholly inadequate for governing us.

In a revelation given us in August 1833, we were cautioned:

And that law of the land which is constitutional, supporting that principle of freedom in maintaining rights and privileges, belongs to all mankind, and is justifiable before me. Therefore, I, the Lord, justify you, and your brethren of my church, in befriending that law which is the constitutional law of the land; And as pertaining to law of man, whatsoever is more or less than this, cometh of evil. I, the Lord God, make you free, therefore ye are free indeed; and the law also maketh you free. Nevertheless, when the wicked rule, the people mourn. Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men ye should observe to uphold; otherwise whatsoever is less than these cometh of evil. (D&C 98:5–10)

Christ was not “an high priest which cannot be touched with the felling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Christ knows how to help us in our struggles because He has likewise suffered from every point of temptation that men must endure. Alma 7:11 explained this about Christ, “he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses

of his people.” Every difficulty men encounter, Christ likewise encountered and therefore He understands how to minister to all our needs, comfort us in our trials, and help us endure what cannot be avoided.

Modern scripture explains Him and how He overcame sin, He is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them; And that he created man, male and female, after his own image and in his own likeness, created he them; And gave unto them commandments that they should love and serve him, the only living and true God, and that he should be the only being whom they should worship. But by the transgression of these holy laws man became sensual and devilish, and became fallen man. Wherefore, the Almighty God gave his Only Begotten Son, as it is written in those scriptures which have been given of him. He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them. (D&C 20:17–22)

When we “give heed” to our temptations, we lose the battle our Lord won.

It is possible to live in a world filled with sin and avoid becoming embroiled in the errors. Do not let your eyes focus on the wickedness you see around you, but look up to heaven and the example of Heaven’s God, where there is no corruption.

Our society is no longer sustainable as a cohesive and unified people. It may take years for it to finish its disintegration, but its failure is well underway. The only means to salvage a peaceable society will be to either convince the whole to repent and return, or, failing that, to divide into separate bodies and allow those who agree on certain moral principles, to live together.

We have an opportunity to attempt to convince others to repent and return. This ought to be our work for now. It seems likely we will follow the foolish example of the Book of Mormon people who previously lived on this land and, like them, divide into warring factions before destruction will sweep away the more wicked people from this land.

The Book of Mormon warns us plainly:

For behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fulness of iniquity among the children of the land, that they are swept off. And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God—that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fulness come, that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done. Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, who hath been manifested by the things which we have written. (Ether 2:10–12)

JULY 15, 2015

Secret and Public

I have received an email informing me that there are those who claim I teach one thing in secret and another in public. That is a toxic notion I reject.

The most unfortunate thing about this is that traditional LDS beliefs actually REQUIRE us to accept the public/private hypocrisy of people of faith. What a tragic legacy we have been handed.

I reject the idea we must live lies to be true to God. It is a false idea and utterly contemptible. I wish there was no one who believed this could be a “true principle” because it is not.

If you look carefully at scripture, the information withheld from the public was NEVER a contradiction of what was given. It was more, and it was sacred, and it could be profaned and used to support wickedness if taught in public. But it was not a contradiction, not something to make the public information a lie, and not hypocritical.

It is tragic we have inherited this legacy. It is only because of this legacy that the idea I’m saying one thing in private and another in public could be advanced. I reject plural marriage, do not and will not practice it. It is abhorrent to me and the evidence tying it to Joseph Smith has been manipulated to fit a pattern adopted after his death. Sorting it out now is almost impossible, because the LDS community is almost entirely polygamists—whether they think it is to be practiced today or not, they believe it is a true principle. I do not. I think Section 132 was altered before released to the public.

The advice I give to everyone is to let their disputes end and if reconciliation needs to happen then it should be between those directly involved and in private.

What a sad thing this has remained. I would ask that my name not be associated with any attempt to advance and continue a grave historical problem with LDS Mormonism. I am public about what I advocate, teach and practice.

3.2 Beer

Minutes of meetings of the first presidency and quorum of the twelve are not made available for public view. However, participants in those meetings have kept diaries, which tell us about their discussions. Fifteen years into his tenure as LDS Church President, Heber J. Grant's diary records an issue they discussed when Prohibition ended.

Twenty-five days after the repeal of Prohibition through the 21st Amendment, Heber J. Grant's diary has the following entry:

I was in favor of all the General Authorities resigning as directors of the Utah Hotel, because I felt they would simply have to sell beer and it would be better for us to be out of it. (December 30, 1933)

On January 3, 1934 his diary contains the following entry:

At 11:15 this morning there was a meeting of the Presidency and Apostles in the Presidency's office, and the matter of my continuing as President of the Utah Hotel in view of the fact that the hotel is selling 3.2 beer was discussed, and the brethren felt that it as it was legal and declared by government chemists to be non-intoxicating it would be best for me to remain as President of the company, that it would create more comment if I resigned than if I were to stay with it. The question of advertising Anheiser Busch beer in the Deseret News was discussed and it was decided not to accept this advertisement.

Today, Utah remains one of only 5 states that restrict beer sold in grocery stores, drug stores and gas stations to 3.2% alcohol content.

JULY 17, 2015

Taxation/Representation

The Revolutionary War slogan “no taxation without representation” should be reconsidered for our present plight. The new slogan should be “no representation without taxation.” Unless a person actually bears the burden of paying the required tax, they should have no right to vote and impose the burden on anyone else.

Democracies fail because of human weakness. There will always be a majority of people willing to let others sacrifice, ask others to pay, and avoid responsibilities if they can manage it. Nobility and greatness are rare and precious things. The mob wants to sit in the coliseum, eat free, and watch gladiators battle for their amusement.

When the mob realizes they need not do anything more than vote higher taxes on others to pay for their bread and entertainment, society is doomed. Greece is facing a complete national failure because of human weakness. All western socialist societies are headed into the same dark end.

The United States does not have the leadership required to change, the population with the self-discipline required to change course, nor enough educated people able to see or understand our doom. If you can see the problem, you should speak up. Help others to understand the path we are on will end with collapse and violence.

JULY 18, 2015

A God of Order

There is something underway. It began with the Latter-day Saints. It will move on to address other gentiles, then the Lehi remnant, and finally the Jews. It will unfold as the Lord directs, at the time and in the manner He wants.

The wild enthusiasm and foolish excesses of those invited first is nothing to be concerned about. An invitation is nothing more

than that: an offer. What people do in response determines if they will be gathered. Most will never be gathered.

Anyone who will wait patiently for the Lord, do what He asks, as He asks it, and remain faithful will be remembered by Him. His angels will watch over and ultimately gather them to safety.

The hardness and blindness of the Latter-day Saints was anticipated, and prophesied by the Lord. He has shown them the courtesy of inviting them to repent.

The invitation will be given to others, and some few of them will respond. There will be only a few saved out of every group. It will not be many but it does not require many.

The systematic approach to the final invitation will roll out under the direction of the Lord, in the way He directs, and with results based on whether they “hear His voice” — the same criteria as when He was here during the New Testament era.

JULY 25, 2015

Leaders Have Fought God

The Missouri persecutions would not have happened without betrayal among the leading church authorities. The editors of the *Times and Seasons* took the extraordinary step of naming some of the leaders responsible for the Missouri outrages in the April 1840 edition.

These characters were busy in striving to stir up strife and turmoil among the brethren, and urging on mean and vexatious lawsuits; they were also, studiously engaged in circulating false and slanderous reports against the saints, to stir up our enemies to anger against us, that they might again drive us from our homes, and enjoy the spoils together, we are disposed here, to give the names of some of those characters, believing that justice to an injured people, requires

it at our hands. They are as follows, viz: Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmore [Whitmer], W.W. Phelps, John Whitmore [Whitmer], and Lyman E. Johnson.

Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer were two of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon who testified they saw the plates, beheld the angel, and heard the voice of God testifying to them.

John Whitmer was the Church Historian who left and took with him all the church's history composed to that date.

Lyman E. Johnson was one of the original Twelve Apostles.

W.W. Phelps was an assistant-president of the church in Missouri and had been a scribe to Joseph Smith.

All these men had credibility because of their status as knowledgeable, respected and well informed leaders within the Mormon community. When they turned on Joseph and the church, the Missourians reasonably believed them.

The mobs who attacked the saints were inspired in large part by the testimony and affidavits signed by former insiders. Their testimony led to the conclusion that the Mormon community was a threat to law abiding citizens. The "Salt Sermon" delivered on July 4, 1838 by Sidney Rigdon threatened a "war of extermination" against the Missourians if they ever troubled the saints again. This phrase was repeated by Governor Boggs in his "Extermination Decree"—but "extermination" was coined originally by Sidney Rigdon. The Salt Sermon was widely circulated at the time. The idea of extermination was turned by the former insiders into a threat against all non-Mormons living in Missouri, as if the Mormons intended to become the aggressors.

The many accusations against Joseph Smith included Oliver Cowdery's false claim that Joseph was an adulterer. The Missourians

believed the Mormons were a menace, were led by hypocrites, and intended to violently overthrow the local communities. These conclusions were based on what the above identified Mormon leaders (and other leaders including church apostles) were claiming. The Missourians thought they were getting the truth from believable sources.

In the May 1840 edition of the *Times and Seasons* a letter which had been written by Joseph Smith while he was imprisoned in Missouri during the Mormon War was published which included, in part, the following:

...saith the Lord. Those who cry transgression, do it because they are the servants of sin, and are the children of disobedience themselves, and swear falsely against my servants, that they may bring them into bondage, and death—

...Wo unto all those who drive, and murder, and testify against my people, saith the Lord of hosts, for they shall not escape the damnation of hell...

That same letter seems to indict Sidney Rigdon for the intemperate language of his Salt Sermon:

We would respectfully advise the brethren, to be aware of an aspiring spirit, which has frequently urged men forward to make foul speeches and beget an undue influence in the minds of the saints and bring much sorrow and distress in the church; we would likewise say be aware of pride, for truly hath the wise man said “pride goeth before destruction and an haughty spirit before a fall;” outward appearance is not always a criterion for us to judge our fellow man by, but the lips frequently betray the haughty and overbearing mind, flattery also, is a deadly poison; a frank and open rebuke, provoketh a good man to emulation, and in the hour

of trouble he will be your best friend, but rebuke a wicked man and you will soon see manifest, all the corruption of a wicked heart, the poison of asps is under their tongue, and they cast the saints in prison that their deeds be not reprov'd.

Although W.W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery later returned to the church, and Phelps was forgiven by Joseph Smith, the condemnation was not withdrawn by the Lord.

Whether it was in Kirtland, Missouri or Nauvoo, the greatest source of trouble came from current or former Mormon church leaders. The list of “persecutors” who had the greatest effect on killing other Mormons were the then-current or former Mormon leaders.

We should study the past to avoid repeating the errors. The people we have trusted to lead have condemned the innocent of being wicked in the past. They have brought condemnation on themselves and trouble for others when they have cried “transgression” although there is none.

JULY 28, 2015

False Claims Against Joseph Smith

In the April 1840 edition of the *Times and Seasons* (Vol. 1, No.6) the History of the Missouri Persecutions continued. That installment explained how lies by insiders managed to inspire Missouri mob violence. The bad deeds of others (including Sampson Avard) were attributed to Joseph. People still debate whether Joseph knew and approved of Avard’s underground vigilantes called the “Danites.” Joseph, however, was unequivocal in denying his involvement or awareness.

This pattern of attributing bad deeds to Joseph and others behind their backs was an effective technique in Missouri. It destroyed the peace and stirred up mob violence. The same technique was later used again by insiders (including members of the first presidency) to inspire the mobbing and murders of Joseph and Hyrum.

In the *Times and Seasons* article, after recounting the violence, murder, burning of homes and crops, theft of property and imprisonment, the question was posed of “why” the Missourians behaved this way:

Was it for committing adultery? We are aware that false and slanderous reports have gone abroad, which have reached our ears, respecting this thing, which have been started by renagades, and spread by the dissenters, who are extremely active in spreading foul and libilous reports concerning us; thinking thereby to gain the fellowship of the world, knowing that we are not of the world; and that the world hates us. By so doing they only show themselves to be vile traitors and sycophants.

... We have learned also since we have been in prison that many false and pernicious things, which were calculated to lead the saints astray and do great injury, have been taught by Dr. Avard, who has represented them as coming from the presidency; and we have reason to fear, that many other designing and corrupt characters, like unto himself, have taught many things, which the presidency never knew of, until after they were made prisoners which, if they had known, they would have spurned them and their authors as they would a serpent.

Thus we find, that there has been frauds, secret abominations, and evil works of darkness going on leading the minds of the weak

and unwary into confusion and distraction, and all of which has been endeavored to be palmed upon the presidency, who were ignorant of these things which were practised upon the church in our name.

... We could enumerate the names of many who have acted in a mean and dastardly manner, some of whom we once considered our friends men whom we once thought would never condescend to such unhallowed proceedings, but their love of the world and the praise of men has overcome every feeling of virtue, and they have yielded obedience once more to their old master, consequently their last end will be worse than the first.

The circumstances seem to fulfill the Lord's description of the gentiles to whom the gospel would be given in the last days:

And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you: At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations; and if they shall do all those things, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them. (3 Ne. 16:10)

Joseph's words describing the saints of his day, ("frauds, secret abominations, and evil works of darkness going on") are similar to the Father's quoted by the Lord, ("filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations").

Things did not improve in Nauvoo. Conspiracies there would attribute worse behavior to Joseph; more allegations of secret teachings, more foul and widespread adulterous relationships, and darkness resulting in Joseph and Hyrum's murders.

The tragedy is that the LDS Church attributed to Joseph and Hyrum what their false accusers claimed. Those who told lies about Joseph did it to cover their own sins. LDS leaders adopted many of the lies and practiced many of the abominations. They inherited lies. They believed them and were led to publicly practice foolish lusts and claim it as integral to their religion. Now if the truth is told it is not believed.

CHAPTER 5

Framing The Right Questions

AUGUST 2015

AUGUST 1, 2015

Sunstone 2015

Today at 5:00 I will speak as part of a panel discussion at the 2015 Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City. The panel will examine “The Mormon Legal Mind.”

It doesn't sound like a particularly interesting subject, but it is. LDS Mormonism is now subject to corporate organization and legal construction. There is really only one LDS Mormon, one member and one owner. It is the single individual who is the senior-most tenured member of the church's 12 apostles. He owns everything, including the religion.

To make the legal construction understandable, an example shows how LDS Mormonism is the property of one individual: If instead of staying away from church, the roughly two-thirds of the baptized members were to come to General Conference and unanimously vote out the Church President, First Presidency, Quorum of Twelve, Seventies, and all other General Authorities

as presently constituted—literally vote every one of them out and elect an entirely new slate of officers, this would be what happened:

The Corporation of the First Presidency, sole, could tell all LDS Mormons everywhere in the world that they could no longer use any LDS chapel. He could tell them to stay out of his temples because he was locking the doors. He could keep Deseret Book, Deseret Management Corporation and all its assets, all the church welfare farms, all its intellectual property including copyrights, its offices, condominiums, Temple Square, the Conference Center, Brigham Young University, BYU Hawaii, and all other church colleges, all the thousands of acres of property in Missouri, Florida and Hawaii, the Polynesian Cultural Center, City Creek Mall, and everything else. The entire LDS empire would remain his sole property, and the “church” would have no legal right to use or keep any of it. They wouldn’t even have the right to use the name “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” because it is a registered mark owned by one man.

So the legal construct of LDS Mormonism is a topic worth at least learning something about. The panel today will discuss it at 5:00 p.m.

AUGUST 6, 2015

Predicting the Unpredictable

The Lord keeps His counsel close to Himself. Although prophets have given us His promises about the last days, the promises will be fulfilled by God in His own way, His own time, and according to His determination (Isa. 55:8–9). Even when He discloses what He is doing to a prophet, the words spoken by His messengers are not frequently accepted, much less understood.

Men may ruminate, speculate and pontificate about what God WILL do, or what God CANNOT do, but they will only know what God did after it has been done. The topic of the “remnant” occupies the attention of Latter-day Saints, and their offshoots. I don’t think the reservation wards of the US Government will one day break free from that ingrained social arrangement to build a self-sustaining, independent Zion which can exist independent of every other creature under heaven (See D&C 78:14). It is improbable people content to remain dependent on government support will abruptly decide to “stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world” and build Zion.)

In a recent study of racial composition in the US by the Pew Institute, they made this interesting observation:

The number of people who identify themselves as multiracial is growing three times faster than the population as a whole, according to a new report that explores the latest nuances and contradictions of racial identity in a society that has sometimes seen itself as a melting pot.

And the largest group of mixed-race people include those who have been here the longest: whites and Native Americans. They make up half of the mixed-race population in the United States but are also least likely to think of themselves as multiracial. (See *The Washington Post*, “Pew: Multiracial population changing the face of the U.S.,” June 11, 2015)

The Lord may well decide to use “the mixed-race population” which “are also least likely to think of themselves as multiracial”—or the largest mixed race group in the US. The mixture of whites and Native Americans may have been foreseen (2 Ne. 30:6).

As the report states, “the largest group of multiracial people, those with white and American Indian ancestry, have only a faint connection to their indigenous heritage.”

Looking for the “remnant” will not fulfill prophecy if the Lord intends to fulfill it in His own way, time and manner. We should do what we are asked, when asked, in the way we are asked to do it, and leave it to the Lord to vindicate His word. He will accomplish it in a way that will cause men (as Christ put it) to “shut their mouths; for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider” (3 Ne. 21:8).

AUGUST 11, 2015

Answer to an Email

I got an email asking about different answers received by different people to their prayers on the same subject. Two of the subjects were multiple mortalities and plural marriage. In response I wrote an email back that stated the following:

Probably would be better as a discussion rather than an email. It is worth taking some time to run through the issue and the way it manifests itself in scripture.

Briefly:

- An answer to prayer is often based on the question asked and the frame of reference in which the question is framed. Oftentimes we do not yet know enough to frame the right question.
- God deals with each of us where we are at the moment we approach Him. He does not always tell us something we haven't yet prepared our minds and hearts to receive. So when He gives

an answer to a partial, incomplete, and unfocused inquiry, while the answer will be “true” it is an answer inside a context.

- At one point in life we want to know what we should be doing as a first priority and we are told “get a spouse.” Well that answer might be a good one when you are unmarried and young, but if you take that as the continuing, enduring and last commandment from God on the subject you may decide you need to be acquiring a second spouse, then a third, and so on.
- Often God speaks in symbols, not in definite meanings. For example the vision or dream of Lehi concerning the tree, pathway, iron rod and building filled with mockers. If you read his vision you may get any number of meanings from it. Nephi asked for the same thing, and although there was a tree, fruit, iron rod, pathway and building there was also so much more and different than what his father saw that you could easily conclude it was a very different answer. If you were to decide Lehi and Nephi conflicted, and then developed an argument to prove they disagreed it could easily be done. But that would be contrary to what Nephi’s record stressed.
- If you read the talk from Ephraim about Christ as the prototype of the saved man you will see that there are many stages of development required before anyone attains to the resurrection. These are called “estates” in scripture. The phrase “multiple mortalities” is non-scriptural. The concept of reincarnation was denounced by Joseph as a false doctrine. But there is something true about the doctrine of “estates” in which we are able to be “added upon.” I think a discussion about the subject requires a great deal more care and understanding than the scriptures presently outline. On subjects like this because the scriptures are so inadequate to make it clear it is dangerous to fill in the

missing details with what someone said years following Joseph Smith's death about what they thought he taught in private to a few individuals. To take those statements and put together additional elaborations made by the "insiders" expounding their own thoughts or worse still, a third-hand exponent elaborating on what must be true invites error. It invites speculation and conclusions which are not supportable from the clear statements of scripture. When it comes to this subject, the greatest difficulty I see is that it distracts from the test presently underway. When you take all of it together ask yourself: "So what?" If it is all absolutely true, "so what?" How does that help you pass the test of this estate presently underway? How will it rescue your soul in the challenge faced and the peril of this mortal sojourn? Assuming the insight you gained about being an ancestor who died young is true, so what? How does that rescue your soul? How does knowing that change what you need to do to get through the challenges of this afternoon?

- I know of no way to receive light and truth from heaven but by patient, obedient and disciplined living by everything God has said, commanded or instructed. It is as the Lord told His disciples, some things are not overcome "but by fasting and prayer." A haphazard inquiry from a proud and hard hearted soul will not likely receive an answer from the same Lord who spent entire nights alone in solitary prayer. Our Lord's prayers were so private that His own disciples needed to ask Him to teach them how to pray, because He did not display it for them to learn from by overhearing. He went alone, apart and in private, and then prayed for hours, oftentimes overnight. This was Christ. This was He who is "more intelligent than them all." Yet people expect then can ask in haste about something

that shatters their paradigm and, in their pride expect to have everything they always believed be ratified to their satisfaction and what annoys them to be denounced. Until the heart is broken and willing to accept the sad news that they are wrong and God is going to correct them they are not likely to get an answer other than they are right. In fact they've been right all along. Answers from a meek and lowly Lord come with the greatest accuracy to the meek and lowly inquirer. There are but few of those living.

It is a big subject. It can't be covered in a few brief statements and probably not suited at all for email. But I hope these ideas are of some value to you.

AUGUST 20, 2015

Genocide

Genocide has become a tool of modern governments to achieve political control and eliminate unwanted populations. The most horrific recent examples include:

China, under Mao's rule, killed at least 49 million of its citizens.

Under Stalin, the Soviet Union killed 20 million.

Adolf Hitler killed approximately 6 million in concentration camps and 12 million in the war.

In the Congo, King Leopold killed approximately 8 million.

The Khmer Rouge killed an estimated 2.4 million.

The Armenian genocide killed as many as 1.5 million.

All of these are exceeded by the United States' government sponsored killing of unborn children. Abortion was decreed a Constitutional right in the opinion written by Harry Blackmun in 1973. In the decades following his decree, an estimated 55 million have been murdered. Most of these have been paid for by taxpayer

money allocated for that purpose. The United States has murdered more than Mao, Stalin, Hitler, King Leopold, the Khmer Rouge and the Ottoman Empire. At the present rate, in a few more decades, the United States will have killed more than all of them combined. These other genocidal governments targeted political opponents and consolidated their power to govern by killing. The United States has killed primarily in support of sexual gratification, hedonism and as an accepted form of birth control. Every one involved will be held to account for killing.

“Inasmuch as ye do it unto the least of these, ye do it unto me.”
D&C 48:38.

“Thou shalt not ...kill, nor do anything like unto it.” D&C 59:6.

“why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” Luke 6:46.

AUGUST 25, 2015

Baptism is Mandatory

There is one Lord, only one faith, and only one baptism acceptable to Him (Eph. 4:5).

The Lord has a simple doctrine. He explained it directly to those who heard Him at Bountiful. Here is His doctrine:

And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me. And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be

damned. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost. And thus will the Father bear record of me, and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me; for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one. And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things. And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them. (3 Ne. 11:32–40)

Baptism must be by immersion (3 Ne. 11:26: “then shall ye immerse them in the water, and com forth again out of the water”).

To baptize, a man must have been given authority by Jesus Christ. Christ taught that in the baptismal prayer He required to be recited by anyone performing the ordinance. It establishes the condition that He first directly gives them authority to baptize: “These are the words which ye shall say, calling them by name, saying: Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen” (3 Ne. 11:24–25).

Catholics baptize by sprinkling. This is not accepted by the Lord as His because it does not comply with the required pattern.

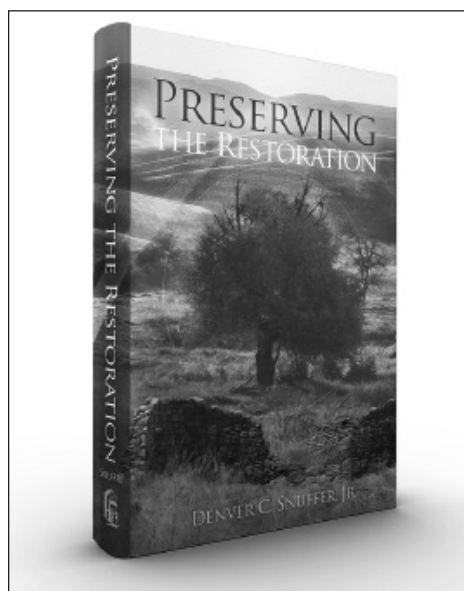
Baptists may immerse, but do not have authority to baptize given to them by Jesus Christ. This is not accepted as His.

All the denominations are presently astray. But God still offers baptism.

There are some few authorized by Christ, performing baptism with His authority, teaching the doctrine of Christ, and giving freely an ordinance to any willing to accept the Doctrine of Christ and repent.

God has made Himself directly known to prophets of old. He did so with Abraham (Gen. 15:1); and Jacob/Israel (Gen. 46:2); and has said He would do so with any authentic prophet (Num. 12:6).

The LDS Church does not offer an acceptable baptism any longer. In the LDS Church's official publication for their missionaries (who are involved with any baptism of any individual nine years of age or older), they instruct the following is to be included in the missionaries' Baptismal Interview Questions (see *Preach My Gospel*, p. 206): "2. Do you believe that [current Church President] is a prophet of God? What does this mean to you?"



The phrasing of the question presumes any generic church president who happens to be “current” is *ipso facto* “a prophet of God.” The office makes it so.

It is a church office in LDS theology, and not the calling of the man by God’s own voice. (Contrast with JST Gen. 14:29).

The baptism offered by LDS Church missionaries is based on an adulteration of Christ’s doctrine, is not effective, and will no longer be accepted by Christ as His. He does, however, require baptism. The acceptable means was outlined in my talk in Phoenix and can be read as a paper on this blog, or the talk can be downloaded here or streamed on YouTube.

Baptism is necessary. A record is likewise necessary. Baptism is offered freely, without obligation, and without initiating you to follow another man or men. You are free to thereafter worship as you see fit. But it is essential. A record is kept by a central recorder. The website is www.recordersclearinghouse.com. It is a necessary process.

The only condition for baptism is to accept the Doctrine of Christ, set out by Christ in His own words. Christ commanded it be done, and has reiterated that it is to be done anew in our day. We will be disappointed at His coming if we fail to obey.

AUGUST 28, 2015

FAIR Conference

FAIR held a conference in Provo on August 6th and 7th. Presentations included the following speakers/topics:

Ed Pinegar: *How to help young Latter-day Saints deal with criticisms against the Church and the doubts they cause while remaining faithful.*

Margaret Barker: *The Mother in Heaven and Her Children*.

Brittany Chapman: *An Act of Religious Conviction: Mormon Women and Nineteenth-Century Polygamy*.

Ron Dennis: *Captain Dan Jones: Defender of the Faith in Wales*.

Brant Gardner: *History and Historicity in the Book of Mormon*.

James D. Gordon III: *Faith and Scholarship*.

Mrs. Brian D. Hales: *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding*.

Cassandra Hedelius: *A house of order, a house of God: Recycled challenges to the legitimacy of the church*.

Michael R. Otterson: *Correcting The Record*.

Dan Peterson: *The Reasonable Leap into Light: A Barebones Secular Argument for the Gospel*.

Paul Reeve: *From Not White Enough, to Too White: Rethinking the Mormon Racial Story*.

Stephen Webb: *Why Mormon Materialism Matters*.

Lynne Wilson: *Christ's Emancipation of Women in the New Testament from their Cultural Background and Baggage*.

These all sound like great presentations. But the *LDS Church News* only reported on two of the talks: Otterson's talk (he is employed in the LDS Church Public Relations Department) and Hedelius, an attorney working for the government somewhere near Washington DC.

The *LDS Church News* article did not clearly identify what (or who) Hedelius was targeting (See, *Speaker identifies 'spiritual threat'*, August 16, 2015, p. 11). That omission has been fixed by *LDS Meridian Magazine* which has now published her entire talk, with footnotes, here: "*A House of Order; A House of God: Recycled Challenges to the legitimacy of the Church*" <http://ldsmag.com/a-house-of-order-a-house-of-god-recycled-challenges-to-the-legitimacy-of-the-church/>.

Dan Peterson and Ed Pinegar are usually more noticed than an obscure speaker on her maiden voyage into FAIR.

AUGUST 29, 2015

Second Comforter

As foreign translations of *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil* are being considered, one question that has come up is whether the book ought to be updated to reflect changes since its original publication 9 years ago. There will be no changes made in the book. If there is a third edition, there will be no changes made there either.

I was an active, faithful Latter-day Saint when the book was written. It is a correct statement of the LDS Church beliefs at that time. The book preserves an important moment in time, before even more radical changes to the LDS Church were made.

When the book was written it was understood that “*The Second Comforter*” referred to Christ. The footnotes in LDS scripture confirmed John 14: 16, 18 and 23 were referring to Christ. They were Christ’s promise that He would appear to His disciples. In the latest revisions to the LDS scriptures, the reference was changed and redefined to mean the Holy Ghost, and not Christ.

The LDS Church has not yet changed, altered or deleted the explanation to John 14:23 in the D&C. That volume of scripture still states: “John 14:23—The appearing of the Father and the Son, in that verse, is a personal appearance; and the idea that the Father and the Son dwell in a man’s heart is an old sectarian notion, and is false” (D&C 130: 3).

The elimination of the footnotes was not inadvertent. The LDS Church no longer teaches that it is possible for a faithful Latter-day

Saint to receive *The Second Comforter*. As recently as June 13, 2015, LDS assistant historian Richard Turley and church apostle Dallin Oaks traveled to Boise, Idaho, and while there denounced the idea of church members having spiritual experiences that go “entirely against all the rules of order that we have talked about” (Recording at 59 minutes). Turley, quoting President Spencer W. Kimball, warned that this kind of experience “may not come from God. I am sure that there may be many spectacular things performed because the devil is very responsive” (*Id.*).

Dealing directly with *The Second Comforter*, Turley denounced the claim, “only those who see the face of Jesus Christ in mortality will receive Celestial Glory” (*Id.*). Elder Oaks added: “the suggestions that this must happen in mortality is a familiar tactic of the adversary. (Recording at 1 hr. 30 seconds).

If these statements are not enough, a talk at FAIR was covered by both the *Church News* and *LDS Meridian Magazine*. The *Church News* headlined their article “*Speaker identifies ‘spiritual threat.’*” In that article, it reports it is spiritually threatening to have “an inordinate interest in *The Second Comforter*.” *LDS Meridian Magazine* reprinted the talk. The talk states it is wrong to have, “Inordinate interest in *The Second Comforter* or Second Anointing, complaints that the church does not teach or emphasize them enough, and belief that books or teachings by individuals who are not church leaders are the best way to obtain them.”

The last time *The Second Comforter* was mentioned in general conference was in the early 1970’s. It is not covered in Priesthood, Relief Society or Gospel Doctrine lesson manuals of the church. It is not on the correlation committee’s approved list of topics suitable for discussion.

The book *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil* uses scripture, traditional sources and quotes from LDS Church leaders, including Joseph Smith, and books printed by Deseret Book and Bookcraft (a subsidiary of Deseret Book). It is an entirely orthodox book 9 years ago. It represents the actual position of the LDS faith when it was printed.

The shift in just 9 years is so dramatic that the book needs stay just as it is. It demonstrates how very much the LDS Church has changed, and how quickly it did so. It is an important historical document preserving a snapshot that allows a stark contrast to be made in the minds of anyone interested in understanding a rapidly changing institution losing track of its most fundamental teachings.

SEPTEMBER 2015

SEPTEMBER 7, 2015

Pretensions of Public Piety

The idea of a “wolf” concealing itself in “sheep’s clothing” (Matt. 7:15) comes from the pretense of piety by men whose hearts are set on the things of this world. The more conspicuous the pretensions to piety the quicker people are misled.

John C. Bennett was a notorious adulterer, having abandoned his marriage and family before arriving in Nauvoo. But he was elected the first Mayor of Nauvoo. His election was unanimous. The citizens of Nauvoo universally admired him.

In his inaugural address on February 3, 1841, his first recommendation for improving the community was to pass an ordinance forbidding bars, dram shops and sales of alcohol by the drink in Nauvoo. He associated drinking with “evil and crime”

which could be prevented by adopting his recommended ordinance. The first ordinance adopted by the Nauvoo City Council and signed into law by Mayor Bennett was “An Ordinance in relation to Temperance” passed on February 15, 1841. It prohibited “all persons and establishments” from selling whiskey by the drink in Nauvoo without a physician’s recommendation in writing.

This conspicuous act of public piety reaffirmed the man’s nobility and concealed Bennett’s real inclinations and ongoing betrayal of a wife and children. It made Bennett appear to be the right man to be trusted to lead the community.

This same black-hearted character defended enforcement of morality by compulsion.

Liberty to do good should be cheerfully and freely accorded to every man; but liberty to do evil, which is licentiousness, should be peremptorily prohibited. The public good imperiously demands it”

This was Lucifer’s plan advocated anew by Nauvoo’s first mayor. Given Bennett’s inclinations, maybe he proposed forcing morality on citizens because he knew it was the only way he could be moral.

John C. Bennett also appears to be the first Mormon to quote Francis Bacon: “Knowledge is power.” This slogan is now carved on a monument at one of the entrances to BYU. So far as I have discovered, it was John C. Bennett’s Inaugural Address in February 1841 that this quote first found its way into Mormon use.

In hindsight, it is so very easy to pick out Bennett’s pretensions to piety and to see them for what they are. Nauvoo elected the man by unanimous vote to be the first mayor of the Mormon city because they could not see what he really was. His attire was so very sheep-like they could not conceive they were upholding a wolf.

Today it is probably no different. Wolves are still trusted with the treasury, given honor, and smothered with adoration. Joseph Smith had little confidence in mankind's ability to decide between the real and the imitation. He explained it this way:

The world always mistook false prophets for true ones, and those that were sent of God, they considered to be false prophets, and hence they killed, stoned, punished and imprisoned the true prophets, and these had to hide themselves 'in deserts and dens, and caves of the earth, (see Hebrews 11:38), and though the most honorable men of the earth, they banished them from their society as vagabonds, whilst they cherished, honored and supported knaves, vagabonds, hypocrites, impostors, and the basest of men. (*DHC*, Vol. 4, p. 574; also *TPJS*, p. 206)

Anything claimed to be truth should conform with the truths already given in scripture. Everyone's motives should be questioned until it is determined by sufficient observation they are sheep. Any teaching or person who draws us to them, and does not point us to the Lord is unable to help us. If they try to supplant Christ as the object of admiration, then they are anti-Christ and a false prophet.

SEPTEMBER 10, 2015

Preserving the Restoration is Now Available

After a year's work the book inspired by the ten lectures has been completed and published. It includes a great deal of supporting research and citations which the lectures did not use. Some of the limitations of the talks do not exist for a book. Therefore the book covers more than I could fit into the lecture series and is organized somewhat differently to finish the discussion.

The substance of the book is contained in the ten lectures, the blog posts about King Benjamin and the paper titled *Cutting Down the Tree of Life to Build a Wooden Bridge*. These are available for free on this website. It is not necessary to spend money to acquire the book to learn the substance.

This new book enlarges on subjects and has a better overall organization. It has also made extensive use of the *Joseph Smith Papers*, the *Times and Seasons*, conference minutes, contemporary newspapers written in the 1830's and 1840's, correspondence from the era. The quotations from those sources leave their language as in the original, with misspellings, cross-outs, improper grammar, etc. At the end of the book there is a "Word Index" that is blank, allowing the reader to fill in citations to pages that the reader may want to find quickly. The book is a reference work to recover the original faith that existed at the beginning of the restoration, the original destiny, and sets out how the restoration can continue despite the fact institutions based on "Mormonism" have universally abandoned the original faith.

Anyone who is interested in Mormonism will benefit from reading this book. It is not hostile to any sect, but attempts to restate the original "Mormonism" for the benefit of anyone in any sect who would like to better understand what their faith started out to accomplish.

You can view details about the book by clicking [here](#) or on the image at the top of this post.

SEPTEMBER 13, 2015

Guarding the Pathway

The Lord limited Nephi by commanding that, “the things which thou shalt see hereafter thou shalt not write” (1 Ne. 14:25). This may have been to prevent different prophetic accounts from introducing errors, disputes and open conflict. Both Oliver and Joseph described and quoted John the Baptist. But their accounts relate it differently. They quote the angel differently:

Joseph: “...and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness” *JS-H* 1:69. [Implies it will remain until an event, and then be removed.]

Oliver: “...which shall remain upon the earth, that the Sons of Levi may yet offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness!” *JS-H* footnote, taken from the *Messenger and Advocate*, vol. 1, October 1834, p. 14–16. [Implies it may be here to stay, and will accommodate a righteous offering by Levites while here.]

It is not a significant difference. But it is just such different accounts that have produced disagreements, and disputes follow disagreements, and those grow into fanatical opposition between religious communities and eventually we have wars.

What if the Lord’s instruction was not to limit Nephi, but it was instead because God recognizes us as insecure, hasty and foolish beings. What if Nephi could have given a cogent retelling of the same events that were assigned to John. But since John was going to retell them so differently using cosmic imagery, drawn from heavenly constellations, (dragon-Draco; woman with child-Virgo; altar-Ara; the lamb-Aries; the lion-Leo; pouring out judgments/plagues-Aquarius; etc.) that we would make mush out of reconciling the two different approaches. Nephi talks about gentiles, waters, wars, books, and history in much simpler metaphors. Nephi may

have understood Jewish learning, but he tried not to use it apart from quoting Isaiah.

Nephi may have understood the cosmic plan as well as John. John wanted to point to the testimony above, in the stars. Nephi may have given even a plainer version of it than did John. But Nephi was required to couch everything he taught in the words of those who already “had written them” (1 Ne. 14:26). So Nephi employed Isaiah to teach his (Nephi’s) message. Thus a seeming conflict between two visionaries was averted—for our benefit.

Similarly, today we have people whose notions, visions, dreams and experiences are being promulgated through blogs, lectures, seminars, books and sermons. Most are unanchored in scripture. Because the scriptures are not being used to anchor these messages, there are widely disparate views of what is going on now and what is supposed to happen in the future.

What if the Lord restricted today’s visionaries the same way he restricted Nephi? What if the visionary information was used by the recipient to explain, expound and preach from holy scripture? Things would be much clearer for His people in these last days if we were given the assurance that God is the same yesterday, today and forever. This is the message of the scriptures. The scriptures are how God gets His word out to His people. Using the scriptures to expound the word of the Lord is not an antiquated notion. What if the Lord wants His word vindicated by referring to them now? Using them now? Expounding them now? What if the Lord’s example on the Road to Emmaus is to be taken seriously? His example was to teach using the law and all the prophets to show how in all things He was to suffer as He did.

It should be relatively plain to judge between what the Lord commissions and wants preached and what comes from the foolish

imaginations of men and women. Apparently the best way to sift sheep and goats is to allow every wind of doctrine to come upon mankind and see which are wise and which are foolish virgins. Who keeps themselves unspotted and who runs to and fro with itching ears to consume on their lusts every new thing.

What a perfect test we are taking. Everyone knows they ought to be grounding themselves on a rock, but then mistake sand, leaves, air, wood and dung for the rock. There are people waste-deep in excrement who are certain they are standing on holy ground.

How much sooner might we be able to agree on the things that matter most if we put our understanding into words of scripture? How can we ever come to unity if we do not share a common scripture; an anchor to hold us together?

The pathway back is guarded by shiny trinkets that get all the wayfaring fools to step off a cliff to their ruin. Just because you are in the largest crowd leaving the pathway doesn't mean the landing is going to be any less destructive. To stay on it the iron rod is needed.

CHAPTER 6

Ask, Seek, Knock

SEPTEMBER 13, 2015

γνῶσις

Gnosis (γνῶσις) is a Greek noun meaning “knowledge.” A celebrated but errant lecture in Provo recently characterized those who are learning about LDS history and forgotten doctrine, and thereby realizing there are gaps in LDS traditions, to be “Mormon gnostics.” She (and by extension FAIR) apparently are unaware of the many criticisms of Mormonism itself as “gnostic.” I have previously provided links to that talk, the *Church News* and *Meridian Magazine’s* coverage of the talk. I usually don’t comment on such things, but it’s a smoky Sunday here in Sandy (California is burning again) and I’m on-line so I decided to put this up before my wife talks me out of it.

Joseph Smith taught that “Knowledge saves a man; and in the world of spirits no man can be exalted but by knowledge” (*TPJS*, p. 357). In the same talk Joseph said, “If a man has knowledge, he can be saved” (*Id.*). Gnosis is at the heart of the Mormonism Joseph Smith taught.

Gnostics often claimed to have “hidden knowledge” that the world could not receive. It was too sacred and would be profaned by public exposure. This characteristic of gnosticism is far more applicable to LDS temple rites than teaching about *The Second Comforter*, or Christ’s continuing personal ministry. If there is “Mormon gnosticism,” it is practiced by the temple-attending latter-day saints. If gnosticism is a legitimate term of derision, then it describes the church FAIR attempts to defend.

The proper role is to point people to God and testify that any can come directly to Christ, without an intermediary, and receive Him. I have testified that to receive Christ means His actual appearing to you, not something that happens merely in your heart. We should all echo Joseph Smith’s teaching and the scripture within the LDS Doctrine and Covenants: “John 14:23: The appearing of the Father and the Son, in that verse, is a personal appearance; and the idea that the Father and the Son dwell in a man’s heart is an old sectarian notion, and is false” (D&C 130:3).

SEPTEMBER 18, 2015

Priesthood and Baptism

I answered an email from someone who has read the things I have written about priesthood, including the Elijah materials. He was asking about priesthood held by LDS men who were not in a position of leadership, and inquiring whether LDS missionaries could still offer acceptable baptism. Those who have read what I have written will understand the question and my response.

I responded as follows:

In the beginning there was only one, unified priesthood. This is why Joseph commented “all priesthood is Melchizedek, but there are different degrees of it.” (I’m paraphrasing his statement.)

If, therefore, any person has been ordained to any portion of priesthood, they have received in part the original, unified priesthood.

In the end of the world the same priesthood which was in the beginning is to return. Adam prophesied this and Enoch recorded Adam’s prophecy (Moses 6:7). It returns when God’s voice confers it upon a man (JST Gen. 14:29). Therefore if a man holds some degree of it, and God confers the rest by His voice from heaven, the ordination is completed and the same priesthood which was in the beginning of the world returns.

The LDS Church is not led by men authorized to offer baptism, but it includes many men who could offer baptism. But the form of baptism is strictly prescribed by the Lord in 3 Ne. II. He explains His doctrine and then directs that anything more or less than this cometh of evil.

The missionaries are required to compel a confession from prospective converts before baptism that they acknowledge Thomas S. Monson as a prophet. This is in Preach My Gospel. It is the second question asked in the baptismal interview. As long as a missionary conforms to the Lord’s direction in 3 Ne. II, I see no reason why their baptism would not be acceptable to the Lord. But if they follow the direction in Preach My Gospel, then the baptism would need to be redone. Not because of a lack of authority, but because the ordinance has been corrupted.

SEPTEMBER 18, 2015

Preserving The Restoration Available

Preserving The Restoration has been updated and is available again.

SEPTEMBER 19, 2015

Priesthood and Baptism Questions

I've been asked in several emails if the recent post titled "Priesthood and Baptism" means I'm advocating changes to the criteria for baptism. At first I thought the inquiries were unnecessary. But now I think I should clarify:

That recent post included the following introduction: "I answered an email **from someone who has read the things I have written about priesthood**, including the Elijah materials. He was asking about priesthood held by LDS men who were not in a position of leadership, and inquiring whether LDS missionaries could still offer acceptable baptism. **Those who have read what I have written will understand the question and my response.**"

I thought it would be clear because when I refer to "**what I have written**" TWICE in the introduction, I wrongly assumed everyone reading that would understand it means what was said **before** still mattered. The answer was clarifying that a fully conforming missionary could qualify, and would not be disqualified merely by reason of serving an LDS mission at the time they baptized. It should not be required to rehearse every detail related to every topic every time a simple issue is raised by a question.

I hope this answers these additional inquiries and helps to point out how to read a post.

SEPTEMBER 25, 2015

Big Cottonwood Conference Remarks

Last Sunday I went to Big Cottonwood Canyon as a conference involving 7 fellowships was ending. I went to visit with those who were there and inquire of those who attended what their observations were concerning the conference.

I got into a conversation with a few of the people who were still there after the closing prayer, but was handed a microphone and told that others felt I was leaving them out. Rather than seem unfriendly, I went ahead and took the microphone and spoke for a few minutes to everyone still there. I learned that what I said was recorded, and a copy of the transcript was sent to me for review. I've now done a superficial edit to make it more coherent, and filled in some missing portions, including the first few moments that were not recorded. Without voice inflection, transcripts can be misleading even if they were the actual words. Humor and irony in particular can be misunderstood when the speaking voice is absent. So I've done some editing to make some things clear. I haven't filled in source materials, or cited to all the material I am quoting from the *TPJS* or scriptures. Those who study will readily identify them.

I did not intend to be put on display or get the attention of the group when I went up. I timed my arrival to be after the conference part was over. I wanted to hear from those who were there. I did not intend to speak. What happened frustrated that purpose.

I hate being made the center of attention. I am not a celebrity, do not want to be one and should not be treated like one. I am another ordinary man living in perilous times seeking hard to do what the Lord asks of me. I fear my weaknesses. I fear failure. We all must be careful about confining our admiration to God alone.

If I cannot be allowed to come and quietly participate or observe, then my family and I will not come.

If I am asked to say something by the Lord then I will do so. Otherwise, I hope to remain silent and get out of the way. We all have work to do.

The transcript is now on the downloads page of the blog as one of the papers so everyone can read it.

I have heard many positive things about the conference. It was attended by a couple of hundred people. The format was a success. The setting was beautiful. The meadow where the closing prayer was given was a spectacular setting for petitioning God. Best of all, I had nothing to do with organizing it or speaking (until it was over). It was encouraging to see how some took the initiative and much good was accomplished by these few fellowships. A surprising amount of food was still available for the post- conference dinner. What a great thing happened!

SEPTEMBER 26, 2015

New Website and Logo

An important step has been achieved. A new website titled “Born of Water” is now live. The website allows anyone located anywhere in the world who desires to be baptized to identify themselves. It is all confidential.

The website also allows those with authority to baptize to identify themselves in a confidential submission. Those qualified to baptize can then determine if they are able to assist someone in need of baptism. If they are able and willing to help, the baptizers can send a contact through the site to the one wanting baptism. This way those in remote locations will be able to receive baptism.

The logo on the site is shaped like two hands reaching upward, forming the image of a dove. The eye of the dove is a mark on the wrist of the right hand. The colors in the corners of the mark are the colors of the veil in the Tabernacle of Moses and Temple of Solomon. It is a trademarked, copyrighted and service marked registered image that is the property of Adrian Larsen. He alone can give or revoke permission to use the image that is his property.

The logo will appear on three sites: Born of Water, Recorder's Clearinghouse, and for a time on this site to acquaint people with the logo. The logo is a way to vouch for a site's privacy and safety. If the logo is authorized for use, the public can be confident it will not take them to a site of a hostile group, commercial enterprise or specious origin. It is a way to identify authenticity.

SEPTEMBER 28, 2015

New Website Update

On the first day there were baptizers authorized, requests to be baptized submitted and at least one baptism arranged.

To help those desiring to receive baptism, there is now a button that can be used on other sites to refer people to the baptism website. There is more information available at BornOfWater.org. The button has been installed at the top of this site and can be used as an active link back to the Born of Water site. The rate of progress is astonishing to me. There will be other developments as the Lord's work rolls forward. All of those involved are working as volunteers. There is no central control, and everything should be done by a common spirit and common cause.

OCTOBER 2015

OCTOBER 5, 2015

Missionary Work

Now, as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion.

Now, Behold, a marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men. Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day. Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work; For behold the field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul; And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work. Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence. Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Amen.

For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward. Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward. But he

that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned.

OCTOBER 7, 2015

Clarifying Distinctions

The “stone cut out of the mountain without hands” (Dan. 2:44–45) is not a corruptible institution but an incorruptible Gospel.

There is no organization currently ministering the “gift of the Holy Ghost” as a right conferred upon an individual to remain always with them. There is an admonishment directing people to: “receive the Holy Ghost.” That admonishment is directed to the individual as advice, counsel or an objective to seek for, not as a right conferred indelibly upon them. (See, David Bednar, *Receive the Holy Ghost*, April 2010 General Conference; *That We May Always Have His Spirit To Be With Us*, April 2006 General Conference.) As recently as the Sunday morning session of the last LDS conference, President Eyring explained the limits of the LDS connection to the Holy Ghost. “We desire it, yet we know from experience that it is not easy to maintain. We each think, say, and do things in our daily lives that can offend the Spirit” (*The Holy Ghost as Your Companion*). Anyone of any faith anywhere in the world can have the same experience as a transitory gift from God (Moroni 10:4–5). Remember God gives liberally to all; the wicked and the righteous. People of faith throughout the world have as much access to the Holy Ghost as a latter-day saint. If it were not so, the LDS missionaries could not advise an investigator to pray and ask God—pointing out Moroni 10:4. If it were not so, Joseph could not have asked God relying on the promise of James

1:5. There is nothing special about the LDS admonishment, but it is a good, worthy and correct principle which all mankind ought to follow. If they do, no matter what their faith traditions, they will harvest the same results as those spoken of by President Eyring in the last LDS general conference.

Christ, however, can give the permanent gift of the Holy Ghost by His touch (3 Ne. 18:36; Moroni 2:1–3).

There are no “sealing” keys used by any Mormons in their temple rites: “Brothers and sisters, if you are true and faithful the time will come when you will be called up and anointed kings and priests, queens and priestesses, whereas now you are only anointed to become such. The realization of these blessings depends on your faithfulness.” It, like the Holy Ghost, is conditioned on your faithfulness. This same promise is made to all mankind by the Lord (See, e.g., D&C 14:7; D&C 96:6; Alma 11:40; Moroni 7:41).

Christ can and does seal a man up to eternal life (See, e.g., Mosiah 26: 14, 20; Enos 1:5–8; D&C 132:49; 1 John 2:25).

Institutions who use fear to control the hopes and aspirations of mankind concerning eternal life are in the gall of bitterness. Fear is of the devil. When the final remnant is gathered, they will have shepherds who remove fear (Jeremiah 23:2–5). When we are prepared by Christ, and by His word alone, we will not fear (D&C 38:30).

If we are warned we should warn others. But the Lord has instructed: “And let your preaching be the warning voice, every man to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness” (D&C 38:41).

OCTOBER 21, 2015

My Son’s Self-Sustaining Experiment

I have a son who is experimenting with self-sustaining lifestyle. He has moved to rural New Hampshire on an isolated tract of land where he and his family are trying different ventures. One of them (soap production) is now past the hobby stage and into production. We have been buying and using the soap for about a year now. He has now produced enough to sell to others outside the family.

His family's website is "Earthen Step" located at earthenstep.com

Here is a description of the soap taken from his website:

We started off with cold process soap and became addicted quickly. The first bars that we made were very mediocre compared to what is being sold on this website. But, those first bars blew away any soap you can find at your local super-market. They were even superior to many handmade soaps we have tried since then. We seemed to have a knack for this "hobby." After hundreds of bars we have refined our recipes and only share the best.

These bars are very gentle and have unique scents and attributes. Many people have told us they don't need to use lotion anymore after using this soap. They are very gentle on the skin and help your skin mantle get in balance with itself — they are also very great at cleaning the most dirty of skin. Most soap out there is too harsh and many aren't even true soap, just chemical detergents. These harsh chemicals strip your skin and replace it with nothing. The bars we sell leave behind high-quality vegetable oils such as: olive oil, shea butter, coconut oil, cocoa butter, palm oil, avocado oil — see individual product pages for all the ingredients used. We do this by "superfating" our soaps which leaves 5% or more of the oils behind after saponification.

Saponification is the process of fatty acids (we use vegetable oils/butters) reacting to a strong alkaline (we use sodium hydroxide). This reaction takes place, turning the oil/lye mixture into various salts and glycerin. The salt is what cleans your skin and glycerin moisturizes. All of the moisturizing glycerin is left in the soap — commercial soaps strip this out and sell it to be used in other cosmetics/lotions. The extra oils that are left behind from the superfatting condition the skin and help replenish your skin's protection barrier.

We only use nature-made ingredients to color and scent our bars. The only synthetic we use is sodium hydroxide, and it is of food-grade quality. We use vegetable oils and butters, clays, mud, leaf powders and other natural ingredients. We list every ingredient used on each product page.

This experiment is to gain practical experience in living self-sufficiently by producing the basic necessities and relying less on others. We all should learn to rely less on a complex society that requires peaceful cooperation to supply the necessities for life and basic hygiene. There are a lot of needs that our ancestors satisfied by their own hand that are lost to us. Rediscovering those home-manufacturing skills is something we all should consider at least experimenting with to learn how to care for ourselves and others.

OCTOBER 25, 2015

Reformation Sunday

As this Reformation Sunday draws to a close I wanted to honor those who went before: Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, John Wesley, John Wycliffe, and the Pilgrims who were inspired

by their cause to come to America to establish a New Jerusalem, a land of faith, a place of peace and freedom.

We went to the services of the Presbyterian Church on South Temple in Salt Lake City this morning to celebrate the occasion. The bagpipes and drums stir the heart of even the casual believer. That building's great stained glass windows testify in the west of Christ's birth and in the east of His resurrection. The sun was rising in the east during the early morning service, and lit the image of the angel in announcing His resurrection. The lower stained glass windows in the west testify of the many events in His life and ministry. What a wonderful setting it was to remember the Reformation.

The Reformation set the stage for God's final work. A Restoration began in Joseph Smith. It will continue. That New Jerusalem sought by the reformers will yet be established.

How odd it seems that in this dreary last chapter where rampant impurity, gross immorality, the love of man growing cold against one another—how odd it is that in this day the Lord would again stir us to remember His promise of Zion. Yet it was always foretold to be so, for the Lord said both wheat and tares would grow together until ready for harvest. (Matt. 13:24–30; D&C 86:7.) Tares are ripening. What is God to make of His wheat?

OCTOBER 31, 2015

Fidelity in Marriage

Fidelity to your spouse is foundational to righteousness. Immorality is disruptive of marriage, destructive of families, and has no place in a City of Peace.

Group sex, immoral relationships and free intercourse is offensive to God, a violation of the Ten Commandments, and the

means of spreading disease. God does not justify carnal relations except between one man and his one wife. They two are the image of God. Anything else degrades and corrupts. Participants in immoral behavior become laden with sin.

Those foolish enough to be misled by this darkness deserve to be taken captive and destroyed, as will certainly come to pass.

NOVEMBER 2015

NOVEMBER 4, 2015

Cain's Legacy

In addition to the first murder (Moses 5:32), Cain's descendants also introduced taking multiple wives (Moses 5:44). Murder to gain control and the adulterous taking of multiple wives is a pattern originated by Cain and later imitated by Brigham Young. Young called the former "blood atonement" and the latter "Celestial Marriage." Cain slew only Abel, so far as the record reports, but Brigham's followers accepted his doctrine and slew hundreds.

Some have reported that we not only dedicated our property, but likewise our families to the Lord, and Satan taking advantage of this has transfigured it into lasciviousness, a community of wives, which things are an abomination in the sight of God... if any person, has represented anything otherwise than what we now write they have willfully misrepresented us.

(—Joseph Smith, 1838 Letter from Liberty Jail)

At least Cain did not claim he could not lead others astray.

NOVEMBER 9, 2015

Imitate or Appropriate

Lucifer and his followers damn mankind by employing the following strategies.

Imitate: Lucifer makes what he does resemble what the Savior does. He teaches as closely as possible what the Savior teaches. He claims what the Savior claims. He promises what the Savior promises. But in every case, he does so falsely so that it cannot save anyone.

Appropriate: He gains control over whatever the Savior establishes. The very best way to insure no one is saved is to take the actual House of God and make it Lucifer's house.

The weak-minded are easily fooled into believing they have salvation when they only have a powerless imitation. Hence the Lord's prophesy that many will claim at the last day they did many wonderful things in His name. To them He will say: "I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7:21-23.)

It may seem challenging, but making the right choices is not difficult. As long as we take this concept seriously (our salvation depends on it) and we study carefully using the scriptures as our guide, it is easy to tell imitation from the real thing. It is also easy to see when the order established by Christ has been misappropriated. The scriptures tell us the test for priestcraft. Do men seek the welfare of Zion, or their own benefit?

NOVEMBER 12, 2015

A Gospel of Christ

Joseph Smith wrote or spoke on different occasions describing the First Vision. This has become a source of criticism from some and doubt for others. The question at hand is why he would tell the story differently, using different words on two or more occasions?

I think the criticism is unwarranted. But I have taken note of it and intend to make different mistakes. I have written only one account of my testimony, witness and gospel (announcement of “good news”) of Christ, and published it in the book *Come, Let Us Adore Him*. To avoid the inevitable criticism I would receive if I were to use a different pronoun, adverb or adjective by giving a second account, I intend to leave the account in that book to stand as the only statement I will make about those visits from the Lord.

He took some patience over a number of visits to help me understand His suffering in the atonement. Then He showed me His resurrection. The account of Gethsemane and the resurrection in *Come, Let Us Adore Him* are consolidated into one narrative, although it required a number of visits for me to understand. It is written in the third person, imitating the Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 12:2–5.

The Lord wanted my testimony of what He suffered to be public. The book has not been widely read, and I do not think that it needs to be. Those who are interested in His great condescension for our sake can seek it out. It was meant for them. For that reason I have never repeated it.

There have been other encounters between the Lord and me, including a first one that conveyed interesting information about His return in glory. I believe He will want that one to be made public at some point, but He will have to determine whether and when that will happen. I have no intention to go beyond the specific direction He gives.

NOVEMBER 19, 2015

Fellowship Locator

A website to assist in locating fellowships worldwide has been completed and is now live. You can find the site at the following address and link:

<http://www.fellowshiplocator.info>

This site allows anyone to enter a fellowship and provide information for others to identify and contact you. You can also use it to locate the nearest fellowship. It is designed to facilitate worldwide identification for those who share beliefs in the restoration of the gospel.

This particular site has a limited purpose: to facilitate worldwide identifying and contacting fellowships. It will not have any commercial use or activity on it. It will not be used to promote any product or sell. The site permits feedback about the fellowships, including complaints. Those complaints will be made public. Complaints will be investigated and if abuse is discovered (the fellowship is a sham), the location will be deleted.

There are other sites with different fellowship goals, including social interaction. One was built to help in the Midwest. It is also live. That site is found at:

www.zionfellowships.com

A third site providing some fellowship related information and service is:

www.RestoreZion.com

NOVEMBER 21, 2015

Rebaptism

On Sunday, March 20, 1842 Joseph Smith preached about baptism and rebaptized about 79 church members and at least one new convert. The first baptism was the convert.

Wilford Woodruff's Journal records:

President Joseph Smith went forth into the river & Baptized with his own hands about 80 persons for the remission of their sins & what added Joy to the scene the first person Baptized was Mr L. D. Wason a nephew of sister Emma Smith was the first of her kindred that have embraced the fulness of the gospel.

On the next Sunday Woodruff recorded:

After the meeting closed the congregation again assembled upon the bank of the river & Joseph the seer went into the river & Baptized all that Came unto him & I considered it my privilege to be Baptized for the remission of my sins for I had not been since I first Joined the Church in 1833. I was then Baptized under the hands of Elder Zerah Pulsipher. Therefore I went forth into the river & was Baptized under the hands of JOSEPH THE SEER & likewise did Elder J Taylor & many others... (March 27, 1842, Wilford Woodruff's Journal.)

In just these two journal entries we see rebaptism was taught and practiced by Joseph Smith, John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff. If other contemporaneous records are consulted it is clear that rebaptism was universal in the early days of Mormonism. It was not the sacrament that renewed baptismal covenants, but rebaptism.

NOVEMBER 22, 2015

Syria

Below is an excerpt from an article reviewing the news about a crisis in Syria:

No nation can claim the name Syrian. A chaotic mixture of all tribes and tongues remnants of migrations from north and south, they disturb one another in the possession of this glorious land where our fathers for so many centuries emptied the cup of joy and woe, where every clod is drenched with the blood of our heroes when their bodies were buried under the ruins of Jerusalem. (*Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, June 1, 1841)

NOVEMBER 24, 2015

Talk on Mormon History

Last Sunday I spoke about Mormon history. It was recorded and is now available on this website for any who are interested in that topic. It is located on the “Downloads” page, under the “Audio Files” section.

DECEMBER 2015

DECEMBER 1, 2015

Paper: Mormon History

The recent talk on Mormon History in the “Downloads” page now has a paper based on the talk. The paper has been edited and additional supporting materials and citations have been added.

DECEMBER 3, 2015

Book of Mormon

Here is how the Prophet Joseph Smith explained the Book of Mormon:

I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book. (*DHC* 4:461; see also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 194)

Here is how the Lord addressed those who believed in the restoration (including us) in 1832:

And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you

have received— Which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all. And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written—.
(D&C 84:54–57)

It makes no sense to ignore the Lord's condemnation. It makes no sense to give primacy to what others have to say instead of remembering and studying the Book of Mormon.

It makes no sense to measure the truth of the gospel by another standard when the Book of Mormon was provided to us as the means to measure that truth.

The writers of the Book of Mormon departed from Jerusalem before the Jewish exile into Babylonian captivity. The first Book of Mormon writers avoided Babylon, and their descendants never knew a thing about it.

The Book of Mormon people migrating out of Jerusalem left the Holy Land at the end of the first temple period. They avoided the triumph of the Deuteronomists over the religion of the Jews. The Jewish Deuteronomists were innovators who repudiated and replaced the original religion with a new, apostate form of worship that dominated the second temple period. The Book of Mormon writers were spared from all that. They were gone before it happened.

Recall the “head of gold” in the king's dream (as interpreted by Daniel) was the king of Babylon (Daniel 2:32–38). It is foretold that in the last days God's work will provide a “stone” which will break down all the world's false religious, economic, cultural and

philosophical ideas (*Id.*, vs. 34–35). As the restoration commenced with Joseph Smith, a book was translated “by the gift and power of God” which was written by authors who were never exposed to, or contaminated by the “head of gold,” or any other subsequent kingdoms of the world. The **ONLY** text we have that survives without corruption of false religious ideas from history is the Book of Mormon.

I have friends (and of course Hugh Nibley) who will think my statement, “**The only text**” goes too far because there are earlier texts predating Babylon that were uninfluenced by it. Most notably Egypt. This is an opinion they are welcome to hold. I do not share it, however.

The Book of Abraham shows the path of Abraham crossing into Egypt. The language used on the brass plates (Mosiah 1:3, 5), and by the Nephites (Mormon 9:32), was Egyptian. They remind me that Egypt is significant somehow. But crossing paths and adopting language is not the same as certifying their religion and culture. There are plenty of reasons to question Egypt’s religious material.

Israel was taken out of Egypt. Even though there are Egyptian influences in the religion of Israel, it is certainly clear that Israel did **NOT** adopt Egyptian teachings wholesale, but included only carefully selected parts. They preserved some, abandoned others, and added still more. If Egypt represents an apostasy, then Israel represents a restoration.

There is no account of angels visiting the Egyptians or an ascent into heaven. The exception is Imhotep, but his story seems remarkably parallel to Joseph’s. Both were commoners. Both were employed by the Pharaoh. Both attained to high status despite their common birth. The tomb of Imhotep is “lost” despite efforts to locate it, and Joseph’s bones were taken from Egypt with the

departure of the Israelites (Exo. 13:19). There are others, of course. But apart from questions about dating, their accounts are quite similar. If Imhotep and Joseph are not the same individual, a single exception does not destroy the general rule.

The ceremonies of Egypt spoke of “gods” but the gods did not visit them. After leaving Egypt, God sent to Israel a host of prophets who were ministered to by God and angels, including Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Malachi, and even His Son, Jesus Christ. These prophets came to Israel, not Egypt, to visit, teach, prophesy, minister and live.

Egypt fought against Israel and hoped to keep them in captivity. But the God of Israel fought for and delivered Israel from Egyptian enslavement. If there must be a choice between religions, then the choice ought to be settled by God’s deliverance of Israel by His own hand, and Egypt’s unsuccessful fight against the God of Heaven to prevent it.

Although Solomon’s temple was architecturally inferior to and much less elaborate than the temples of Egypt, God visited and accepted Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 8:10–13). There is no account before or after that time of God visiting and accepting the temples of Egypt.

The religion of Israel worked. The religion of Egypt did not. Heaven ministered to, visited with, sent angels to teach, and His Only Begotten Son to dwell with Israel. The Egyptians kept elaborate ceremonial complexity which awed their people, and preserved a false tradition generation after generation despite its powerlessness. It was impressive to men. It was ineffective to save.

Perhaps most importantly, after adhering to the original religion in the Americas, being instructed, warned and led by prophets who spoke with God, the Lord Himself, as a risen being, descended to

visit with the people of the Book of Mormon. The religion of Israel also had the power to connect anew with heaven. Even after 600 years of difficulties and disputes, they still retained a religion with the vitality necessary for Christ to come to visit.

I studied the Book of Mormon for over two decades before being fully persuaded of its power. My sense of wonder increased over time. It was ONLY because I came to regard with tremendous respect the Book of Mormon that the Lord condescended to visit with me. The religion of the Book of Mormon saves. Through it, the only “stone” upon which it is safe to build will roll forth in the last days. That “stone” is Christ (1 Peter 2:6).

CHAPTER 7

Beyond Repair—“Operator! Give me the number for 911!”

DECEMBER 6, 2015

Reorganizing A Stake

I listened to a lesson today riddled with apostate heresy and historical errors. The lesson was hopelessly beyond repair, so I said nothing. But a little while before attending that meeting I had been reading in the *Times and Seasons* about the very topic mangled by the lesson.

On May 22, 1841 the saints in Kirtland called a General Conference. There was no central authority consulted before calling the conference. The first presidency was not asked, nor the twelve apostles, nor any seventy. It was a decision made only by the saints themselves.

At the conference Almon Babbitt resigned as the stake president. After resigning the conference was adjourned for an hour to allow the saints to decide who they wanted to nominate.

Following that adjournment the saints settled on Almon Babbitt as their nominee, but he declined. Despite declining a vote was taken and Babbitt was unanimously elected stake president. Upon

being elected, he relented and agreed to serve. He nominated Lester Brooks and Zebidee Coltrin as counselors, who were likewise unanimously elected.

The minutes of the General Conference were mailed to Nauvoo, and were published in the *Times and Seasons* on July 1, 1841.

The whole church with various equal quorums (first presidency, twelve traveling high councilors, seventy, stake high councils) had been fully organized five years before 1841. Everyone at that time understood a stake high council had authority equal to the twelve traveling high council, and equal as well to the first presidency. With equal and separate divisions it was designed to be impossible for one branch to corrupt the entire church.

The early church governed themselves by common consent, without overlords dictating to them. Equality prevailed and authority was disbursed into equal and independent groups. That prevented autocratic rule and guarded against apostasy of the whole body, until church government was overthrown by Brigham Young and replaced by an autocracy of the twelve.

DECEMBER 12, 2015

Revising D&C Section 132

It is apparent to any reader that D&C §132 is internally inconsistent. Those inconsistencies suggest to me it is an altered document. If it has been altered and/or is not the original language, then there are two choices—throw the entire document out, or attempt to correct it.

There is already an effort underway to throw the document out, so I will leave that idea to others. I would like to make an attempt to correct it.

By way of background, sometime after Joseph dictated a revelation to William Clayton in July 1843, the transcript was lost, misplaced, hidden or destroyed. The version everyone is familiar with is in the handwriting of Joseph Kingsbury. It is Kingsbury's (not Clayton's) handwritten document which has been accepted as the official revelation.

The earliest descriptions of the original document do not match the Kingsbury text. I've studied the document and given prayerful consideration to it for years. Before proposing a revised version, consider a few of the irregularities in the published text.

Verse 7 has a parenthetical thought which limits sealing authority to one man at a time on the earth. Brigham Young made this claim for himself, and the insertion conveniently ratifies his claim to complete control. That claim by Young and his successors has produced a great deal of harm (for LDS believers and offshoots of LDS Mormonism). In contrast to the exclusive authority of a single man in verse 7, verse 39 refers to Nathan and "others of the prophets who had the keys of this power" who sealed many wives to David. Verse 39 allows more than "one man at a time" and contradicts Brigham Young (and his successors') claims. By dropping the parenthetical from verse 7 it harmonizes verses 7 and 39. More than "one man at a time on the earth" is also inconsistent with the sealing power given to Hyrum Smith in a revelation (D&C 124:93). The insertion is obviously wrong.

Verse 19 is poorly punctuated and can be made more clear with revised punctuation.

The thought that begins in verse 40 is interrupted by 4 verses, then continues in verse 45. The content in-between (verses 41-44) appears to be an interlineation. The addition of those 4 verses seems

unnecessary, and invites abusive intrusions by a man pretending to judge others.

Everything after the Lord confers the sealing power on Joseph Smith and forgives his sins appears to be either unnecessary, a contradiction, or was used to support Brigham Young's campaign against the influence of Emma Smith and Joseph's descendants. The "10 virgins" material (verses 61–63) are in particular a contradiction of the earlier limitations found in the earlier text.

The threats against women in verses 64 and 65 not only abrogates a wife's agency, but introduces a strange contradiction. An "espoused virgin" has to give her consent for her man to take others ("and the first give her consent"—verse 61). But a wife "becomes a transgressor" if she doesn't welcome her man's additional women (verse 65). The practical effect is to let "virgins" make the decision regarding the additional women, but wives get condemned as transgressors, and once they transgress the man is "exempt from the law" (verse 65) requiring her consent.

Based on the earliest descriptions of the text, eliminating obvious parenthetical insertions, removing inconsistencies, treating marriage as the solemn covenant otherwise discussed in scripture, and respecting what I know about our Lord, I believe Section 132 would be more correct if it read as follows:

¹ Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines—

² Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter.

³ Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same.

⁴ For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory.

⁵ For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the foundation of the world.

⁶ And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God.

⁷ And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these: All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power (~~and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred~~), are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from

the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead.

⁸ Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion.

⁹ Will I accept of an offering, saith the Lord, that is not made in my name?

¹⁰ Or will I receive at your hands that which I have not appointed?

¹¹ And will I appoint unto you, saith the Lord, except it be by law, even as I and my Father ordained unto you, before the world was?

¹² I am the Lord thy God; and I give unto you this commandment—that no man shall come unto the Father but by me or by my word, which is my law, saith the Lord.

¹³ And everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or principalities, or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be, that are not by me or by my word, saith the Lord, shall be thrown down, and shall not remain after men are dead, neither in nor after the resurrection, saith the Lord your God.

¹⁴ For whatsoever things remain are by me; and whatsoever things are not by me shall be shaken and destroyed.

¹⁵ Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are dead, and when they are out of the world; therefore, they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world.

¹⁶ Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.

¹⁷ For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever.

¹⁸ And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife, and make a covenant with her for time and for all eternity, if that covenant is not by me or by my word, which is my law, and is not sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, through him whom I have anointed and appointed unto this power, then it is not valid neither of force when they are out of the world, because they are not joined by me, saith the Lord, neither by my word; when they are out of the world it cannot be received there, because the angels and the gods are appointed there, by whom they cannot pass; they cannot, therefore, inherit my glory; for my house is a house of order, saith the Lord God.

¹⁹ And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them: “Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection (and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection); and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths.” Then shall it be written in the Lamb’s Book

of Life that he shall commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood. And if ye abide in my covenant, and commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity. And it shall be of full force when they are out of the world. And they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads. Which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

²⁰ Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.

²¹ Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.

²² For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me.

²³ But if ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me, and shall receive your exaltation; that where I am ye shall be also.

²⁴ This is eternal lives—to know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. I am he. Receive ye, therefore, my law.

²⁵ Broad is the gate, and wide the way that leadeth to the deaths; and many there are that go in thereat, because they receive me not, neither do they abide in my law.

²⁶ Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man marry a wife according to my word, and they are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, according to mine appointment, and he or she shall commit any sin or transgression of the new and everlasting covenant whatever, and all manner of blasphemies, and if they commit no murder wherein they shed innocent blood, yet they shall come forth in the first resurrection, and enter into their exaltation; but they shall be destroyed in the flesh, and shall be delivered unto the buffetings of Satan unto the day of redemption, saith the Lord God.

²⁷ The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which shall not be forgiven in the world nor out of the world, is in that ye commit murder wherein ye shed innocent blood, and assent unto my death, after ye have received my new and everlasting covenant, saith the Lord God; and he that abideth not this law can in nowise enter into my glory, but shall be damned, saith the Lord.

²⁸ I am the Lord thy God, and will give unto thee the law of my Holy Priesthood, as was ordained by me and my Father before the world was.

²⁹ Abraham received all things, whatsoever he received, by revelation and commandment, by my word, saith the Lord, and hath entered into his exaltation and sitteth upon his throne.

³⁰ Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and of the fruit of his loins—from whose loins ye are, namely, my servant Joseph—which were to continue so long as they were in the world; and as touching Abraham and his seed, out of the world they should continue; both in the world and out of the world should they continue as innumerable as the stars; or, if ye were to count the sand upon the seashore ye could not number them.

³¹ This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham, and the promise was made unto Abraham; and by this law is the continuation of the works of my Father, wherein he glorifieth himself.

³² Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham; enter ye into my law and ye shall be saved.

³³ But if ye enter not into my law ye cannot receive the promise of my Father, which he made unto Abraham.

³⁴ God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? Because this was the law; and from Hagar sprang many people. This, therefore, was fulfilling, among other things, the promises.

³⁵ Was Abraham, therefore, under condemnation? Verily I say unto you, Nay; for I, the Lord, commanded it.

³⁶ Abraham was commanded to offer his son Isaac; nevertheless, it was written: Thou shalt not kill. Abraham, however, did not refuse, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness.

³⁷ Abraham received concubines, and they bore him children; and it was accounted unto him for righteousness, because they were given unto him, and he abode in my law; as Isaac also and Jacob did none other things than that which they were commanded; and because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods.

³⁸ David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon and Moses my servants, as also many others of my servants, from the beginning of creation until this time; and in

~~nothing did they sin save in those things which they received not of me.~~

³⁹ David's wives and concubines were given unto him of me, by the hand of Nathan, my servant, and others of the prophets who had the keys of this power; and in none of these things did he sin against me save in the case of Uriah and his wife; and, therefore he hath fallen from his exaltation, and received his portion; and he shall not inherit them out of the world, for I gave them unto another, saith the Lord.

⁴⁰ I am the Lord thy God, and I gave unto thee, my servant Joseph, an appointment, and restore all things. Ask what ye will, and it shall be given unto you according to my word.

~~⁴¹ And as ye have asked concerning adultery, verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man receiveth a wife in the new and everlasting covenant, and if she be with another man, and I have not appointed unto her by the holy anointing, she hath committed adultery and shall be destroyed.~~

~~⁴² If she be not in the new and everlasting covenant, and she be with another man, she has committed adultery.~~

~~⁴³ And if her husband be with another woman, and he was under a vow, he hath broken his vow and hath committed adultery.~~

~~⁴⁴ And if she hath not committed adultery, but is innocent and hath not broken her vow, and she knoweth it, and I reveal it unto you, my servant Joseph, then shall you have power, by the power of my Holy Priesthood, to take her and give her unto him that hath not committed adultery but hath been faithful; for he shall be made ruler over many.~~

⁴⁵ For I have conferred upon you the keys and power of the priesthood, wherein I restore all things, and make known unto you all things in due time.

⁴⁶ And verily, verily, I say unto you, that whatsoever you seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever you bind on earth, in my name and by my word, saith the Lord, it shall be eternally bound in the heavens; and whosoever sins you remit on earth shall be remitted eternally in the heavens; and whosoever sins you retain on earth shall be retained in heaven.

⁴⁷ And again, verily I say, whomsoever you bless I will bless, and whomsoever you curse I will curse, saith the Lord; for I, the Lord, am thy God.

⁴⁸ And again, verily I say unto you, my servant Joseph, that whatsoever you give on earth, and to whomsoever you give any one on earth, by my word and according to my law, it shall be visited with blessings and not cursings, and with my power, saith the Lord, and shall be without condemnation on earth and in heaven.

⁴⁹ For I am the Lord thy God, and will be with thee even unto the end of the world, and through all eternity; for verily I seal upon you your exaltation, and prepare a throne for you in the kingdom of my Father, with Abraham your father.

⁵⁰ Behold, I have seen your sacrifices, and will forgive all your sins; I have seen your sacrifices in obedience to that which I have told you. Go, therefore, and I make a way for your escape, as I accepted the offering of Abraham of his son Isaac.

⁵¹ ~~Verily, I say unto you: A commandment I give unto mine handmaid, Emma Smith, your wife, whom I have given unto you, that she stay herself and partake not of that which I commanded~~

you to offer unto her; for I did it, saith the Lord, to prove you all, as I did Abraham, and that I might require an offering at your hand, by covenant and sacrifice.

⁵² And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before me; and those who are not pure, and have said they were pure, shall be destroyed, saith the Lord God.

⁵³ For I am the Lord thy God, and ye shall obey my voice; and I give unto my servant Joseph that he shall be made ruler over many things; for he hath been faithful over a few things, and from henceforth I will strengthen him.

⁵⁴ And I command mine handmaid, Emma Smith, to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, and to none else. But if she will not abide this commandment she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord; for I am the Lord thy God, and will destroy her if she abide not in my law.

⁵⁵ But if she will not abide this commandment, then shall my servant Joseph do all things for her, even as he hath said; and I will bless him and multiply him and give unto him an hundred-fold in this world, of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, houses and lands, wives and children, and crowns of eternal lives in the eternal worlds.

⁵⁶ And again, verily I say, let mine handmaid forgive my servant Joseph his trespasses; and then shall she be forgiven her trespasses, wherein she has trespassed against me; and I, the Lord thy God, will bless her, and multiply her, and make her heart to rejoice.

⁵⁷ And again, I say, let not my servant Joseph put his property out of his hands, lest an enemy come and destroy him; for

Satan seeketh to destroy; for I am the Lord thy God, and he is my servant; and behold, and lo, I am with him, as I was with Abraham, thy father, even unto his exaltation and glory.

⁵⁸ Now, as touching the law of the priesthood, there are many things pertaining thereunto.

⁵⁹ Verily, if a man be called of my Father, as was Aaron, by mine own voice, and by the voice of him that sent me, and I have endowed him with the keys of the power of this priesthood, if he do anything in my name, and according to my law and by my word, he will not commit sin, and I will justify him.

⁶⁰ Let no one, therefore, set on my servant Joseph; for I will justify him; for he shall do the sacrifice which I require at his hands for his transgressions, saith the Lord your God.

⁶¹ And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood—if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery for they are given unto him; for he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else.

⁶² And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified.

⁶³ But if one or either of the ten virgins, after she is espoused, shall be with another man, she has committed adultery, and shall be destroyed; for they are given unto him to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment, and to fulfil the promise which was given by my Father before the foundation of the world, and for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that

they may bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified.

⁶⁴ And again, verily, verily, I say unto you, if any man have a wife, who holds the keys of this power, and he teaches unto her the law of my priesthood, as pertaining to these things, then shall she believe and administer unto him, or she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord your God; for I will destroy her; for I will magnify my name upon all those who receive and abide in my law.

⁶⁵ Therefore, it shall be lawful in me, if she receive not this law, for him to receive all things whatsoever I, the Lord his God, will give unto him, because she did not believe and administer unto him according to my word; and she then becomes the transgressor; and he is exempt from the law of Sarah, who administered unto Abraham according to the law when I commanded Abraham to take Hagar to wife.

⁶⁶ And now, as pertaining to this law, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will reveal more unto you, hereafter; therefore, let this suffice for the present. Behold, I am Alpha and Omega. Amen.

DECEMBER 13, 2015

More on Yesterday's Post (§132)

It is apparent many people care more about the topic of plural marriage than do I. To stem the flood of emails I am now receiving, let me add these general points:

Context always matters. Who is addressed always controls the content of the message. If an answer is given to a question, then the question controls the Lord's discussion.

The Book of Mormon sermon of Jacob (Jacob 2:23–33) was to a small branch of Israelites who had departed from Jerusalem.

His audience was the common man, and his sermon addressed the morality and virtue expected by God for His people.

The discussion in §132:34–40 is framed by the question Joseph asked. Joseph’s question is restated by the Lord in verse 1. Joseph was perplexed about specific ancient personalities. These were Bible “heroes” or prophets. Bible history indicates they were chosen by God. These men were apparently involved with plural marriages (at least in Joseph’s understanding of the Bible at that time). Joseph wanted to know how the list of men were “justified” before God.

Unlike Jacob’s sermon, the answer to the question Joseph raised was not about morality. [But the Lord does address morality in the first 32 verses, where marriage is between “a man” and “a woman.”] Joseph’s question about “justification” involved only a legal issue.

In the specific case of David and Solomon (which Jacob condemned in his sermon) the Lord does not describe their conduct as moral or virtuous. He explains how the ancient kings were “justified” in receiving “many wives and concubines” under the ancient system and therefore did not “sin.” Their marriages were political. They were legal. It was part of the ancient system of binding a kingdom to their king, settling disputes, acquiring fealty from influential families, and forming alliances between neighboring kingdoms. It was a political reality, and “justified” in the circumstances. Although not moral, the arrangements were not condemned as “sin” in the answer given to Joseph.

David and Solomon were not moral examples of how the common man should live their lives, organize their families, or establish their marriages. These kings fit the warning Samuel gave about the negatives associated with kingship. Political rule by a king always results in taxes, wars, conscription of young men to fight for the king, and servitude of young women to serve the king. God

told Samuel a king would afflict Israel. Samuel repeated what the Lord foretold concerning the abuses kings inflict on their kingdoms (1 Sam. 8:10–18). It was spot-on.

I have no interest in answering endless questions about this subject. I am working on other important things. The best way to proceed with questions is to study. Study, pray and reflect. Converse with the Lord. Questions should drive you to the Lord. He will answer. Sometimes you must do your homework to arrive at the answer, but He will guide you if you allow Him.

If you believe there is a contradiction, then focus on finding the answer. It is through contradictions that the hidden mysteries of God are found. There are times when the Lord WANTS a matter to appear as a contradiction and deliberately makes it appear that way. He does that to make us think, study, pray and grow. Or, in His language, to “ask, seek and knock.”

CHAPTER 8

Back to Basics

DECEMBER 17, 2015

Obedience and Sacrifice

The first temple covenants are “obedience” and “sacrifice.” The order places the obligation for obedience before the obligation for sacrifice. They belong in that order.

Obedience requires men to support their wives (D&C 83:2) and parents to care for their children (D&C 83:4). [The first verse of the Book of Mormon informs us Nephi was supported by his goodly parents, including receiving a good education (1 Ne. 1:1).] This principle to care for family must happen before any sacrifices can be considered.

In other words, before any sacrifice is made to help the poor, build a temple, support a community, or any other good and charitable thing obedience to the commandment to care for your family members must be satisfied. Those who fail to provide for their families are no better than the faithless (1 Tim. 5:8). Those who disobey the obligation to support and care for their families bring the faith of Christ into disrepute and cause scorn for His church.

DECEMBER 19, 2015

Great or Malignant Sins

Joseph Smith's 1838 history did not originally have these words:

In making this confession, no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins. A disposition to commit such was never in my nature. But I was guilty of levity, and sometimes associated with jovial company, etc., not consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been. (*JS-H* 1:28)

Instead his original draft ended with this confession:

I was left to all kinds of temptations, and mingling (with) all kinds of society I frequently (fell) into many foolish errors and displayed the weakness of youth and the corruption of human nature which I am sorry to say led me into divers temptations to the gratification of many appetites offensive in the sight of God (*JS Papers, Histories* Vol. 1: 1832–1844, p. 220)

The history of Joseph Smith was first published in the *Times and Seasons*. This part of his history was printed in an installment on April 1, 1842 (*Times and Seasons*, Vol 3, p. 749). The explanation that Joseph was not guilty of “any great or malignant sins” had not yet been added in April 1842.

The month following publication of this installment of Joseph's history, on May 11, 1842, John C. Bennett was excommunicated from the church for adultery. Bennett did not go quietly, and therefore public notice of his excommunication was announced in print on June 15, 1842. Bennett got louder and more accusatory and on July 1, 1842 a full account of John C. Bennett's misconduct was explained in the *Times and Seasons*.

Because Bennett began his public accusations against Joseph Smith in 1842, on December 2, 1842 a note was added to Joseph's history. The LDS Historian's Office explains the note clarified his sins "were of a minor nature" (See, *JS Papers, History*, Vol. I, p. 221, footnote 55). The addition they describe is in Willard Richards' handwriting, and reads as follows:

In making this confession, no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins: a disposition to commit such was never in my nature; but I was guilty of Levity, & sometimes associated with jovial company &c, not Consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been; but this will not seem very strange to any one who recollects my youth & is acquainted with my native cheerly Temperament. (*Manuscript History*, Note added December 2, 1842)

The addition of this clarification appears to be directly in response to John C. Bennett's adultery, the discovery by Joseph Smith of a "spiritual wife" system being practiced in Nauvoo, and the accusation that he was aware of, believed in, and practiced adulterous relationships. As Joseph Smith stated publicly months later in a meeting in Nauvoo:

What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers. (*DHC* 6:411, May 26, 1844)

I had not noticed this timing until called to my attention this week. Joseph denied committing "any great or malignant sins" in response to scandal brought to Joseph's attention through the John C. Bennett affair. Put into context it is clearer. His denial was related

to the “spiritual wife” system of adulterous relationships practiced in Nauvoo which was being attributed to him.

DECEMBER 21, 2015

Adam’s Religion

I participated in a fellowship discussion with a group of people a few weeks ago about the ministry of angels. I have been reflecting on that conversation since then. I think the ministry of angels is an indispensable part of the gospel, but angels are subject to God, who commands their ministry (Moroni 7:30). The angels have a specific ministry. They call men to repentance and fulfill and do the work of God’s covenants (Moroni 7:31). We approach God (not angels) and then God sends angels as His ministers.

Adam had a pure religion taught to him directly by God. It contained the full gospel message while other dispensations, depending on their worthiness and readiness, were given portions of it. In a very real sense mankind began with the religion of God, which was lost through disobedience, lack of interest and unwillingness to study. Righteous men have been trying to recover that original religion ever since.

It is the same challenge today. The original religion Adam practiced needs to be recovered. It was prophesied that it would be recovered. It, along with the original priesthood, is destined to return at the end of the world (Moses 6:7).

A Book of Remembrance was prepared beginning with Adam (Moses 6:5). Enoch also wrote a book describing the original religion (Moses 6:43–46). The records prepared by those fathers were passed down for a time through heirs, but were relegated to disuse and neglect until restoration came in the time of Abraham. That

restoration was needed because Abraham's immediate forebearers had lost the original teaching through their changing of its doctrines (Abr. 1:31). It was because Abraham obtained the original religion that he was able to practice it in an uncorrupted form. It brought him back into God's presence.

Although he did not have the complete records, the first Pharaoh did not invent a new religion. Instead he "imitated" and tried to carry on that original which belonged to the fathers Abr. 1:26). Pharaoh was righteous, but he descended through a line that forfeited the birthright and did not have the right of priesthood presidency, or the right to govern the family of God. But the right to that order will return (Moses 6:7).

Abraham reestablished the order. Because of this, he could correct and teach the Pharaoh of his day (approximately 2000 years after the first Pharaoh), and whose own religion had, by Abraham's time, lost its way (See *Facsimile 3*, final note).

Once a religion begins to drift, it is very difficult to recover the original. During Abraham's time, the task was impossible. Egyptian culture, art and government were based on a religion which had changed over 2000 years, despite the intention to preserve its authentic teachings. Even if Abraham could correct everything for the Pharaoh, it would be impossible for that Pharaoh to even reclaim his nation. Once errors have hardened into hierarchy, institutional tradition, wealth, power and governing systems, a single man, even a king, cannot change its course.

Egypt drifted, but was founded by a king "seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah, his father" (Abr. 1:26). The religion was not merely faith, repentance and baptism. It was also an "order" which

governed. Those holding it, including Adam and Noah, had the right to “reign” or govern. Without God’s full authorization as the foundation of his government, Pharaoh never had the right to govern. He could only “imitate.”

Egypt’s imitation included many truths mingled with errors. The religion of Egypt preserved a slightly better understanding of portions of the original gospel than others. For example, Egypt understood the hierarchy of heaven better than do we. They acknowledged the “four sons of Horus.” They are real. There are four great angels who have power over the four parts of the earth (D&C 77:8). We know them as Michael (Adam), Gabriel (Noah), Enoch (Raphael), and John (Uriel), whose control is over air, water, fire and earth—the four parts of the earth. They have “power over the four parts of the earth, to save life and to destroy; these are they who have the everlasting gospel to commit to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people; having power to shut up the heavens, to seal up unto life, or to cast down to the regions of darkness” (D&C 77:8). In spite of their ministry, we are not to worship them, nor to pray to them. Egypt may have identified and understood them better, but they erred by exalting them to worship and prayer along with other heavenly beings the Egyptians called *neteru* and the Hebrews called angels. These comprise the host of heaven led by Jehovah. The first error God corrected for Moses was this idolatry of angels, who are not to be worshipped, but are to be recognized and respected as God’s messengers and servants (Exo. 20:3–5).

Egypt knew of a great god they identified as “Amon” (also Aumn, Ammon—a name given to several individuals in the Book of Mormon) which Joseph Smith identified as “Ahman” (see D&C 78:20, 95:17; and which is associated with Adam being in the presence of God—Adam-on-di-“Ahman”). The Egyptian father,

Amon, had a wife identified as Hathor. Their son was identified as Horus. In the oldest form of the Hebrew faith (before they were excised by the Deuteronomist reformers) the godhead included a Father, Mother and son. The Tabernacle and Temple had an image of the Divine Mother that was removed during Josiah's reforms and never returned. In the restoration, Joseph taught that exaltation of man required sealing of a man (husband/father) to a woman (wife/mother) to allow for the continuation of the seeds (son/heir) (See D&C 132:19–20). From eternity to eternity the cycle repeats. If you understand the destiny of those who attain exaltation you understand the nature of those who were exalted before.

Egypt acknowledged one of the exalted angels as “the great scribe,” and identified him as Thoth. His real identity is clarified in the writings of Moses as Enoch (Moses 6:5, 46). Enoch ascended to heaven. But we do not worship him.

Egypt's religion erred by turning true angels into gods, to whom they prayed and whom they worshipped. Angels are sent by God and minister the truth to man, but are forbidden to become the objects of worship. Egypt turned mere angelic servants of God into deity and worshipped them.

Throughout the Bible record, the angels clarify their limited role. In the temple, the angel Gabriel clarified his limited role as a messenger (Luke 1:19). When the apostle John beheld the angel sent to him, he fell to worship him (Rev. 22:8). The angel forbid it, declaring “See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: Worship God” (Rev. 22:9). John has now become a ministering angel (D&C 7:6). When John the Baptist appeared to Joseph and Oliver he declared himself only a “fellow servant” (JS-H 1:69).

Angels may occupy positions of authority before God, and may have ministries entrusted to them (D&C 130:5), but only God is to be worshipped. Only God's word will survive into the afterlife. Even if one of the four great angels establishes a covenant, unless God ordains it as His, that covenant will fail (D&C 132:13).

We can recover lost information from studying relics left from the past. Egypt left a great body of evidence we can sort through to help us in our search. But as the search is undertaken we must always remember that their religion had through millennia of practice undergone change and corruption. By the time of Abraham, and still more by the time of Moses (and nearly completely by the time of Isaiah), Egyptian religion had become something very different from that of the first Pharaoh who endeavored to maintain the teachings of the "First Fathers". We must avoid the errors of Egypt that transpired as their doctrine and rituals changed. "The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof; and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit" (Isa. 19:14). When reckoning through Egyptian wreckage, therefore, our guide must be the truth. We measure truth against the standard of the Book of Mormon, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and confirmed in the teachings and revelations given through Joseph Smith.

We no longer have Adam's language. It was corrupted at the time of the tower, and lost to all but the Jaredites. Their record was written in the original language, but by the time Moroni translated the record he required the seer stone to make the translation (Ether 1:1-2; Mosiah 28:11-14.)

We do not have possession of their plates, but the Jaredites wrote in the original language of Adam (Mosiah 28:17; Ether 1:35). It is interesting that the last people to have written in the original

language of Adam were the Jaredite colony whose record is now part of the Book of Mormon.

We do not yet have the original religion taught to Adam. It also was lost long before Abraham, and was restored to him. He had the advantage of possessing the “records of the fathers” and therefore knew what they wrote in the first generations from Adam till Enoch describing the gospel taught by God to Adam.

No society has preserved the original religion. Joseph Smith was called by God to begin the process to restore the original. Through Joseph, we obtained some significant portions of the gospel which had been lost. He was killed before it was completed. What he left has become a muddled mess requiring a great deal of work to understand it. What Joseph restored must now be recovered. Even then, more must be returned before we finally arrive back at the beginning.

The Book of Mormon was translated “by the gift and power of God” and is an essential part of the restoration of the gospel fullness. Indeed it “contains the fullness of the gospel” because it gives account after account of those who were brought back to God’s presence and redeemed from the fall.

All the ancient world’s earliest religions had accounts of man returning to God through ceremonies and rites. But it was Israel who was visited by God. And the Book of Mormon contains the most clear and vast array of examples of successfully entering God’s presence. Lehi (1 Ne. 1:11), Nephi (1 Ne. 11:7, 2 Ne. 11:2), Jacob (2 Ne. 11:3), Enos (Enos 1:5, 7), Alma (Alma 36:22), and many others returned to God’s presence as part of the narrative of the Book of Mormon. It is indeed as Joseph Smith described it:

I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion,

and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book. (*DHC* 4:461; see also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 194)

Many trails remain that point backward to the earliest times and the first religion. Some of those trails are in the Apocrypha which was commended to us for study in modern revelation (D&C 91). Joseph, followed by other early saints, were eager to read beyond the closed Biblical canon advocated by their Protestant neighbors. Hugh Nibley followed in that tradition. Joseph Smith did not have access to the Book of Enoch. The materials in the Nag Hammadi were not available until 1945. The Dead Sea Scrolls were not available until they were discovered beginning in 1946 and continuing until 1956. Many ancient texts have been recovered after Joseph's death. Additionally, scholarly Islamic works have been published in English after Joseph's death. The sources now available for us, but which were unavailable while Joseph lived, fill libraries. Like the Apocrypha, these newly recovered ancient documents have many things which are true (D&C 91:1). They also can be understood through the Spirit (D&C 91:4). But without the benefit of the Spirit they can be misleading (D&C 91:5–6).

We do not yet have the gospel as taught by God to Adam. That is still to be restored. It will be entrusted to those few people who will hearken to the Lord and live by every word that proceeds from His mouth (Matt. 4:4—Christ quoting Deu. 8:3). It will return. But it will be given to people who are worthy of it, and will abide by its requirements. They will be meek, humble, patient, submissive, gentle, or in other words, Christlike.

DECEMBER 24, 2015

Christmas

Though the Lord was not born in December, it is when we remember His birth. Reflecting on His entry into the world some things continue to amaze me as I think about it.

The Lord entered this world with no particular advantages. His social position was obscure, His nation was subjugated to Rome, His people held false religious ideas and would reject His message, and His life was threatened from its beginning. His family fled into Egypt to save Him from the king's attempt to take His life (Matt. 2:13).

Heaven took greater notice than society, singing praises to shepherds (Matt. 8:16). A handful of His contemporaries knew His birth was significant: Simeon (Luke 2:25–32), Anna (Luke 2:36–38) and wise men (Matt. 2:1–2).

But for most people He lived among, all things continued as before. We have widespread celebration of His birth today. But when He was born, His birth was largely unnoticed, unappreciated, or unwelcome. He is the same today, yesterday and forever (Mormon 9:9; D&C 20:12). The truth is to know things as they are, were, and are to come (D&C 93:24). Few know Him, and therefore few recognize the truth. It can be spoken openly, because few have ears to hear (Mark 7:16).

Even though the Lord has provided a great many prophecies of His return, and details of what will happen before His return, today is like His first coming. He can accomplish His work openly, while the world takes little notice (Hab. 1:5; Acts 13:41).

He came to save us. Those who recognized who He was and why He had been sent rejoiced. Abraham saw His coming and

rejoiced (John 8:56). Enoch foresaw His day was comforted and rejoiced (Moses 7:46). His work has always been to save and exalt mankind (Moses 1:39). He will wipe away every tear (Rev. 7:17).

Even though His work is the solution to mankind's troubles, men turn their faces from Him (Isa. 53:3). He speaks to us and proclaims:

For verily I say unto you that I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the light and the life of the world—a light that shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not. I came unto mine own, and mine own received me not; but unto as many as received me gave I power to do many miracles, and to become the sons of God; and even unto them that believed on my name gave I power to obtain eternal life. And even so I have sent mine everlasting covenant into the world, to be a light to the world, and to be a standard for my people, and for the Gentiles to seek to it, and to be a messenger before my face to prepare the way before me.

DECEMBER 29, 2015

Come Unto Christ

Immediately before taking Peter, James and John to the Mount of Transfiguration, the Lord prophesied there were “some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom” (Matt. 16:28). This He fulfilled on the Mount when these three were shown the day of the earth's transfiguration at His coming (D&C 63:20–21). One of the Lord's gifts to many of His disciples is to show them His coming, judgment of the wicked, and redemption of the righteous.

In the final days of His earthly ministry, He was approached by His disciples in private and asked for an explanation of His coming

in glory. The group who approached Him included men and women followers (Matt. 24:3). He then told them plainly about His return. We have two restored accounts of His lesson: D&C 45:16–59; and the re-translated version of Matthew 24 (JS-Matthew in the Pearl of Great Price). In both, He refers to “holy places” where His disciples will stand “and shall not be moved” (D&C 45:32). They will first be gathered by Christ, who “shall send his angels before him with the great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together the remainder of his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (JS-Matt. 1:37). These are “they who are ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, by the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth, to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn” (D&C 77:11).

The Lord’s return is always a subject He wants us to keep in mind. All the latter-day events that will mark the time for His return will happen in a single generation (D&C 45:30; JS-M 1:34). Therefore, when that generation begins to witness the signs of His coming, they should prepare so the return of the Master does not find them abusing others (Matt. 24:44–51; JS-Matt. 1:49–55).

Among the gentiles, the “covenant” will only be established in His church. He defines His church as “whosoever is baptized unto repentance” (Mosiah 26:22). More clearly, in our day He has said, “Behold, this is my doctrine—whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same in my church” (D&C 10:67). As Christ promised to those living on this land,

But if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto who I have given this land

for their inheritance; And they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem. (3 Ne. 21:22–23)

Covenants can be broken. By changing the ordinances covenants are broken (Isa. 24:5). No organization exists with an intact covenant, but there are messengers the Lord has chosen and sent, preaching and offering the Lord's covenant through baptism. Salvation is not related to joining an institution, but it is dependent on repentance and receiving baptism at the hands of those He has sent. There is a website where baptism can be requested by one with authority. Baptism can be received even if one chooses to worship with Baptists, Catholics, Presbyterians, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, or Mormons. Faith in Christ and covenant with Him does not require anyone to be part of an organization run by men. It requires repentance and faith in Christ.

I am sent as another witness to testify He will return. Signs have been, and are being given both in the heavens and on earth. Today there are “false Christs, and false prophets,” who are doing their work “that, if possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (JS-Matt. 1:22). The elect are only protected “according to the covenant” (JS-Matt. 1:20, 22). He has authorized baptism as His own covenant to preserve all who receive it. I have seen His return and I know this newly offered baptism will be respected at His return by those who will return with Him. Baptism is offered as a covenant between you and the Lord. There are no institutional demands made upon you as a result of receiving the ordinance. It is an invitation to renew your relationship with Christ and take an act of faith to show Him you keep Him in your heart.

There is a requirement to record on earth so it can be recorded in heaven (Rev. 20:12; D&C 128:6–9). Because it must be recorded, the recorder’s clearinghouse allows you to submit your name on-line. The record consists of only a name, without any contact information. These names are kept confidential.

If, on this journey, you find yourself looking for fellowship with like-minded people, the fellowship locator allows you to locate, or announce your own fellowship and invite others to share in worship. These are voluntary associations and anyone can choose to participate.

Every nation, kindred, tongue and people, black and white, male and female, young and old, are invited to be baptized. There is no charge, and you make no commitment to men. You only covenant to follow Christ.

He is aligning events to complete His work, and the signs of His return are being given to this generation. The time will soon come when it will not be possible to receive this invitation any longer. Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance.

JANUARY 2016

JANUARY 4, 2016

Priesthood Ordination

I was asked about mechanics of priesthood ordination in an email this morning. I responded as follows:

The power to baptize comes from God’s voice to the man. We “ordain” into a brotherhood that follows from man-to-man, no matter what “line” that brotherhood reckons through it is nevertheless only a

brotherhood of men when first established. But the confirmation of authority comes from heaven by the voice of God.

In a very real sense, when the confirmation of authority comes from the voice of God, the line of authority changes to Him, rather than the brotherhood of men. But the tradition is to reckon the line through the brotherhood of men because: 1. we have an objective trail we can follow and, 2. that is all the initial “ordination” gives.

I have four lines of authority: 1. One for the Aaronic ordination. 2. A second for the Melchizedek ordination. 3. A third for High Priest ordination. 4. And the final ordination by the voice of God to me conferring the power to act on His behalf as He directs. Of them all it is the last I prize as the one to be valued.

JANUARY 4, 2016

Sacrament and Tithing

I was asked about how fellowships should organize their treatment of newcomers on the issue of tithing. In response I said:

I really hesitate to get into the internal governance of fellowships because the right belongs to the member through common consent. Because the right to govern arises from common consent, the decisions of the fellowship can be varied. Perhaps the approach will be changed from time to time based on experiences. But the fellowship has the right to decide, and then later, based on experience or discussion, to change the decision to do something else.

I was asked about what to do with left-over sacrament bread and wine and how appropriate it would be to share with others the following day if they do not share the same beliefs. In response I said:

I would regard the close of the service as also the end of the consecration of the emblems. So that once the event/observance/service has ended, then I would think anything remaining would be just ordinary food to be used as the case may be. That was what happened to the excess loaves and fishes (Mark 6:43; Matt. 14:20; John 6:13; Luke 9:17), which were gathered and used. I wouldn't just throw away the remainder, but I'd make use of it all. I think once the service ends then the sacred nature of the emblems likewise ends.

CHAPTER 9

Rumors in the Air

JANUARY 5, 2015

Second-Hand Rumors

Yet another second-hand rumor has been passed along to me. This latest rumor attributes things to me I would not say, have not said, and are not true. In response to this new rumor, I sent an email to the one who is the apparent source of the latest batch of falsehoods. Since I have no way of knowing how far the falsehoods have spread I want to reiterate again, I have NO SPOKESMAN.

You should trust no one to pass along something that I “really believe” or that I discuss “with trusted friends” or in a private meeting at which I “let out information” about important topics.

I speak openly, write and publish what I think, believe or know, and do not skulk around giving important information to friends, former neighbors or people I “will really visit with candidly.”

It disappoints me that this continues to be an issue. I assume they think doing this allows them to advance their mischief and make me responsible for it. But I don't understand why anyone would believe these people when I clearly have said over and over

that I don't use others to advance ideas, deliver information, or pass along secret or "higher" things. It's hogwash.

JANUARY 6, 2016

An Email (LDSFF)

I got an email from an anonymous individual at the ldsfreedomforum which inquired:

Mr. Snuffer,

I've created a post over at ldsfreedomforum asking you to clarify a teaching you put forth some time ago. The link to that posting is <http://www.ldsfreedomforum.com/viewtopic.php?f=14&t=41084>.

All the relevant information regarding my question can be found on the posting, so I won't repeat it here.

Thank you for considering my invitation to have a dialogue about this particular teaching. I'm sending this request from an anonymous email address out of a desire to remain entirely unknown, as I'd rather have people focused on the facts rather than the personalities insofar as it is possible. My handle on ldsfreedomforum is endlessismyname. Any reply you make to this email will only be available to me for one hour from when it is sent, so I will monitor this inbox for the next 12 hours and then try again tomorrow if I haven't heard back. Another option is for you to send me a private message on the forum.

Thanks, endless

I responded:

Is it possible to talk by phone? It would require a lot of typing and I'd rather save the time and talk. I have a day-long trial preparation meeting with co-counsel tomorrow, an oral

argument hearing on Friday, and I am preparing for a Federal jury trial in a couple of weeks. So spending a lot of time typing an email is problematic for my schedule.

If you'd like, I can give you my office phone (provided in my email) Or my cell phone if you will keep it confidential.

—Denver Snuffer

I sent another follow-up email to the same anonymous inquirer explaining:

I followed your link and tried to put my email response up there. It requires me to register and choose a password and then puts me into the middle of that forum. I do not want to get tangled up in that setting and have my inability to continue to monitor and respond there to be interpreted as something other than I am busy. So I'm not inclined to join their forum and become a fixture there (as would undoubtedly become required if I want to be understood).

I never post anonymously on any site.

He has responded:

Denver,

Thank you very much for your prompt reply, especially considering the limited time you have available due to your work obligations. I'm happy to talk on the phone but I worry that I may not represent your answer accurately if I try to report back to the forum regarding our conversation, especially if the answer is involved (which it sounds like it might be). Would it be okay with you if I take notes while we talk, create a summary that I think accurately reflects your response to my question, and then

pass that summary back to you for your approval before posting it back to the forum?

I don't know how late you work but I won't be available to talk until this evening. If you'd like me to call your cell, just send it over in a separate email. I'm happy to keep it confidential.

Thanks again. I look forward to talking to you and getting a clear understanding of what your thoughts are regarding my question.

endless

I just replied:

That would be fine. I like the approach.

I have a suggestion, however: Your email deletes and you are nameless, and unidentified. I don't really care who you are, and I respect your desire to remain unidentified, but it would be better if you use a real contact source so these emails do not disappear (as the first already have). I have no reason to reveal your identity to anyone.

My cell is:———— (provided in the email)

—Denver Snuffer

He wrote again:

Understood. I've noticed that you sometimes respond to questions on your personal blog. Would providing clarification to this question be something worth doing over there? That way you wouldn't have to join a forum (which I don't blame you for not wanting to do. I joined it yesterday simply because I was trying to find a way to contact you, and was told those at the forum might be able to help with that).

I hope you don't mind my posting anonymously. It stems from nothing more than a desire to not be seen as either a friend or an enemy of Denver Snuffer. In reality I am neither. I'm somebody who has been approached by a dear friend with an invitation to examine your teachings who now needs some clarification regarding a teaching that is causing me some confusion. I'll post your response on the forum so that you don't have to join. Thanks for trying to do it yourself.

endless

I replied:

I have been updating our emails on my website because I was not really certain when your email first arrived how to regard it. I thought it might be nothing more than spam, or someone baiting me and wanting to accuse me of hiding. So I put it up to make my willingness to respond public.

I've updated them on my website and they are available there- so feel free to do the same at the other location if you choose.

—Denver Snuffer

He replied:

Duplicating everything won't be necessary. If the conversation is documented on your site I don't feel it necessary to duplicate the effort on the forum. I'll just point people towards your blog and they can monitor the conversation from there if they want to.

I'm happy to provide you with an email address that allows us to retain the emails moving forward. I appreciate your respect for my desire to remain anonymous. I have several reasons for doing

this, not the least of which is that I don't want to influence anyone that knows me with my questions. I'd like everyone to be able to come with their own questions, without preconceived notions or prejudices based on my identity.

I'll send you an email from my normal address momentarily.

In his last response he provided information about contact I will keep confidential as I agreed. But I also sent him this brief summary about myself:

No problem. And now I will not update the website with anything further from you: How about after 6:30 pm? I'm pretty open from then for an hour or so.

It would still involve a good deal of typing: For example by way of introduction:

I spent two decades teaching Gospel Doctrine Class in Pleasant Grove, then Alpine, then in two different stakes in Sandy, and in the last stake in two different wards. I taught by lecture, not by soliciting input from the class. Someone would have to raise their hand if they wanted to participate. I assumed the burden was on me to make the material useful. I spent between 10 and 20 hours each week to prepare a 50 minute presentation. I did not want to ever say the same thing twice. Therefore each time through the scriptures (and in two decades each of the standard works were taught 5 times) the exposition revisited the material from a more expansive study than the one four years earlier.

I wanted the class to expand my own understanding. Therefore whatever had been taught before was kept in memory

while I studied to find what else might contribute to the material.

I've kept those study habits. I still work about 10 to 20 hours a week over the scriptures and church history.

As I did the math recently, I estimated that I have logged about 35,000 hours of scripture study since being converted to Mormonism. As a result of that I think in terms of the scriptures. Passages run through my mind continually. They are my companion in life. When I was 13 I would have told you apart from my own thoughts, the strongest voice in my mind came from Mark Twain (I had read practically everything he had written by then). Today I would say the strongest voice in my mind apart from my own thoughts, comes through the language of scripture and are continually the source I ponder, reflect upon, weigh, and seek to understand.

Although I have had many remarkable experiences with God, I have found the scriptures contain everything necessary to discuss every topic. Even things I thought were original and revealed for the first time to me upon returning to study I have found are already there in scripture. I just could not see it until it had been shown to me. Then through the light of a new revelation I learned that Isaiah, or Daniel, or Christ already addressed the matter but it was hidden from my view until I saw it as well.

This is the sort of thing that requires a great deal of typing to set out, and even this is cryptic and summary. I would ask if you've read Malcom Gladwell's book, *Outliers* at this point in a conversation. In there he mentions that it takes about 10,000 hours of preparation before someone becomes accomplished in any skill. It is Gladwell's observation, and it may or may

not be accurate. But when I read his book I was reminded of what the scriptures have done to influence my own life and how I've logged more hours by three times than he suggests produces competence.

Well, I look forward to your call.

—Denver Snuffer

FINAL NOTE:

He called and we spoke last evening (January 6th) from 7:02 pm to 8:26 pm according to the clock in my room. He has provided a summary of the answers to his two questions and I have edited it to make it more complete and he will put it up on the LDSFF.

JANUARY 7, 2016

When I Clarify, When Not

There are hundreds of different topics that people discuss with me about which I have no opinion or view. These things matter to others, and in some cases are believed to be vital religious issues for them.

Just a few examples will illustrate:

Bishop John Koyle's Dream Mine matters to some people. They have invested in it and study what Koyle taught, said and prophesied. I've heard them explain their views.

I have heard more than one account of "multiple mortal probations" from those who believe strongly in the idea. Some think it is at the heart of the gospel plan. I've heard them but have never been able to reconcile the strongly contrasting forms this idea has taken.

One man believes everything ever revealed since Adam can be extrapolated from the pre-1990 version of the LDS endowment. His complex theories have been evolving, encountering obstacles, taking a detour and reconstituting for years, but he stays on this theme as the basis for all gospel knowledge. I've listened to him.

There are many different views of the role and status of women. On one extreme they are breeding stock, of little value other than to be subservient to men and produce offspring. On the other extreme they are goddesses and men are mere brutes, to be endured by the divine feminine as a test in this fallen world; but men will get their punishment in the world to come where women's true value is known. I've heard these various expositions of conflicting views about women.

I've attended meetings where strange ideas are taught openly. I've listened and tried to understand what the speaker is attempting to teach. There are hundreds of examples, but I will leave it with these.

I can probably explain many of these strange ideas in the same way as they have been explained to me. But the fact I can listen to them, or restate what others have set out, does not mean that I share their beliefs or support their "cause." I try to understand them, without the need to do anything more.

For me, these wildly varying ideas are important for one reason: I'm trying hard to understand the challenge we face to become "one" with each other. In the most peaceful, enlightened and enduring society (apart from Enoch's and Melchizedek's cities) we have only a brief explanation of their social order. But in the description it tells us four times the same important lesson:

4 Ne. 1:2 **"and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another."**

This was a first step. It was not complete. But the people managed to stop their disputes. They may not have agreed with one another, but they were no longer fighting among themselves about their different viewpoints.

4 Ne. 1:13 “And it came to pass that **there was no contention among all the people, in all the land; but there were mighty miracles wrought** among the disciples of Jesus.” This was a closer agreement where united faith among the people began to bear the fruits of the spirit. It is a second level and developmentally greater than the absence of contention that preceded it.

4 Ne. 1:15 “And it came to pass that there was **no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts** of the people.” This was yet another stage of development. It came as people’s hearts were filled through God’s love so they would no longer just be avoiding contention, they were now in agreement.

4 Ne. 1:18 “the first generation from Christ had passed away, and there was **no contention in all the land.**”

The experience these people went through was in stages of progression and development. Over many years I’ve tried to see what the landscape looks like among the different versions of the gospel as understood by widely varying people. I believe them (you) all to be loved by God. I believe them (you) all to be sincere. I let others explain themselves to me, I labor to understand them (you), and let all men go in peace. I believe it is important to allow all men to explain their views, and important to consider this cacophony because of how it separates us from becoming “one” with each other. It is a very real challenge. It is daunting. But it is important to understand as a point of beginning.

I do not interrupt people and challenge everything they say. I do not insist that people change their views to be exactly as mine.

If I only tolerated my own view I would interrupt every person in every conversation and make myself an obnoxious mad man.

From time to time there are those who take the views they have announced to me as their belief or doctrine, and associated MY name with it. If they explain their views as theirs, they go in peace. But when they make their belief MINE, and their understanding of things MY understanding, or when it is not true or accurate, then I choose to clarify that I do not share that viewpoint.

JANUARY 9, 2016

Every Word of God

In answer to temptation Christ explained, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). In this our Lord quoted the scriptures: “that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live” (Deu. 8:3).

This makes us responsible to listen for and respond to God’s voice.

The Lord was confronted by devout Jews who questioned His failure to respect the existing religious conventions. They thought He disrespected the law and authorities. They could not understand that He was sent to replace the existing order with something new. For them, anything that failed to conform to the existing pattern was to be condemned. They knew their traditions were true, they were God’s chosen people, and God had spoken through Moses and the prophets to them. Therefore, Christ’s failure to fall into strict conformity with the existing religious traditions seemed to them proof of His heresy.

Christ explained the change of direction His ministry would cause in these words:

No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles. (Mark 2:21–22)

God spoke through Joseph, who translated the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God. Therefore to live by every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God we must accept the Book of Mormon, even if this causes us to abandon older forms of religious ideas.

Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews? Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth? Wherefore murmur ye, because that ye shall receive more of my word? Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also. And I do this that I may prove unto many that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and that I speak forth my words according to mine own pleasure. And because that I have spoken one word ye

need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever. Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written. For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written. (2 Ne. 29:6–11)

JANUARY 15, 2016

Interview

I was asked about being interviewed for the Religion News Service. The inquiry asked about “my” movement. In response to the request I replied:

I would [be willing to be interviewed]. But I would not want this to either be or have the aura of self-promotion. The “movement” (if it can be called that) is not owned by me. The participants are independently motivated, and I exert no control over anyone.

Tithing is collected and distributed locally. No benefit comes to me. I donate when I am at a meeting where it is collected, and those who are present decide among themselves by common consent how the tithing is used among themselves. I have never been present when that decision has been made and of course I have not received one cent from anyone’s tithing donation.

There are fellowships across the globe, but I have not founded a single one. They are established by those who share the common belief in the need to be more scripture based, more seriously devoted

and more individually accountable for the restoration through Joseph.

CHAPTER 10

By Godly Example

JANUARY 18, 2016

Rebaptism

Edwin Wilde provided me some excerpts taken from his review of 178 early Mormon journals mentioning the widespread practice of rebaptism. Here is some, but not all, of the information he uncovered:

From the journal of Milo Andrus, (1814–1893): “In the spring of 1854, I was sent to Saint Louis to preside over the stake there. Stayed there one year, rebaptized and confirmed about 800 saints.”

From the journal of Elizabeth Brotherton:

March 19 1851 Mr. Pratt was appointed on a mission to the Pacific Coast to organize and set in order the Saints that had gone there not knowing where the church would locate. They went in the ship Brooklyn. I went with him to San Francisco, we traveled in company with A. Lyman, and C.C. Rich when they were going to San Bernerdino with a company of Saints. After a tiresome journey we arrived in San Francisco. Mr. Pratt

remained there and rebaptized quite a number in about two months time.

From William Clayton's diary:

May 9, 1841 Joseph preached on his side on baptism for the dead (see Record). Afterwards a number was baptized both for remission of sins and for the dead. I was baptized first for myself and then for my Grandfather Thomas and Grandmother Ellen Clayton, Grandmother Mary Chritebly and Aunt Elizabeth Beurwood. (Clayton was previously baptized October 21, 1837)

From the journal of Warren Foote:

24th. [March 1842] This is the day that I have appointed to go down into the waters of baptism and thereby fulfill the covenant I made to the Lord when I was near death's door. The meeting was at Elder Jacob Myers house about one mile from Father's. I walked down there and in company with Amos Kimmins, Franklin Allen, and his wife, Samuel Myers, and Lovina Myers, was baptized by Daniel A. Miller, President of this branch, between five and six o'clock P.M. The foregoing named persons, had been baptized before, and now felt to renew their covenants. As it was concluded to have an evening meeting I thought that I would stay to it. The wind blew up from the north very cool and in going home, I took cold.

Other entries in Warren Foote's journal:

8th. [May 1842] Sunday. A very large congregation assembled to meeting. Sidney Rigdon preached. In the afternoon there were many baptized in the font in the basement of the Temple and forty three in the Mississippi River. They were mostly rebaptisms.

[MAY, 1844] 26th. Attended meeting at Bro. J. Clark's. After meeting I rebaptized Elihu Allen, Joseph Clark, and John B. Carpenter. We ordained E. Allen [a] priest, and Joseph Clark [a] teacher. It is so wet that we cannot plant corn.

[JUNE, 1844] 9th. Sunday. My wife with five others were rebaptized by Elder J. B. Carpenter.

From the autobiography of Joseph Holbrook:

On Saturday, January 5, 1833...I told Brother Lyons and Rich I would like to be baptized if they thought I was worthy as I had brought my clothes for that purpose. So after breakfast I was baptized with my Aunt Phebe Angel by Leonard Rich... My wife was taken very sick on the 7th of July [1842] and grew worse until she died, being taken sick nine days (July 16, 1842), aged 37 years, 11 months and two days...After my wife's death, I was rebaptized in the Mississippi River by Brigham Young.

From the autobiography of Joseph Hovey:

I, Joseph, for the first time bowed myself before God in secret and implored his mercy and asked him if what I had read out [of] the Book of Mormon was true and if the man, Joseph Smith, was the one who translated these marvelous records. I, Joseph, asked God for a testimony by the Holy Spirit and truly I got what I asked for and more abundantly. Therefore, my wife, Martha, and I did truly rejoice in the truth we had found in those records. We also searched the Bible daily and found that it did corroborate with the Book of Mormon. We were, therefore, born again and could see the kingdom. Hence, July 4, 1839, we were baptized with water and received the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. One brother, Mr. Draper, baptized us...there was a committee appointed by the God of Israel to superintend those houses in the fall of 1840. The fund

to commence the building of the temple were raised through tithing, that is every man put in a tenth of his property and thereafter his earnings every tenth day...I, Joseph, did prosper well in good health but my wife, Martha, was not so well as myself. I, Joseph, did go to work in the stone quarry and I labored exceedingly for the Nauvoo House. I got out several hundred feet of stone during the season. I also worked on the Nauvoo temple cutting stone. In the meanwhile, my wife, Martha, was sick, even abortion took place and she was very low. But she was healed by going to the baptismal font and was immersed for her health and baptized for her dead.

This is from the journal/autobiography of William Huntington Sr.:

In 1833, I found the Book of Mormon. I read the book, believed in the book that it was what it was represented to be. My mind thus being prepared to receive the gospel accordingly, in the month of April 1835, myself and my wife both united with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

...April 11th, 1841 Joseph [Smith] and Sidney [Rigdon] baptized each other for the remission of their sins as this order was then instituted in the Church. Accordingly, on the 27th of April [1841], I was baptized for the remission of my sins. Also, on the same day, was baptized for my brother Hyrum Huntington.

This is from the autobiography of Benjamin F. Johnson:

In the spring of 1835 before I was baptized, my mother and all her children met at the house of my sister, Delcena Sherman, to receive from Patriarch Joseph Smith, Sr., our patriarchal blessings. He blessed all according to age until he came to Joseph E. and myself, when he placed his hands first upon my head. My mother told him I was the youngest, but he said that mattered not—to me was the first blessing; and in blessing me,

among other great and glorious things, he told me the Lord would call me to do the work of brother Seth, who had been called away by death. In this promise there was to me more joy than ever before I had known; my dear brother was not to be robbed of his blessings, and if I could only live faithfully his work would be done, and I should do it for him. I felt this was the greatest boon the Lord could bestow upon me. ... Soon after this, I overstepped my father's objections and was baptized by Elder Lyman Johnson... On the 13th of October [1838] we crossed the Mississippi at Louisiana, and began to hear of great troubles among the Mormons at Far West, and we were warned of the great danger of proceeding, but our camp was only stirred to greater desire to go on. Here I remembered my former purpose to renew my covenant by baptism, and as one of my associates, D. D. McArthur, was to be baptized, I went with him and was baptized by Henry Hariman. [Harriman]

From the autobiography of Joel H. Johnson:

At the October [1856] Conference the heads of the Church preached the necessity of a reformation among the saints by confessing their own sins against God and their brethren and forsaking the same and by forgiving the sins of others and making restitution for all wrongs as much as possible. This glorious work of reformation and restitution soon commenced in Great Salt Lake City and spread with rapidity to all the branches of the Church; and all who confessed and restored were rebaptized for the last time for the remission of their sins. Thursday, September 18th [1856], I started with my wife Susan and little child accompanied by my son Nephi, with an ox team to go and visit our friends at Summit Creek in Utah County,

and also in Salt Lake City, and attend the October conference, and to purchase and drive home a few sheep. We arrived at Summit Creek and Friday the 26th, and found our friends as well. We had a good visit with them and started on Tuesday the 30th for Salt Lake City, and arrived on Friday the 3rd of October, attending conference and done our business and started homeward on Friday the 10th. On our way we called at Lake City in Utah County and purchased 26 sheep, one of which died at Chicken Creek. We arrived safely home with the rest on the 25th and found all well, and was rebaptized on Wednesday, 29th [October 1856], at Fort Johnson by Issac C. Height, President of the Stake of Cedar City.

The following comes from the autobiography/journal of Lyman O. Littlefield:

My mother lingered for four or five days after my arrival. In the warmest terms she expressed her thankfulness to her Heavenly Father that I had come to be with her through her sickness. I conversed with her freely concerning the doctrines and principles of the Church, in relation to all of which she expressed her firm belief, and spoke of her great desire to get well that she might renew her covenant by being rebaptized. She felt that this would be a great satisfaction inasmuch as she had been absent from the Church for several years. She said this had been her desire for a long time, but she had put it off from time to time. "But now," she said, "if the Lord permits me to get well, I will attend to it, and nothing shall hinder me.

Also there was this note later in the journal:

While there [Kirtland] I made the acquaintance of Brother Luman Heath and wife and rebaptized her mother in the

Shagrin River for the renewal of her covenant, according to her desire. I also made the acquaintance of Brother and Sister Kent and many others.

From the autobiography of Nathan T. Porter

My brother Lyman Wight Porter, took passage on... the Union Pacific, to the state of Missouri to visit our eldest sister Melinda (Malinda) Chipman, whom we had not seen for many years... A disposal was soon made of the property she had for sale, so that she, with her son Sanford, was on their way with him for Salt Lake Valley... She soon renewed her covenants by rebaptism and received her endowments in which she had much joy and consolation.

This from an early excerpt of Parley Pratt's autobiography:

After we had arrived on the ground of Great Salt Lake City we pitched our tents by the side of a spring of water; and, after resting a little, I devoted my time chiefly to building temporary houses, putting in crops, and obtaining fuel from the mountains... Having repented of our sins and renewed our covenants, President John Taylor and myself administered the ordinances of baptism, etc., to each other and to our families, according to the example set by the President and pioneers who had done the same on entering the valley. These solemnities took place with us and most of our families, November 28, 1847.

This is from a letter from Parley Pratt to Brigham Young, August 28, 1851; while he was in San Francisco:

Since I have arrived here I have been diligent in the duties of my calling every hour, and have called upon God for His Spirit to help me with all the energy I possessed, and without ceasing. The result is, the Spirit of the Lord God has been upon me continually, in such light, and joy, and testimony as I have

seldom experienced. Brothers A. Lyman and C. C. Rich have been here with me some of the time; we have called together the old members and others, and preached repentance and reformation of life. We have re-baptized many of them, and have re-organized the Church.

From pg 118–119 of the journal/autobiography of Joseph Lee Robinson:

Now, prior to this, after we had fairly gotten up there we called a meeting of the people for it was a nice inviting country and a good many had come upon the lands. We talked to them some, inquiring if they were able and agreeable that I should be their president and bishop and that I should select two of their members and set them apart as my counselors and would they uphold us by their prayers and faith. I wished them to make it manifest by the show of the right hand and there was a clear vote, yes... Our ward was bounded at that time north of Cherry's settlement and south of Weber River, a very large ward, but a few people. Suffice it to say, we met together often and preached and prayed and sang songs and sometimes, spoke in tongues. We were counseled to be rebaptized as we had been a long time traveling and all that wished to be Saints they should make it manifest. Consequently, there was a number baptized on the first of July, 1849 by John Harris, Joseph L. Robinson, Susan and Laurinda M., two of his wives, Daniel A. Miller, Hannah Miller, and Jacob, Lovica, James S., Susanna, Millers, and John and Olive Garner, Seth Dustin, Susanna Harris, William Harmison, all of which were confirmed by Joseph L. Robinson and Daniel A. Miller. Also on September 9th, 1849, there were baptized by Joseph L. Robinson, Maria Robinson, Oliver Lee, Ebenezer J., Anna Maria, Robinsons, William P. and

Sidney R. Burton, Elizabeth, David and Alma Hess, and Clarica Jane Miller all of which were confirmed by Daniel A. Miller and John Harris. Also on September 9th were baptized by Daniel A. Miller, Benjamin and Rosanna Matilda Cross, Joel Ricks, Eleanor, Louis, and Sally Ann Ricks and Amanda Tomkins—all confirmed by Joseph L. Robinson and John Harris.

Also there is this excerpt from that same book, pgs 420–421:

November 1891. Aunt Jane Slade died November 21st, 1891. She is gone. We tried to save her from death. The Lord told me he would forgive her and that I might bless her and if she would believe she should remain for a season and enjoy her new home and the society of her friends and have time to reflect and prepare to meet her God, We were really in hopes we could get her well enough that she could come and stop with us awhile, that we might get sufficient faith in her that she might get rebaptized, renew her covenants and baptized for her health.

From the autobiography/journal of Allen Russel:

Some time in the Summer, I think before Joseph Smith the Prophet and his brother Hiram were killed in Carthage Jail in 1844. Father, Mother, my sister Sally, my brother Horace, and myself, went to the creek where Patriarch John Smith was baptizing, and we were all were re-baptized by Patriarch John Smith and confirmed by his son George A. Smith at waters edge. Baptized about May 10, and confirmed some time in the month of June.

Also from the same journal:

“Thursday [May 1899] 11—I did work for William and was baptized for my health and a man for Brother Ashman, then I was administered too.”

Also he wrote:

Tuesday [October 1899] 24—We went to the temple and Brother Ashman set as a witness. I was baptized for my health and administered to Horace Thorton being mouth and Brother Van Stewart baptizing me.

Still later he recorded:

Saturday [February 1906] 10—I received \$1.50 for temple worker. Preached the gospel to Ted Davis. He said he had been baptized but did not think it would hurt him to be again and said he desired to have his wife sealed to him. I preached to Albert Day and he said he was convinced of his error.

Daniel Tyler recorded some teachings that he learned from Joseph Smith:

About the time the doctrine of rebaptism for members in the Church was first revealed in Nauvoo, Joseph, the great seer and revelator to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, made some remarks on the subject: On one occasion he read, among other scriptures, Hebrews, 6th chapter, 1st and 2nd verses, as follow:

Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

The Prophet said the first verse should read: “Therefore, not leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, etc.” This explanation not only made the entire subject of the two verses clear but reconciled them with other scriptures. Notwithstanding Paul is made to say “leaving,” etc., the inference is clear that if the foundation of repentance, baptism and the laying on of hands should be relaid they would have to perform those works over again, as every careful reader of the text must see. This also corroborates a revelation to the Church of Ephesus: *Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works.* All latter-day Saints know that the first works after repentance are baptism and the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost. Here we find a presiding elder of a branch or ward of the Church commanded to perform these works over again, under pain of removal if he failed to obey the divine behest. Many more passages might be quoted to the same effect, but these are sufficient for my purpose. Joseph’s translation not only reconciles the text with itself, but also with other scriptures, as already shown, and as was explained by the Prophet.

Helen Whitney’s diary recorded:

The evening of the 16th, after witnessing the death of Brother William Gheen, who died at 7 o’clock in the evening, father took Sarah and Sister Winchester to the river and baptized them for their health.

A statement by Orson Pratt found in the *Journal of Discourses* 18:156–61:

I will here state that Martin Harris, when he came to this [Utah] Territory a few years ago, was rebaptized, the same as every

member of the Church from distant parts is on arriving here. That seems to be a kind of standing ordinance for all Latter-day Saints who emigrate here, from the First Presidency down; all are rebaptized and set out anew by renewing their covenants.

JANUARY 24, 2016

Ephesians 4:29–5:16; 6:12

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak

of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light... For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Given the nature of our fight (which is spiritual), we ought to resist the culture of conflict that poisons our time, and rise above disputing among ourselves to show by our godly example what it means to follow Christ.

CHAPTER 11

Setting Things Straight

FEBRUARY 2016

FEBRUARY 9, 2016

Correcting the Record

Jana Riess has posted a new portion of the interview I did with her a few weeks ago. It is titled: “Did Joseph Smith Practice Polygamy—Denver Snuffer Says No” (<https://religionnews.com/2016/02/09/did-joseph-smith-practice-polygamy-denver-snuffer-says-no/>).

Earlier I put a corrected version of the interview here and emailed Jana explaining that there were some errors needing to be corrected. I just got off the phone with Jana and her earlier version has now been updated and corrected. There was an honest mistake made and she has made the correction.

I appreciate that Jana has taken the time and trouble to get it correct.

FEBRUARY 10, 2016

Sturge-Weber Disorder

A neighbor's granddaughter ("Emery") was born with Sturge-Weber syndrome and the family is asking for help with the costs of medical care. They set up a website to sell t-shirts, help raise money and raise awareness of this birth defect. Their website is called:

"Emery's Army"

Emery's grandfather and I served in an elders quorum presidency about twenty-years ago. He was later bishop of our ward while I served on the high council. Our families have been friends for years. Our kids have grown up together. My wife has been Joy's YW leader. We are happy to post this appeal in an effort to help the family.

FYI: The t-shirt sales will end on Saturday.

FEBRUARY 14, 2016

Prophecy, not Publicity

The most surprising thing to me is the Lord's utter indifference to whether the world takes note of what He is doing. Prophecy was never intended to be the same thing as publicity. He works in obscure, unnoticed ways to bring His work to pass. The Book of Mormon calls it "small means." He describes His labor force as "the weak things of the world."

The people who expect something big, noteworthy and earth-shaking before recognizing God's hand have never noticed His message or messengers. The world expects publicity. It expects God will always work through the "chief seats" when He rarely does.

The Lord will return as a "thief in the night" because He is unwanted, unwelcome, and although He gives many signs and sends a message, men choose darkness instead of light. For mankind

it is always nighttime. They do not notice the dawn. They remain asleep, with eyes closed.

FEBRUARY 17, 2016

How To Fail

What if the Lord were to give the opportunity to build Zion? What if the Lord wanted it to happen now? What would be done differently than was done by those who went before and failed?

There is a model to follow if we want to fail to achieve Zion. In Missouri, those who gathered were rejected and driven out because of their “jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires” (D&C 101:6).

After the catastrophe in Missouri, the refugees from the failure reassembled in Nauvoo. The Lord offered another chance, promising that if they would follow Him they would receive the fullness of the priesthood He had taken from them (D&C 124:28). He made the offer in January 1841.

The work on the Nauvoo Temple proceeded haltingly and was never finished before the building was struck by lightning, burned, knocked over by a tornado, and the remaining fragment disassembled by the town because of safety concerns. It was foreseeable the offer in January 1841 would not be meaningful. Over a year later the *Times and Seasons* printed a letter from the Nauvoo High Council describing how they viewed the population working on the temple:

[We rejoice at] the willingness to aid in the building of the ‘House of the Lord,’ we are grieved at the conduct of some, who seem to have forgotten the purpose for which they have gathered. Instead of promoting union, appear to be engaged in

sowing strifes and animosities among their brethren, spreading evil reports; ... We feel to advise taking the word of God for our guide, and exhort you not to forget you have come up as Saviors upon Mount Zion, consequently to seek each other's good, -to become one: inasmuch as the Lord has said, "except ye become one ye are none of mine." (*Times and Seasons*, February 15, 1842, Vol. 3, No. 8, *The High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ, to the Saints of Nauvoo*)

It is easy to fail. Just gather people who will contend with each other and there will be failure EVERY time. It makes sense to try something new rather than repeat the pattern that will never work. First, provide an opportunity for those who are interested to display who they are, whether they can live peaceably with others. Once we know one another's hearts then the Lord can gather only those who will avoid contentions, jealousies, strifes, envyings, and jarring. Like the pattern in Abraham, first men are "proven" and then they are gathered, or spared.

FEBRUARY 25, 2016

Marriage

Last Saturday a group gathered to participate in a conference to discuss the upcoming marriages taking place between their children. Several were in attendance. I was there, along with Keith Henderson and other men and women whose children are preparing for marriage. Keith Henderson wrote up a description of the outcome, and a few of us helped edit and synthesize it into an article you can now find on the Recorder's Clearinghouse website. The article is titled "Marriage" and could be of interest to anyone

whose family includes someone contemplating getting married (<https://www.recordersclearinghouse.com/2016/02/>).

FEBRUARY 25, 2016

Comments on “Marriage”

In response to the Recorder’s Clearinghouse article on Marriage, these are some of my thoughts:

First, a conference can be called by anyone at any time and include any group that gathers. There has not yet been a “general conference” where everyone has been invited, but that will probably happen at some point. In the meantime, there have been conferences and there will probably be more.

The article deals with two subjects: Marriage and sealing. They are two different topics.

On marriage, the transcript of the civil marriage ceremony in the 1835 D&C was not written by Joseph Smith. It was authored by Oliver Cowdery based on what he had witnessed Joseph doing when marriages were performed. It is as close an historical account of the ceremony Joseph performed during that era as we have. Between 1835 and the time Joseph died, it was the ceremony performed throughout the church. It is as appropriate as any other civil ceremony, and has the advantage of being nominally connected with Joseph Smith.

The article is not a commandment, but a suggestion. People are free to accept or ignore it. No one claims the right to issue a commandment on this subject for others to follow. It is the humble attempt of a group of people who are directly confronting this in their families to address the issue. Then that group of people provided their explanation for the possible benefit of others.

Some clarifications have been suggested by others who were in attendance, and Keith Henderson will post additions and updates based on those suggestions in the next day or two. One clarification will be to make a sharper distinction between marriage and sealing.

On sealing, I personally doubt the language used in LDS Temples has been preserved intact from Joseph until today. But it is as close as we have for the present, and has been handed down from earnest people through four generations. It makes sense to use the language and ask God to accept and preserve the marriages sealed using this ceremony.

Words chosen carefully should be read carefully. For example, the statement that “we know of no man on earth today claiming at this time the right to seal by virtue of the rites and ordinances he has received from on High” means just that and nothing more. That is a claim made by the LDS Church. There is no reason to concern ourselves about what will happen in due course in the future. Until there is a command to proceed with an errand assigned by God, nothing can be done with His approval. There is a lot of work left to do before the House of God returns.

FEBRUARY 28, 2016

1, 2 or 3 Priesthoods?

There was a talk given by Joseph Smith on August 27, 1843 where he describes three kinds of priesthood. Here is a quote from the account we have: (See *TPJS*, pp. 322–323).

Respecting the Melchizedek Priesthood, the sectarians never professed to have it; consequently they never could save any one, and would all be damned together. There was an Episcopal priest who said he had the priesthood of Aaron, but had not the priesthood of Melchizedek: and I bear testimony that I never have found the

man who claimed the Priesthood of Melchizedek. The power of the Melchizedek Priesthood is to have the power of 'endless lives;' for the everlasting covenant cannot be broken.

The law was given under Aaron for the purpose of pouring out judgments and destructions. There are three grand orders of priesthood referred to here.

First, The king of Shiloam (Salem) had power and authority over that of Abraham, holding the key and the power of endless life. Angels, desire to look into it, but they have set up too many stakes. God cursed the children of Israel because they would not receive the last law from Moses.

The sacrifice required of Abraham in the offering up of Isaac, shows that if a man would attain to the keys of the kingdom of an endless life; he must sacrifice all things. When God offers a blessing or knowledge to a man, and he refuses to receive it, he will be damned. The Israelites prayed that God would speak to Moses and not to them; in consequence of which he cursed them with a carnal law.

What was the power of Melchizedek? 'Twas not the Priesthood of Aaron which administers in outward ordinances, and the offering of sacrifices. Those holding the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood are kings and priests of the Most High God, holding the keys of power and blessings. In fact, that Priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy, and stands as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam.

Abraham says to Melchizedek, I believe all that thou hast taught me concerning the priesthood and the coming of the Son of Man; so Melchizedek ordained Abraham and sent him away. Abraham rejoiced, saying, Now I have a priesthood.

Salvation could not come to the world without the mediation of Jesus Christ.

How shall God come to the rescue of this generation? He will send Elijah the prophet. The law revealed to Moses in Horeb never was revealed to the children of Israel as a nation. Elijah shall reveal the covenants to seal the hearts of the father to the children, and the children to the fathers.

The anointing and sealing is to be called, elected and made sure.

‘Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.’ The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right from the eternal God, and not by descent from father and mother; and that priesthood is as eternal as God Himself, having neither beginning of days nor end of life.

The Second Priesthood is Patriarchal authority. Go to and finish the temple, and God will fill it with power, and you will then receive more knowledge concerning this priesthood.

The Third is what is called the Levitical Priesthood, consisting of priests to administer in outward ordinances, made without an oath; but the Priesthood of Melchizedek is by an oath and covenant.

I’ve explained at length how I understand these three divisions of priesthood in the talk in Orem titled “Priesthood” (which, in addition to my blog, is available as an audio on YouTube) and then supplemented the material in the chapter on Priesthood in *Preserving the Restoration*. I continue to receive emails asking for clarification.

In the beginning there was one priesthood with one name. The original was called “the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son

of God.” (D&C 107:3.) Adam prophesied that this single, original form of priesthood will return at the end of the world. (Moses 6:7.)

The original form was renamed after Enoch in his day. (D&C 76:57.)

Then later, it was renamed again after Melchizedek. (D&C 107:4.) The renaming did not change the priesthood, but merely used a different title to “avoid the too frequent repetition of his [the Son of God’s] name.” (*Id.*)

The original, unified, singular priesthood was held by the first Patriarchs. From Adam through Melchizedek, the single form of priesthood was held by “priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.” (D&C 76:57.) The full extent of that authority and the rights it conferred were important enough that the Pharaoh claimed it, and through it the right to govern the earth. (Abr. 1:26–27.) The original Pharaoh was a “righteous man” (Abr. 1:26) but it was not his right to govern as a holder of this original priestly authority. In the beginning of the world, while men rebelled against the authority, the righteous allowed themselves to be guided by it, and through it they repented and found favor with God.

The authority was passed down through Abraham. Although the chosen line through Isaac lost it, it was preserved through Abraham and Keturah’s son, Midian. (Gen. 25: 1–2.) The man Reuel (given an “El” naming by his parents-Exo. 2:16–18) descended from Midian. He received a new name from God. (“Jethro”-Exo. 3:1.) The new name from God indicates God accepted him as His son. Moses received his ordination through Jethro. (D&C 84:6.)

Now Jethro was a righteous man, but it was through Moses that God established the rule of the Holy Priesthood after the Order of

the Son of God. Therefore, it was through Moses that Egypt's rule over Israel was overthrown, and the people liberated to follow God.

However, the Israelites were unwilling to abide this priesthood. It required too much of them and they hardened their hearts. They could not enter into God's presence as a people. (D&C 84:22–25.)

In the days of Moses it was divided, and a lesser form of priesthood was carved out from the higher form. (D&C 84:25–27.) That lesser form was called "Aaronic" and authorized to act only in administering outward ordinances. (D&C 107:14.)

Joseph explained that in the LDS Church there were two priesthoods. (D&C 107:1.) But Joseph also described three priesthoods in the talk given August 27, 1843. In an attempt to clarify, I have associated the three kinds of priesthood with the following names and qualifications: **Aaronic**: Priests who associate with angels and have fellowship with them. **Melchizedek**: Priests who associate with the Son of God and have fellowship with Him. **Patriarchal**: Priests who have been in the presence of Father Ahman and have been accepted by Him. I admit this is not the way the names are used in the scriptures. I have renamed them in this manner as my attempt to harmonize understanding with the talk given by Joseph and to distinguish from LDS claims.

There are important points to consider. There was originally a single form of priesthood. It was the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God. That priesthood is prophesied to return at the end of the world. God the Father decides who will stand at the head of the Family, with authorization to govern as a father (or patriarch) following the pattern given to Adam in the beginning. As Joseph explained it, "*Go to and finish the temple, and God will fill it with power, and you will then receive more knowledge concerning this priesthood.*" This will be required of us, just as it was before.

If we have any authority at all, we have some portion or degree of the original. Rather than limiting ourselves to some other form, ordain to the Holy Order and leave it to God to determine how much He decides to confer upon a man.

It is clear Jethro was approved of God. It is clear his parents worshipped the true God, and named him “Reu-El” to honor the God of Abraham. It is also clear that God did not honor Reuel with the responsibility of freeing Israel from Egypt and giving direction to them. It was in Moses that God reclaimed the original authority over His chosen people.

There will be a root of Jesse to whom the right will belong. (D&C 113:5–6.) This was never Joseph nor Hyrum. It could never be done by a “pure blooded Ephraimite” and therefore their bloodlines did not qualify to finish the House of God. Their lives were foundational for what will come next. What they accomplished is shown in the Nauvoo Temple as a metaphor. It was constructed to the second floor, and unfinished in design and construction at their passing. Although others tried to design and build what was left, it burned, and was then destroyed by a whirlwind. Only pictures and a few stones remain of the original. The House of God will return and the original authority of the Holy Order will likewise be here on earth before the return of the Son of God.

The Holy Order will submit to the Son of God, and freely acknowledge that it is His right to rule. He will be the King of kings, and the Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16) because no man with this Holy Order will compare themselves to Him.

Limiting what is said about these matters of priesthood hopefully prevents deceivers and pretenders from improving their false claims. It will not be entrusted to a fool, nor given to the proud and haughty. It will be held by the meek and lowly. True authority

must persuade and invite using kindness and pure knowledge as their scepter, offering their lives as a sacrifice and not offering themselves as an idol to be honored.

MARCH 2016

MARCH 7, 2016

PTHG

In an email exchange about *Passing the Heavenly Gift* I sent the following:

I think it is a more correct account of the restoration than anything else that has been written. The Book of Mormon was not an attempt to give a “fair” or a “compete” account of events. It was selected precisely to accomplish the object of telling the truth about the Nephites and their failure.

If you shaded the account with what Laman and Lemuel said, thought, wrote or did in response to Nephi, then we might not have the same view of Nephi at all. Nephi didn't give us their story, except insofar as he recounts their reactions to him.

Mormon did not give more than a highly selective summary in the rest of the book. It is because the history was condensed, edited, and abridged that we can treat it as scripture and inspired. Inspiration is not generally shared across competing viewpoints. Generally there is “right” and “wrong” and the scriptures identify which one is correct. There is no competing voice ever allowed to speak.

So PTHG took the words of scripture and prophecy and recast the story of our history to fit the prophetic model concerning us and our events. It is not balanced with opposing materials because

the other opposing materials project a false narrative, a prideful vindication of ourselves while altogether ignoring the obvious failures along the way.

MARCH 14, 2016

Tangible? Spiritual?

I have exchanged emails with a man who is preoccupied with the distinction between a physical and spiritual appearance of Christ. I sent an email this morning trying to make it clear this distinction is not what he thinks:

The problem you are allowing to divert you is the issue of “tangibility” or “physicality.” You shouldn’t give that the attention you are allowing it to receive.

When the Lord appeared to Daniel only Daniel saw Him. All the others did not. (Dan. 10:7.) Daniel even calls it a “vision” and so, according to your separation of events it clearly it wasn’t physical.

But when Daniel collapsed onto his face the Lord picked him up and set him on his knees. ((Dan. 10:10.) So according to your separation of events, it clearly was physical.

When Adam was baptized, it was through the medium of the Spirit, and so according to your separation it was clearly spiritual. (Moses 6:4)

But he was “laid under the water” and then was “brought forth out of the water” and so according to your separation it was clearly physical.

When Christ appeared suddenly in the upper room where the door was shut and His appearance was clearly spiritual (John 20:19) according to your separation.

Yet He showed to them His wounds, and therefore according to your separation it was clearly physical. (John 10:20).

You are like Vizzini in Princess Bride, and do not see how it is possible for BOTH cups of wine to be involved in the same phenomena. You want someone else to choose the wine in front of them so you can determine that, according to your understanding, it is the wrong cup.

It is for the reason that our Lord can appear physically to one, and yet be hidden and unrevealed to another, all at the same time, that Paul wrote: “whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell.” This was not an attempt to differentiate between physical and spiritual, but instead an acknowledgement by a man who encountered God that God is real, tangible, glorious and pure, and we may need to enter an altered state to behold Him. But He is nevertheless real and His appearance is physical to the one to whom He appears, and a mystery and entirely otherworldly to those who remain without.

MARCH 24, 2016

Easter

We remember Easter foremost for the resurrection. The Lord remembers it foremost for the suffering in Gethsemane. In 1829, the Lord shared His reflection in a revelation to Joseph:

Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer

even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink— Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men. Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power; and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken, of which in the smallest, yea, even in the least degree you have tasted at the time I withdrew my Spirit. (D&C 19:15–20)

It was important for the Lord to attain the resurrection, for it completed the process that frees mankind from death. But it was more important for the Lord to free us from sin. Because of what He accomplished in Gethsemane, we are able to be reconciled to God. It was “sore... exquisite... hard to bear...” and caused Him to “tremble because of pain,” and ask His Father that He might not drink the bitter cup. It caused the “greatest of all” to “shrink” away from the abyss of suffering.

By partaking anyway, and despite His desire to be spared, He “finished [His] preparations unto the children of men.” It was only “**preparation**” of an atonement because we are required in turn to receive its benefit through baptism and repentance. If we are unwilling to do this then it is as if no atonement were made for our sins, and we then are called upon to likewise suffer. The Lord has explained that if we refuse to repent then “our sufferings shall be sore.” Almost incomprehensibly difficult for us to bear.

The greatest response to the Easter celebration would be repentance and baptism.

APRIL 2016

APRIL 7, 2016

Signs of the Second Coming

I hear comments from a wide variety of people who wish Christ would return. They welcome the idea, as if it were going to solve the world's problems. I'm always daunted by what will happen immediately before His return. Whatever joy He may ultimately bring, this world will undergo widespread catastrophes prior to the return.

Jesus was asked about the signs which would accompany His return. He answered in Luke 21: 25–26:

And there shall be signs in the sun...

[the most common sign is always an eclipse. For some reason the transit of Venus across the sun went largely unnoticed. But the sun waxes and wanes in both magnetic effect, sunspot activity and solar flares. It affects climate, electromagnetic fields, crops and all life.]

and in the moon...

[the most common sign are blood moons and eclipses. But it can also be used to gauge the health of our atmosphere.]

and in the stars...

[these rotate predictably, but when they move from one age to another by the precession through the equinoxes, the new constellation was said anciently to be “a new earth.” And when the pole star moved from one to the next, the change was said anciently to be “a new heaven.” Both Aquarius and Polaris represent a change to a new heaven and a new earth.]

and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity;

[most often associated with economic upheaval and warfare. But today there is both distress and perplexity from causes the

modern world has no preparation to face and little hope of solving peacefully.]

the sea and the waves roaring;

[most often associated with tsunami activity.]

Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth:

[most often associated with the lack of courage to face the adversaries and opposing forces that threaten our safety. It includes the inability to stand for principle and righteousness because men are weak. It also includes the growing cruelty of men toward one another.]

for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

[most often associated with apostasy and collapse of faith by men. But also includes distress felt by the angels who are over the earth and those sent by heaven to minister to others. The term “Powers of Heaven” is a proper noun, referring to angelic hosts.]

I'm not certain those who pray for the Lord's quick return appreciate fully what they are asking.

APRIL 16, 2016

Talk in Moab

I delivered a short talk in Moab, Utah on Sunday, April 10th. The transcript is up in the “Download” section of this website.

APRIL 25, 2016

Sunstone Symposium 2016

The annual Sunstone Symposium will be held in Salt Lake City, July 27–30. This year's topic is: “*Many Mormonisms and the Mormon*

Movement.” I will be presenting a paper at this year’s event titled: “Was There An Original?”

All the scheduling is tentative at this point. I am not certain which day I will present or in which venue/room. However, as the schedule is finalized I will put up further notice.

CHAPTER 12

A Pattern In All Things

APRIL 29, 2016

Why a Temple?

Baptism for the dead first appears in scripture in Paul's writings where he mentions the practice in passing. (1 Cor. 15:9.) Because it is only a lone-reference and not an explanation, it is not enough of a scripture-basis to build any clear understanding.

The idea of work by the living for the dead is not mentioned to include any ordinance in the promised return of Elijah. The prophecy of his return is vaguely described as "turning the hearts of the children to the fathers" and the father's hearts in turn to the children. However vague this passage may be, it is clearly important because this prophecy is repeated in all volumes of scripture (Old T, New T, Bk of Mormon, D&C, PofGP). Joseph elaborated on the meaning of Elijah's return and role as part of the justification for baptism for the dead and other temple rites.

There is a relationship between ascension in this life and the right to ascend in the afterlife which is mentioned, but not well explained, in scripture. It is undeniably present in one verse of the D&C. That verse states:

All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, ... by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed [meaning Christ], ... are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead.”

There are two ascents. One is temporary and happens when men are “caught up,” but then return to this world. It represents overcoming the world and returning the individual back to the presence of God. It is called “redemption from the fall” (Ether 3:13) because it brings the individual back into God’s presence. That form of temporary ascent is designed to establish a covenant or promise related to the other, more gradual ascent through development of the individual. The temporary mortal ascent secures a promise for the individual that they will be permitted to make the eternal ascent to where God and Christ dwell in the afterlife.

The second form is the actual ascent, involving redemption and securing eternal life. It is a methodical process over eons of time to bring those who ascend to reside where God and Christ dwell. (D&C 76:62, 112.) In the King Follett Discourse Joseph Smith said this:

“Thus you learn some of the first principles of the gospel, about which so much has been said. When you climb a ladder, you must begin at the bottom and go on until you learn the last principle; it will be a great while before you have learned the last. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it is a great thing to learn salvation beyond the grave.”

This is the growth, by degrees, which results in exaltation.

Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God. And you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves—to be

kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done—by going from a small degree to another, from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you are able to sit in glory as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power. (*Id.*)

The second form of ascent cannot happen in mortality, but is accomplished over time. It requires attaining to the resurrection, meaning that death has no claim on you because you merit eternal life. This is what Christ gained in His life and through His sacrifice here. We are dependent upon His merits to overcome death. But we will have to attain the same thing before we finish the second form of ascent. Christ is the “prototype of the saved man” and we must “be precisely what he is and nothing else” or not be saved according to *The Lectures on Faith*. (Lecture Seventh, Paragraph 9.)

For mortals, the first form of ascent is possible. The scriptures, in particular the Book of Mormon, contain accounts of those who have ascended to God’s presence and overcome the fall of mankind. Many Old Testament prophets did likewise, but their accounts were redacted by the Deuteronomists because of hostility to the doctrine. The reality is that most people, even very good believing people whose lives are filled with Christian charity and love for their fellow man, are not going to ascend even temporarily while they live in this fallen world. The first ascent is covenant-filled. God brings us before Him to establish a covenant assuring the eternal ascent. Most people will ascend over eons, because that process is based on the determination and commitment people have to follow God and His Christ.

In this fallen world, the great challenge is to lay hold of the covenant right to ascend to God’s throne. (Rev. 3:20–21.) It is true that God is no respecter of persons and everyone CAN, but the truth is that very few will obtain the covenant while in the flesh.

In His mercy, God has made provisions for all people. He loves all mankind equally, has planned for allowing those good and believing people who will not qualify in their own right to ascend the “mountain of the Lord” into His presence to receive it through more ordinary means. God’s purposes cannot be defeated, even by man’s weakness. God has other means to qualify people to be His covenant family.

The purpose of a temple (meaning an actual temple commissioned, ordered, blessed, accepted and visited with His presence) is to substitute for the temporary ascent of a mortal into God’s presence. A real temple becomes “Holy Ground” and the means for making available to faithful people in every state of belief and hope the opportunity to receive, by authorized means, the same covenant, obligation, association, expectation and sealing through an authorized and binding arrangement in sacred space. This is the same thing they can receive from God directly if they enter into His presence while still in the flesh. In effect, the temple becomes an extension of heaven. God, angels and mankind are able to associate there as in Eden. It is a return to Eden, where “God walks in the cool of the day.” (Gen. 3:8.)

The ordinances or rites of the temple are presented in ritual form. This is required. God’s House is a House of Order because it is reoriented to point away from this world in order to reflect the order of heaven and the actual eternal ascent into His presence. The volume of information conveyed by God would be too vast to set out in non-ritual form. In ritual, it is possible to convey a great body of information with symbolism, metaphor, relationships, and types that work on the mind of man the same way that visionary experiences directly with God convey. The mind is expanded and

the ritual allows something of God's viewpoint to be transmitted into the mind of man.

The temple has only one real purpose: To convey God's promise to exalt those who experience it; provided they abide the conditions for exaltation. It portrays the real, second eternal-form of ascent in a way that gives the initiate a promise that if they walk in the path shown them they will arrive at the Throne of God in the afterlife.

A real temple is required for Zion because it is the mechanism for reorienting society. Through it, the standard of conduct for ordering peaceful lives is established, and society becomes centered on the temple for law, education, social structure, government and coexistence. A real temple is a repository for knowledge and learning. It will include a library for study, teaching and learning. A real temple is indispensable for Zion because such a society is always built upon a heavenly pattern of cooperation and equality, making a city of peace or city of righteousness possible. It is the means to provide people with the information necessary to allow them "to govern themselves."

Since the temple can easily become corrupted, and the things revealed there can cause greater wickedness if men knew of the great revelation of heaven, the times when an actual temple with all the attendant contracts, bonds, obligations, covenants, performances and expectations are set out plainly have been few indeed. The Lord visited a damaged temple in Bountiful to minister to the Nephites. The events at Bountiful mirror the highest ideals and instruction of the LDS Temple. In the Nephite record, the Lord conducted ceremonial revelation which extended beyond what men are allowed to openly reveal. The Book of Mormon does not contain a full record of what transpired. Recording it was forbidden.

The pattern of treating some things as off limits is not only set out in the visit of Christ to the Nephites, it is repeatedly the case in scripture. As Paul said, “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” (1 Cor. 2:9.)

There is also D&C 76:114–118:

But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion; Which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter; Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him; To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves; That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory.

I preach, teach, exhort and expound to encourage every soul to rise up in this life and make the first ascension to God while in the flesh. Some have done so. Others will. Perhaps a great many will. I hope so. But if there are believers who cannot or will not do so in this life, the temple is the means God will provide to allow the “least of the Saints” to likewise obtain a hope in Christ by an authorized covenant which will bind on earth and in heaven. Then they become likewise heirs of salvation and part of the great congregation to whom the Lord will proclaim: “Well done!” They will have a legitimate and authorized means for laying ahold of the promise of eternal life and continuing the long path of ascent to the Throne of God to dwell with Him and Christ.

The LDS version of temple rites is insufficient to allow anyone to obtain the right to ascend to God's presence in eternity. The Lord will fix this, as He intends to establish an Ensign to which all nations (meaning scattered covenant Israel) will return in the last days and there receive their crowns at the hands of servants who will minister covenants for this purpose (D&C 133:31–34).

Mankind has generally failed to rise up to the place where God and mankind can meet. He has offered to do so repeatedly. His lament, “How oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks, but ye would not” (3 Ne. 10:5) is not just empty rhetoric. It is the actual, historical fact of how men have responded to God. God offers. We refuse. God withdraws. Generations come and go and God offers again. We refuse. God withdraws. Time passes. Again, He speaks and makes the offer.

You mustn't confuse the fact I hear His voice and teach what He asks with any personal significance on my part. I have no value for others' salvation—the second form of ascent. That role is confined to Christ alone. He is the “keeper of the gate” and “employs no servant there.” (2 Ne. 9:41.) But what I am teaching is true. What I am saying is not speculation or conjecture.

The people who went before, and are now beyond this veil are real. They still live, just in a different state. They still care about us. They were resurrected with Christ and are working as our fathers in heaven (D&C 132:37) to cause the fulfillment of covenants made long ago to them in their generation. God is behind the last-days effort to vindicate His word. Whether we like who He sends, or believe what He is doing, or even recognize His involvement, it is nevertheless the case that God is involved very directly in bringing about the accomplishment of His foretold latter-day work.

MAY 2016

MAY 3, 2016

Fellowship Gathering

Last Sunday there was a fellowship in Provo. The gathering involved people who associate on-line from a large geographical area. People came from Arizona, Texas, Idaho, Utah and perhaps other places. A couple now living in Utah recently relocated from Tennessee. They have helped one another with their monetary donations, and become close with each other through their meetings.

This group was friends and equals. They drew straws to decide who would bless and pass the sacrament. There was no one directing or assuming the right to control the events or others. Their mutual respect was apparent.

While I did not have an opportunity to speak with everyone in attendance, those I did talk with were uniformly well-informed and serious students of the gospel and scripture. They are bright, thoughtful and humble people with sincere desires to follow God.

Most, perhaps all (I didn't ask if they didn't tell me) had been excommunicated from the LDS Church. If they had been permitted to remain part of their LDS congregations, they would make any ward stronger, any discussion more edifying, and any service more heartfelt.

I count it a privilege to have been able to associate with them. It was good for my soul to meet and hear them.

MAY 5, 2016

Boise General Conference September 2016

A general conference has been scheduled in Boise, Idaho on September 10 and 11 this year. A site discussing the conference in more detail is linked here: Doctrine of Christ Conference (<https://restorationarchives.com/library/conferences.php>)

MAY 9, 2016

Doctrine of Christ

A quarter-page ad was put into the Denver Post on Sunday, May 8th titled "The Doctrine of Christ". It invites anyone who accepts the doctrine to meet at the Aurora Reservoir on Sunday, May 22nd to be baptized. The ad is sponsored by the BornofWater.org/Colorado participants. At their website they offer additional direction and answer questions. Those who have organized the event and paid to publish the advertising are to be commended for their faithfulness and sacrifice.

MAY 21, 2016

Fishers of Men

Jeremiah prophesied of the Lord (Christ) sending "fishers." (Jer. 16:16.) Christ said this referred directly to Him in the JST of Matt. 4:19. ("I am he of whom of whom it is written by the prophets; follow me and I will make you fishers of men.")

Tomorrow at the Aurora Reservoir there will be baptisms offered to any who are in the Denver area and believe the Doctrine of Christ.

This is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me. And whoso

believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, and he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost. And thus will the Father bear record of me, and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me; for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one. And again I say unto you, ye must repent and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things. And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Verily, Verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell shall open to receive such when the floods come and the winds bear upon them. Therefore, go forth unto this people and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth. (3 Ne. 11:32–41)

Those warned are required to warn others. (D&C 38:41; 88:81.) God offers salvation to everyone, and we should make known the Doctrine of Christ, offer baptism to all, and help prepare the world for His return.

The earliest Christian hymn we have was written by Clement of Alexandria. Its words are:

“Fisher of men, the blest,
Out of the world’s unrest,
Out of sin’s troubled sea
Taking us, Lord, to Thee;
Out of the waves of strife,
With bait of blissful life,
Drawing Thy nets to shore
With choicest fish, good store.”

MAY 25, 2016

Sunstone Schedule

The Sunstone schedule is now becoming more fixed. You can review the schedule here: [2016 Salt Lake Symposium](#).

I will be speaking from 5–6:30 pm on Friday, July 29th in the Saltair Room in the Olpin University Center on the University of Utah.

The talk I will give is titled: *Was There An Original?* It is about the beginning of Mormonism and the continuity or discontinuity since the beginning.

JUNE 2016

JUNE 6, 2016

D-Day

June 6, 1944, now 72 years behind us, was D-Day. It should remain a sober reminder of what is required once evil is allowed to gain dictatorial control over nations. If we do not fight for freedom

through peaceful, political means, then the choices are either enslavement or war. While we are allowed to choose a political solution, we ought to choose wisely. “When the wicked rule, the people mourn.” (D&C 98:9; see also Proverbs 29:2.)

Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men ye should observe to uphold; otherwise whatsoever is less than these cometh of evil. (D&C 98:10)

Every freedom mankind enjoys throughout the world is affected by who is elected to hold office in the United States. Those who are allowed to vote ought to do so with sober appreciation of the solemn consequences of our choice. When we choose poorly and elect unfit, unqualified, morally deficient leaders whose integrity is questionable all the world pays a price. A leader (male or female) is best when he regards himself as nothing more than a public servant, and worst when assuming it is to gratify his pride or satisfy his vain ambition.

JUNE 15, 2016

Word of Wisdom

There's an interesting article on Yahoo which states in part:

Paris (AFP) – Very hot drinks probably increase the risk of cancer, a UN agency said Wednesday, but coffee — once feared to be a carcinogen — is safe if enjoyed at “normal” temperatures.

Tea and mate, a popular South American herbal infusion, may also be harmful if drunk hotter than 65 degrees Celsius (150 degrees Fahrenheit), the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) reported.

“It doesn’t matter what the liquid is,” said epidemiologist Dana Loomis, who took part in a review of the world’s most popular hot beverages. “What matters is the temperature.”

The title of the article is “Very Hot Drinks Probably Cause Cancer: UN Agency.”

JUNE 17, 2016

A Bigger Picture

I had a lengthy education the night of April 14th (two months ago) about the overall picture of the Lord’s work. We are important, but He is working with all people, in all cultures, and in all faiths, at the same time. He is not just working with us. We may be important to fulfill promises He made to fathers who went before, but there are billions to whom those promises likewise extend, and for whom He has as much care, concern and love as He has for us.

We get myopic and see things through a very narrow lens, when the God of heaven sees all mankind as the object of His atonement and beneficiaries of the restoration of truth through Joseph Smith. If we are somehow “special” to God, so are all the rest of mankind. His plan is for the advancement of all mankind, to “add upon” every one of us who come to live and die here. We are learning to distinguish between good and evil by the experiences we have.

Even if we think our religious understanding superior to others, the others are also being added upon as well. As I have worked on the paper I will be presenting at Sunstone in July, I have been reminded that Mormonism was intended to include “all truth, wherever it is found” as part of one great whole. It is we who are

narrow-minded and intolerant, not God. God has a heart big enough to care for all, and even the least of mankind.

Whenever there is some new revelation by God to me I always stand corrected, because I needed correcting, and in awe of how great our Lord is; and how comparatively little I am.

JUNE 27, 2016

The Martyrs

Hyrum fell first, and as the eldest brother led the way. Joseph died moments later. Today is the anniversary of their martyrdom.

Exactly as the angel foretold, the name of Joseph Smith is “had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people.” (*JS-H* 1:33.) Just as the Lord affirmed to Joseph in Liberty Jail,

fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee; While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand. (D&C 122:1–2)

The evil spoken of Joseph now comes from the LDS Church, which claims him as their founder. It comes from Brian Hales, who claims to be an accurate biographer. It comes from anti-Mormons, and Christian ministers, and fundamentalists who have created a caricature they claim to be Joseph. There is little difference between these people and William Law, Charles Ivins, Francis Higbee, Chauncey Higbee, Robert Foster and Charles Foster who published the *Nauvoo Expositor*.

It would be good if some (or all) of those who claim Joseph was a sexual predator and adulterer for impregnating another man's wife, were to apologize and acknowledge there is no compelling proof Joseph ever had sexual relations with any other woman other than

Emma Smith. Even the putative last suspected daughter, Josephine Lyons, is now ruled out as his descendant. I have not read any apology for the false accusation that he was the father from Hales, the church, or any of his accusers.

In the aftermath of John Bennett's misconduct, Joseph pursued an effort to track down what had happened in Nauvoo. By May 21, 1842, the high council met and,

[A] charge [was] [preferred] against Chauncey L. Higbee by George Miller for unchaste and un-virtuous conduct with the widow [Sarah] Miller, and others. (*Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, p. 414, all as in original)

In the trial,

Three witness[es] testified that he had seduced [several women] and at different times [had] been guilty of unchaste and unvirtuous conduct with them and taught the doctrine that it was right to have free intercourse with women if it was kept secret &c and also taught that Joseph Smith authorised him to practice these things &c. (*Id.*, pp. 414–415, as in original)

On May 25 the charge was preferred

against Ms. Catherine Warren by George Miller for unchaste and unvirtuous conduct with John C. Bennett and others. The defendant confessed to the charge and gave the names of several other [men] who had been guilty having unlawful intercourse with her[,] stating they taught the doctrine that it was right to have free intercourse with women and that the heads of the Church also taught and practiced it[,] ...learning that the heads of the church did not believe of [the] practice [of] such things[,] she was willing to confess her sins and did

repent before God for what she had done and desired earnestly that the Council would forgive her. (*Id.*, p. 417, as in original)

She furnished the identities of the several men involved, resulting in more church court proceedings to stop the spread of Bennett's mischief.

On September 3, 1842,

[A] charge was preferred against Gustavius Hills by Elisha Everett[,] one of the teachers of the Church[,] for illicit intercourse with a certain woman by the name of Mary Clift by which she was with child[,] and for teaching the said Mary Clift ~~that~~ the heads of the Church practiced such conduct & that time would come when men would have more wives than one &c. (*Id.*, p. 424, as in original)

The next day, September 4, 1842,

Esther Smith gave evidence that [the] defendant [Gustavius Hills] told her that it was lawful for people to have illicit intercourse if they only held their peac[e] & that ~~the time would~~ it was agreeable to the practice of some of the leading men or heads of the Church. (*Id.*, p. 425, as in original)

Yet more courts were held as the effort to round up those who were involved in this practice. John Bennett, in response to the treatment given him by the church, set out to tell another story in which he was the hero and Joseph was the villain. He wrote, lectured and campaigned against Mormonism, first to salvage his reputation, but ultimately as his profession.

Joseph left a record of public and private actions taken in opposing the plural wife system. These included:

I preached in the grove and pronounced a curse upon all adulterers and fornicators, and unvirtuous persons and those

who have made use of my name to carry on their iniquitous designs. (Joseph Smith (Sermon at the Grove; Apr 10, 1842)

Then there is the obviously altered Joseph Smith journal for Thursday 5th October 1843, which confirms there was an effort to alter documents to conform to later events and practices:

(ORIGINAL) Evening at home and walked up and down the street with my scribe. Gave inst[r]uction to try those who were preaching teaching or practicing the doctrin of plurality of wives. on this Law. Joseph forbids it. and the practice ther[e] of— No man shall have but one wife.

(REVISED) Evening at home and walked up and down the street with my scribe. Gave inst[r]uction to try those who were preaching teaching or practicing the doctrin of plurality of wives. on this law for according to the law i hold the keys of this power in the last days, for there is never but one on earth at a time on whom the power? and the keys are conferred—and I have continually said Joseph forbids it. and the practice ther[e] of No man shall have but one wife at a time unless the Lord directs otherwise

Someone revised the content at a later date. Once revised at a later date, it was “on” again, and perhaps retroactively “on” since the original alterations were not possible to detect until the *Joseph Smith Papers* project made the original available for public view.

There was a published denunciation of polygamy in early February 1844 in the newspaper edited by Joseph:

As we have lately been credibly informed, that an Elder of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter-day Saints, by the name of Hiram Brown, has been preaching Polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines, in the county of Lapeer, state of

Michigan. This is to notify him and the Church in general, that he has been cut off from the church, for his iniquity; and he is further notified to appear at the Special Conference, on the 6th of April next, to make answer to these charges. (Joseph Smith & Hyrum Smith, *Times and Seasons* Vol. 5 (February 1, 1844)

The Relief Society later put out a more detailed document titled *A Voice of Innocence from Nauvoo* that offered an even stronger denial of plural marriage. It was penned by W. W. Phelps at the request of Joseph Smith. The document was presented to a general meeting of the church at which Joseph presided in March 1844, three months before he was killed:

A vast assembly of Saints met at the Temple of the Lord at nine o'clock A.M., by a special appointment of President Joseph Smith, for the purpose of advancing the progress of the Temple, &c. The Patriarch, Hyrum Smith, was present; also of the Twelve Apostles Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, Willard Richards, Wilford Woodruff, John Taylor, and George A. Smith; also the temple committee and about eight thousand Saints. ...[later in the meeting] an article was also read by W. W. Phelps, entitled, "A Voice of innocence from Nauvoo", and all the assembly said 'Amen' twice. (*DHC* 6:236, p 241)

I tire of hearing Joseph's name associated with evil. Particularly from those who claim to honor him as a prophet. On this day I would defend his honor and affirm he is exactly who and what he claimed. He was a virtuous man, in love with his wife Emma, and opposed to adultery, immorality and dishonesty.

JUNE 29, 2016

Now Christians

I finished and submitted for print a new book addressed to Christians. The book is an attempt to re-introduce Joseph Smith as an important Christian figure, separate from institutional Mormonism. It is time he became relevant to all Christians, and no longer regarded as the property of Mormonism. The new book should be available on Amazon by early August if anyone is interested.

The time has come to give attention to Christians who are not part of the Mormon tradition. Other faiths need to be invited to think about what God is doing to finish His work. Christians have barriers, including prejudices and traditions, but all need to be invited to consider how great things the Lord has done for mankind.

For several months I have solicited the opportunity to speak at several theological schools. Although I did get invited to speak to a group of “Mormon Studies” graduate students in California, they are not who I need to address. The other efforts have not proven successful. Accordingly, I thought it appropriate to make it public. I am looking for an opportunity to speak to a Christian audience, and enlist help from others.

If anyone knows of a Christian venue that meets the description below, please contact me and let me know:

I would like to give three talks, one in California, one in Texas and one in Atlanta. I will pay my own travel costs, and do not expect or want to be compensated for speaking. The audience should be comprised of Christians, and not Mormons. I would like to record the talks and make them available on-line for others to hear. The size of the venue is unimportant. I would prefer a theological school, but would welcome any venue with a Christian

audience, including a church if one were available. Below is a brief biographical description you can use to solicit the invitation:

I converted to the LDS church when 19 years old, and served faithfully for 40 years. Among other things, I was an Elder's Quorum President, Sunday School President, Bishop's counselor, Ward Mission Leader, High Councilor, and Graduate Institute Instructor. I taught for three years at BYU Education Week on the Brigham Young University campus in Provo, Utah. I graduated from the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University in 1980, and have practiced law for 36 years. I have authored 15 volumes on Mormonism, including Mormon history and doctrine. I was excommunicated for publishing a book challenging the traditional LDS church narrative of its history, and offering a new interpretation of the events. My excommunication was directed by Elder Russell M. Nelson, current President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the LDS church.

I will be addressing the topic of Joseph Smith as a significant Christian figure, worthy of considering alongside all other important Christian thinkers, writers and martyrs.

You can send a response to dssnuffer@gmail.com.

JULY 2016

JULY 5, 2016

New Book For Christians

A new book addressed to Christians is now available on Amazon. The book is titled *A Man Without Doubt*.

It is intended to be readable. There are no footnotes, and it is just under 200 pages. The book introduces material written

by Joseph Smith by laying the historical setting that produced the document. Then Joseph is allowed to speak to the reader in his own words. The book was reviewed by non-Mormon readers beforehand, and their comments and suggestions were solicited and considered in finalizing it.

If you know of a Christian who has a negative opinion of Joseph Smith, you may want to lend them a copy of this book to see if it influences them in a positive way.

Mormons may not appreciate the book. There is very little about the history leading to each of the three writings that is particularly flattering. The book first explains the frustrations and disappointments Joseph encountered in trying to convey to others the higher priesthood. In response to the failure, Joseph set out to address the lack of faith. *Lectures on Faith* were given in the School of the Prophets, then canonized in the *Doctrine and Covenants* to address the crisis of faith early Mormons experienced when the higher priesthood did not work as expected.

The second crisis began in 1837 and lasted through 1838. The collapse of the Kirtland Safety Society, the many members angry at Joseph, his flight to Missouri to escape the Mormons who intended to kill him, and the troubles in Missouri leading up to the Mormon War are explained as background. When John Whitmer, the historian of the church, left with the history, Joseph began a new composition in 1838 to replace the one Whitmer took. The background is prelude to the Joseph Smith History, and explains why Joseph wrote many of the comments in his history.

The third crisis was when Joseph was taken prisoner in the Mormon War. For six months in 1838–1839 he was confined in Missouri while Mormons were scattered from the state under threat

of extermination. The background explains the circumstances in which Joseph wrote the letter from Liberty Jail.

After introducing the events leading to the three Joseph Smith compositions, the reader is allowed to read Joseph's response to the crises. Everyone is allowed to form their own opinion of Joseph by considering how he reacted.

There is a glossary to help those unacquainted with Mormon language and leading figures to familiarize themselves with events, persons and texts of early Mormonism.

Most of the opposition Joseph Smith encountered had either disaffected Mormons leading or participating against him. His responses are all the more remarkable because of how positive he remained throughout.

If you know anyone, including Christian ministers, who could benefit from reading the book, please share it with them. Nothing in the book attempts to convert anyone to Mormonism. Its only purpose is to introduce Joseph Smith as a Christian figure whose life, in many ways, was like the Apostle Paul. A quote from Paul in the beginning of the book supplies all later chapter titles.

JULY 24, 2016

2016 Sunstone Symposium

This coming Friday, July 29, I will be speaking at the Sunstone Symposium at the University of Utah. I speak at 5:00 p.m. The lecture is titled: *Was There An Original?*

The lecture will examine how Mormonism changed during Joseph Smith's lifetime. By taking a few topics to illustrate the overall phenomena, I hope to provide some additional insight into

Joseph's ministry and how to put context to the restoration. It was an incomplete work-in-process. There is a great deal left to be done.

JULY 24, 2016

Missionary Outreach

The purpose of *A Man Without Doubt* is to allow those with a desire to open a conversation regarding the restoration with non-Mormons to have a resource to invite questions. The best way to introduce new religious truths is by answering questions. The book explains Joseph Smith in his own words. He explained his beliefs simply, forthrightly, and persuasively. When he is allowed to speak, he does not appear to be the fanatical despot most non-Mormons conjure as their imagined character.

I'm giving copies of the book to others in the hope they will want to learn more. It is intended to be a resource for anyone to use with non-Mormons. We all have an obligation to others. When we are informed about how God is advancing His last-days work, we are obligated to inform others, "it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor." (D&C 88:81.)

JULY 30, 2016

Sunstone Paper

The paper that the Sunstone talk I gave yesterday is available as a download. You can view or download the paper here:

We are working to add it to the "Downloads" area of this website and should have that accomplished later today.

CHAPTER 13

Correct Acts

AUGUST 2016

AUGUST 6, 2016

Tiresome Lying

The hyper-political reporting by the major news outlets has become tiresome. It is no longer watchable. All sense of decency and fairness has been abandoned in order to polarize. Candidates use every device of rhetoric and distortion to portray their opponent to be astonishingly evil, untrustworthy, incompetent, vile and dangerous.

There is no attempt at fairness, no recognition of virtue in the opponent. If you trusted the partisan press you would believe the two major political parties of this nation have insanely chosen to offer us a stupid criminal or a dangerous egomaniac for our presidential candidates.

Washington is corrupt. Both of these candidates have exploited the corruption to gain power by using opposite means. Nevertheless it is corruption which has produced the present choice.

This foolish angry debate between parties may generate interest, sell papers, improve ratings, and increase audience share for the

purveyors of propaganda, but it divides people into thoughtless hostile opposing camps. It is unworthy of us.

Suspend all judgment until the candidates debate each other, and decide between them based on the content of their respective explanations. Turn the debate off as soon as the candidates finish speaking, and avoid the highly paid, politically motivated “analysts” who try to tell you what to think afterwards. They are well-paid liars offering opinions for hire, who are far more loyal to their bosses than our country.

As long as we the people have the right to vote bad leaders out and new leaders in to office, no political problem is insurmountable.

AUGUST 7, 2016

Faith Requires Correct Acts

James wrote,

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. (James 2:17–18)

To the same effect, *Lectures on Faith* explain,

it is faith, and faith only, which is the moving cause of all action, in them; that without it, both mind and body would be in a state of inactivity, and all their exertions would cease, both physical and mental. (*Lecture First: 10*)

Faith sets man into action, and whatever it is that man believes he acts in conformity with that. All that is required to trap mankind is to have us accept false ideas. We cannot help but act in conformity with them—whether they are true or false.

Saving faith must be grounded upon a correct understanding of God's will. As *Lectures* explain, there are some indispensable requirements for saving faith in God, including "a correct idea of his character, perfections and attributes." (*Lecture Third: 4.*) We cannot be wrong about God and have saving faith. If we misapprehend His character, we are darkened in our understanding and are likely to be misled. Faith in the only true and wise God gets replaced by worship of others thought to be among the hosts of heaven, like the evil king Manasseh. Manasseh brought into the temple altars to worship the "hosts of heaven" like the heathen (or Wiccan) do. This folly offended God, and God spoke to condemn it, but the people would not listen to God. (2 Chr. 33:2–10.) The false worship of the "hosts of heaven" brought the judgments of God upon those who should have known better. They were warned, failed to heed the warning, and were destroyed. (*Zeph. 1:4–9.*)

Faith likewise requires we have

an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing, is according to his will.—For without an acquaintance with these three important facts, the faith of every rational being must be imperfect and unproductive; but with this understanding, it can become perfect and fruitful, abounding in righteousness unto the praise and glory of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. (*Lecture Third: 5*)

It is impossible to disobey God and obtain the assurance from Him that a man is pursuing His will.

If we are not doing His will, He will not give us such an assurance. It is contrary to His nature to confirm to us we are pleasing Him when our acts displease Him. When a man or woman worships the hosts of heaven, a divine mother, false spirits, or pursues a course different from the one that follows God's will, any

“assurance” that we are pleasing God comes from a lying source. If we are deceived by a lying spirit, it is impossible to have faith. Joseph Smith said,

A man must have the discerning of spirits before he can drag into daylight this hellish influence and unfold it unto the world in all its soul-destroying, diabolical, and horrid colors; for nothing is a greater injury to the children of men than to be under the influence of a false spirit when they think they have the Spirit of God. (See *Times and Seasons*, April 1, 1842, “Try the Spirits”)

He also taught, “Lying spirits are going forth in the earth. There will be great manifestations of spirits, both false and true.... Every spirit, or vision, or singing, is not of God.” (*DHC* 3:391.)

Saving faith also requires worship of God by correctly identifying the object of your worship. We are authorized to extend faith in God as correctly identified in the *Lectures*. Whenever the subject is God,

the Godhead: we mean the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There are two personages who constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme power over all things—by whom all things were created and made, that are created and made, whether visible or invisible: whether in heaven, on earth, or in the earth, under the earth, or throughout the immensity of space—They are the Father and the Son: The Father being a personage of spirit, glory and power: possessing all perfection and fulness: The Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle, made, or fashioned like unto man, or being in the form and likeness of man, or, rather, man was formed after his likeness, and in his image;—he is also

the express image and likeness of the personage of the Father: possessing all the fulness of the Father, or, the same fulness with the Father; being begotten of him, and was ordained from before the foundation of the world to be a propitiation for the sins of all those who should believe on his name, and is called the Son because of the flesh—and descended in suffering below that which man can suffer, or, in other words, suffered greater sufferings, and was exposed to more powerful contradictions than any man can be. But notwithstanding all this, he kept the law of God, and remained without sin: Showing thereby that it is in the power of man to keep the law and remain also without sin. And also, that by him a righteous judgment might come upon all flesh, and that all who walk not in the law of God, may justly be condemned by the law, and have no excuse for their sins. And he being the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and having overcome, received a fulness of the glory of the Father—possessing the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit, that bears record of the Father and the Son, and these three are one, or in other words, these three constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme power over all things: by whom all things were created and made, that were created and made: and these three constitute the Godhead, and are one: The Father and the Son possessing the same mind, the same wisdom, glory, power and fulness: Filling all in all—the Son being filled with the fulness of the Mind, glory and power, or, in other words, the Spirit, glory and power of the Father—possessing all knowledge and glory, and the same kingdom: sitting at the right hand of power, in the express image and likeness of the Father—a Mediator for man—being filled with the fulness of the Mind of the Father, or, in

other words, the Spirit of the Father: which Spirit is shed forth upon all who believe on his name and keep his commandments: and all those who keep his commandments shall grow up from grace to grace, and become heirs of the heavenly kingdom, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ; possessing the same mind, being transformed into the same image or likeness, even the express image of him who fills all in all: being filled with the fulness of his glory, and become one in him, even as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one. (*Lecture Fifth: 1–2.*)

This description of the Godhead excludes a mother-in-heaven, the hosts of heaven, and other extraneous objects of veneration. Faith must be centered in the God of heaven or it cannot save.

AUGUST 9, 2016

Framework

The scriptures set both the framework to teach, and the standard for teaching content. The scriptures provoked the restoration through Joseph. (*JS-H 1:11–12.*) The resurrected Lord taught from the scriptures, both in Palestine (Luke 24:25–27) and in the new world (3 Ne. 23:5–6.) Christ pointed to the scriptures as the source to be searched for truth concerning Him. (John 5:39.)

When the apostate Sherem was confronted, and his error denounced, those who heard Jacob “searched the scriptures, and no longer hearkened to the words of this wicked man.” (Jacob 7:23.) When Alma and Amulek finished preaching, those who were converted “began to repent, and to search the scriptures.” (Alma 14:1.)

Once people who had been led astray repented, they looked more carefully at the scriptures to guide them, so they would not fall into error again. The scriptures fortified them against false teachings.

All scripture is given to us for our profit and guidance. They can correct our errors and teach us righteousness. (2 Tim. 3:16.)

Everything I do, teach and write is taken from the scriptures. They are the framework and the standard for the content of anything I teach.

AUGUST 11, 2016

Christ Alone Saves

The atonement is our rescue. Christ alone performed it and He has proclaimed that He alone has accomplished it: Isaiah 63:3: **“I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me[.]”**

In modern revelation, He has reiterated that He alone performed the atoning sacrifice required to save us from judgment and condemnation:

D&C 133:50: **“I have trodden the wine-press alone, and have brought judgment upon all people; and none were with me;”**

He saves us through the atonement because He paid the price of the wrath of Almighty God for all sin: D&C 76:107: **“I have overcome and have trodden the wine-press alone, even the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God.”**

Paul explained that through the original disobedience of Adam, a sentence of death was imposed on mankind, but that sentence was reversed and many will be made righteous by the sacrifice of Christ. (See Romans 5:12–19.)

It is Christ alone who will keep the way. He will allow those who have believed in Him, obeyed Him, kept His commandments

and thereby walked in the path of His righteousness (to become righteous) to enter:

2 Nephi 9:41:

O then, my beloved brethren, come unto the Lord, the Holy One. Remember that his paths are righteous. Behold, the way for man is narrow, but it lieth in a straight course before him, and the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name.

It is Christ and His name alone which will provide salvation for mankind: Mosiah 5:8

And under this head ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives.

John 14:6: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

There are many others in heaven. God the Father and Christ are not alone. There is an entire host of beings with them: Neimiah 9:6:

Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

Some of the hosts are righteous, align with God, and follow His will: D&C 88:112: **“And Michael, the seventh angel, even the archangel, shall gather together his armies, even the hosts of heaven.”**

Angelic hosts are on both sides, some on God’s right hand and others on His left:

2 Chronicles 18:18: **“Again he said, Therefore hear the word of the Lord; I saw the Lord sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left.”**

1 Kings 22:19: **“And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.”**

But angelic hosts retain the right to choose. It is possible for them to rebel and fall short. It is possible for angelic hosts to be cast down from heaven: D&C 29:36:

And it came to pass that Adam, being tempted of the devil—for, behold, the devil was before Adam, for he rebelled against me, saying, Give me thine honor, which is my power; and also a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency;

Faithful members of the heavenly hosts can further God’s work, and cooperate with Him in assisting mankind: D&C 84:42:

And wo unto all those who come not unto this priesthood which ye have received, which I now confirm upon you who are present this day, by mine own voice out of the heavens; and even I have given the heavenly hosts and mine angels charge concerning you.

We cannot be saved by an angel. Nor can we trust any angel, even from heaven, to be the object of worship or adoration. That must be reserved for Christ and His Father alone: Galatians 1:8:

“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

Even if an angel were to give you a covenant, promise or assurance; or a man were to “seal you up to eternal life,” unless it comes by and through Christ alone, it will be of no value in the afterlife: D&C 132:12–13:

I am the Lord thy God; and I give unto you this commandment—that no man shall come unto the Father but by me or by my word, which is my law, saith the Lord. And everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or principalities, or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be, that are not by me or by my word, saith the Lord, shall be thrown down, and shall not remain after men are dead, neither in nor after the resurrection, saith the Lord your God.

Those who worship angels, men, or institutions instead of Christ risk becoming subject to a fallen angel: 2 Nephi 9:8:

O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more. (See also D&C 76:98–105)

One of the adversary’s pretensions is to claim that he is “the son of God” or the “Only Begotten,” thereby hoping to mislead people to worship him instead of the Lord. (See Moses 1:19; D&C 128:20.)

Before accepting a message as truth, you ought to know the scriptures well enough to test the message against the words of Christ, His unwaivering voice from the time of Adam until the

present, and the prophets. It should not be difficult to determine if some new thing is true or just vanity, without power, and offensive to God. You should be careful about allowing any angel or man to pretend to “seal you up” to some eternal reward. You may find yourself subject in the afterlife to a vile spirit who will claim the right to rule over you. There are pretenders, even among the hosts of heaven. Joseph Smith cautioned,

A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power than many men who are on the earth. Hence it needs revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God. (*DHC* 4:588)

Believe in Christ, trust in Him, and seek salvation through Him alone.

AUGUST 17, 2016

Boise Conference

Next month, September 9–11 in Boise, Idaho there will be a conference to which all are invited. It is called The Doctrine of Christ Conference. There has been a website created for the event. I am one of a number of invited speakers. I look forward to participating.

A group of Boise believers have organized the event, arranged and paid for the venues, and will be manning the necessary staffing needs. The website for the event solicits participation from others. If you are inclined to do so, you can sign up to help, or donate. Some people are traveling great distances to attend, and the website allows you to assist those needing help.

SEPTEMBER 2016

SEPTEMBER 12, 2016

Boise Conference Report

I returned this evening from the Boise Conference. It was a remarkable event. The Boise Fellowship did a wonderful job of organizing, selecting venues, keeping the event on schedule, choosing speakers, and adding the music for this event. They will have recordings available in a few days. I would encourage anyone interested to listen to the proceedings.

The music was so well done that I cannot praise it enough. Today there was a rendering of “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief” that was better than any performance I’ve heard of the hymn. Yesterday’s music was impressive and included original works prepared for the conference. I look forward to listening to the music again when the recordings are available.

This was an important event with many insightful and valuable talks. I took pages of notes while listening to the speakers.

I appreciate all the work done by the Boise Fellowship and the many volunteers who contributed to this event.

SEPTEMBER 12, 2016

Boise Conference Audio/Transcripts

The audio recordings of the Boise Conference are now available on the Doctrine of Christ website. Transcripts will be available there soon. Anyone who would like to listen to the proceedings can go to their website and hear the conference talks and music (<https://restorationarchives.com/library/conferences.php>).

CHAPTER 14

Building Blocks

SEPTEMBER 19, 2016

“Organize Yourselves”

Part I of 3:

There are some important ideas to be considered when discussing the establishment of Zion. The first is that a new dispensation of the Gospel is always built on what went before. Earlier dispensations are never ignored. Although Moses ultimately founded a very different “look-and-feel” for Israel, his first book recounted the creation and the role of the first patriarchs in preserving knowledge of God from the time of Adam. So Moses’ dispensation gave deference to, and preserved the memory of the patriarchal dispensation.

Joseph was likewise given a dispensation that is to be built on. The Book of Mormon, other revelations given through Joseph, and the preservation of rudimentary priesthood authority were all necessary for the work. As the last work proceeds forward, there is every reason to be grateful for those who have preserved some of what came through Joseph Smith. We should thank them.

The direction to “organize yourselves” is given seven times in modern revelation. (See, e.g., D&C 44:4; 78:11; 88:74; 88:119; 104:11;

104:58; 109:8.) In considering the restoration, what if believers were unwilling to organize themselves so as to be subordinate to an hierarchy? What if people of good faith concluded that the weaknesses of that system would lead inevitably to abuses and apostasy? Is there no alternative other than to “organize ourselves” into a system of quorums, branches, wards, stakes, regions, areas, and then place all of it wrongly at the disposal of a dominating Catholic-mimicking “priesthood” that claims the right to rule and reign by the right to control inherent in their priesthood offices? It was foretold that system would prove vulnerable to utter failure and complete loss of authority. (See D&C 121:36–37.)

Believers are allowed to “organize themselves” in any manner they choose. The authorities derive their institutional right to preside solely from the consent of the governed. It is through “common consent” any right to government is established in the church. (D&C 26:2; 28:13.) The right to organize stems from “common consent” given by both men and women. This right is so fundamental that it holds greater right than the first presidency, twelve, seventy and high councils. In the absence of these authorities, the saints retain the right to govern themselves by their own voice: “[W]here there is not a quorum [of the Twelve] they will have to do business by the voice of the Church.” (*JS Papers, Documents Vol. 4*, p. 302.) If the twelve have rejected the restraints upon them (“no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood”), then saints, including those who act independent of an hierarchical organization, are free to “organize themselves” by their own voice and do business by the voice of the congregation.

Gifts of the Spirit are NOT coincident with, nor dependent upon, priesthood. Anyone, man or woman, young or old, with or without priesthood can have gifts of the Spirit. (See, e.g., D&C

46:10–26.) Paul’s instruction to the saints at Corinth suggested they all (men, women and children) seek for the best gifts. (1 Cor. 14.) That instruction could not be given to such a varied audience if gifts of the Spirit were limited to holders of priesthood.

The great high priest for whom the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God was renamed (D&C 107:2–3), did not perform miracles through his priesthood. Like every other person, he performed miracles through his faith. His faith to perform miracles preceded his ordination to the priesthood. (See JST-Gen. 14:26.) Because he exhibited great faith, he was subsequently ordained. (See JST-Gen. 14:27.) Before his ordination, he worked miracles. This means, just as D&C 46:10–26 confirms, that gifts of the Spirit are not limited to men who hold the priesthood. Any person of any age or sex can work miracles through faith. The result of this, of course, is that women as well as men can prophesy, heal the sick, speak in tongues, have visions, inspired dreams, and other remarkable works through the Spirit.

President David O. McKay is given credit for the priesthood correlation program. He opposed it. He believed it would lead to the total apostasy of the LDS Church. No one need to be captive of this system. All are free to organize in a way to reflect a determination to serve God, trust the scriptures, receive baptism according to the Doctrine of Christ, and associate with others as equals. It is IMPOSSIBLE for disparate and unequal people, who are subordinate to a controlling hierarchy, to become of “one heart and one mind, with no poor among them.” The essential equality required for Zion cannot occur. This is why Enoch’s city had no hierarchy, and why Melchizedek’s people called him a “prince of peace,” though he was not an actual prince. He had no kingdom. He taught repentance and his people repented. Joseph established

equality at the foundation of this dispensation. It was destroyed by the institutions which claim him as their founder. Any new dispensation should avoid repeating the error.

There is faint hope for Zion. But so long as there is any hope at all, it is found in the effort to repent and follow Christ, not only to say but to do.

In the next post I will discuss the fatally toxic flaw inherent in institutionalism that destroys equality. There are other flaws when institutional order is abandoned, and those will likewise be discussed in a third post.

SEPTEMBER 21, 2016

Authority and Abuse

Part 2 of 3:

When men get a little authority almost all will immediately begin to abuse their supposed right to control others. (D&C 121:39.) Assuming there is any right belonging to the priesthood, it can only be exercised by “persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness and pure knowledge[.]” (*Id.*, v. 41–42.) If authority is abused because it is “the nature and disposition of almost all men” to do so (*Id.*, v. 39) then a solution is to revoke the right to control. Revoke the right to preside. Revoke the right to lead. Once that is done then the only method a man has to function as a minister is by persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love unfeigned and pure knowledge. There is no other method or means left for the minister. He is powerless to control, dominate, gratify pride, or obtain vain ambition. He can be ignored—unless his pure knowledge and persuasion attracts the heart and leads people closer to the Lord.

Joseph Smith's dispensation denounced and destroyed the consolidation of power. He set in order a system that would have precluded any man from insisting he could control others. Two days prior to the revelation in D&C 107, Joseph Smith gave a discourse about fractured authority within the church. The discourse was reported in minutes kept by several different scribes, including one written by William McLellin and copied by Warren Cowdery into Minute Book 1.

If the pattern given by Joseph Smith were followed, there would be no "President of the Quorum of the Twelve." Instead each member held no greater right than any other. Joseph "stated that it would be the duty of the twelve to appoint the oldest one of their number to preside in their councils, beginning at the oldest and so on until the youngest has presided and then beginning at the oldest again, &c." (*JS Papers, Documents Vol. 4*, p. 301.) In other words, the right to preside rotated from the oldest to the youngest, then back again to the oldest. This rotation of the role to preside made all of them the presiding authority in turn.

The twelve were missionaries, whose administrative authority only existed outside organized stakes. Joseph explained, "the Twelve will have no right to go into Zion or any of its stakes and there undertake to regulate the affairs thereof where there is a standing High Council." (*Id.*) When the twelve were outside the stakes, and among unorganized areas of the world, they had administrative authority there. However, it required a "quorum" of them (at least 7) to take administrative action. Joseph taught that "where there is not a quorum they will have to do business by the voice of the Church." (*Id.*, p. 302.) **Meaning that any administrative action taken where the twelve did have jurisdiction could only be done if 7 were involved.** If less than 7 of the twelve were present, then the

administrative authority was in the “voice of the Church” and not in any presiding man or men. In any organized stake, the highest authority was the high council. The seventy were another body of missionaries who assisted the twelve. The members of the seventy were called by the “seven presidents of the first seventy” (*Id.*) and were independent from the twelve.

Joseph never moved any man from the twelve into the first presidency. Joseph did not call or ordain the twelve, they were chosen and ordained by the three witnesses. The twelve, in turn, did not have authority to call the seventy. Their members were called by the seven presidents belonging to that quorum.

This splintering of authority precluded any single man or small body of men from dominating and dictating to the church. Ultimate authority was vested in “the voice of the Church” who could revoke any man’s position or authority. This is similar to the Constitution which divided authority between co-equal branches of government. This form of government was designed to weaken power of any single branch so as to preclude any single man or group from gaining autocratic control. Freedom (or agency) is protected best by any system that prevents one man or group of men from controlling others. Unfortunately, in both the Federal Government and the various restoration churches, autocratic power has accumulated and the voice of the people has been subverted.

Two days after the March 1835 conference, D&C 107 was presented to the church. Like Joseph’s earlier explanation, authority was splintered among equal bodies with limited jurisdiction. The person with the duty to administer spiritual things, dispense spiritual blessings, have the heavens opened to them, and to enjoy the presence of God the Father and Jesus Christ was the president of the high priesthood, who belonged to a presidency. The presidency

consisted of him and two counselors. (D&C 107:9–22.) These men were never part of the twelve during Joseph’s lifetime. The twelve were “equal in authority” with the first presidency. (*Id.*, v. 24.) Although the twelve had no rights inside an organized stake, in the mission field they were equal to the first presidency (provided there was a quorum of 7 acting). The seventy were also “equal in authority” with the others. (*Id.*, v. 25–26.) And the stake high councils were likewise “equal in authority” with the foregoing. (*Id.*, v. 37.)

In this organization, the greatest authority was vested in “the voice of the Church.” But administratively, the authority was fragmented between co-equal bodies of a presidency, twelve, seventy (which could be unlimited in numbers) and high councils (which could also be unlimited in number). The discourse by Joseph and the follow-on administrative outline in Section 107 diffused the authority in that dispensation. It was not consolidated or amalgamated into the hands of any single man or men. It contemplated such divergent and potentially opposing bodies that it would be impossible to manage such an arrangement unless the person or persons who tried to control the direction of the body were to use persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love unfeigned and pure knowledge.

There was one other office (it no longer exists) which was held by a single man. He held the office of “Priesthood and Patriarch” (D&C 124:91). The twelve eliminated that role in the 1970s and its last occupant died in April 2013.

The diffused authority died with Joseph, and the twelve assumed administrative control over the church. Their oldest member now gets the automatic right to own and control everything. The voice of the church is limited to saying “yes” at conferences. A “no” will not change decisions or the right of the twelve to control the church.

The essential division of authority, and its obvious inefficiencies, are easy to criticize. It clearly did not have an objective of making the church easy to control. The pattern was a behemoth that fractured the organization into such potentially competing parts that there is little surprise it did not last long in practice.

Trading diffused authority for consolidated control made the management of the Mormon religion efficient, effective and powerful. But it came at an astonishingly high price. The religion founded on revelation, angels and communing with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ traded its spiritual core for earthly mammon. The world envies the bargain. Modern Mormon factions are all surprisingly wealthy—even the small fundamentalist groups. There are two great principles this history has proven. First, a body of believers who are equal are not easily governed. If the only tools to employ are persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love unfeigned and pure knowledge, it will require the wisdom of God to keep believers together. As soon as they are allowed “to govern themselves” there will be ill-defined margins and straying believers in need of teaching, preaching, persuading and long-suffering. Second, it is easy to aggregate power, wealth, influence and authority if religion is used to control people. If one claims to speak for God and there is a population who accepts that claim, outrageous abuses can be perpetrated; and power, wealth, influence and authority can be retained.

From these two principles comes a conclusion that almost all men will choose the second principle over the first. (D&C 121:39.) Even if a man who would give his life to follow Christ were to found the organization, as soon as he is taken, the organization will remain behind. It will fall into the hands of other men. Dispensations are founded by Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ, Peter, and Joseph, but they quickly become the property of Pharaoh, the

priests of Baal, Eli, Caiaphus, Annas, Constantine and Brigham Young. The pattern is so inevitable that it seems self-evident it would be foolish to repeat a failed pattern.

If Zion is to have people of one heart and one mind, who live in righteousness with one another (Moses 7:18) then however cumbersome, inefficient, difficult or daunting it may prove, only the first principle can be chosen. If it fails, then there is no residual institution to add another abusive tool for the god of this world to employ in deceiving and chaining men using another inherited false tradition.

The Law of Moses did not produce Zion. The New Testament Primitive Christian church did not produce Zion. Modeling after either of these, as the church established by Joseph Smith did, has likewise not produced Zion. Zion will be produced by a journey begun in equality, pursued by equals, with no man able to command another man's actions. Persuasion, meekness, unfeigned love and pure knowledge are the only tools necessary for Zion.

SEPTEMBER 22, 2016

Equality

Part 3 of 3:

I continue to receive emails and comments suggesting it will be a necessity to organize a new church. That is not only a bad idea, it would be contrary to the objective of Zion. A formal institution becomes a creature of the law, subject to regulation by the state. In Massachusetts, the state attorney general has announced that she interprets non-discrimination laws, written to address public accommodations, to apply to churches if they are open to the public. This interpretation allows the state to compel churches to get on

board with social causes championed by the state, even if they run contrary to the moral teachings of the church.

No law can reach a man's beliefs. What a person believes and practices in the privacy of their own home is something the state will find almost impossible to curtail. They may try, but to accomplish it would destroy the entire government. Zion must conform to God's plan, not man's. Anything man can regulate, tax or outlaw can become the means used by overreaching government to corrupt.

There are those who are working to provide a way for people to donate to a temple fund. Because the state regulates solicitation of donations from the public, the women involved have needed and hired legal counsel (not me) to accomplish the modest goal of allowing people who choose to do so to donate money for a temple. These women have been working, meeting, planning and overcoming challenges for several months thus far, and are still not in a position to announce their project. This is only to raise funds.

The complexity of this single undertaking reaffirms what I have said previously: There is no need for a corporate organization or even an institution. Much more can be accomplished without it. Furthermore, any organization requires an individual or board to be at its head to control it. That is not only unwise, it will fail.

Zion is not Zion unless those who are there are of one heart, one mind and dwell in righteousness. (Moses 7:18.) Zion will be equal in earthly things in order to become equal in heavenly things. (D&C 78:5–6.) This will eventually require a place where there are no poor and everything is held in common. (Moses 7:18; also 3 Ne. 26:19; 4 Ne. 1:3.) This is voluntary, not compulsory. The property owned by individuals will be used for the common good. If one lacks, and another has abundance, the abundance of the one aids

the one who lacks. Voluntarily—because it is in the heart of the individual to help others.

There are nearly insurmountable challenges in creating a community where the rudimentary elements of Zion can be lived. The equality required is not theoretical, but actual. It must be lived.

Every one of the institutions claiming Joseph Smith as their founder is stratified. Wealthy men preside and claim the right to be supported in their lifestyle while there are members living in grinding poverty. When Warren Jeffs was arrested for child sex abuse, he was driving a red Cadillac Escalade with \$54,000 in cash in the vehicle. He presides over a relatively small sect. The largest Mormon sect employs presiding authorities many of whom own multiple residences valued in the millions. They are not to be envied, but pitied.

It is impossible to have the faith for salvation unless your religion requires the sacrifice of all things. (Lecture 6:7.) To accomplish this, the Nephites had ministers who received nothing for their preaching:

And when the priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God they all returned again diligently unto their labors; and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did all labor, every man according to his strength. (Alma 1:26)

Learn from failures. Avoid the traps that have made all the institutions claiming Joseph as their founder part of the inventory of tools employed by the god of this world to chain mankind. Those

churches are now only thorns, briars and noxious weeds to torment and afflict mankind. Inequality begets inequality.

Titles are not necessary. Being the fulfillment of prophecy, or possessing “keys” for honor and respect is not necessary. No one of us should be greater than another. The only thing needed is the right to preach, teach, exhort and expound. If this is all there is then truth alone will matter—not who is stating it. Then, if a man has priesthood, he ought to employ it in the only way authorized:

No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile— (D&C 121:41–42)

If a man has something true to proclaim, let him persuade. If none are persuaded, let him be long-suffering and use gentleness and meekness to show by his example his unfeigned love. Such kindness is required of any man who would claim to follow Christ. The greatest sign of truth is when a man proclaims “pure knowledge” because it always greatly enlarges the soul of those who listen.

There is a new dispensation. Do not import the abuses that have become epidemic in the remains of the last dispensation. Joseph established equality; it has been destroyed. Do not mimic the gentiles who love to exercise authority over one another. They falsely regard their overlords as benefactors—something Christ roundly condemned. (Luke 22:24–27.)

I could obtain the right from God to organize a church, but I would not do it. Zion can only be established upon principles of equality. Zion will come in a single generation, (if they are righteous) and therefore does not need to be institutionalized.

(JS-Matt. 1:34.) Dispensations do not gather strength over time. Historically they have succeeded or failed while Enoch was alive, or while Melchizedek was alive. When these true teachers are gone, the strength of their ministry atrophies and another restoration must follow. If they are penitent and willing to trust God, the last-days Zion will be achieved by a single generation.

This way is cumbersome and inefficient. But why do gentiles think it is preferable to trade godly equality for administrative efficiency? If the destiny is equality, then the journey must begin with that held paramount. We cannot pursue abusive and controlling means to achieve freedom and equality. The path taken, matters as much as the destination. Struggling with the inefficient and cumbersome tools of persuasion, love, patience and pure knowledge will require a lot of changes to be made voluntarily. That is of course the goal: Voluntarily changing hearts.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2016

Presidency's Priorities

The equality between the first presidency and stake presidencies is apparent in a letter written August 4, 1835. It was written by “the Presidency of the church of Christ of latter-day saints” which was defined by the letter. Remember that Section 107 makes various groups equal in authority. A stake presidency therefore was regarded as part of the “Presidency of the church.” The letter begins:

the Presidency of the church of Christ of latter-day saints consisting of the Presidents, Joseph Smith, Jr. Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, and William W. Phelps....(*JS Papers, Documents* Vol. 4, pp. 373–374)

The presidency had received a letter from Elder Marsh. The reaction to the letter was quite negative. Marsh praised the preaching of two of the twelve apostles, and the praise seemed offensive to the presidency. They wrote:

We discover an error in Elder Marshe's letter—He says, “To the able preaching of Elders W.E. McLellin & P.P. Pratt.” We conclude that if it had been the preaching of the Lord, as it should have been, he would have had the honor, and not these men. (*Id.*, p. 377)

As I read this passage it struck me how entirely appropriate it would be for all preaching to be measured by the degree to which it brings credit and honor on the Lord, rather than to men.

SEPTEMBER 29, 2016

False Traditions

Both the Book of Mormon and modern revelation warn that false traditions are dangerous. They are like chains, binding and blinding victims. Missionaries to the Lamanites taught the gospel and worked to overthrow the false traditions. When converted, these false ideas were discarded, “And as many as were convinced did lay down their weapons of war, and also their hatred and the tradition of their fathers.” (Hel. 5:51.)

Samuel the Lamanite explained in his warning sermon what had happened to the deceived and why. They had “dwindled in unbelief because of the traditions of their fathers.” (Hel. 15:15.)

Alma explained how the Lamanites had been deceived, “it is because of the traditions of their fathers that caused them to remain in their state of ignorance[.]” (Alma 9:16.) He promised that at some future time they would be freed from this captivity. “At some period

of time they will be brought to believe in his word, and to know of the incorrectness of the traditions of their fathers[.]” (Alma 9:17.)

King Benjamin explained to his sons that the Lamanites were in a corrupt state because of the traditions they had been handed down, even our fathers would have dwindled in unbelief, and we should have been like unto our brethren, the Lamanites, who know nothing concerning these things, or even do not believe them when they are taught them, because of the traditions of their fathers, which are not correct. (Mosiah 1:5)

Modern revelation warns about disobedience and false traditions. The “evil one” removes light and truth from a man’s soul through both. False traditions are as effective as disobedience in darkening the hearts, minds and souls of men. “And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers.” (D&C 93:39.)

When a false tradition is accepted as truth, it controls a man’s mind. He sees through the lens of the tradition. Hence the blinding effect. When the truth is taught, it conflicts with the tradition. The tradition controls, and the truth, presented in plainness, cannot be seen.

False traditions give people security, reassuring them they are in the right way. When it has been taught to them by parents and trusted adults while they are young, there is a great mental and emotional challenge to seeing things in a new light. Losing the tradition can mean being alienated from friends, family and community.

Because false traditions control men, and the gospel requires men to repent and forsake the false traditions, Jesus warned:

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (Matt. 10:35–37)

It is not easy to follow the Lord when it requires us to depart from comfortable traditions. But it is the only way to obtain salvation.

Joseph Smith explained,

Let us here observe, that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things. (Lecture 6:7)

CHAPTER 16

The Joseph Smith Papers

OCTOBER 2016

OCTOBER 2, 2016

Joseph Smith Papers

The *Joseph Smith Papers* are valuable and I am very grateful to the LDS Historian's Office for publishing them. When they are released, I get them and read them cover to cover, like a novel. I have marked, added, cross-referenced, highlighted, and corrected mine.

It is perhaps an impossible task for the LDS Historian's Office to view the historic documents outside of the LDS tradition. Their commentaries and footnotes are composed in the context of their traditions, and do not always give an accurate picture of the documents. Hence, the many additions I have added to my copy.

I think the Historian's Office is doing their best to be helpful, and I believe they are being as honest as they can be in their circumstances. But they weave into the actual historical documents an incorrect LDS narrative through the "General Introductions", "Historical Introductions", "Chronologies", "Bibliographical Directories", and footnotes. They are unable to allow the plain

words of the documents to speak for themselves. Just one example taken from the volume 4 of the “Documents” illustrates the point:

In 1921, the highest authorities in the LDS church discarded *Lectures on Faith* without a vote of the church. *Lectures* had been adopted as a “law” for the church at a conference on August 17, 1835. In that conference, every division of priesthood voted quorum by quorum to adopt *Lectures* as scripture and a law, followed by a vote of the entire church – men, women and children doing likewise.

The actual events presents a troubling dilemma for the LDS institution. Rather than concede that deleting *Lectures* in 1921 was an error, they have offered various excuses for its deletion. In the *Joseph Smith Papers* treatment of this awkward matter, they offer the excuse that the original adoption of *Lectures* was defective. In this, they are unwilling to be accountable for what is a rebellious departure from a law binding on the institution.

The LDS Historian’s Office introduces the August 17, 1835 conference minutes by describing the *Lectures* as an improper deviation from what was authorized. They write:

The book that Cowdery presented differed from the one foreseen by the Kirtland high council. It did not contain excerpts from the Bible or the Book of Mormon, but instead had two sections, one of which was devoted to seven theological lectures that were prepared in the winter of 1834 and 1835 for the Elders School in Kirtland. The other section contained many of JS’s revelations, which constituted the “*covenants and commandments of the Lord.*” No extant record indicates when or why the committee decided to deviate from its original instructions, but the change had occurred by February 1835, when the committee composed the preface to the book (*JSP Documents* Vol. 4, p. 383, italics in original)

This is how the Historian's Office undermines confidence in the *Lectures*. The assertion that "no extant record indicates...why the committee decided to deviate" and adopt *Lectures* is not true. The conference minutes that follow this Historian's Office introduction explains the matter:

The presidency of the church approved the book, including *Lectures*, by adopting the following language:

The names of the Committee are as follows Joseph Smith Junior, Sidney Rigdon, Oliver Cowdery & Frederick G. Williams. This Committee having finished said Book according to the instructions given them, it was deemed necessary to call the general assembly of the Church to see whether the book be approved or not by the Authoroties of the church, that it may, if approved, become a law, unto the church, and a rule of faith and practice unto the same. (*JSP Documents*, Vol. 4, p. 386, all as in original)

The presidency did not believe there was a "deviation," but the book was "finished ...according to the instructions given them."

After Oliver Cowdery, William W. Phelps, John Whitmer, and John Smith testified the book (including *Lectures*) was true and from God, John Smith asked for a vote from several bodies. The vote was taken to approve the following proposition:

That they would receive the Book as the rule of their faith & practice, and put themselves under the guidance of the same and also that they were satisfied with the committee that were chosen to compile it, as having discharged their duty faithfully. (*JSP Documents* Vol. 4, p. 394)

Further testimonies were given by Levi Jackman, the 12 apostles (whose written testimony was read to the conference affirming

favorably both “the Book and the Committee who compiled it”), and Leonard Rich (speaking for the 70 Apostles). Leonard Rich referred specifically to Lectures:

...he had examined the Lectures and many of the Revelations contained in it, and was perfectly satisfied with the same, and further, that he knew that they were true by the testimony of the Holy Spirit of God given unto him; he then called for the Vote of as many of the 70 as were present, which was unanimously given in favor of the Good, and also that they were perfectly satisfied with the committee that compiled it. (*JSP Documents* Vol. 4, p. 394–395)

Bishop Newel K. Whitney, Bishop of Kirtland, next testified that he had examined the *Lectures* and knew them to be true. When he presented it for a vote by his counselors, he asked for a vote affirming the following:

He then called for the Vote of his counsellors, which was given in favor of the Book and also of the Committee that compiled it as having discharged their duty faithfully. (*JS Papers Documents* Vol. 4, p. 395)

After this, John Corrill testified of his “entire satisfaction with the labors of the Committee.” (*Id.*)

Elder John Gould said, “he had received the testimony of the Spirit in favor of them, and that he was well satisfied with the committee” (*Id.*) and asked for the vote of the Elders, which was given.

Then Priest Ira Ames spoke, testifying: “he was present in the general assembly which appointed the committee, And that he was well satisfied with the fruit of their labors.” (*JS Papers Documents*

Vol. 4, pp. 395–396.) The priests then unanimously approved the volume.

Teacher Erastus Babbitt testified the volume came “from God” and that “he was well satisfied with the labors of the committee.” (*Id.*) The teachers then unanimously approved it.

The most obvious reason the LDS Historian’s Office is unable to find any “extant record [that] indicates when or why the committee decided to deviate from its original instructions” is because the committee DID NOT DEVIATE from the assignment given to them.

When the assignment was given, most, if not all of those who approved the *Lectures* and revelations on August 17, 1835, were present. THEY understood the assignment. One of the Kirtland high council who approved the completed volume including *Lectures* was Samuel Smith. (*JSP Documents* Vol. 4, p. 387.) He was the one who originally nominated the committee. (*JSP Documents* Vol. 2, p. 97; 2:137, Vol. 4, p. 175; 4:421.) If anyone should have detected a “deviation” from the committee’s assignment, it would have been the one who nominated them. Yet he testified “This committee having finished said Book according to the instructions given them.” (*JSP Documents* Vol. 4, p. 386, emphasis added.)

The very people who understood the original assignment, including members of the committee, testified the committee had “finished said Book according to the instructions given them.” All of those involved, including the entire body of the church who voted to adopt the *Lectures* as part of binding scripture and a law for them, saw no deviation. It did not “differ from the one foreseen by the Kirtland high council,” as the LDS Historian’s Office asserts. Those involved saw only the faithful performance of an assignment by the committee.

Because the LDS institution inexplicably dropped *Lectures* by a decision made by church leaders without any vote by the membership, there can be only one of two conclusions: 1. They were wrong (which the LDS Historian's Office is loath to suggest by any historical document they publish). Or, 2. They were right (and so "Historical Introductions" and footnotes need to support their decision).

Like many other parts of the *Joseph Smith Papers*, this example shows how the editors intrude into the published documents to add their defense of the institution employing them. They no doubt are convinced the institution tells a correct story of history, and therefore they construe the records to support the institution, even when it requires them to contradict the documents. But tradition should not blind us, and to read the historical documents in the *Joseph Smith Papers* for content, is to see that the editors often construe them to conform to a story different than the one told by the historical record.

It would be interesting if someone were to write a comprehensive account of the contrast between the editors' explanations and the actual documents of early Mormonism.

I am very grateful for the publication of the *Joseph Smith Papers*. They help us to see a truer story of early Mormon events while Joseph Smith was alive, in a way that has never been possible before.

OCTOBER 4, 2016

Joseph Smith Papers 2

In the *JSP Histories* Vol. 1, the LDS Historian's Office adds an "Historical Introduction" to drafts of history written between 1838 and 1841. In their introduction, they discuss copyist Howard Coray's explanation of his clerical work in transcribing Draft 3. This version

was based on Draft 2, which Joseph Smith “dictated” to Coray as he wrote down Draft 3. The Historian’s Office then acknowledges this:

If the statement was accurate in that sense, it suggests that JS read aloud from Draft 2 in the large manuscript volume, directing editorial changes as he read. (*JS Papers Histories* Vol. 1, pp. 200–201)

In the Draft 2 that Joseph Smith read from, the following description is recorded about the visit of an angel to Joseph on September 21, 1823:

He called me by name and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me and that his name was Nephi. That God had a work for me to do, and that my (name) should be had for good and evil among all nations kindreds and tongues. (*JS Papers Histories* Vol. 1, p. 222)

While reading the account, and making editorial changes to it as Coray wrote Draft 3, the account was rewritten as follows:

...calling me by name, (he) said. that he was a messenger. sent from the presence of God to me. and that his name was Nephi. —~~that~~ he had a work for me to do that my name should be had for good and evil. among all nations. kindreds. & tongues— (*JS Papers Histories* Vol. 1, p. 223)

It is noteworthy that the two versions are not identical. There was a close enough examination of the text of Draft 3 for Joseph to have made several changes to these sentences. Yet in both accounts the name of the angel who visited on September 21, 1823 remained “Nephi.”

Somehow the LDS church changed the name of the angel from “Nephi” to “Moroni” and it is the “Angel Moroni” who sits atop almost every LDS temple. The LDS Historian’s Office deals with this

problem through a footnote: “A later redaction in an unidentified hand changed “Nephi” to “Moroni” and noted that the original attribution was to a “clerical error” (*JS Papers Histories Vol. 1*, p. 223, footnote 56).

That footnote uses Oliver Cowdery as a reliable source for changing the name to “Moroni” because of a letter he wrote in 1835. But Oliver Cowdery was not with Joseph in 1823–1827. The first time they met was April 5, 1829. (*JS-H 1:66*.) Oliver is not as reliable a source as Joseph, but the Historian’s Office uses him to justify the change of identity from “Nephi” to “Moroni.”

The same footnote acknowledges that during Joseph’s lifetime the identity of the angel was always Nephi:

The present history [Draft 2] is the earliest extant source to name Nephi as the messenger, and subsequent publications based on this history perpetuated the attribution during JS’s lifetime. (*Id.*)

Draft 2 was written in 1839, and appears to have been entirely based on a version dictated by Joseph in 1838. The 1838 manuscript has been lost and therefore Draft 2, made the next year, is the “earliest extant source” of the Joseph Smith History.

Taking these dates, we know Joseph identified the angel as “Nephi” in 1838, and remained consistent with that identification when it was recopied in 1839. Joseph reviewed and revised the account with Coray in 1840, and although he changed several things in the surrounding text, the identity of the angel was still “Nephi.” Subsequent publications approved or written by Joseph during his lifetime likewise identified the 1823 visitor as “Nephi.” (See *Times and Seasons*, 15 April 1842, 3:753–754; *LDS Millennial Star*, August 1842, 3:53–54.)

In 1842 Joseph became the editor of the *Times and Seasons*. He wrote an announcement in the March 1, 1842 edition which stated:

To Subscribers: This paper commences my editorial career, I alone stand responsible for it, and shall do for all papers having my signature henceforward. I am not responsible for the publication, or arrangement of the former paper; the matter did not come under my supervision. JOSEPH SMITH (*Times and Seasons*, Vol. 3, No. 9)

This March 1, 1842 edition of the paper began the first publication of the Book of Abraham, and so it is one of the more available editions of the paper.

Three editions later, with Joseph as editor of the paper, the following account was printed:

He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Nephi. That God had a work for me to do, and that my name should be had for good and evil, among all nations, kindreds, and tongues[.] (*Times and Seasons*, Vol. 3, No. 12, HISTORY OF JOSEPH SMITH (Continued))

In the *JS Papers Histories Vol. 1*, the footnote quoted above acknowledges the change of name from “Nephi” to “Moroni” was done “later” and by “an unidentified hand.” It could have been put there anytime by anyone. But this insertion is important enough to the LDS tradition for the Historian’s Office to footnote and to explain the name “Nephi” was a “clerical error.”

Joseph used, approved, repeated and asserted that he alone would stand responsible for identifying the angel as “Nephi.” But an unknown hand is used by the Historian’s Office to relegate this name to a clerical error when it conflicts with LDS tradition.

The question of whether “Moroni” belongs at all in the LDS narrative can be answered by another document found in the same volume. Another recap of history was composed by Joseph Smith in 1842, and printed in the same edition of the *Times and Seasons* wherein he announced his role as the new editor. Joseph wrote a letter to John Wentworth, the editor of the *Chicago Democrat*. After the letter was written and sent, it was transcribed and published in the *Times and Seasons*. This required Joseph to have reviewed the letter at least twice by the time it was printed in the newspaper he edited.

The letter does not name the angel, but clarifies Joseph’s experience between 1823 (first visit) and 1827 (when the plates were given to him):

The angel appeared to me three times the same night and unfolded the same things. After having received many visits from the angels of God unfolding the majesty, and glory of the events that should transpire in the last days, on the morning of the 22d of September A.D. 1827, the angel of the Lord delivered the records into my hands. (*JS Papers Histories* Vol. 1, p. 495; also *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 3, No. 9, CHURCH HISTORY)

Joseph was not visited by a singular angel, but “many visits” from “angels”—making it possible that although Nephi visited him first in 1823, others (which may have included Moroni) also visited him during those four years. Joseph’s mother, Lucy Mack Smith, recounted what Joseph learned from the “many angels” who visited:

During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined. He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of travelings, and the animals upon which they rode;

their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life among them. (Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (Liverpool, S.W. Richards, 1853), 36–173.)

The PofGP version of the *Joseph Smith History*, verse 54, confirms that with each annual visit between 1823 and 1827 he met “the same messenger” (meaning Nephi). However, as the Wentworth Letter suggests, there were others who are not mentioned and are only alluded to have visited.

The visit of “diverse” angels is also mentioned in D&C 128:20–21. These various angels all declared “their dispensations”—a term that would refer to a beginning and ending of a gospel epoch or order.

The dispensation of Moses began with him and ended with John the Baptist. Both Moses and John the Baptist appeared to Christ, witnessed by Peter, James and John, on the Mount of Transfiguration. In Matthew 17:1–13, Moses is named and “Elias” is later clarified to identify John the Baptist. (Verse 13: “Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.”)

In the JST Mark 9:2–4, the identities are explicitly Moses and John the Baptist:

2 And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. 3 And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. 4 And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses, *or, in other words, John the Baptist and Moses*: and they were talking with Jesus.

Joseph inserted into verse 4: “or in other words, John the Baptist and Moses.”

The men who began and finished the dispensation of Moses visited Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration and “declared their dispensation” to Him. It would be symmetrical for the Nephite dispensation which began with Nephi and ended with Moroni to likewise have the founder and finisher visit Joseph and “declare their dispensation” to him.

[Since Lehi was Nephi’s father some will quibble over identifying Nephi as the beginning. However, before departing from Jerusalem it was Nephi, not Lehi, who possessed the Sword of Laban, brass plates, and indicia of kingship. It was Nephi, not Lehi, who received the revelation giving instructions on how to build the boat for the trip to the promised land. It was Nephi who received the more fulsome revelation of the tree of life. It was Nephi who was shown the entire sweep of history in a revelation summarized in 1 Nephi chapters 11–14. Nephi prepared, and God preserved the Small Plates of Nephi as the foundational scripture of the Book of Mormon. Mormon did not abridge Nephi—we have his record in full. Therefore, it is more properly Nephi, not Lehi, who should be regarded as the founder of the Nephite dispensation.]

If Joseph identified the angel who visited him in September 1823 by the name “Nephi” throughout his life, using it in three drafts of his history, using it in the newspaper he edited, and not changing when given many opportunities to do so, the conclusion it was a “clerical error” that was corrected by “an unknown hand” is at best insufficient.

If “many angels” visited between 1823 to 1827, including Moroni, then leaving the name as “Nephi” does no harm, and more accurately attributes to Joseph Smith what Joseph Smith

intended. No matter how the error was made, and despite an “unknown hand’s” change to “Moroni” the *Joseph Smith Papers* ought to respect Joseph Smith’s words above Oliver’s.

The obvious difficulty with this approach is that the tradition makes the “angel fly[ing] through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach” (Rev. 14:6) now in gold leaf atop temples and identified as “Moroni” an embarrassing mistake. Tradition holds that this reference in the Book of Revelation was fulfilled by the first angel who visited on September 21, 1823. That would make it Nephi, even if later on an angelic Moroni was among the “many angels” visiting between 1823 and 1827.

Joseph’s account should not be undermined even if, when he tells his account and vouches for its truthfulness, he contradicts an LDS tradition.

OCTOBER 8, 2016

Nephi/Moroni Questions

In response to questions about the prior post concerning Nephi visiting Joseph Smith in September 1823 I add the following:

In the “Historical Introduction” written by the LDS Historian’s office for what is now D&C 14, they mention the first witness of the plates (other than Joseph Smith) was the mother of David and John Whitmer:

Whitmer later recounted that during their journey to Fayette, he, Cowdery, and JS briefly encountered a ‘pleasant, nice looking old man’ whom JS identified by revelation as a heavenly messenger transporting the plates. Whitmer also recalled that soon after their arrival in Fayette, his mother, Mary Mussleman Whitmer, was met ‘by the same old man, ‘who showed her the

plates.’ (*Joseph Smith Papers, Documents* Vol. 1: July 1828–June 1831, p. 67)

This witness (Whitmer’s mother) knew the angel’s name as “Nephi” — just like Joseph Smith in his 1838, 1839, 1840 and 1842 writings. Her grandson wrote,

I have heard my grandmother [Mary Musselman Whitmer] say on several occasions that she was shown the plates of the Book of Mormon by a holy angel, whom she always called Brother Nephi.” (*Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, article titled *Another Account of Mary Whitmer’s Viewing of the Golden Plates*, found in Vol. 10; (2014), p. 37)

In footnote 56 (*JS Papers Histories Vol. 1*, p. 223) the Historian’s Office also cites an article in the *Elder’s Journal* in July 1838 as a reason to rename “Nephi” to “Moroni.” However, this is a reference to an answer by Joseph of a specific question involving the source of the plates (and not the angel who appeared in September 1823). The question and answer are:

Question 4th. How, and where did you obtain the Book of Mormon?

Answer. Moroni, the person who deposited the plates, from whence the book of Mormon was translated, in a hill in Manchester, Ontario County, New York, being dead; and raised again therefrom, appeared unto me, and told me where they were; and gave me directions how to obtain them. (*Elder’s Journal*, July 1838, pp. 42–43)

The plates were deposited by Moroni, not Nephi. The fact Moroni was involved in delivery of the plates does not mean it was him who appeared to Joseph in 1823. Since Moroni sealed the records to prevent their discovery by an unauthorized party (Moroni

10:2), the records could not come from their secure location without his (Moroni's) consent to open the seal.

Of course Moroni should have been among the “many angels” involved between 1823 and 1827. But Joseph and Mary Mussleman Whitmer both testified it was “Nephi” who appeared at the beginning (1823) to her and to Joseph. Moroni consented to allowing Joseph possession of the plates—as was his right to do. And both Nephi and Moroni were required (the alpha and omega of the Nephite dispensation) to hand off their dispensation to Joseph—as explained in D&C 128:21.

OCTOBER 11, 2016

Joseph Smith Papers 3

Volume 4 of the Documents put the *Lecture First of The Lectures on Faith* into an appendix in the back of the book. The Historian's Office explains in the “Historical Introduction” the reason for putting it at the end in an appendix, rather than where it would belong chronologically as part of the main volume.

First, they question the authorship. Although they admit Joseph Smith edited and vouched for the *Lectures*, they note, “it seems likely that Sidney Rigdon had a large hand in composing the lectures.” (*JS Papers Documents Vol. 4*, p. 458.) They concede on the next page that “JS was apparently involved as well.” (*Id.*, p. 459.)

Taking this point first, consider the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. Joseph did not compose any of the original 66 books in the LDS/King James version of the Bible. Joseph edited and “corrected” the text.

John 6:44 in the KJV reads: “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”

JST John 6:44 reads:

No man can come unto me, except he doeth the will of my Father who hath sent me draw him. And this is the will of him who hath sent me, that ye receive the Son; for the Father beareth record of him; and he who receiveth the testimony, and doeth the will of him who sent me, and I will raise up at the last day in the resurrection of the just.

Since Joseph did not compose the original text of John, but merely edited it, should it or should it not be regarded as Joseph’s product. Would it be Joseph’s as soon as he approves an edit, no matter how much of the original is left?

The LDS Historian’s Office rejects this idea for *Lectures on Faith*, and explains:

Because JS’s role in producing the lectures cannot be clearly determined, the first lecture is presented as an appendix of the volume rather than as a featured text. (*JS Papers Documents Vol. 4*, pp. 459–460)

The volume published after Volume 4 of the Documents is the first volume of the *Administrative Records* containing the minutes of the meetings of the council of 50. The LDS Historian’s Office takes a different approach in this volume of minutes than their treatment of *Lecture First*:

[T]he minutes are published as part of *The Joseph Smith Papers* even though much of the record covers events in the eighteen months following Smith’s death on 27 June 1844. This volume is divided into four parts that correspond with the council’s

periods of activity. Part 1 contains a record of the meetings held on seventeen days from 10 March through 31 May 1844. Part 2 of this volume covers the meetings held on fifteen days from 4 February through 10 May 1845. The final two parts contain, respectively, the minutes for three meetings held in September and October 1845, and for two meetings held in January 1846. (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. xiii)

Only the first part of this new volume has any connection with Joseph Smith at all. The first 204 pages are the only pages covering events prior to Joseph's death. Pages 205 to 526 are entirely a product of others. Joseph Smith, who, being deceased, did not contribute to the meetings. Yet none of these four parts are put into an appendix, as *Lecture First* was done.

The disparate treatment forces the conclusion that by relegating *Lecture First* to an appendix and questioning the authorship, the Historian's Office hopes to undermine confidence in *Lectures on Faith* and bolster the inappropriate administrative decision to delete them from LDS scripture in 1921 without approval by the body of the church. Likewise, by putting into the *JS Papers* project, meetings held after Joseph's death which were presided over by Brigham Young, the Historian's Office wishes to convey the impression of continuity and trustworthiness in the LDS institution following Joseph's death. They want to convey the impression it was "business as usual" and nothing changed.

OCTOBER 18, 2016

Joseph Smith Papers, Conclusion

Though practically endless fodder exists for comment about the disparity between the historical texts published in the *Joseph Smith Papers* project and the LDS Historian's Office commentaries and

footnotes, I plan to make this last observation and leave the topic alone. Readers should be aware the Historian's Office is blinded by an LDS tradition which they defend, even when it is contradicted by the documents they are publishing. Readers should make their own careful assessment of both the documents and the Historian Office's running commentaries.

A number of people have already pointed out that the latest publication of the record of the Council of Fifty meeting does not support what is called in the LDS tradition "Joseph Smith's last charge" to the twelve. Briefly the issue is this:

The twelve claim they were given a mantle by Joseph Smith that put them in control of all things LDS. This event purportedly happened 26 March 1844, because this is the only possible date that fits all the various claims about the event. The Historian's Office editorializes about the 26 March 1844 meeting of the Council of Fifty:

A significant event likely occurred in this meeting, probably in the morning session, about which the minutes are silent but which council members discussed a year later in connection with a written summary prepared by Orson Hyde. Clayton's brief note that JS spoke "on heavenly things and many other important subjects" likely marks what was later referred to as JS's "last charge." This may have been an extension of the charge relating the history, purpose, and rules of the council that was typically given to new members and that JS may have delivered in this meeting. The most complete recorded version of this charge was written down by Thomas Bullock in December 1846. (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 63)

Did you get that? An event “**likely**” happened “**probably**” in the morning, but the records do NOT mention it. But this missing information “**likely marks**” something (that later got manufactured to defend claims by the twelve) and “**may have**” happened even though nothing in the record supports the claim. Then 33 months later Thomas Bullock wrote the “most complete recorded version” of what **may likely** have **possibly** happened.

Checking Joseph’s journal, we get this report of the day on which the **possible** event **may** have happened:

Tuesday Ma[r]ch 26–1844 fr[o]m 9 to 12. in council from 2 to 5 P.M. in coun[c]il– [9 lines blank] warm some wet (*JS Papers Journals* Vol. 3, pp. 208–209).

The Historian’s Office adds footnotes to the record in order to insert other retrospective accounts that put Joseph’s “last charge” (as it is called) into the footnotes. Presumably so the reader is reassured the LDS traditions are supported—just not by anything that Joseph Smith was connected with recorded contemporaneously.

This fuss to support the twelve’s claim to have the right to control all things LDS ignores an obvious problem. Even if one believes the retrospective accounts, and supposes that what “**might probably**” have happened, really did, it doesn’t amount to anything. Traditions not only blind the Historian’s Office, they defy common sense.

The “kingdom of God” is not the LDS Church and the LDS Church is not the “kingdom of God.” They are separate:

Joseph Smith stated that the “literal kingdom of God [that is, the Council of Fifty], and the church of God are two distinct things” as “the laws of the kingdom are not designed to affect our salvation hereafter. (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. xxiii)

So if Joseph rolled the “kingdom of God” off his shoulders and onto the twelve, it has nothing to do with the giving the twelve jurisdiction to assume complete autocratic control over the church. There was already a revelation in place (D&C 107) that confirmed the role of the twelve in the church to co-equality with the seventy, stake high councils, and gave them no jurisdiction within an organized stake. So the assertion that the charge allowed them expanded jurisdiction contrary to and in violation of, Section 107 is not justified when the “kingdom of God” and the church are two separate things. The “kingdom of God” is “not designed to affect our salvation” and therefore did not, indeed cannot, subjugate the church.

Further, even if you accept the charge given to the twelve, rolled to them the “kingdom of God,” they abandoned it.

The final meetings of the council were held in the mid-1880s. Thereafter the council’s records appear to have remained in the custody of the Office of the First Presidency. In 1922 church president Heber J. Grant reportedly entrusted Joseph Anderson, who served as secretary to Grant and the First Presidency, to safeguard the records. In 1932 Grant and Franklin S. Richards—the last two living members of the council—met together and read through some of the Council of Fifty records. The minutes were also accessed in the late twentieth century. In 2010 the First Presidency transferred the Nauvoo-era record to the Church History Library. (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 6)

Thus died the “kingdom of God” which, Joseph Smith **probably may** have charged the twelve to possess. They neglected the “kingdom of God” because they were preoccupied with acquiring

complete, unfettered control to dictate over the church and hold at defiance any who dared to challenge them. They reign over the seventies and high councils with impunity. Their autocratic control holds the approximate 30% of those who remain nominally active in the church in complete submission. They have the “keys of the kingdom”—which kingdom has lapsed into complete oblivion. But they’ve parlayed that into dictatorship over the other organization, the church.

Ask yourself: Why would Joseph, knowing the “kingdom” and the “church” were entirely separate, choose to have himself anointed a “king and priest” in the Council of Fifty, and NOT in the church? There is something important to be found in the answer. An answer you will have to find for yourself because very few LDS know much about this. Unfortunately, they are too busy “not being led astray” by men who claim to **probably** have the “keys of the kingdom,” (at least **most likely** may have—**probably** from the morning of March 26, 1844).

OCTOBER 22, 2016

Second Comforter: Spanish Translation

A Spanish language translation of *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil* is now available in print and should be available next week on Kindle.

The Spanish title is *El Segundo Consolador: Conversando con El Señor a traves del Velo*

This is the same book as *The Second Comforter*, translated into Spanish by a volunteer committee. The material in the book was sound LDS doctrine/teaching when originally written. Since that time the teaching has been denounced by the LDS Church, and

therefore it is important as a point of contrast between what was taught for over a century-and-a-half by the LDS Church and what they have rapidly abandoned in only the last decade.

If you know of any Spanish readers who would be interested in this important teaching, they may want to read this volume. Although the institution has removed it from their body of teaching, the book teaches truth about the Gospel of Christ.

OCTOBER 24, 2016

Supreme Court

The public does not elect members of the Supreme Court. We elect an office holder, who selects a nominee, and such nominee must then be confirmed by the US Senate. Once confirmed, a Justice of the Supreme Court serves for life, unless impeached and removed from office.

Because of the death of Justice Scalia, this election takes place against a background of one vacancy on the Supreme Court. There are other members whose health and age make additional vacancies likely to happen during the next four years. Because of this, we know the next President of the United States will make at least one, and perhaps several appointments to the highest court in the land.

There are several issues that invade every aspect of our lives which the Supreme Court either has or will be asked to decide.

Should men who “self-identify” as women be permitted to use a woman’s bathroom? Should this be allowed even if there are minor children in the bathroom? This issue is now winding its way through the Federal Court system.

Should all churches be subject to public accommodation laws? If so, can churches be required likewise to allow men into women’s

restrooms, even if minor children are in the same bathroom? The Massachusetts Attorney General is threatening to litigate this very issue.

Is Obamacare constitutional? It has been upheld in a split decision based on the power to adopt a tax, despite the fact that Obamacare would be unconstitutional if based on the power to regulate commerce. However, since it originated in the US Senate, and the power to adopt a new tax is confined to bills originating in the US House of Representatives (Article 1, Section 7, Clause 1), will this make the law unconstitutional?

When a rancher in Wyoming excavated an area along the stream on his property, and created a pond, did that subject his property to regulation by the EPA under the Clean Water Act? The EPA imposed a \$20 million fine claiming they had that right. If the Supreme Court were to weigh in on such a dispute, what would they decide?

Are the limits of the Second Amendment broad or limited? Is the right of citizens to “keep and bear arms” broad enough to allow few regulations? On what basis can there be restrictions?

Is executive legislative action taken by any President of the United States an unconstitutional invasion of the legislative power confined to Congress? If not, how far can an executive impose “executive orders” which defy, neglect or contradict legislative action taken by Congress?

Everything from how you are investigated about an alleged *crime*, to how you are charged with an alleged *crime* and how you are to be prosecuted for the alleged *crime* is up to the Supreme Court. That court alone determines the extent of governmental power, and what steps are necessary to protect your rights against self-incrimination, due process, protection against cruel and unusual punishment, and right to legal counsel. Do these protections apply

to US Citizens if the Commander in Chief employs a drone to kill people in foreign lands?

Recently a divided Federal Appeals Court upheld a law requiring the Catholic Little Sisters of the Poor to provide abortion and contraceptive care, contrary to Catholic Church teachings. The decision means the Little Sisters of the Poor face up to \$2.5 million a year in fines.

The Fourth Amendment protects citizens from unreasonable searches and seizures. Federal agencies are spying on citizens at an unprecedented level because of Internet, email, smart-phones and social media. The Supreme Court will be asked to determine what, if any, limits the Constitution provides to citizens under this Amendment.

The extent to which government can oppress, impose its will, tax, regulate, spy, and burden you and your property is decided in the final analysis by the Supreme Court. If Congress oversteps its limits, the Supreme Court can nullify their acts. If the President oppresses or acts illegally, it is up to the Supreme Court as the final arbiter to reign him in.

The potential justices nominated by the next President to serve on the US Supreme Court may have greater effect on your life, liberty and property than will the President. As you vote, you may want to consider the likely selection to be made by **the only two candidates** who stand any chance of being elected. Throwing a vote away for some symbolic gesture, as recent polling suggests Utah is now willing to do, means abdicating the decision to others (if this election is close). This seems foolish, given the enormous importance of the role the next President will have in filling the US Supreme Court.

The difference between the likely appointees of the two candidates cannot be fully known until an appointment is made. But there are two competing judicial philosophies that broadly reflect these differences:

A conservative judicial appointment would generally favor allowing social change to come slowly and to be accomplished by legislation. This approach allows elected officials to reach a consensus through compromise legislation. An activist liberal judicial appointment would view the court as an agent of change. Instead of following behind public consensus, the court's decision can compel social changes even without a national consensus. These different approaches result in very different decisions. It is often the case that an activist decision changes society, but leaves scars and turmoil because there was no attempt to reach a consensus. Should the Supreme Court have the power to usurp the people and attempt to reshape our society?

CHAPTER 17

All or Nothing

OCTOBER 27, 2016

All or Nothing

Zion and a New Jerusalem will exist before the Lord's return in glory. (D&C 45:28–32; 133:17–35; 45:65–75.) But God will bring it as His work. Mortal man will labor with Him, but the Lord will be given credit for accomplishing it. (Mosiah 12:22; 3 Ne. 16:18; –both quoting Isaiah 52:8.)

A chorus of Pied-Pipers are now clamoring for attention, none of whom speak for the Lord. None offer the slightest idea or information on how to proceed with the work of Zion. They chirp criticism and proclaim their doubts, claiming something ought to be done. The chorus does not sing from the same page, for one says, “there is no need for a temple”, while another states confidently, “Denver is too enamored with Joseph Smith”, and another proclaims as his great theme, “all you need is Jesus, for He has no final work on Zion to accomplish”, and another, “I’m not saying there hasn’t been a visit by something or someone with Denver, but it certainly wasn’t Christ.” Then there is: “The Davidic Servant will be the translated John!” says another. (This despite the

fact that Zion is a mortal challenge to be accomplished by mortals. Immortals do not involve themselves directly in responsibilities required of mankind.) Many other alternatives are also offered, inconsistent and contradictory, all of which pursue as their one theme: Do not expect the Lord to bring again Zion; and if He does, do not expect it to be done with any involvement by Denver.

Do not be misled: I make no claims for myself. Nothing has been accomplished. Until the work is completed, no one can claim a role for himself or proclaim he will fulfill prophecy. Quite frankly, little has been done so far by any one, and every man's life is short with little time to labor before taken from this world. The task of Zion is far more daunting than the foolish imagination of the human heart. If we soberly assess what is left to be accomplished, we would all repent and cooperate with one another, lending whatever strength we have to the task. We would stop fighting and opposing one another, and ask what we could do to aid.

No institution exists with the capacity to accomplish Zion. It will be so entirely foreign to this world that the people who come there will be required to adopt a new society, new way of thinking, different way of interacting, entirely new law, a form of government that does not presently exist, an order to their lives that alters everything, and a form of righteousness that is only possible for a society with a new structure.

Much of the sinfulness of mankind is due to the way our society, government and economy are organized. If mankind were reordered, a great deal of what is broken inside the individual would be fixed by a new environment. But it is an "all or nothing" proposition. Half-measures will fail. The restoration did not reach a conclusion. It began, halted, and has been receding ever since. The objective was

Zion. But Zion is all or nothing. Taking “some” of the attributes without the rest of it, is doomed for failure.

Zion will have “all things in common” but only as a by-product of a larger construct. Without the rest of the social structure, implementing “all things in common” is only a curse, not a blessing. The Pinery Mission in Wisconsin was established to harvest lumber for the Nauvoo Temple. Those sent to Wisconsin decided to live a “consecrated” life and have everything in common. (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 24 footnote 26.) When the leaders of the mission wrote a letter February 15, 1844 to the first presidency to report on progress, they made an observation about how poorly things were working with their attempt at living consecration:

[T]he main hindrance to our successful operations was the feeding, clothing, and transporting a great many lazy, idle men, who have not produced any thing by their pretended labor, and thus eating up all that the dilligent and honest could produce by their unceasing application to labor, & (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 24)

The economic catastrophe left the participants destitute. What was worse, the lumber from this effort, although intended for the Nauvoo Temple and Nauvoo House, was pilfered by workmen for use on their own Nauvoo residences.

Everyone knew the Nauvoo Temple had to be built with dispatch. The same commandment that required the temple built also warned that once sufficient time to build it had passed, if the saints failed to accomplish the task the church would be rejected. (D&C 124:31–32.) The men harvesting the lumber in the Pinery Mission concluded the Nauvoo Temple would not be completed according to the commandment. Their letter said:

...having also become convinced that the Church at Nauvoo or in the Eastern States will not build the Nauvoo House according to the commandment, neither the Temple in a reasonable time. (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 30)

As George Miller observed, theft of the lumber was preventing progress on the temple:

Miller discovered that lumber they had earlier supplied for the temple and the Nauvoo House was instead being used to construct houses for the workmen. (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, footnote 39, p. 30)

When a society acts on the notion of having “all things in common” as an end, rather than a by-product of a new society, then any project, just like the Nauvoo Temple, becomes almost impossible to complete successfully. This principle cannot be separated from a reordered society. This is why the Lord must bring Zion, because mankind cannot.

Minutes of a meeting May 6, 1844 mentioned twenty-five men who would be returning from the Pinery Mission in Wisconsin:

About the 1st of July there will be about 25 able men down from the Pinery who would be destitute when they returned home. (*JS Papers Administrative Record*, p. 155.)

Zion will not begin with people attempting to “have all things in common.” Zion will require a new government, new social order, new way of life, an altogether different society from what now exists. It will not be just adopting some new magic economic rule like “have all things in common.”

There are still a series of talks that need to be given to the Christian community. No venue has yet been arranged to speak in California,

Texas or Atlanta. I appreciate the effort given by so many of you, and believe the attempts have all been noted by the Lord. The assignment to speak has not been withdrawn, and I still need assistance to make such arrangements for the three venues. If you can offer an opportunity, I would appreciate knowing of it.

OCTOBER 29, 2016

All or Nothing, 2

The restoration took a dramatic departure in 1844 from the trajectory it was on in the years 1830–1844. Beginning in 1830, there was a church being formed. There followed structural development. Offices were being added. There was overlapping jurisdictions, common consent, and other parts in constant motion throughout that time. In March 1844, the church was left out of something new called “the kingdom of God.” Membership in the church was not necessary for participation in the “kingdom of God.” (See *JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 97.) The “kingdom of God” is not the LDS Church and the LDS Church is not the “kingdom of God.” They are separate:

There is a distinction between the Church of God and kingdom of God. The laws of the kingdom are not designed to affect our salvation hereafter. It is an entire, distinct and separate government. (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 128)

Joseph died three months after introducing the idea of a separate “kingdom of God.” Therefore, how it would have developed, what it would have accomplished, and whether it would be acceptable to God are questions left unanswered. What is very clear from the scraps of its beginning is that the purpose of the endeavor was to fulfill a prophecy from Daniel. This fulfillment would NOT be

through a church established by Joseph Smith, but would instead come through another organization, whose beginning was separate from, and outside of the church.

The prophecy that this other organization (to be known as the “kingdom of God”) would fulfill is:

This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image’s head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. (Daniel 2:31–35)

Daniel related the foregoing dream, and then gave its interpretation:

Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters’ clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay,

so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure. (Daniel 2:38–45)

The interpretation makes Nebuchadnezzar the “head of gold” or the first kingdom of man whose influence would last throughout history until God reclaims rule over the earth. The project begun in March 1844 was intended to develop into the “kingdom of God.” Joseph explained the purpose and identity of the newly begun, but still poorly defined endeavor:

[T]he kingdom which Daniel saw was not a spiritual kingdom, but was designed to be got up for the safety and salvation of the saints by protecting them in their religious rights and worship. ... The literal kingdom of God, and the church of God are two distinct things. (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 128)

At the incipient stage, a committee began a draft to set out the contours of the kingdom. It was never finished, and ultimately was abandoned, but the beginning of their draft work was approved, and the committee was given more time to work to completion.

Unfortunately, events quickly changed and the draft was never finished. In their draft they explained the state of the world:

[T]here is not an original kingdom on earth that holds the rightful authority from the king of Kings and Lord of Lords, to govern his subjects: but that all the nations have obtained their power, rule and authority by usurpation, rebellion, bloodshed, tyranny and fraud; (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 111)

The document laments the state of the world under man's rule and explained that,

the cruelty, oppression, bondage, slavery, rapine, bloodshed, murder, carnage, desolation, and all the evils that blast the peace, exaltation, and glory of the universe, exist in consequence of unrighteous rule, and unlawful dominion, by which the pure, the patriotic, the noble, the virtuous, the philanthropic, the righteous and wise servants of God have been persecuted, hunted, whipped, scourged, exiled, massacred, sawn asunder, crucified and slain in all ages of the world, under all earthly authorities, and by every form of government, from murderous Cain, to the days of the exterminating [Lilburn W.] Boggs of Missouri; And that all the pride, corruption, impurity, intrigue, spiritual wickedness in high places, party spirit, faction, perplexity and distress of nations, are the natural results of these illegitimate governments; (*Id.*, pp. 111–112)

The problem remains still today. There is no government of God, and therefore no existing kingdom of God, and the first attempt by Joseph did not produce even enough groundwork to permit it to continue past the 1880s. (See *JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 6.) It was abandoned, because without God's directing hand there was nothing well-defined enough to preserve.

The LDS church has incorrectly taken the habit of calling itself “the Church and Kingdom of God.” For example, D. Todd Christofferson said in the October 2015 general conference, “the Church is, after all, the kingdom of God on the earth.” (“Why the Church”) It isn’t.

The kingdom was not properly established during Joseph’s lifetime, but it belongs to the last dispensation. The kingdom of God, the New Jerusalem and Zion, are yet to be established.

OCTOBER 31, 2016

All or Nothing, 3

In the minutes of the morning meeting of 18 April 1844, an incomplete draft of the constitution for the “kingdom of God” was read. In the afternoon meeting of that day, the constitution was discussed. In the discussion, a remark was recorded about the relative importance of the church and kingdom: “He [Er. Lorenzo D. Wasson] considers that the kingdom is something more important than the church and is approximating nearer to God.” (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 126.)

It is the “kingdom of God” — not a church — whose destiny is to destroy all other governments, kingdoms and institutions pretending to exercise authority over mankind. God’s kingdom will be welcome relief to the oppression mankind has suffered for thousands of years.

The fledgling “kingdom” did not acquire any clear definition in 1844. When anyone was inducted into the initial organization “the men took an oath to keep their proceedings secret.” (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 40.) Very little information has been

available about the “kingdom of God” until the publication of the minutes as part of the *Joseph Smith Papers* project.

Even though we now have minutes of the meetings, they are incomplete. As an example, Joseph Smith “gave much instructions on many subjects” in the 11 March 1844 meeting, but what was said is not included in the minutes. (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 43.) In the same meeting, “the chairman [Joseph] continued his instructions”—again, without any detail of what was taught. (*Id.*, p. 44.)

The LDS Historian’s Office describes the meeting of 13 March 1844 by stating the minutes “clearly fails to record most of the day’s council discussion.” (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, pp. 45–46.)

The view we have into the incipient “kingdom” is even more limited because it was decided by the participants that,

It was considered wisdom to burn the minutes in consequence of treachery and plots of designing men. (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 50)

Records were burned. Many of the minutes that now survive are recreations made afterwards. Attempts at remembering some of what happened.

In the meeting of 19 March 1844, “The chairman [Joseph] continued his instructions on the order of the kingdom of God.” (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 52.) We do not have what he instructed.

By the afternoon of 4 April 1844, the subject of “kingship” had been raised and discussed. Before anyone was considered a “king,” the minutes of 4 April record:

Er Alman [Almon] Babbit differed in some respects from some of the previous speakers. He explained his views on laws in general (i.e.) the laws of the land. He referred to the

apostasy of the children of Israel in choosing a king. (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 79)

He was referring to the decision to replace a theocratic system, at the time presided over by Samuel, with a king—described in 1 Samuel chapter 8. When the prophet Samuel inquired of God he was told, “they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.” (1 Sam. 8:7.) The Book of Mormon anticipated the gentiles displacing the Nephite/Lamanite inheritance, and proclaims: “this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles.” (2 Ne. 10:11.)

Elder Babbit’s protest made sense and has scriptural support. In effect, he was saying the restoration of a “kingdom of God” by adopting a king would be like a return to the post-Samuel era of the Old Testament. That is generally considered a time of apostasy, as Babbit suggested.

Elder Babbit sent a letter on 10 April, explaining he would not be able to participate in the meeting scheduled for the next day. He expressed his confidence in the group, and said, “I will most cheerfully give my sanction to all measures which may receive your sanction.” (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 86.)

Babbit’s protest may have led the Chairman Pro-Tem (Sidney Rigdon) to offer an observation about how the “kingdom of God” ought to be operated. Rigdon explained:

The design was to form a Theocracy according to the will of Heaven, planted without any intention to interfere with any government of the world. We wish to have nothing to do with them. We have no violence to offer to governments, no rights to infringe. The object is to live so far above their laws that

they cannot interfere with us, unless by violence. (JS Papers Administrative Record, p. 88)

Perhaps that would have satisfied Babbit, had he attended. Hyrum Smith spoke to the group and suggested they “have a greater work to do than Enoch had[.]” (JS Papers Administrative Record, pp. 93–94.)

In the meeting held 11 April Joseph Smith was sustained as a “prophet, priest and King” over the “kingdom of God” by members of the council.

It makes one wonder whether the Book of Mormon imperative (“this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles.”) was at least part of the reason Joseph would be slain two months later. One thing is certain: The “kingdom of God” did not begin to roll down the mountain in 1844. Nor has it broken in pieces any of the false governments oppressing mankind. The world has yet to see that put into motion by God’s almighty hand.

NOVEMBER 2016

NOVEMBER 2, 2016

All or Nothing, 4

Despite Almon Babbit’s April 4, 1844 concern about a “king” representing apostasy and rejection of God’s rule, the minutes of the April 11, 1844 meeting confirm that Erastus Snow,

concluded by offering a motion that this honorable assembly receive from this time henceforth and forever, Joseph Smith, as our Prophet, Priest & King and uphold him in that capacity in which God has anointed him. The motion was seconded and

accepted unanimously...Whereupon the council adjourned agreeable to E. Snows motion with shouts of Hossanna to God and the Lamb Amen and Amen. (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, pp. 95–96)

At this point, work on the constitution for a government by the “kingdom of God” abruptly ended. A new revelation on April 25, 1844 made anything further irrelevant, by declaring:

Verily thus saith the Lord, yea are my constitution, and I am your God, and ye are my spokesmen. From henceforth do as I shall command you. Saith the Lord. (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 137)

Apparently, once Joseph Smith was made their king, there was nothing further God could clarify for that group about the “kingdom of God.”

Perhaps the April 11th coronation was a mistake, and the April 25th revelation recognized there was nothing further that could be done in developing the “kingdom of God” among people who chose Joseph, instead of the God of Heaven, as their “king.” There are two potential problems with making Joseph Smith “king” over the “kingdom of God.”

First, there is a phrase coined by Bruce Porter that expresses an impediment to king-making: This land has a ‘restrictive covenant’ prohibiting a king. The Book of Mormon explains God’s intention for this land: “And this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles.” (2 Ne. 10:11.) Making Joseph a “king” violated the restriction.

The most that can be established in the Americas is a steward who holds a stewardship in trust for the Lord. Christ is the God

of the land and it belongs to Him alone as the King. (Ether 2:12.) Apparently, the council only considered the Old Testament example of the apostasy of ancient Israel by appointing a king and rejecting Samuel, raised by Babbit on April 4th. No one thought to consult the Book of Mormon and consider its prohibition.

A proper stewardship holding Christ's place belongs to someone appointed by God to hold dominion over the earth. The same as was first given to Adam by God. When planning the creation, God intended for the first man to be given dominion:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. (Genesis 1:26)

To the first man and woman God commanded:

Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (Genesis 1:28)

The right of dominion over the creation belonged to God. God gave that right to Adam and Eve. It does not automatically transfer to all their descendants. It was transferred from Adam to his first appointed heir, Seth. [Cain would have been the first heir (Moses 5:15), but because he rebelled, he lost his position. To prevent that loss, Cain slew the next heir, Abel, but it did not accomplish the ambition. Cain was ultimately replaced by Seth.] Seth was given the right belonging to the first father, Adam, and through him down generations to Enos, and his son Cainan, and his son Mahalaleel, and his son Jared, and his son Enoch, and his son Methusaleh,

and his son Lamech, and his son Noah, and his son Shem who was given the new name of Melchizedek. This right is called the “patriarchal priesthood” or right to hold dominion over the world as the steward, or father, or patriarch over all creation. (See D&C 107:40–55.)

Following Melchizedek, an apostasy of generations lost the right, and there was no successor for Melchizedek with dominion over the earth, nor a right to be the father of nations (meaning families). Though separated by generations of apostasy, Abraham sought to obtain the right and retrieve what was nearly lost from the world. As father Abraham explained:

I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers. It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning, or before the foundation of the earth, down to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or first father, through the fathers unto me. (Abraham 1:2–3)

Abraham obtained the kingdom of God, the patriarchal priesthood, and the right of dominion belonging to the first man, Adam. It remained through descent from Abraham for five generations. Then the restoration ended, and apostasy returned.

The apostasy then lasted for generations until Moses. Between Moses and Jesus Christ, the kingdom of God was lost, and only a remnant kingdom of the Jews remained. That remnant was completely overthrown by John the Baptist, who was appointed to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews. Moses and John the Baptist, on the Mount of Transfiguration, transferred the kingdom of God to Christ. He died not only as the rightful “king of the Jews” but also as the rightful heir of Adam, holding dominion over all the earth. In His death, the rightful Heir was sacrificed.

There will be a “kingdom” established in the last days to fulfill the prophecy of Daniel. But the initial approach taken in Nauvoo was a false start, and appointing Joseph Smith as a “king” aborted the endeavor.

There was a second error, also, in making Joseph a “king.” Although Joseph may have had the authority to appoint, he never had the right to appoint himself. The appointment had been made by God earlier. Hyrum held the legal right before Joseph. Therefore, if a “king” or steward, or more correctly a patriarch, were to be chosen while Joseph was alive, it needed to have been his brother Hyrum. Three years prior to the meetings in 1844, the Lord did appoint Hyrum to the office of “priesthood and patriarch:”

that my servant Hyrum may take the office of Priesthood and Patriarch, which was appointed unto him by his father, by blessing and also by right; That from henceforth he shall hold the keys of the patriarchal blessings upon the heads of all my people, That whoever he blesses shall be blessed, and whoever he curses shall be cursed; that whatsoever he shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever he shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. And from this time forth I appoint unto him that he may be a prophet, and a seer, and a revelator

unto my church, as well as my servant Joseph; That he may act in concert also with my servant Joseph; and that he shall receive counsel from my servant Joseph, who shall show unto him the keys whereby he may ask and receive, and be crowned with the same blessing, and glory, and honor, and priesthood, and gifts of the priesthood, that once were put upon him that was my servant Oliver Cowdery; That my servant Hyrum may bear record of the things which I shall show unto him, that his name may be had in honorable remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever. (D&C 124:91–96)

Hyrum was older than Joseph. After Hyrum's death, this office passed momentarily back to Joseph because he was the eldest surviving heir. But with Joseph's death, the two dispensation heads fell. What remained was confusion, usurping, ambitious men, and disorder. Now the Lord has abandoned that remnant to begin something anew.

The work begun through Joseph Smith remains incomplete. The structure, order, authority, organization, laws, and means belong entirely to the Lord. When He establishes the last day's "kingdom," it will be His. Even if put into the hands of stewards, they cannot usurp the Lord, who is the God of this land and of the whole earth. Even if God again gives to a man:

[T]he voice of Michael, the archangel; the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope! (D&C 128:21)

Anyone who receives this delegation will need to realize they are only a servant-steward, holding in trust for the Lord all the rights which originated with Him and must be returned to Him when Adam, the ancient of days, returns for a meeting. That gathering will be in the New Jerusalem, or Zion, where Adam-ondi-Ahman—or in other words where Adam and Son Ahman (Christ) come to meet. The purpose will be for all stewards who have obtained this right to return to Christ the right to hold dominion over the earth. Christ will take authority over the entire world at the Second Coming in a lawful and orderly act that respects what He ordained in the beginning. His house is a house of order. He is the same, from the beginning to the end. His path does not vary, and His course is one eternal round.

NOVEMBER 4, 2016

All or Nothing, 5

It may seem ironic that the warning against “kings” on the land of the Americas (2 Ne. 10:11) was recorded by a man who was himself a king (2 Ne. 5:18). However, the gentile model of “kings” is not the same as the Nephite model of “kingship.” The Nephite kingship is well explained by King Benjamin:

I have not commanded you to come up hither that ye should fear me, or that ye should think that I of myself am more than a mortal man. But I am like as yourselves, subject to all manner of infirmities in body and mind; yet I have been chosen by this people, and consecrated by my father, and was suffered by the hand of the Lord that I should be a ruler and a king over this people; and have been kept and preserved by his matchless power, to serve you with all the might, mind and strength which the Lord hath granted unto me. I say unto you

that as I have been suffered to spend my days in your service, even up to this time, and have not sought gold nor silver nor any manner of riches of you; Neither have I suffered that ye should be confined in dungeons, nor that ye should make slaves one of another, nor that ye should murder, or plunder, or steal, or commit adultery; nor even have I suffered that ye should commit any manner of wickedness, and have taught you that ye should keep the commandments of the Lord, in all things which he hath commanded you— And even I, myself, have labored with mine own hands that I might serve you, and that ye should not be laden with taxes, and that there should nothing come upon you which was grievous to be borne—and of all these things which I have spoken, ye yourselves are witnesses this day. Yet, my brethren, I have not done these things that I might boast, neither do I tell these things that thereby I might accuse you; but I tell you these things that ye may know that I can answer a clear conscience before God this day. Behold, I say unto you that because I said unto you that I had spent my days in your service, I do not desire to boast, for I have only been in the service of God. And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God. Behold, ye have called me your king; and if I, whom ye call your king, do labor to serve you, then ought not ye to labor to serve one another? And behold also, if I, whom ye call your king, who has spent his days in your service, and yet has been in the service of God, do merit any thanks from you, O how you ought to thank your heavenly King! (Mosiah 2:10–19)

In contrast to this model, Christ explained the problem with gentile kings: “And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles

exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.” (Luke 22:25.)

Nephi’s warning against “kings” occurs in connection with the promised Zion:

And this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles. And I will fortify this land against all other nations. And he that fighteth against Zion shall perish, saith God. For he that raiseth up a king against me shall perish, for I, the Lord, the king of heaven, will be their king, and I will be a light unto them forever, that hear my words. (2 Ne. 10:11–14)

Zion cannot be founded on “kingship” other than the Lord, the king of heaven, who will be Zion’s only king.

The return of the “kingdom of God” will be to prepare the earth for Christ’s return in glory. Zion, the New Jerusalem and the “kingdom of God” all relate to each other and will be developed and functioning in the last generation before the Lord returns. If this does not happen, the whole earth will be cursed. (D&C 128:18.)

The “kingdom of God” has been described as a stone “cut out without hands” (Dan. 2:34) which will proceed to “smite the image... and brake them to pieces.” (*Id.*) The stone will then become “a great mountain, and fill the whole earth.” (Dan. 2:35.) Yet this is all to be accomplished without violence and based on the principles considered by the council in 1844.

Remember, the “kingdom of God” will be a form of Theocracy to be planted with no intention to interfere with any government of the world. It will offer no violence to governments. But its citizens will live far above their laws. (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 88.)

How can the “kingdom of God” smite the false governments of the world and grind them to dust without violence? How can it be non-confrontational, yet succeed in filling the whole earth? Such a revolution will be God’s work. God will not need to use violence, compulsion, treachery, unlawful dominion, pride, corruption or any of the other conventions used by the usurping governments of man. Hence the saying it will be a stone “cut without hands” or in other words accomplished by the wisdom of God.

It should be clear from the prophecies that this work will start with a small group chosen to begin the work. A temple and rites will provide the legal, cultural, and covenant foundation for a new society. These people will learn how to become the “kingdom of God” and will learn His ways and to walk in His paths. When they know how to live in peace, and have obtained the original Holy Order, others will be invited to join them and learn how to live according to a new, higher way of life. The challenge of teaching new people this new way of organizing society will be daunting. The community will struggle together to learn how to overcome the social infection that comes from Babylon anytime a new family flees Babylon and comes to Zion.

As the group grows, they will increase their aptitude to assimilate new members. Skills will be gained in helping people overcome the world. The infections from Babylon, the Medes, Persians, Greeks, Romans and all modern world governments will be eradicated. People of the New Jerusalem will learn a godly way of governing and holiness of character.

As the New Jerusalem grows, eventually it will divide, and there will be another group established nearby where both communities will be able to take in new families and teach them of the Lord’s way. Isaiah described these people:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (Isa. 2:2–3)

Modern revelation explained it:

And in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water; and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land. And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants. And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence. And there shall they fall down and be crowned with glory, even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim. And they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy. Behold, this is the blessing of the everlasting God upon the tribes of Israel, and the richer blessing upon the head of Ephraim and his fellows. And they also of the tribe of Judah, after their pain, shall be sanctified in holiness before the Lord, to dwell in his presence day and night, forever and ever. (D&C 133:29–35)

The work of obtaining Zion from the Lord is to walk back to Eden. Its purpose is to renew mankind and be redeemed from the fall. The objective is to create a place where God can come and dwell with people, as He once did in the Garden of Eden. Because they lack the knowledge to dwell in righteousness, mankind is held captive by false governments: “Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable

men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.” (Isa. 5:13.) Fools prize ignorance and speculation over what the Lord is offering as a gift.

Then will Isaiah’s prophecy be fulfilled:

they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord. (Isa. 2:4–5)

Then too will the 10th Article of Faith be accomplished:

We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.

Everything will need to change before the prophecies can be fulfilled. All the culture, law, social arrangements, ambitions, economies and pride of the nations will need to be rejected by the group. The new way of life must be organized after the original pattern taught in the beginning. The “rights belonging to the fathers,” which Abraham obtained as an inheritance from the first man Adam, will be recovered and lived by the those occupants of the New Jerusalem. They must not only say, but do, what is asked of them by God. His purpose is to make mankind joyful, which cannot be attained by wickedness. “Wickedness never was happiness.” (Alma 41:10.)

When God gives mankind this opportunity, they are rarely interested. The last time God offered, the opportunity was spoiled by “jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore by these things they

polluted their inheritances.” (D&C 101:6.) Even people who think they would like to see Zion, fight against the truth now being rolled out in plain sight. They err, and prize delusion over active engagement with God.

He offers again. But whether mankind is any better prepared, or more willing than before remains to be seen. It will require all from us, or we will be left with nothing.

NOVEMBER 6, 2016

All or Nothing, 6

Zion consists of people living in harmony with God. It is defined in revelation as “the pure in heart.” (D&C 97:21.) But prophecy also confirms it will be an actual location, and a place of gathering. The events of the last days have been known since the time of Enoch. The Lord explained to him:

great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve; And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a **place** which I shall prepare, **an Holy City**, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for **there shall be my tabernacle**, and it **shall be called Zion**, a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch: Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and

we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; (Moses 7:61–63, emphasis added)

It is a mistake to think of Zion as ONLY the “pure in heart.” It is more. All God’s covenants with the patriarchal fathers will be fulfilled.

Zion will begin with a single seed, but it will eventually fill the whole of North and South America. (See Words of Joseph Smith, p. 362–363; “The Whole of North and South American is Zion”; Wilford Woodruff Journal, April 8, 1844; see also Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 362.)

The kingdom of God will “grind to dust” through persuasion, example and overcoming the world. If there is no need for financial, legal, administrative, or social assistance from the governments of men then the New Jerusalem can break free of man’s corrupt governments.

The way Zion will “grind to dust” the kingdoms of man will not be by force. The “kingdom of God” will progress “by faith & revolutionize the world, not by power, nor by might, but by pure intelligence.” (*JS Papers Administrative Records*, p. 157.)

Not all the wicked will be persuaded, and there will be violence because of corruption in the coming days. In the future, it will be with the gentiles as it was with the Nephites: the wicked will destroy the wicked:

But, behold, the judgments of God will overtake the wicked; and **it is by the wicked that the wicked are punished**; for it is the wicked that stir up the hearts of the children of men unto bloodshed. (Emphasis added)

Modern revelation speaks of the coming distress among the wicked: “I have sworn in my wrath, and decreed wars upon the

face of the earth, and **the wicked shall slay the wicked**, and fear shall come upon every man;” (D&C 63:33, emphasis added)

Zion must exist independent of Babylon:

Behold, this is the preparation wherewith I prepare you, and the foundation, and the ensample which I give unto you, whereby you may accomplish the commandments which are given you; That through my providence, notwithstanding the tribulation which shall descend upon you, that the church may stand **independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world**; That you may come up unto the crown prepared for you, and be made rulers over many kingdoms, saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Zion, who hath established the foundations of Adam-ondi-Ahman; Who hath appointed Michael your prince, and established his feet, and set him upon high, and given unto him the keys of salvation under the counsel and direction of the Holy One, who is without beginning of days or end of life. (D&C 78:13–16, emphasis added)

Buying and selling is how men are controlled by Babylon. In the New Jerusalem, exchange will be without money, without price. (Isaiah 55:1—quoted in 2 Ne. 9:50; 26:25.) There will be no commerce to tax, no business to license or regulate in Zion. Because it is independent of everything else under heaven, it will not matter to Zion if Babylon the great falls. (Rev. 18:2.) Zion will not miss her abundant delicacies. (Rev. 18:3.) Zion will not weep over her fall. (Rev. 18:9–11, 15–17.) Zion will not cast dirt on their heads and bewail the loss of riches. (Rev. 18:19.)

The strength of Zion will come from men who are taught correct principles and are able to govern themselves according to the plan of happiness. God will be their protection:

And it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God; And the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, and it shall be called Zion. And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety. And there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be said among the wicked: Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible; wherefore we cannot stand. And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy. (D&C 45:66–71)

Covenants established with Adam by God will be returned and offered again to bind men and make them accountable only to Him. Those in Zion will live in peace with one another because of their relationship to God.

Like the Nephites after the visit by the resurrected Christ, the people of Zion will live without contentions and disputations, dealing “justly with one another. (4 Nephi 1:2.) They will live according to a higher law which will remove all contention. (4 Nephi 1:13.) This defeat of contention will eventually spread to “all the land.” (4 Nephi 1:15.) When there has been “no contention” for a generation, God will “bless mankind in all their doings.” (4 Nephi 1:18.)

The kingdoms of men, ancient and modern, have and do control how men think, engage in commerce, regulate property, tax, govern,

make war and interact. Zion will make a complete overthrow of these systems. Other societies will be “ground to dust” because the way of life in Zion will appeal to all peaceful men. Men of peace will abandon the other false systems and join Zion.

It would do little good to teach the religion of Adam to men if they are not willing to live like Adam. Adam did not question, doubt or rebel against God. He intended to live by every word of the Lord, even when he did not understand “why” something was commanded by the Lord. Adam suspended judgment, and obeyed. Few men are like father Adam. It is doubtful many living today will find it appealing to suspend judgment about a commandment if the Lord does not explain “why” something is to be done.

Adam followed direction for years, not knowing why he was given the direction. He trusted God:

And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord. And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: **I know not, save the Lord commanded me.** And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore. (Moses 5:5–8, emphasis added)

When the Lord establishes the foundation of the New Jerusalem, it will require the sacrifice and obedience of the residents. Even if the foundation for that city is laid, if mankind is unwilling to be

governed by God, learn from Him and trust His guidance, it is doubtful it will become Zion.

NOVEMBER 8, 2016

All or Nothing, 7 - Conclusion

The return of Zion will require sacrifice. If mankind understood the intelligence that God will return to the earth they would be eagerly asking how to help. Zion will not be a place for proud men to pontificate about man's learning or their conjecture about the meaning of scripture. It will be a place to learn of God's ways.

Therefore thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. (Isa. 29:22–24)

The proud, learned and those who think themselves wise may continue to walk by the poor sparks of their own dying fire, but they will lay down in sorrow for the loss of their opportunity to learn in Zion. (Isa. 50:11, also 2 Ne. 7:11.) The humble and meek, however, will want to learn from God. They will submit in gratitude to what the Lord offers:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God

of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (Isa. 2:2–3)

This can happen in our day. Or not. One day, some few will be guided by the Lord to accomplish it. But the choice of allowing it to happen is left to us. The journey begins by living the way Christ taught in the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at Bountiful.

Every one of man's institutions are corrupt. They are led by men and women who rule against the best interests, even the will, of the people over whom they exercise control. They abuse authority and their subordinates lord it over their minions.

The kingdoms of men will be ground to dust because all peaceful men will choose to live above their laws in Zion. There will be no commerce to be taxed, but only labor to feed and clothe one another. No legal agreements because people will honor their promises to one another. No police, no lawyers, courts or prisons. They will “deal justly with one another” never asking for mercy, or pardon for failure. To deal “justly” requires every citizen to hold themselves to the rigorous standard of “justice” instead of the lax standard of “mercy.” Even as they hold themselves to a standard of “justice,” they will show “mercy” and “forgiveness” and “charity” to others. “Justice” is only to be applied internally to make us deal fairly with others. Externally, every man expects to allow his neighbor the kindness and mercy he hopes the Lord will show to him in the day of judgment.

As the best of society gravitates to live in Zion, those who refuse to obey a higher standard will be left behind. They will become increasingly unproductive, unlawful, unkind, unmerciful, and ungovernable. Babylon will collapse into chaos. Zion will thrive. The scenes that went before will be repeated again:

And from that time forth there were wars and bloodshed among them; but the Lord came and dwelt with his people, and they dwelt in righteousness. The fear of the Lord was upon all nations, so great was the glory of the Lord, which was upon his people. And the Lord blessed the land, and they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish. And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them. And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion. And it came to pass that Enoch talked with the Lord; and he said unto the Lord: Surely Zion shall dwell in safety forever. But the Lord said unto Enoch: Zion have I blessed, but the residue of the people have I cursed. (Moses 7:16–20)

Zion is destined to overthrow the world. But it will happen methodically, with effort, and through a system God established in the beginning returning to the earth. If men will welcome it, and live according to God's plan for happiness, men will become free and happy indeed.

There can be no king in Zion other than the Lord. The journey is a return to Eden and the beginning. Adam is often referred to in scripture as “father” and not once referred to as “king.” Christ regarded Himself as a “servant” and lifted others around Him by the light of His teaching and godly example. Look carefully at the promise of someone who will be “mighty and strong” found in D&C 85:7:

I, the Lord God, will send one mighty and strong, holding the scepter of power in his hand, clothed with light for a covering,

whose mouth shall utter words, eternal words; while his bowels shall be a fountain of truth, to set in order the house of God, and to arrange by lot the inheritances of the saints whose names are found, and the names of their fathers, and of their children, enrolled in the book of the law of God[.]

Was not our Lord “clothed with light for a covering” because of the intelligence He displayed and the graceful things He taught? Were His words not “eternal words”? Were not His bowels “a fountain of truth”? And did He not “set in order the house of God” by what He explained, did and gave? Yet in all this our Lord was meek and humble. He was apparently ordinary. There was no reason for any of those in positions of authority over Him to admire Him. The Jews rejected Him and very few recognized He was the promised Messiah. There was nothing desirable in Him for the wicked. (Isa. 53:2–3.)

Zion, like our Lord, will receive little attention or regard from the world. The people who will recognize that its foundation is being laid will be very few. While the Jews, Christians, saints and philosophers look to constantly replenish themselves from the east (Isa. 2:6), God will begin His work quietly in the mountains of the west (D&C 133:30–32). Thus the Lord’s great revolution will eventually overthrow all other kingdoms.

CHAPTER 18

Calling All Christians

NOVEMBER 10, 2016

Addressing Christians

In response to email inquiries for more information about my proposed talks to Christians in California, Texas and Atlanta, I have been providing the following information:

I'd prefer to speak in a theology school or church, if one can be made available. The intended audience would be those who either know little of Mormonism or think they know enough to be "anti-Mormon" because they regard it a false cult. I will pay my own way there and back, and all costs for hotel, food, etc. I do not expect any compensation for speaking.

If possible, I'd like to have 55 minutes to speak. If that is not possible I would like as close to that length of time as is permitted.

In answer to questions about me and addressing Christians, I have provided the following in email responses:

Do you consider yourself a Christian or a Mormon?

A Christian.

Do you think you are saved by grace or works?

It is by grace we do the required works to be saved. As explained in Philip. 2:13: “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do his good pleasure.” As Paul explained in Romans 6:1–2 concerning those who are born again through Christ: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.” We must escape sin by the grace of God and then do the works that testify we are in possession of God’s grace. As James explained in James 2:17–20: “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But will thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” If we are saved by the grace of God our works will testify of that grace within us. Without the works of righteousness, put within us by being born again, a new creation of Christ’s, we may claim to have been saved by grace, but it is without proof.

What do you think about the Book of Mormon ? Do you think it holds the same level of authority as the Bible?

I believe the witness of John: “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God”

The Bible testifies of Christ, and I believe its testimony of Him.

The Book of Mormon testifies of Christ, and I accept its testimony.

Where is your teaching different from the lds church?

The LDS church claims it speaks for God. I do not believe that claim to be true.

The LDS church claims it alone offers salvation to mankind. I do not believe that claim to be true.

The LDS church asks believers to pay tithes of 10% to them. I believe they misuse the widow's mite and rob God.

I believe the LDS church lies about its history, wrongly conceals its financial misdeeds from the public and encourages and practices idolatry.

What do you want to talk to the Christian churches about?

How the story of Joseph Smith has been misused, mischaracterized, and misunderstood by the LDS corporate church to falsely claim authority for themselves. That the Mormon followers were responsible for persecuting, opposing, and ultimately murdering Joseph Smith. That he believed and taught from the Bible. It was the Bible that was used by Joseph Smith to preach all his public sermons, and that his entire message can be summed up by James 1:5.

I'm going to offer an introduction to Mormonism by introducing Joseph Smith as a Christian thinker and Biblical preacher.

Below is a description taken from the cover of my last book about Joseph Smith:

Smithsonian Magazine identified Joseph Smith as the most significant religious figure in American history. Yet he remains misunderstood by most Christians, primarily because his legacy has been regarded as Mormon property. In many ways his life mirrors the Apostle Paul. He belongs to the Christian community as much as St. Francis of Assisi, Luther, Tyndale, Wesley, Knox, Williams and Calvin. His worst critics were and are Mormons. They abused him, led mobs against him, conspired to have him imprisoned and ultimately murdered. Mormons have slandered his memory with false histories.

Joseph declared to the Mormons in April 1844 (two months before he was murdered): “You don’t know me; you never knew my heart.” That audience and its descendants have been self-interested custodians of Joseph Smith’s legacy. This book separates him from the interests of any institution, and allows him to explain his heart, in his own words. When allowed to speak, he is very different from the Mormon version. This book covers Joseph Smith’s three watershed failures and his written responses. The historical stage is set; then he reacts to the trials. The three episodes are: The quest and failure to distribute priesthood, the quest and failure to establish a community called “Zion,” and his half-year imprisonment in Missouri. He has been vilified and praised as the founder of Mormonism. Over eighty-four different religious sects claim him as their founder. But he is seldom thought of as a Christian thinker, writer and preacher. He taught almost entirely from the Bible. Christians can benefit from knowing his struggle to follow Christ while facing discouraging opposition, betrayal by friends, mob violence, imprisonment and repeated failure. He responded with faith, hope and charity.

NOVEMBER 14, 2016

God’s Mysteries

There is a great difference between recognizing the “signs of the times” and knowing the detail of how prophecy will be fulfilled. An example of the difference is found in Matthew. Matthew 2:1–18 tells of “wise men” who studied the scriptures, watched the signs in the heavens, recognized a “star” that testified of the birth of the Messiah or newborn “king of the Jews,” traveled a great distance

(perhaps as long as two years) to worship Him, facilitated fulfilling prophecy by their presence in Jerusalem, and were visited by God in a dream. Here is the account:

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country

another way. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

Despite all the wise men were able to know, they did not know where to find the newborn king. They mistakenly went to Herod's people to inquire about Christ's birth. They did not know, and God did not reveal to them, that Christ would be born in Bethlehem.

It is unlikely they would have willingly acted to fulfill the Jeremiah 31:15 slaughter of children. Yet Matthew credits their involvement with fulfilling this prophecy. Can men unwittingly fulfill prophecy? Can anyone, even wise men who are well studied in scripture and prophecy, ever fully understand prophecy.

One of the lessons from this scriptural account is that all "wise men" whose diligence and faithfulness lead them to understand God's hand is at work may still not understand how or where God

will act. There remain “mysteries” which God will accomplish, but men cannot understand beforehand.

If the wise men knew He had been born, but could not identify where Christ’s birth happened, despite all else they were able to do, then how can anyone know how God will accomplish His “strange act” in the last days?

Remember the modern caution in D&C 101:93–95:

What I have said unto you must needs be, that all men may be left without excuse; That wise men and rulers may hear and know that which they have never considered; That I may proceed to bring to pass my act, my strange act, and perform my work, my strange work, that men may discern between the righteous and the wicked, saith your God.

Prophecies are not given to know details beforehand. They are given so that when they are fulfilled one may understand that God knows the end from the beginning. (Isa. 48:3–5.)

NOVEMBER 21, 2016

Christian History

Christianity has a troublesome history. The Christian religion is not a single, monolithic thing, but a cascade of divergent segments with great differences, even contradictions, between them. Christian history can be divided into:

The Apostolic Age: This began at 33 A.D., and lasted until shortly after 100 A.D. During this time, the body of scripture used by the Christians consisted of the Hebrew Old Testament, primarily the Septuagint. The leading figures knew or met Christ, and spread their testimony of Him. Paul was a towering figure, writing two-thirds of the letters which would later become “books” in a new addition to scripture, The New Testament.

The Ante-Nicene Period: This began shortly after 100 A.D., and lasted until the Council at Nicaea in 325 A.D. The testimonies of the Apostolic Fathers were collected and began to be regarded as scripture. By the 300s these writings were respected, but they would not acquire an official status as a “New Testament” canon until the council of Trullan in 692 A.D.

Catholic Christianity: The consolidation of Christianity into a universal, or catholic, tradition followed Constantine’s decision to make it the state religion of Rome. Though splinters remained, the state religion used coercion against the unorthodox groups, and did its best to kill off other versions.

East-West Schism: In 1054 A.D., a split between Rome and Constantinople divided the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Christian Church. The division remains today. When they parted company, they also parted in beliefs, practices and claims to authority. The Orthodox tradition prized the vision of God, mystic or gnostic knowledge as superior, while Rome prized rational theology, reason and philosophical knowledge, trusting it as the superior route to truth.

The Great Schism: In 1517 A.D., Martin Luther posted a list of 95 abuses the Roman Catholic Church was practicing (known as “The 95 Theses”) which led to his excommunication in 1521 and ultimately to a rebellion in Germany against Roman Christian hegemony. Although he did not intend to found a church, the Lutheran Church claims Martin Luther as their founder. Among other things, the Roman Catholic monopoly on possession of and reading scripture was overthrown by Luther when he translated the New Testament into the common language. The movable type press, invented by Johannes Gutenberg in 1440 A.D., made widespread printing and distribution of the scriptures possible. It

was the alignment of Luther's religious rebellion, the availability of the printing press, and Germany's desire for independence from Rome that allowed the Protestant Reformation to begin.

Living at the same time as Luther, John Calvin aided in the Protestant fires against Rome. Luther and Calvin initially agreed with each other, but fell into disagreement over the interpretation of the Eucharist.

John Knox also lived at the same time, and led the reformation in Scotland. He is credited as founder of the Presbyterian Church. He was troubled over the authority given a woman king by Catholic Bishops and questioned the "divine right" to rule in those circumstances. He wondered at the duty to serve and obey an idolatrous sovereign, asking John Calvin to counsel him on these topics.

Much of the Protestant Reformation grew out of the abuses inherent in combining church and state. When a state religion claims it is true and approved of God, then anything resisting the state religion is by definition both false and in rebellion against God. It was easy for "Christianity" to torture, kill, imprison and abuse their victim-proselytes for more than a millennium. That was part of governing.

Evangelical Era: One of the most recent Christian developments is the innovation dubbed "Evangelical Christianity" which began in the 19th Century. Credited with laying the foundation for this innovation are John Wesley, George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards. Billy Graham made it spread internationally.

Christianity is anything but a smooth transition from New Testament source to modern denominations. There were serious disconnects from the Apostolic age to the time of Constantine. If there was any legitimacy to the founding of the Roman Catholic

Church, then the subsequent rebellion of, and excommunication by Rome of the Reformation founders renders Protestant Christianity powerless to save. And if the Protestant Reformation was justified by the wickedness and apostasy of Rome, then the Roman Catholic Church forfeited their right to claim to be Christ's one-true-church. If Rome made herself a harlot by selling indulgences or forgiveness of sins, then the Protestant daughters are children of that harlot and hardly able to claim authority derived from Christ's ordination of apostles. (John 15:16.)

Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic Christians should be troubled about the legitimacy of their sects. Their denomination (whichever they accept) has taken a troubling route from the death of the apostles until today. The developing stages are so jarringly different from one another that the modern Evangelicals would be regarded as heretical and either forcibly converted or killed in the first fifteen-hundred years of "Christianity." Even after the Protestant Reformation, church and state remained intertwined and heterodoxy was still dangerous for the non-Lutheran in Germany, the non-Anglican in England and the non-Presbyterian in Scotland.

The English colonies and early states of the United States likewise had tax-supported state churches. The First Amendment prevented a national religion, but the states were free to adopt their own state religion. Virginia had as the state religion the Anglican or Church of England for 224 years (1606–1830). New York had the same state religion for 225 years (1614–1846). Massachusetts had the Congregationalist Church as their state religion for 204 years (1629–1833). Maryland adopted the Anglican or Church of England as the state creed for 235 years (1632–1867). Delaware, Rhode Island and Pennsylvania did not have an official religion, but supported clergy with tax dollars for 155 years, 199 years and 109 years

respectively. Connecticut's state religion was Congregationalist for 179 years (1639–1818). New Hampshire was also Congregationalist for 238 years (1639–1877). Both North and South Carolina were Anglican or Church of England for 212 years (1663–1875) and 205 years (1663–1868) respectively.

Roman Catholicism was discouraged, even persecuted in the American colonies and early states. The Puritans, who fled to the colonies to escape religious persecution, wanted freedom of religion for themselves. But they did not extend that freedom to other faiths, and were intolerant and opposed to religious freedoms for Catholics in particular and other religions generally.

If the divergent Christian positions asserted by various Christian sects are taken at face value, then within the billions who have believed in some form of Historical Christianity almost all will be damned because they have failed to believe in the “correct” version offered by competing groups.

NOVEMBER 22, 2016

What Manner of Being?

When Christ appeared to His disciples, after His resurrection, they thought He was a ghost (or spirit). He corrected their misunderstanding:

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and **supposed that they had seen a spirit**. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: **handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have**. And when he had thus spoken, he

shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And **he took it, and did eat before them.** (Luke 24:36–43, emphasis added)

The testimonies of those who saw the risen Lord confirm He was not a “spirit” but composed of “flesh and bone” and could (and did) ingest food, just like a man of flesh and blood would likewise do.

These marks on His body of “flesh and bone” are intended as an identifier of the Savior. Isaiah confirms His wounds are for our benefit and salvation. (Isa. 53:5.) They will certify Him as the Messiah when He returns:

And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. (Zech. 13:6.)

A modern revelation on March 7, 1831 explains this future event more fully:

And then shall the Lord set his foot upon this mount, and it shall cleave in twain, and the earth shall tremble, and reel to and fro, and the heavens also shall shake. And the Lord shall utter his voice, and all the ends of the earth shall hear it; and the nations of the earth shall mourn, and they that have laughed shall see their folly. And calamity shall cover the mocker, and the scorner shall be consumed; and they that have watched for iniquity shall be hewn down and cast into the fire. And then shall the Jews look upon me and say: **What are these wounds in thine hands and in thy feet? Then shall they know that I am the Lord; for I will say unto them: These wounds are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.**

I am he who was lifted up. I am Jesus that was crucified. I am the Son of God. And then shall they weep because of their iniquities; then shall they lament because they persecuted their king. (D&C 45:48–53, emphasis added)

On the day of His resurrection, Christ spent several hours walking on the road to Emmaus with two disciples. The men regarded Him as a “stranger” with no particular distinction between Him and other mortals as they walked together for hours. He taught them from the Hebrew scriptures about the mission of the Messiah requiring Him to suffer and die. They implored Him to remain for dinner, which He did. When He blessed and “broke bread”—a clearly physical act by a clearly physical being—they recognized Him as Jesus. (See Luke 24:13–31.)

Christ *lost* His body of “flesh and bone” in the Council of Nicaea when He became “*homoousios*” (of one substance with the Father) instead of “*homoios*” (distinct from, but like the Father). And thus the Son of Man (Mark 14:21; Matt. 26:24; Luke 22:22; John 3:13—among many others), as Christ identified Himself, was transformed by the arguments of men into something altogether “other” from those who descended from Adam. With that development in 325 A.D., the “Trinity” sprang into existence as a fundamental belief of Historic Christianity. This dramatic departure in the definition of God really marks the departure of the original or “Primitive Christianity” from the later “Historic Christianity” which replaced the original.

Fishermen and laborers who saw Christ and testified and described Him as a man, were shunned in favor of the philosophies of men who had not seen Him. But the philosophers controlled Christianity, and could dictate all of its terms.

The newly re-created image was unlike man, thus causing a contradiction between God's original description of Himself. (Compare Genesis 1:26.) Indeed, how two beings could be one renders Christ "incomprehensible." This admission was added by another council which adopted the Athanasian Creed, which states in part:

That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;
Neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.
For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son and
another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of
the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the
majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son and
such is the Holy Spirit. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated,
and the Holy Spirit uncreated. The Father incomprehensible, the
Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.
The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal.
And yet they are not three eternals, but one eternal. As also
there are not three uncreated nor three incomprehensibles, but
one uncreated and one incomprehensible.

Whereas Christ said "life eternal" is to "know Him" (John 17:3) Historic Christianity decreed, in effect: "don't even try to know Him. You can never comprehend Him." John's testimony promised men could see and know Christ, because we are like Him: "now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2.) But Historic Christianity's creeds imposed a barrier upon knowing Him, and therefore a barrier upon "life eternal" for Christians.

Creedal Historic Christianity is like the New Testament Samaritans, whom Christ rebuked saying: “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.” (John 4:22.) The philosophers of Historic Christianity are like the pagans on Mars Hill whose beliefs were denounced by Paul as “superstitious:”

And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.) Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, **I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.** For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And **hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth,** and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, **For we are also his offspring.** **Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God,** we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone,

graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent[.] (Acts 17:19–30, emphasis added)

Men are of one blood, and all are the offspring of God. God is, therefore, knowable and wants for mankind to know Him. Christ said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (John 17:3.)

NOVEMBER 25, 2016

What Manner of Being? 2

Christ “lost His body” as a result of the post-Nicaea church philosophers who twisted the scriptures to fit their incorporeal idol. That was neither part of the New Testament teachings nor how Christ was understood in early Christianity.

The post-Nicaea concern was over polytheism. They abhorred the idea of multiple gods, thinking it a pagan idea. Israel had “one God” and not several. Therefore, the idea of the Trinity allowed them (and Historic Christianity ever after) the pretense of monotheism despite the separate beings of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

The “oneness” of God the Father and Christ does not consist, as the Historic Christian creeds suggest, in these being one person of one substance, uncreated, incomprehensible and altogether “other than mankind.” Christ explained His “oneness” with the Father in His intercessory prayer in John 17. Speaking about the immediate disciples who were with Him when He prayed, He petitioned that, “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.” (John 17:11.) The disciples were not of one substance with Christ, nor uncreated,

nor incomprehensible, but were separate individual men. Yet they were to be “one” just as the Father and Son are likewise “one.” Christ’s prayer also referred to future believers who would accept the testimonies of the apostles. Concerning them Christ also prayed,

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. (John 17:20–21)

Do you believe on the apostles’ testimonies? Are you therefore “one” with other believers? Did you merge into the bodies of other believers in order to become “one” with them? Are you the same substance as your minister or priest? If by belief in the same testimony as other Christians you can become “one” with them, then Christ and the Father can likewise be “one” without disturbing their entirely separate existence from one another.

This is not a heresy and not a recent invention. In The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans, he relied on what would later become New Testament scripture as well as common sense to explain that Christ came into the world as a mortal man, although He had been created by the Father and acknowledged by Him as His Only Begotten Son. Here is Ignatius’ explanation:

The Word, when His flesh was lifted up, after the manner of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, drew all man to Himself for their eternal salvation. **And I know that He was possessed of a body not only in His being born and crucified, but I also know that He was so after His resurrection,** and believe that He is so now. When, for instance, He came to those who were with Peter, He said to them, “Lay hold, handle Me, and see

that I am not an incorporeal spirit.” “For a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.” And He says to Thomas, “Reach hither thy finger into the print of the nails, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side;” and immediately they believed that He was Christ. Wherefore Thomas also says to Him, “My Lord, and my God.” And on this account also did they despise death, for it were too little to say, indignities and stripes. Nor was this all; but **also after He had shown Himself to them, that He had risen indeed, and not in appearance only, He both ate and drank with them during forty entire days. And thus was He, with the flesh, received up in their sight unto Him that sent Him, being with that same flesh to come again, accompanied by glory and power.** For, say the holy oracles, “This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen Him go unto heaven.” But if they say that He will come at the end of the world without a body, how shall those “see Him that pierced Him,” and when they recognize Him, “mourn for themselves?” For incorporeal beings have neither form nor figure, nor the aspect of an animal possessed of shape, because their nature is in itself simple. (Chapters II and III, long version as found in *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1*, p. 89; Edited by Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson, Hendrickson Publishing, Fourth Printing, 2004; emphasis added)

The idea that Christ is now and will be a physical being when He returns in glory was a fundamental teaching of the New Testament and early Christians. Do not allow the false reasoning of Historic Christian philosophers to change the person of our Lord into an

imaginary idol invented by those who hijacked Christianity and changed it into a political, economic and social industry.

Ignatius regarded any who taught to the contrary to be damned: “but blasphemes my Lord, not owning Him to be God incarnate[.]” (*Id.*, Chapter V.) He declared:

Let no man deceive himself. Unless he believes that Christ Jesus has lived in the flesh, and shall confess His cross and passion, and the blood which He shed for the salvation of the world, he shall not obtain eternal life. (*Id.* Chapter VI)

This was important precisely because understanding the correct doctrine is required before it is possible to know God. It is as if Ignatius took aim at the heretical and false doctrine in Historic Christian creeds that God is incomprehensible:

Do ye, therefore, notice those who preach other doctrines, how they affirm that the Father of Christ cannot be known, and how they exhibit enmity and deceit in their dealings with one another. (*Id.*)

Because they deny Christ is a person of flesh and bone, “they make a jest of the resurrection. They are the offspring of that spirit who is the author of all evil.” (*Id.*, Chapter VII.)

Truth comes by the revelation of heaven. Men corrupt it, and it ceases to have the same authority and effect as it would if believed. All men are required to repent and return to God. Part of that repentance will require Historic Christians to forsake the abominable creeds adopted by false priests and come to know Christ Jesus, who was sent by the Father into the world as a man, who lived, died, was resurrected and will return again in glory.

NOVEMBER 28, 2016

Eternal Life: Knowing God

As a prior post mentions, Christ explained “eternal life” as knowing Him: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (John 17:3.)

The writers of the New Testament knew Christ. They were taught by Him or He appeared to them. Prior to His death, Christ promised He would continue to be known, because He and His Father would take up their abode with others in the future.

Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. (John 14:22–23)

This promise was intended to be taken literally.

In addition to His followers, the antagonist (Saul) was also visited after Christ’s resurrection. Christ approached him on the road to Damascus. (See Acts 9:1–22.) Christ appeared and then took up His abode with Paul, who was later caught up to heaven and was taught “unspeakable things” of the mysteries of God. (See 2 Cor. 12:1–5.)

A modern prophet explained that Christ’s promise to “take up his abode” with men is not merely figurative or in the heart, but is indeed a personal appearance in which the believer comes to know his Lord:

John 14:23—The appearing of the Father and the Son, in that verse, is a personal appearance; and the idea that the Father and the Son dwell in a man’s heart is an old sectarian notion, and is false. (D&C 130:3)

Christ appeared to Joseph Smith and he testified of the appearing:

I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—“This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” (*JS-History* 1:16–17)

In another appearance to both Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, they jointly testified:

the Lord touched the eyes of our understandings and they were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about. And we beheld the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father, and received of his fulness; And saw the holy angels, and them who are sanctified before his throne, worshiping God, and the Lamb, who worship him forever and ever. And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives! For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father— That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God. (*D&C* 76:19–24)

Christianity was never intended to be controlled by pastors, ministers, priests, bishops or even apostles. Christianity was intended to be alive, with Christ directly involved with His followers. But the creeds of Historic Christianity have impeded the

relationship between a God who wants to be known and religious institutions who preach He is unknowable.

The entire message of Joseph Smith can be reduced to one verse in the Bible: James 1:5: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” Joseph believed this and asked. God answered. Christians can all do the same. “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.” (James 1:6.)

God has the capacity to answer all prayers addressed to Him. And He will send no one away empty-handed.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? (Matt. 7:7–11)

DECEMBER 2016

DECEMBER 8, 2016

Bibleolatry

Christians universally claim that the canon of scripture is closed. According to the tradition, God finished revealing things and the single means of knowing God's will, gaining authority, and

obtaining salvation is fully documented in the scriptures. This is the “sola scriptura” belief—i.e., the scriptures alone save.

This is not true. Even the scriptures do not make such a claim. All the Christian apologists who cite the various Old and New Testament verses to support the claim, rely on convoluted interpretation. They also ignore the promise of scripture that God will continue to speak (James 1:5–6; Joel 2:28–32) and will send prophets (Rev. 11:3; Zech. 4:14).

One of the principles of Biblical hermeneutics is that interpretation of scripture is best accomplished by using the newest to understand the oldest. The passages of the Old Testament quoted in the New Testament mean what the New Testament claims because the New Testament is more recent. If this principle were not used, then you could question many of the ways Old Testament meanings get assigned by New Testament writers because they are counter-intuitive, or even apparently contradictory to the original Old Testament text.

For example, the Isaiah text in 7:14, read apart from the New Testament claims, apparently means that a young virgin will not have time to conceive a child, and give birth (approximately 9 months) before the kings of both Damascus and Samaria are overthrown. (See Isa. 7:5–16.) BUT, according to the New Testament this is a Messianic passage foretelling the virgin birth of Christ. (Matt. 1:23.) Therefore, Christians universally claim the virgin birth of Christ was foretold by Isaiah 7:14.

If you take the rule to interpret the meaning of scripture by using the most recent revelation to assign meaning to all earlier scripture, then the meaning of the Bible ought to be reckoned by using the Book of Mormon and revelations to Joseph Smith. Christians are unwilling to do this, and when considering a new

revelation, apply their rules of interpretation in the reverse. It is hypocritical. Moreover, if the same test were applied in like manner using the Old Testament, then Christianity would fail for lack of support.

Consider what the Book of Mormon has to say about this Bibliolatry:

many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible. But thus saith the Lord God: O fools, they shall have a Bible; and it shall proceed forth from the Jews, mine ancient covenant people. And what thank they the Jews for the Bible which they receive from them? Yea, what do the Gentiles mean? Do they remember the travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews, and their diligence unto me, in bringing forth salvation unto the Gentiles? O ye Gentiles, have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant people? Nay; but ye have cursed them, and have hated them, and have not sought to recover them. But behold, I will return all these things upon your own heads; for I the Lord have not forgotten my people. Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews? Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth? Wherefore murmur ye, because that ye shall receive more of my word? Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation

like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also. And I do this that I may prove unto many that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and that I speak forth my words according to mine own pleasure. And because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever. Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written. For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written. For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it. And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews; and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews. And it shall come to pass that my people, which are of the house of Israel, shall be gathered home unto the lands of their possessions; and my word also shall be gathered in one. And I will show unto them that fight

against my word and against my people, who are of the house of Israel, that I am God, and that I covenanted with Abraham that I would remember his seed forever. (2 Ne. 29:3–14)

Christians do not actually worship Christ. If they did they would be eager to hear any word that proceeds from His mouth. But instead, they mute Christ, insist they can employ the words of a book as their salvation, and render Christ silent. This is idolatry, and they would rather worship their idol, the book, than the God who died, rose again, and lives still.

If He lives, then He can speak. He does speak. Christians are just not listening.

DECEMBER 17, 2016

Talks to Christians

I have announced a plan to give three talks to Christian audiences. I have asked several theological programs to allow me to address their students. In every case I've been declined. Because of that, I asked others to help me find opportunities to address a Christian audience. In the last few months, a number of people have voluntarily made numerous requests to seminaries, churches and other religious groups asking them to allow me an opportunity to speak. Nothing has been arranged.

We are approaching 100 declined requests and it seems unlikely I will get an invitation from a seminary or church. As a result, a new approach will be taken to accomplish the project.

Next year will be the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. Because the owners of churches and seminaries are uninterested, I will rent venues and invite Christians to come. It will be free for any who come to listen. I do not preach for hire,

nor ask for donations. I will use my own resources to be able to address any who will listen.

When the venues and dates are confirmed, I will post the information here. Right now July, August and September are tentatively targeted. California in July, Texas in August and Atlanta in September. All talks will be recorded and available on-line after each one is given.

The new approach will require some effort to publicize the talks beforehand. I'll be asking for volunteers to help pass out flyers and tell people of the talks in each area. The size of the audience is unimportant. But the talks need to be given and then made available for anyone to hear.

The talks will be celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, and will take note of the things God has done and yet promises to accomplish before the Second Coming in glory of the Lord. A new website is being prepared as part of this effort and should be live in January 2017. Posts on this website related to the outreach to Christians will also be posted on the new website. New videos of interest to a Christian audience are also planned for the new website.

DECEMBER 20, 2016

Early Christian Meetings

Justin Martyr lived from 110–165 A.D. and wrote in the “sub-apostolic” age. His writings give a glimpse into how Christianity functioned in its earliest days.

In his First Apology, he provides a description of Christian worship. They met in homes, having no church buildings.

Before being considered a Christian, a candidate was baptized “in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit.” (First Apology, Chapter LXI-Christian Baptism.)

Meetings began with a prayer and “saluting one another with a kiss.” Then sacrament is prepared and administered using bread a “cup of wine mixed with water” which is blessed by “giving praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands.” (*Id.*, Chapter LXV-Administration of the Sacraments.)

The early Christians recognized there was an obligation for “the wealthy among us [to] help the needy.” Therefore, after reading scripture and “the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets” donations are collected. “And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows, and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want.” (*Id.*, Chapter LXVII-Weekly Worship of the Christians.) The reference to the “president” is to the one who conducted the meeting that week.

These simple observances were resilient enough to preserve Christianity after the death of the apostles and before any great hierarchical magisterium arose. It was the power of baptism, the sacrament, scripture study and financial aid among believers that gave Christianity its power. But it was diffused, and therefore incapable of destruction. When Justin Martyr was slain, the scattered Christians continued unaffected. It was just like when Peter and Paul were slain, and before them, James was killed. The power of Christianity reckoned from the vitality of its original

roots. These roots were in Christ, His message, and teachings, which were employed to relieve one another by the alms shared from rich to poor.

When a centralized hierarchy took control over Christianity, the money that was used for the poor, the widows and orphans, was diverted to building churches, cathedrals, basilicas and palaces. Ultimately, the wealth generated by the generosity of Christian believers became the tool used by the hierarchy to buy up armies, kings, lands and treasures which were used to rule and reign as a cruel master over a subjugated population made miserable by the abuse heaped on them from Rome.

Even after the Protestant Reformation, Christianity continued to be ruled by hierarchies. Cathedrals and church buildings consumed and consume resources which are to be used to help the poor. Christ built no building, although He accepted the temple in Jerusalem as His Father's house. Peter built no church building. Nor Paul, nor James, nor John. Christianity in the hands of the Lord and His apostles needed no brick and mortar for its foundation. It was built on the hearts of believers, brought together by the charity and assistance shared between them.

Today Christianity is not benefitted, but weakened, by hierarchies, cathedrals, edifices and basilicas housing opulence, wealth and art. Although the prophecies foretell of a temple to God in Zion, and another in Jerusalem, there are no other structures foretold to be built by Christians or latter-day Israel. How much stronger would Christianity be today if wealth were reserved for the poor, and hierarchies were stripped of their wealth?

DECEMBER 22, 2016

Christmas Carol

Here is a link to a short but beautiful Christmas Carol. It is titled “The Angels And The Shepherds” and is a recording of the King’s College Choir at Cambridge.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKiMY5lognQ>)

DECEMBER 28, 2016

Temple Fund

The work of three women (volunteers) to provide a means for raising funds for a temple has taken many months. They have consulted with lawyers and accountants to advise them. Many dead-ends have been explored in their attempt to find the means to raise funds for a temple.

There are numerous laws, both state and federal, which regulate fund raising by an organization. But they do not want a regulated business or charitable entity, nor do they intend to invite legal supervision that may permit fund raising today, but regulate and control by force what is built tomorrow. This is intended as God’s house, and His authority alone is to be respected there.

After months of work, I met with the women this morning. Tomorrow an announcement will be available from them, and I will post it on this website.

DECEMBER 29, 2016

Temple Fund Website

The three women I mentioned during the Boise Conference who have been working to establish the means to aggregate funds dedicated to building a temple now have a website established

with two available methods where fellow believers may donate to this cause. The website can be found at www.theTempleFund.net.

The women continue to look for ways to improve donating, as their website explains. God's people are always required to build a temple. Therefore, there needs to be preparation for the coming commandment. When the Nauvoo Temple was commanded to be built, the resulting struggle lasted for nearly six years before it was abandoned. It was never completed. That repeated failure will not please the Lord. I have met with the women who have done this work and they have my confidence. I trust that any proceeds donated will be used for a temple and not for any other purpose. In my view all donations belong to God alone, and must be directed toward His House to keep faith with Him. The women share this view.

JANUARY 2017

JANUARY 8, 2017

Christian Talks in 2017

This year I will be speaking to Christians about the Christian Reformation. I will give three lectures in three different venues over the next year. The talks will be recorded and available online for anyone interested in the history and destiny of Christianity.

Christ originally sent twelve messengers to spread the news about Him. They organized congregations of believers throughout the Mediterranean World, the Indian sub-continent and beyond. These were diverse bodies of believers, and depending on which of the twelve organized them, reflected different priorities. But they were all "Christian" and all followed Christ's teachings.

Early Christianity included diverse and sometimes conflicting groups, all calling themselves “Christian.” But conflicts grew in intensity over the centuries that followed. When the Roman Emperor Constantine saw the value in adopting Christianity, he did not realize Christianity was internally fighting over fundamental beliefs. Accordingly, in 324 A.D. Constantine forced an agreement among Christian leaders in Nicaea. The result was the Nicene Creed. This creed marked the beginning of a new era referred to as Historic Christianity.

Historic Christianity divided at about 1,000 A.D. between Rome (Catholic) and Constantinople (Orthodox). That division remains today, more than a millennium later.

Rome’s dominion over Western Europe was further broken up beginning in 1517 when the Protestant Reformation began. What began with Martin Luther, has continued to divide and multiply Christian denominations with different groups placing different emphases on parts of the New Testament.

Coming up on the half-millennium anniversary of the Reformation, I will deliver three talks. There are a number of volunteers working to help arrange venues and spread word about these talks. They will be free to the public and all are invited to come and consider the history and destiny of Christianity.

As soon as each talk is finished, it will be made available on-line. Next Saturday a new website devoted to the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation will be on-line. Work on that site, also by volunteers, has been underway for months. The link will be provided.

Arriving at a “unity of the faith,” which Paul hoped could be achieved by Christians (Eph. 4:11–13) is a ways off. Christianity has instead become the handmaiden of ambitious men who have

diverted resources from the poor to serve themselves. The present state of Christianity is not markedly different from Jerusalem at the time of Christ. The Christian leaders today, like the Sadducees and Pharisees, shear the sheep, consume them, but fail to serve them as Christ did.

Christianity began with personal worship and devotion in the homes of believers. Christ and His twelve built no cathedrals, chapels or church structures, but did give aid to the poor. Isaiah prophesied that only one kind of building would be built for God by His followers: A Temple or House of God, to be built on the mountaintop in Zion, and another in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2–3). Beyond those two structures, all other resources should help the poor, as was once done by early Christians.

Although the website and lectures planned for 2017 are intended for a Christian audience, anyone who is interested in the history and the future of Christianity will find the material useful and interesting.

JANUARY 12, 2017

Christians Should Study Mormonism

Between the death of Christ's apostles and the Council of Nicaea, Christianity changed dramatically. It is impossible to account for all that happened to cause the changes. Although some of the writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers (Christian leaders before Nicaea) have been preserved, the records are wholly inadequate to understand everything that happened, and why it happened.

A new religion rarely appears in history. When one does, it presents a unique opportunity for us to study the process.

Religions begin with an inspired leader whose confident vision opens new light and truth into the world. If there is no new vision then the religion won't survive. But an original, inspired leader is difficult to replicate. Within a short time, the founder's work is overtaken by others. Their insecurities and fears leave them without the confidence once present at the foundation. Believers donate, and contributions aggregate. A new generation of believers begin to notice the wealth of their movement, and aspiring leaders who would never sacrifice their name, reputation, security and lives are drawn to management, seeking personal benefit from the institution. Bold claims become hollow echoes, and leaders' insecurity results in defensive and protective steps. Instead of moving forward with inspired new light and truth, the established religion fears and fights against threatened losses.

William James explained the process:

A genuine first-hand experience like this is bound to be a heterodoxy to its witnesses, the prophet appearing as a mere lonely madman. If his doctrine prove contagious enough to spread to any others, it becomes a definite and labeled heresy. But if it then still prove contagious enough to triumph over persecution, it becomes itself an orthodoxy; and when a religion has become an orthodoxy, its day of inwardness is over: the spring is dry; the faithful live at second hand exclusively and stone the prophets in their turn. The new church, in spite of whatever human goodness it may foster, can be henceforth counted on as a staunch ally in every attempt to stifle the spontaneous religious spirit, and to stop all later bubblings of the fountain from which in purer days it drew its own supply of inspiration. Unless, indeed, by adopting new movements of the spirit it can make capital out of them and use them for its

selfish corporate designs!” (*The Varieties of Religious Experience*, being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Delivered at Edinburgh in 1901–1902, Lectures XIV and XV: “The Value of Saintlessness”).

Mormonism was founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith who claimed that ten years prior to founding a church he had been visited by God the Father and Jesus Christ. In the intervening years between the first visit and the time a church was organized, Joseph claimed to have been visited by an angelic messenger who delivered to him a new volume of scripture, the Book of Mormon. He claimed to have received revelations before founding the church, and then many more after its organization.

Whether you believe Joseph Smith’s claims or not, he and his followers give a unique opportunity to witness how founding a religion sets in motion a series of predictable events that happen every time a new religion begins. Perhaps the best way to decipher the transition of Christianity from the original Primitive Christianity to its replacement, Historic Christianity, is to study Mormonism. Similar to the way the Primitive Christian church passed away after the death of the apostles, Mormonism has passed away following the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. The same process was at work in both.

Primitive Christianity and Mormonism set out to change the world, and after some initial success, both enjoyed worldly success. Their success diverted attention from saving souls to managing people and property. Paul observed, “the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Tim. 6:10). A new religion is not profitable for the first believers. They are persecuted. They sacrifice their lives and property to follow what they believe to be God’s burden laid on them. Because of their sacrifices, they have faith and know they

please God. Without sacrifice, it is impossible to obtain the faith required for salvation. Founders make sacrifices, successors enjoy the fruit of those sacrifices.

In time, the founding gives way to popular approval. John Wesley observed the price that is paid for popular acceptance is the loss of the Spirit:

It does not appear that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were common in the Church for more than two or three centuries. We seldom hear of them after that fatal period when the Emperor Constantine called himself a Christian;...From this time they almost totally ceased;...The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ than the other heathens....This was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian Church; because the Christians were turned Heathens again, and had only a dead form left. Churches all come to depend on money for survival.

Churches, like the men who belong to them, are just as vulnerable to the “love of money” which leads to “all evil.” People can have the gifts of the Spirit, or they can acquire riches in this world, but cannot have both.

Catholicism grew wealthy from the offerings of its members. When it owned most of the European lands and ruled over all people within Roman Catholic boundaries, it was cold, corrupt, violent and cruel. The transition from persecuted minority to dangerous majority took three centuries. With that status the original was lost.

Mormonism has followed the same path and achieved the same end in less than half the time. If a Christian wants to know how Primitive Christianity was lost to apostasy, the history of The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is where it can be found. Mormon beliefs are so unstable that they now “unequivocally condemn” 10 of the first 11 of their church presidents, including Brigham Young, John Taylor and David O. McKay.

In order to progress forward, we must go back. Since we have no way to recover enough information to understand Christianity’s trek from Jerusalem to Rome, Mormonism allows Christians a view into the transition from Nauvoo to Salt Lake. Both paths followed the same tragic topography.

JANUARY 14, 2017

New Website

A new website dedicated to the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation is now live. The link is:

www.christianreformation500years.info

In addition to the written information, there are a series of videos linked on this new website that are also posted on YouTube. Three videos are available immediately, but others will be added as time permits. If you subscribe to the YouTube channel, you will be notified of the new videos as they are made available.

The YouTube channel link is:

www.youtube.com/channel/UC6cEtBt6U_AooDKfQCGoCjA

The new site is intended for a Christian audience. If there is anyone you believe would be interested in learning more about the Protestant Reformation, please refer them to the site.

JANUARY 20, 2017

John Wycliffe 1330–1384

Two hundred years before the Protestant Reformation there was a reformer who foreshadowed what was coming. Although the world's circumstances were then not developed to permit the Reformation, many of Wycliffe's criticisms of Catholicism and his translation of the Bible would prefigure the coming Reformation.

Wycliffe lived through the Black Death, when 25 million people died in Europe. That catastrophe delayed his completion of a doctorate at Oxford until 1372. He became a dissident, and although sanctioned and opposed by the Pope (five edicts from Pope Gregory XI condemned him for 18 errors and called him "the master of errors"), but he believed and taught that the Pope and the church were second in authority to scripture. He conceived of an invisible church of the elect who were recognized by heaven, rather than an organization on earth that controlled salvation. Many of his ideas would later be advanced by the Reformation Fathers.

His arguments with Rome were first political (1366–1378), and later theological (1378–1384). During his last six years of life he provided a continuing written campaign against the Pope and the entire church hierarchy of the time. By the end he came to equate the Pope to the Antichrist.

Among his issues, he disputed transubstantiation: "The bread while becoming by virtue of Christ's words the body of Christ does not cease to be bread." He condemned indulgences: "It is plain to me that our prelates in granting indulgences do commonly blaspheme the wisdom of God." He repudiated confession to the priests: "Private confession ... was not ordered by Christ and was not used by the apostles." He viewed faith as saving: "Trust wholly in Christ; rely altogether on his sufferings; beware of seeking to be justified in any other way than by his righteousness."

He believed every Christian ought to be able to read scripture. At a time when only Latin Bibles existed in England, he began translating it into the common English language. He was assisted in this by John Purvey, and, when Wycliffe died before it was completed Purvey finished the translation. Rome condemned this as an act of rebellion:

By this translation, the Scriptures have become vulgar, and they are more available to lay, and even to women who can read, than they were to learned scholars, who have a high intelligence. So the pearl of the gospel is scattered and trodden underfoot by swine.

Wycliffe responded with this explanation: “Englishmen learn Christ’s law best in English. Moses heard God’s law in his own tongue; so did Christ’s apostles.”

Wycliffe believed church officials ought not to live in wealth, but instead sacrifice to serve. Church wealth should be directed to help the poor. He encouraged English leaders of both church and state to stop sending wealth to Rome, and instead use it to help those locally in need.

Wycliffe died before authorities convicted him of heresy. After his death the Council of Constance declared him a heretic, ordered his remains to be removed from consecrated ground, burned, and his ashes thrown into the river Swift. Pope Martin V confirmed the edict and it was carried out. However, Wycliffe’s influence could not be suppressed, and as one writer observed, “Thus the brook hath conveyed his ashes into Avon; Avon into Severn; Severn into the narrow seas; and they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblem of his doctrine which now is dispersed the world over.”

JANUARY 23, 2017

Baptism is Required

Christ's simple command to "follow me" was given repeatedly (See, Matt; 8:22; Matt. 9:9; Matt. 16:24; Mark 2:14; Mark 10:21; Luke 9:23; John 1:43; John 12:26; among many others).

Christ showed the way, and as part of that He was baptized to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15). It was only after Christ was baptized that the Father commended Jesus and said He was "well pleased" (Matt. 3:13-17).

Christ also had His disciples baptize His followers (John 4:1).

Christ spoke to Saul of Tarsus on the Road to Damascus and converted him by that contact (Acts 9:1-6). Following his conversion, Saul was healed of blindness, renamed Paul, and immediately baptized (Acts 9:11-18).

Paul tied baptism to resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4). He declared that to be baptized is to "put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). There is only "one faith" and it is in the "one Lord" whom we worship, and it requires "one baptism" to be included in the body of believers (Eph. 4:5).

Peter explained that baptism saves us (1 Peter. 3:21).

Christians who follow Christ will all be baptized.

If you have not been baptized, there are those who have authority to administer the ordinance who will travel to you. The ordinance is free, and the service is provided without any charge or expectation of any gift or donation. If you are interested you can make a request at this site:

Born of Water (bornofwater.org)

FEBRUARY 6, 2017

Opposing Christian Sects

Today, the best estimate is that there are over 40,000 different “Christian” denominations or sects. No one knows for sure because there is no organized data-base that identifies them all. Many are as small as a single congregation. The total number of “Christians” is estimated at over 2.2 billion.

Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, today and forever” (Heb. 13:8). God has made a point of explaining that He does not change (Mal. 3:6).

The pace at which “Christian” sects are dividing appears to be accelerating. The disagreements between “Christian” sects are pronounced enough that many of them claim they alone are “true” and only they can save your soul. They denounce other denominations as false, their followers unsaved, or worse, damned and followers of the devil.

The scriptures claim there is “one Lord, one faith, and one baptism” (Eph. 4:5). Christians should compare what they see in “Christianity” of today with what the scriptures teach. How can messages from the various sects conflict so greatly that the Christian world is divided into more than 40,000 different bodies?

Christianity was never to be “preached” by just anybody willing to make a claim to be preaching the truth. A true messenger must be “sent” by God (Rom. 10:14–15). That does not mean they have some sentimental inclination to proclaim a message. It means that God sent them.

Paul was sent by God, and he explained the criteria. The qualifications have never changed, been rescinded or superseded. The unchangeable God requires the same today as anciently.

How can an unchangeable God, who is the same yesterday, today and forever, be guiding these conflicting and contentious Christian denominations? The answer is simple: He is not.

The Christian sects are led by hireling priests who stir up conflict that prevents Christian believers from agreeing with one another. They flatter their congregations and keep them content. “Christians” are fed a weekly dose of vanity and lies by men and women expecting to be paid (by their followers) for their preaching. If you removed the profits from Christian churches, you would quickly see the pulpits abandoned by the hucksters employed there. If no one were paid to preach, conflicts would quickly end between the rank-and-file Christian.

I will be giving three talks later this year in California, Texas and Atlanta. I have been sent to give these three messages. I do know God. I have been ministered to by Him and He has prepared me to minister to others. Like Paul, who was sent by God, I will also tell you of an unchangeable God, who is the same yesterday, today and forever. His message requires the same from you today as it did when Jesus Christ first taught in Galilee and Judea.

Anyone who claims to be a “Christian” may be interested in hearing these three talks. They are free and no donations will be solicited. Charity is wasted on hireling clergy. It should be used for the poor. Clergy ought to labor for their support as do other Christians. The sooner we stop paying a professional clergy, the sooner Christianity will lose its animosity and improve in spirit, function and value.

FEBRUARY 19, 2017

John the Baptist

John the Baptist was the last messenger sent by God in the dispensation of Moses (John 1:6). He represents the end of one dispensation and the beginning of another. He overthrew the kingdom of the Jews and wrested all the authority that remained with the Jews from the original commission delivered through Moses.

John the Baptist's message was to repent, warning that the "kingdom of heaven" was at hand (Matt. 3:2). The Jews were concerned at his message and sent representatives to inquire from him about the authority he had to start something new (John 1:21–25).

John the Baptist's authority to baptize was recognized and accepted by Jesus Christ. He came to John and submitted to baptism because only by doing so would Jesus follow the requirements of righteousness (Matt. 3:14–16).

John was sent by God (John 1:6) and his right and authority was undisputed by both Jesus and the early Christians. Ignatius wrote about Christ's baptism: "[He] was baptized by John, that He might ratify the institution committed to that prophet" (*Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians*, Chapter XVIII). And, "was baptized by John, that all righteousness may be fulfilled" (*Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*, Chapter 1).

Jesus posed the question to Jewish leaders of John the Baptist's authority. He asked, "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" A question that the Jewish leaders knew if they answered would expose the problem of rejecting John. "And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he

will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?" (Matt. 21:25). They concluded that they could not answer this question (*Id.*, v. 26).

Jesus Christ described John the Baptist in these words: "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist" (Luke 7:28). Jesus said of him: "He was a burning and a shining light" (John 5:35).

John was born to a Levite father (Luke 1:5). But he was taken into the Judaeen wilderness and hidden there to protect him from the authorities (Luke 1:80). When he returned from the wilderness, he came dressed in camel hair, wearing a leather girdle, eating locusts and wild honey (Matt. 3:4). These details suggest he lived without employment, home, or wealth, surviving on what God provided, as if Christ had John in mind when He taught in the Sermon on the Mount:

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof (Matt. 6:28–34).

These things, which describe the life of John the Baptist, seem to us both fanatical and impractical. When cast out of the Garden,

mankind was doomed to obtain bread by the sweat of our labor (Gen. 3:19). We are commanded to labor for our support (2 Thes. 3:11) and not steal (Eph. 4:28) nor expect another man's bread to be given to us (2 Thes. 3:8). If a man will not labor, he should not eat what others produce through their labor (2 Thes. 3:10). Yet John seems to have abandoned everything to serve God, and in turn lived only on what God provided for him.

Would we have recognized and accepted John as a messenger sent by God? How would we have determined that this "homeless" man was "sent by God"? If he had no pulpit, how could we know, that for a brief time, he alone could perform an ordinance required for salvation? If he was not part of the established system of religion, why would we give him any heed? If there was an existing temple, a presiding high priest, a governing board in the Sanhedrin, and established synagogues where scripture was recited and messages were delivered each week, why would we expect John to be more relevant to our salvation than the religious system in place? If the entire religious landscape was attributed to Moses, who was known to be a prophet (John 9:29), what makes us think we would choose to believe God sent the outsider, John? Why think salvation today will require anything less of a test than was required when John first appeared and began to preach? Why think we are any different than the Jews who rejected both John and Jesus? If our religion is a comfortable part of our lives, then what is its value?

Christ described what is required to follow Him:

Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son

against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother-in-law (Luke 12:51–53).

And again, the Lord taught:

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matt. 5:10–12).

If our religion does not cause others to revile us, members of our families to be offended, or help us understand the life of Christ and the prophets, it is not Christ's religion. If religion takes us to a comfortable church each week where we are assured we will be saved in heaven, it is not truly Christian. If it does not require sacrifice, then we have nothing in common with either Christ or the prophets.

It is still possible to practice Christianity, but not in comfortable pews, listening to flattery and praise. The Bible warns that the time will come when God will: "Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Otherwise they might see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed" (Isa. 6:10; New American Standard version). This happens every week in most "Christian" churches throughout the world.

Would we have recognized John the Baptist as a burning and shining light? How?

FEBRUARY 21, 2017

Website Translators Needed

I was asked to pass this announcement and request along:

Becoming-zion.org was created to provide another way of keeping up with the growing number of posts on denversnuffer.com. As some may find themselves with more driving time than reading time, the site allows readers to download blog posts in audio format for playback on a computer, phone, MP3 player, or any internet-ready device or streamed directly from the site. Text-to-speech software is used to convert the blog posts to audio files, and even though the software is not flawless, the result is clear enough to convey the meaning of the posts.

Originally, the goal was to use translation software as a means to offer these audio files in Spanish as well as other languages besides English, but if there are those who are willing to translate the posts into another language, the accuracy of the post would more easily remain intact. Those who are willing to help with the project, especially those having Spanish translation skills, can volunteer via that website.

FEBRUARY 27, 2017

Christian Apostasy

Irenaeus lived approximately 130 A.D. to 202 A.D. The exact dates of his life are not known. Nor is the exact date he wrote his greatest work, a five-book series titled *Against Heresies*. His outline of heretical teachings is known to have been composed late in the second century. Until the discovery of the gnostic gospels at Nag Hammadi in 1945, it was from *Against Heresies* that most information about the gnostics was learned.

Irenaeus provides us a glimpse into the state of Christianity less than a century after the death of the apostles. What is revealed through that glimpse, is a bizarre bunch of conflicting views. Many of the teachings he condemned are so alien to today's Christians that we would regard them as perverse aberrations. Yet they competed in the early Christian market place for converts, and claimed to be a true reflection of Christ's teachings.

Christ foretold there would be "children of the wicked one" who would be planted among His "wheat" while they both grew together (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). The apostle Paul was astonished at how quickly the church at Galatia was corrupted with perverse teachings (Gal. 1:6-7). He predicted the entire falling away (apostasy) of the Christian church (2 Thes. 2-3).

While the apostles were alive and preaching, Christians divided themselves into contentious factions. Some followed one teacher, others another, and they emphasized their disagreements rather than their common beliefs (1 Cor. 1:11-13). "Ministers of Satan" were actively teaching inside the earliest bodies of Christians (2 Cor. 11:13-15). Paul lamented that "all of Asia" had fallen into error and rejected his teaching (2 Tim. 1:15). John warned of false spirits and false apostles who were spreading falsehoods that misrepresented Christ (1 John 4:1-2). By Nicaea, 324 A.D., the denial of Christ coming into the flesh was so widely accepted that a newly adopted and false teaching of the "Trinity" completed the overthrow of true doctrine regarding Christ who lived as a man in the flesh among us.

Even if falsehoods supplanted Christianity, John's vision foretells that God's patience will finally come to an end and the religions that worship devils, and gold, and silver and idols will be destroyed (Rev. 9:20).

If Christians were to examine the history of Mormonism, they would better understand how unclean spirits and false prophets overtook Christianity (Rev. 16:13; also 2 Tim. 11:13–15). Joseph Smith began Mormonism under the influence of one spirit, but upon his death, Brigham Young followed under the influence of another.

As a true shepherd would, Joseph gave his life for the sheep (John 10:11). Brigham Young declared he would flee and never surrender his life, a sign of a false shepherd (John 10:12–13). He proclaimed he was unwilling to lay down his life as Joseph did:

“But woe, woe to that man who comes here to unlawfully interfere with my affairs. Woe, woe to those men who come here to unlawfully meddle with me and this people. I swore in Nauvoo, when my enemies were looking me in the face, that I would send them to hell across lots, if they meddle with me; and I ask no more odds of hell today” (July 26, 1857).

“A mob killed Joseph and Hyrum in jail, notwithstanding the faith of the State was pledged to protect them... I have broken no law, and under the present state of affairs, I will not suffer myself to be taken by any United States officer, to be killed as they killed Joseph” (August 12, 1857).

“Do you expect to stand still, sit still, or lie still, and untimely let them take away my life? I have told you a great many times what I have to say about that. I do not profess to be so good a man as Joseph Smith was. I do not walk under their protection nor into their prisons, as he did” (August 9, 1857).

Brigham Young advocated controlling people by holding economic power over them. He explained how he envisioned keeping people in line and subordinate to him by getting them to consecrate their property to the church he led:

If any man is in darkness through the deceitfulness of riches, it is good policy for him to bind up his wealth in this Church, so that he cannot command it again, and he will be apt to cleave to the kingdom. If a man has the purse in his pocket, and he apostatizes, he takes it with him; but if his worldly interest is firmly united to the Kingdom of God, when he arises to go away, he finds the calf is bound, and, like the cow, he is unwilling to forsake it (April 6, 1852).

Brigham Young defied the US Government when its representatives were critical of his authoritarian rule in the Territory of Utah:

What says the United States? 'Let us send a governor there; let us send our judges there.' But what do they cry? 'We have no influence or power, for there are other men there who rule, and we cannot help it; they have the reins of government and turn the people whithersoever they will, and we cannot help ourselves.' What did a gentleman say to [US President] Mr. Fillmore? Said he, 'You need not send anybody there, for Brigham Young is Governor, and he will govern the people all the time; and there is no other man that can govern them.' If there is any truth in this, it is, he will do so as long as the Lord lets him (October 3, 1852).

On June 9, 1853, he threatened to kill any apostates or non-believers who opposed him in a public discourse. Beginning in 1855, God's wrath at Brigham Young and his followers became evident in a series of natural disasters that caused famine and severe hardships. In response to these afflictions, Young increased his threatening and began a bloody period known as the Mormon Reformation. The Mountain Meadows Massacre was as a result, at least in part, by

the fiery rhetoric Brigham Young preached during the Mormon Reformation.

Like the early Christians who were overcome by deceiving spirits, (Mark 13:5–6; 2 Tim. 3:13; 1 Cor. 15:33–34; Eph. 5:5–6). Mormonism was overcome by the lusts, appetites and ambitions of Young, who was animated by a very different spirit than Joseph Smith. The result of leading by that spirit is aptly described in the Book of Mormon:

For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up to get gain, and all those who are built up to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world, and to do all manner of iniquity; yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake; they are those who must be brought low in the dust; they are those who must be consumed as stubble; and this is according to the words of the prophet (1 Ne. 22:23).

LDS Mormonism not only has been built up to get gain, but is a multi-billion dollar empire, able to undertake a trillion-dollar development for housing, and employing a population of 500,000 people in Florida on 133,000 acres. The LDS church is only partly religious, and has built a \$2 to \$5 billion dollar shopping mall-condominium housing-office complex across the street from its Salt Lake City temple. (The total cost depends on whether the retail establishment alone or the entire project is valued). The LDS corporate church is now completing a similarly ambitious project in downtown Philadelphia adjacent to the temple it completed in September 2016.

Millions of faithful Mormons are entirely oblivious to the dramatic gulf between the scriptures, revelations and teachings of the founder Joseph Smith, and the replacement religion created through Brigham Young. That transition mirrors what happened to early Christianity. By the time only one Christian orthodox faith survived, it was also making merchandise of men's souls. The description of Babylon the Great whore in John's revelation accurately describes both the false Christian religious empire founded in Rome in the fourth century and the false Mormon empire founded by Brigham Young in the late 1840s:

The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men (Rev. 18:12–13).

Christianity did not survive the second century. Mormonism did not survive its third decade. The answer to the question 'why' is the same: Both became more interested in getting economic gain, power over the flesh, becoming popular in the eyes of the world, and infatuated by the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world, than in practicing and preserving the faith taught by Christ. The Book of Mormon describes the corrupting influences infecting churches.

Christ's religion requires sacrifice. Its reward is later, after this world. In this world, if we practice the faith taught by Christ, "we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:19).

How can we support with our donations the false ministers who preach for hire and neglect the poor among us? How can we assume we will be saved by the smooth things we hear from our hireling priests? (Isa. 30:10). How would we even recognize the truth after being taught lies pretending to define what it means to be “Christian”?

MARCH 2017

MARCH 5, 2017

September 21st California Talk

The plans for the first talk directed to a Christian audience have been finalized. This event is free to the public, and no donations will be solicited from those who attend. It will occur on a Thursday evening in the Los Angeles area at the Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts as described below:

Los Angeles, California, September 21, 2017, 7:00-8:30pm

Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts, Sierra Room

12700 Center Court Drive, Cerritos, CA 90703



MARCH 9, 2017

Doctrine of Christ Conference

Doctrine of Christ Conference

A conference for all people seeking to follow the Doctrine of Jesus Christ

March 18th–20th, 2017 · St. George, Utah, USA

The website with all the details is linked below:

<http://www.doctrineofchristconference.com>

MARCH 16, 2017

Christian Rejection

I received an email rejecting a request for a speaking venue. The rejection included the writer's assessment that I was "not a Christian" because of her narrow, Evangelical interpretation of the word. I responded as follows:

As one who, like the Apostle Paul, has stood in the presence of Christ, and likewise been caught up into heaven and been taught unspeakable things, I know from the Lord's own voice my standing before Him. Whether others regard me as a "Christian," I know that Christ regards me as His devoted follower and faithful servant.

I likewise comprehend His grace for others, including those who would exclude me from being defined as "Christian," and therefore exclude me from salvation itself.

Rather than debate, deny, or judge the "Christianity" of others using any criteria, Bible verse, or Protestant hope for salvation, I accept any person's claim to be "Christian" as welcome news. Whether they lived for the first millennium and a half of Christian history when only the Catholic Church existed, or they divide

themselves into groups claiming to hold the exclusive qualifications to be saved today.

I judge no man. I encourage them all to hold fast to the hope of salvation offered by Christ, even if they hold beliefs by which they judge and reject me as a fellow Christian.

This intolerant and anti-Christian view rejects as un-Christian all those who think there is a necessary role for works in addition to faith (See James 2:20 & 26: “Faith without works is dead”). They ignore two verses penned by James. They reject three chapters of Christ’s teachings (Matt. 5 through 7). They reject Christ’s own submission to the ordinance of baptism “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15). These dogmatic and blind guides base their entire false construction on Paul’s letter to the Ephesians which states in passing: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8–9). It is a mistake to interpret Paul to be in conflict with Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, and if there is a conflict, we ought to obey Christ.

Paul taught in Ephesus, resided there for a time, and was acquainted with the arguments going on in that community when he wrote his letter to them. The document is literally “reading someone else’s mail” without the benefit of knowing the background of weeks of Paul’s teaching and information related to him from visitors to the city. We cannot now have any confidence that these two verses represent Paul’s understanding or even Paul’s oral teachings.

What we do know for certain, however, is that Christ instructed us to be the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13) and light of the world

(Matt. 5:14). It is anti-Christ to deny the obligation to be salt and to provide light. It is anti-Christ to reject Christ's admonition to let the world "see your good works" if we are to follow Him (Matt. 5:16).

Christ warned us to "keep the commandments." He cursed those who proclaim we are merely saved by grace and have no obligation to obey His commandments. He declared, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19).

Christ then elevated the commandment to not kill, by warning Christians to "not be angry" with their brothers (Matt. 5:21-22). He explained that His followers would not even engage in Christian giving without first forgiving all those who offended them (Matt. 5:23-24).

Christ commanded us to agree with disputants, and not oppose them. We are to give what they demand of us rather than withhold even our cloak (Matt. 5:25-26; 39-42).

Christ elevated the commandment against committing adultery by commanding His followers to not entertain "lust in your heart" (Matt. 5:27-28).

Christ revoked divorce as an option for His followers, except in the case adultery (Matt. 5:31-32).

Christ commanded us to love even our enemies and return good for evil (Matt. 5:43-47).

Christ commanded us to "be perfect" as a follower and believer in Him (Matt. 5:48).

This is only the first of the three chapters of Christ's instructions about what following Him requires.

James explained how a Christian is to follow Christ: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and

have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (James 2:14–18).

MARCH 17, 2017

John Calvin Video

A new video about John Calvin has been put onto YouTube and can be viewed below:

<https://youtu.be/qoFKpX5n-3M>



CHAPTER 19

Remembering and Rejuvenating

MARCH 24, 2017

Restoration Scriptures

The following Announcement was read at the Doctrine of Christ Conference in St. George, Utah. I have been asked to post it here:

Restoration Scriptures Announcement

MARCH 18, 2017

Although what is to be announced may be viewed by most people as a modest achievement, I think history will eventually reflect this as one of the greatest steps forward after the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum.

What I'm about to announce will generate a considerable number of questions. To reasonably manage them, we've set up an email address where you can send your questions & suggestions. That address is: restorationscriptures2017@gmail.com. Your questions will be reviewed this evening, and then tomorrow, a number of the major questions will be answered in front of this body. Any that aren't answered immediately will be replied to after the conference ends.

One of the first ways a dispensation becomes corrupted is by compromising the scriptures used by believers in that dispensation. Therefore when a new dispensation begins, one of the first orders of business for believers is to adopt a new set of scriptures which restore, insofar as it is possible, a correct version of the material they regard as scripture.

Just like the saints of the New Testament adopted a new body of teachings, the Book of Mormon people preserved and added to sacred writings. And while Joseph Smith lived, there were both corrections to old scripture and new scripture was added. Likewise for us, there is a need to remove errors, correct texts, and add to the body of scripture to guide us. This assembly – that is, this worldwide body of believers – must also decide what we accept as scripture. It is our right and sacred responsibility to address this need.

To that end, a new edition of the scriptures is proposed. They are divided into three volumes that have been produced through a unified effort by two independent bodies of volunteers, separately driven to approach the scriptures anew.

Initially the members of these two groups felt individually inspired to revisit the scriptures in an effort to prune away some of the uninspired alterations of man so that they might have a more correct version of scripture for their study. Over time, these individuals were led to one another, combining and harmonizing their efforts. What began as two wholly separate groups, each forming at the same time, both unknown to one another, resulted in separate projects that were completed *at the same time*, and what was learned from their independent efforts identified issues that needed to be addressed.

On the last day of 2016, less than two weeks after discovering each other, these two groups held a meeting, facilitated by Denver

Snuffer, and determined to unify their efforts, each bringing to the table differing components for a greater outcome than either project possessed alone. On the first day of the new year, the two became one as work began, preparing what would become this *Restoration Edition* of the scriptures.

Moving forward, the united team has worked closely with each other, with the Lord, and with His servant, to produce a more accurate record that is true to the Lord's intent and to the Restoration. We are on His errand, not our own.

In September 1832, the Saints were condemned by the Lord and commanded to “repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written.”

We often see this as the Lord rebuking the Saints for failing to *do* according to that which He had written, yet assume that the Saints had been correctly *saying* what He had written. But the Saints did not *say*, and have failed to accurately preserve, what the revelations God provided to them said, because their texts became corrupted. This means that the first step towards emerging from condemnation is to try and do exactly what is being accomplished through this scriptural work now underway. While the full purpose of this project was initially unknown, it has begun a best effort to “repent and remember the new covenant.” If done right, we will at least accomplish the first step: recovering what the Lord provided so we can “say” what He has revealed. Then the challenges increase as we are called upon “to do according to that” which God has revealed.

A future conference must then be held with the intent of approving the final content of the *Restoration Edition* and sustaining that edition as canon for this assembly.

The following is a summary of what is contained in this *Restoration Edition* of the scriptures:

All the scriptural works share the following changes:

- Verse numbers have been eliminated and the text has been formatted into paragraphs. This provides greater context for individual passages and removes the isolation of a statement that is caused by restricting it to a verse. The only exception to individual numbering is in Proverbs where each proverb has been numbered.
- The chapters have been regrouped based on contextual themes rather than staying as they have existed historically. Our team recognized that since chapters were originally organized by man and not by God, we were free to reorganize them. Some paragraphs in some of the books have been combined or divided as well, based on their context. However, in the Book of Mormon, chapters were designated by Joseph Smith himself and those have been preserved.
- Very minor standardization and spelling correction has taken place. Care was taken to respect the text.
- Punctuation can clarify, but it can also restrict. Therefore punctuation has been significantly reduced in all of the volumes in order to free up the text for greater possible interpretation.

Individually

Volume 1 Is the Old Testament

- Joseph Smith's *New Translation of the Bible* (the *JST*) is the base text.
- *The Song of Solomon* had been removed since Joseph indicated that it is not an inspired text.

- Proverbs now includes *Proverbs of Joseph Smith, Jr.* and *Proverbs of Denver Snuffer, Jr.*

Volume 2 Consists of the New Testament and the Book of Mormon

- In a letter to the “brethren in Zion” on 21 April, 1833, Joseph Smith stated, “...it is not the will of the Lord to print any of the new translation in the *Star*, but when it is published it will all go to the world together in a volume by itself, and the New Testament and *The Book of Mormon* will be printed together.”
- Joseph Smith’s *New Translation of the Bible* is the base text for the New Testament.
- The 1840 edition of *The Book of Mormon* is used as the base text and was already formatted into paragraphs. This version was chosen because it contains corrections given by Joseph Smith to what was originally published in 1830 and 1837.

Volume 3 Consists of the Doctrine and Covenants & Pearls of Great Price

- The new D&C returns *The Lectures on Faith* to its original place, along with those sections and revelations identified as coming through Joseph Smith. These have been painstakingly compared to the manuscripts found in the *Joseph Smith Papers* Project.
- The order of the sections has been restored to thematic groupings rather than simply being presented chronologically. These groupings are: Restoration, Organization and Worship, and Revelations to Individuals.
- Several LDS sections have been removed for the following reasons:
 - **Sections 2 & 13** are extracts from *JS-History* and are therefore redundant.

- **Section 20** was written by Oliver Cowdery and constitutes church articles and covenants used to begin to structure the early church organization. They no longer apply.
- **Section 101 on Marriage**, from the original 1835 Kirtland Edition, is not being reintroduced because it is not a product of either Joseph or Hyrum. However, pertinent points are included in another area.
- **Section 110** is completely unverifiable as a true revelation/vision. The three individuals with some information about the section, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery and Warren Cowdery, left no statement or explanation about Section 110. Further, in listing those who visited with them in their respective testimonies, neither Joseph Smith nor Oliver Cowdery mention Elijah as having come. Finally throughout the Nauvoo time frame, including a month before his death, Joseph Smith spoke of Elijah's return as a future and not a past event.
- **Section 129** was a struggle. Initially it was revised by taking the shorthand notes from Joseph Smith's journal and fleshing them out with bridge words and phrases to make them into comprehensible sentences. However, once attempted, that effort was abandoned and the section was completely removed for the following reasons:
 2. The shorthand is just sketchy enough that some of the bridge wording is clearly debatable.
 3. The instruction we have through the Book of Mormon is sufficient on its own to allow us to discern evil spirits.

4. This section, if relied upon alone, is apparently not sufficient to defend against lying spirits.
- Section 134 is a declaration on laws & government written by either Oliver Cowdery or Sidney Rigdon, not Joseph Smith.
 - Section 135 is simply the announcement of the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum.
 - Section 136 is from Brigham Young.
 - Section 138, Joseph F. Smith's vision of the dead, is restricted by copyright and cannot be used.
 - Official Declarations 1 & 2 are declarations made by a different church.
- Several LDS sections have been revised for the following reasons:
 - Section 107 was an amalgamation of content, with only one portion traceable to a revelation before the 1835 publication of the D&C. That portion has been preserved. The 1835 published version bears hallmarks of revisions by the hand of man. Therefore only a portion has been extracted, and then added to by revelation, to explain the establishment of dispensations and reflect the direction of this current dispensation. It is placed as the last section in the new D&C.
 - Sections 121, 122 and 123 came from a letter written from Liberty Jail and are presented within the context of the entire letter written by Joseph Smith.
 - Section 132 on celestial marriage is now represented as it is posted by Denver Snuffer on his blog, containing the redactions suggested there to make the document internally consistent and reflect the earliest descriptions of the original.

- More than 40 new sections have been added for the following reasons:
 - Nearly all of these new sections are verified revelations given through Joseph Smith that simply were never sustained as scripture.
 - Restoration Edition Section 98 is President Hyrum Smith’s epistle to the church.
- The new D&C also includes an insert in the Appendix called “A Prophet’s Prerogative”, an example of an extremely valuable method of comparative study that can significantly help your understanding. The example used is Isaiah 29, and includes an introductory explanation.
- *The Pearl of Great Price* has had its name changed to *Pearls of Great Price*, reflecting and implying further expansion, and the following portions have been removed, revised or added for the following reasons:
 - (A Proposed Set of) *Governing Principles* is a rewritten statement of principles and practices—similar to LDS Section 20—that reflects this assembly’s efforts to preserve the Restoration. This statement is not yet completed. It requires additional inspired input from you.
 - *The Articles of Faith* have been replaced by *The Wentworth Letter* that they were copied from, in order to provide context to those articles.
 - *Joseph Smith-History* has been slightly expanded to the same extent as it was originally published in the *Times and Seasons*.
 - *The Book of Moses* and *Joseph Smith-Matthew* have been removed because they already exist in the New Translation of the Bible and are redundant.

- *The Book of Abraham* remains as is.
- *The Revelation of the Testimony of St. John*—as given through Denver Snuffer, Jr.—has been added. It will not replace the existing *Testimony of St. John* found in the New Testament, but will stand as its own book.
- *Continuing Revelation* is a section which consists of visions and revelations given through Denver Snuffer, Jr. to be made public. This portion of the *Pearls of Great Price* is expected to be the place where new revelation will be added as it is received, which, you will see, has already happened.
- *A Glossary of Fundamental Terms* is at the end of the final volume. Currently it's blank, except for a single sample definition. We encourage all of you to consider emailing us terms for the glossary using the following criteria:
 1. The definition must be scriptural, not your opinion.
 2. The terms need to be those that are critical to seeing things correctly. LDS and Christian culture have so skewed many religious terms as to render them not just wrong, but spiritually dangerous in that they point people in the wrong direction. This will not become a “bible dictionary,” but is an attempt to explain words as the Lord has intended, not “Gospel speak” or Mormonese.

Given that this body must declare to the Lord what records they intend to hold sacred, a Preview copy of these volumes of the *Restoration Edition* are available as of right now for download, in PDF, ebook and other requested formats, from www.scriptures.info, an online library that has been established for materials pertinent to the Restoration. There are a number of interesting tools and

features that have been developed for this site, but now is not the time to go into them. However, I will say that *scriptures.info* is specifically built with tools to aid in comparative study. That's why the Isaiah 29 example is at the back of the D&C—to kickstart you. So take a tour of that important site on your own. Those of you who may have content pertinent to the scriptures that you wish to contribute, those of you who are looking for research material or tools, and those of you who are just curious, be sure to visit the ABOUT page on that site for direction.

A hard copy of each volume is already available for purchase on Amazon.com and Amazon Europe. Search *Restoration Scriptures Preview* or the title of each work and you should find Vol. 1, 2 and 3. This copy is NOT formatted completely—it still has minor flaws in it. In fact, if you are happy to use the electronic copies that are available, you may want to wait until the scriptures have been sustained and scrubbed before buying a copy, as they may change. A final version will be produced that incorporates any changes sustained by this assembly and has been scrubbed of formatting errors.

Additionally, since Amazon won't allow us to sell the copies at cost, the minimal royalties from the copies sold will be donated to the temple fund.

A quick side note: The reason the Creative Commons copyright for these scriptures is in my name is only because I am acting as the public face of this project. There are dozens of people that have contributed to it besides me.

A Research version of these scriptures is partially completed and available for download on www.scriptures.info as well. Unlike the printed scriptures, this Research version will remain in electronic

form – at least for now – and will differ in the following ways from the print copies:

- Though retaining the new chapter groupings, all of the books have LDS chapter and verse numbers inserted to allow for easier research and for comparison with other versions of scripture.
- The *JST* and *D&C* include both strikethroughs and additions visible in their original manuscripts.
- The Book of Mormon footnotes all significant changes from the editions that were published during Joseph Smith's lifetime. Any editions after his death were not approved by him and therefore have been ignored.
- Items removed from the printed copy can be preserved in this copy for research purposes, including, for example, section 129.
- Items of historical or educational significance deemed helpful may be added to this version. Recognize that the Research version is intended to expand details of the sustained scriptures, not supplant them.

We do have plans for a fancier set of scriptures being produced with bible stock paper, leather or faux leather covers, and so forth. That process is already underway, but anyone familiar with the process is invited to email us and lend a hand. I'm not sure of a time frame other than we'd like to have those available by the end of the year. But we won't print any until after the sustaining conference.

For those who honestly can't afford around \$40 to purchase a set of these scriptures and can't use electronic copies for now, if you have a local fellowship you meet with, ask them if they can provide you with a set. If they can't meet your need, please use the email address given to request a set. We have several free sets available for the truly needy that are here at the conference. If there are those

in need who could not attend, but would like a copy, please place a request at that same email address and a copy can be sent to you or your local fellowship.

The next conference, which has been mentioned during this announcement, will be held in Boise, ID, Labor Day weekend, September 2–3, with the intent of approving the final content for the Restoration Edition of the scriptures and sustaining that edition as canon for this assembly. Today is the “open to public view” step of the process. Our team simply got the ball rolling. You will now have approximately 6 months to digest, critique and react to what the Lord has offered.

Please carefully consider what is being offered to us. Zion is the Lord’s work. So getting it will not depend on the goodness or desires of men and women, but on their submission to the Lord, who intends to accomplish it. WE can’t force it, cause it, bring it, or hope it into existence. What we can do is submit to the Lord in a way that encourages Him to continue to use us for His purposes. There is no need for an immediate, knee-jerk reaction to this announcement. You will have time to consider all of it before making a decision.

No sustaining or debate of the scriptures will take place during this conference. But your input is necessary and required. An email address has been provided specifically for that purpose. Please use restorationscriptures2017@gmail.com to send in questions you have about what has been announced and provided.

There likely won’t be enough time tomorrow to answer all the questions that get sent in, but any that aren’t addressed during tomorrow’s Q&A session will be replied to. But there’s no rush. If you have an immediate, burning question, please send it in quickly so that we have time this evening to prepare responses for tomorrow.

Also, this same email address will be used over the next 6 months for additional questions and ongoing feedback in preparation for a sustaining conference. So if you don't have a question or suggestion until June, you can still submit it and it will be addressed. But please refrain from pointing out formatting issues unless it is alarming. We will be combing through the books again to find them all.

If there's a particular issue in these scriptures that is critical, in your opinion, email your concern and your reasoning to support your argument. It will be posted for others to view and consider. If you think that there is something else that belongs in this edition, feel free to email that suggestion as well. For example you might feel inspired about a principle that needs to be added to the Governing Principles statement. However, realize that what this edition now contains has been under the Lord's direction for the past year and a half and He has provided, at times, direct input. And there is a rigorous set of questions to assist you in determining whether you should submit new material.

The **Preliminary Submission & Critique Process** works like this:

1. Questions, suggestions, criticism and requests get submitted to restorationscriptures2017@gmail.com.
2. From the end of the St. George conference until the 4th of July, a SUBMISSIONS list will be maintained on www.scriptures.info.
 - a. The items on the list will come from emails submitted.
 - b. That document will list the specific items that have been pointed out as concerns to be removed, modified or added to the *Restoration Edition*. The points made by the submitter will also be given. Please be aware that your reasoning will be significantly refined if

from the desk of
Denver Snuffer

VOLUME 8

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from the desk of
Denver Snuffer

VOLUME 8

JUNE 13, 2017—SEPTEMBER 28, 2022

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

A Note to the Reader:

This multi-volume series covers blog entries beginning in 2010. Scripture references in the text refer to the LDS versions of scripture found in the King James Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. Beginning about March 2018 the scripture cites change to the Restoration Edition of the scriptures. Cites of the Restoration Edition scriptures are typically denoted with OC, NC and T&C references e.g., (NC Matt. 8:10), or alternately (1 Ne. 1:22 RE) setting them apart from the former LDS scripture version references. For those interested, a scripture reference conversion tool that allows navigation between the various scripture references and versions can be accessed at: <https://scriptures.info/Scriptures/ReferenceTranslator>

CHAPTER 1

A Yet Distant Hope

JUNE 2017

JUNE 13, 2017

Equality?

I received the following email today:

Dear Denver,

I know you don't know me, but there are some things that have been on my mind for quite a while and I wanted to ask you a couple of questions.

When you spoke in St. George, you said, "We are all equal, and we are all accountable." What did you mean by that? At the time, I felt the Spirit bear witness to me that what you were saying was true as well as very significant. Over the past few months, though, I've wondered if I didn't really understand what you were saying. Could you please clarify for me and maybe others as well? Obviously, we all have differing degrees of light and truth. Does that make us unequal? How can I be equal with someone who has a greater connection to the Lord than I do? Are we necessarily brought back into a hierarchy because of this inequality? Do all our voices matter

when some might voice mere opinions, others inspired thoughts from God and others revealed truths from the Lord? How can I be equal with all when some voices are loud and strong and heard by many and others are quiet and reserved and heard by so few?

And are we all really accountable for what happens with the scripture project? About a month ago I read this on the scripture update from the scripture committee:

If we mess things up, we are responsible for that and the Lord cannot hold the assembly responsible. The Lord is capable of making the covenant happen. He wants this. Many on the other side (according to Denver) are eager for this to happen. The Lord can remove any knucklehead(s) that gets in the way or threatens the project. He will also support it. We have seen signs that heaven has compassion on the project and the Committee (Denver receiving corrections to the scriptures is one sign). Trust that the Lord will get His way.”

To me, this sounds like we're not accountable at all. And it also reminded me of this:

The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray. It is not in the programme. It is not in the mind of God. If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place, and so He will any other man who attempts to lead the children of men astray from the oracles of God and from their duty. (Sixty-first Semiannual General Conference of the Church, Monday, October 6, 1890, Salt Lake City, Utah. Reported in Deseret Evening News, October 11, 1890, p.2.)

In PTR, you asked, “Can we be ‘one’ because we believe in the theory of equality?...Is belief enough? Or must there be action?”

I know you were talking about temporal matters, but does it apply here as well? I also looked up “Equality” on your website and discovered a series of blog posts that discuss this very concept, pointing out errors in the early church. You talked about how Joseph had initially set up a system where various groups shared power with each other and with the church as a whole. You said:

This splintering of authority precluded any single man or small body of men from dominating and dictating to the church. Ultimate authority was vested in “the voice of the Church” who could revoke any man’s position or authority. (September 21, 2016)

Up until now, there hasn’t been a concern about authority and power because we, as a people, have been organized in fellowships and have governed ourselves and have seen ourselves as equals. But now there is “a small body of men” who are making decisions that affect everyone. Is their authority splintered so that they don’t have too much power or control? Are there checks in place to ensure against unrighteous dominion?

In the same blog post, you said:

There are two great principles this history has proven. First, a body of believers who are equal are not easily governed. If the only tools to employ are persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love unfeigned and pure knowledge, it will require the wisdom of God to keep believers together. As soon as they are allowed “to govern themselves” there will be ill-defined margins and straying believers in need of teaching, preaching, persuading and long-suffering. Second, it is easy to aggregate power, wealth, influence and authority if religion is used to control people....

If Zion is to have people of one heart and one mind, who live in righteousness with one another (Moses 7:18) then however cumbersome, inefficient, difficult or daunting it may prove, only the first principle can be chosen. If it fails, then there is no residual institution to add another abusive tool for the god of this world to employ in deceiving and chaining men using another inherited false tradition.”

I can't imagine any of us in this situation today holding any judgment against the early saints. It is incredibly difficult to govern with persuasion and long-suffering and all of that. As a parent, I fail at it daily. It would be so much easier to establish a hierarchical system and move forward. But are we following the same pattern in a different way? I hear fewer and fewer voices because they don't feel heard. I see more and more shrugging and saying, “I guess the Lord will take care of everything,” “Just trust the scripture committee.”

You said:

Zion will be produced by a journey begun in equality, pursued by equals, with no man able to command another man's actions. Persuasion, meekness, unfeigned love and pure knowledge are the only tools necessary for Zion.”

I'm not interested in the theory of equality. Could the process of getting a new set of scriptures be just important as the scriptures themselves? Are we so interested in the end results that we don't care how we get there? You said it better:

This way is cumbersome and inefficient. But why do gentiles think it is preferable to trade godly equality for administrative efficiency? If the destiny is equality, then the journey must begin with that held paramount. We cannot pursue abusive and controlling means to achieve freedom and equality. The path

taken, matters as much as the destination. Struggling with the inefficient and cumbersome tools of persuasion, love, patience and pure knowledge will require a lot of changes to be made voluntarily. That is of course the goal: Voluntarily changing hearts. (September 22, 2016)

Are we really all equal? Are we really all accountable? If not, please let me know. If we are, then how do we change the way we're doing things so that we operate as equals?

I responded to this inquiry as follows:

What is the “project” now underway? I believe it to be something other than just recovering the scriptures. But the scriptures are an essential part of the “project” now underway.

As to the scriptures, there were really five different points of origin for what has been accomplished to date. No one began the project because someone was “in control.” All five different points of origin were either an individual or a small group of people who banded together to start some aspect of recovering a more accurate version of the scriptures. I was not involved. I heard that some group was working on a new set of better scriptures, and I thought it was a good idea. But I wasn't involved.

As work proceeded some of these people learned of the work of others and banded together. Over time the different groups distilled into three: two groups working independently and an individual working alone. They were unaware of each other. The two groups were working on all of the scriptures, and the individual was working on the Joseph Smith Bible text alone.

One of the groups contacted me and turned their “finished” product over to me to publish. They asked to be left unnamed. I was going to respect their wishes, but, while I was still reviewing their work I learned of another project having been completed. I’ve explained already that I contacted the other group, and put the two groups in contact with one another, and that once they were in contact they learned from one another and determined to consolidate and improve the overall project into a single effort.

No one was prevented from doing this work. Everyone was equal and entitled to do the work. There was and is no one “in charge” including me. In fact, my contributions have been limited and carefully measured by me to allow others to complete their labors uninterrupted by me attempting to exert any control. This has been freely done by volunteers laboring prayerfully as equals in pursuit of a product they have all been led by God to accomplish.

The fellow who labored alone on the Joseph Smith Bible project only recently came to the attention of the others laboring on this scripture undertaking. He stepped up voluntarily, explained what he had been working on, and is now in charge of the *JST* portion of the project because his work has been better than anything accomplished by either of the groups separately or in their combined efforts. No one elected him to take over. He just appeared with better work having been accomplished, his labors were recognized as better than what others had been able to perform, and he was given by everyone the responsibility to shepherd that part of the project to completion.

The fact that an unknown individual could step forward in the last month and provide valuable and inspired work that

everyone who had been previously laboring for over a year and a half to accomplish, and then be recognized as having done a better work, in my estimation PROVES that we are all equal. He did this as a solitary labor of love and devotion. He was not called, controlled, or assigned. He volunteered. Like all others working on the scriptures, he also proceeded as an individual with equal right to contribute. And contribute he has.

The labor on the “D&C” (I use that term for convenience) was turned over to two volunteers sometime after St. George. They were not part of the original two groups, and were only recent volunteers added to the work because they had the desire and willingness to labor on this work. Although they were very recent additions, compared with those who worked for 18 months before these two joined, the entire “D&C” has been turned over to them. They volunteered and have proven by their efforts to be worthy of the labor they are performing. No one called them. No one presides over them. They decided to do the work and have been trusted to accomplish it by everyone who had done the preliminary work.

Everyone has had the same opportunity throughout. And many people now in critically important roles assumed those positions of trust and labor very recently and entirely voluntarily.

No one is getting paid. No one is paying anyone. No one has the right to hire or fire the volunteers. There is no inequality in this project that I can determine from my observations of the work and how it has progressed.

There are a lot of people criticizing because they haven't been consulted along the way or “included” in the work. But if they rolled up their sleeves and did something to contribute they would soon find themselves laboring alongside those

who have done just that for nearly two years now. Everyone is welcomed to the work.

It is not particularly easy work. It involves many hours of reviewing sometimes difficult to read and poor quality documents in order to recover as accurate a transcript as possible. There is no “freelancing” involved in any of this. It is a word-recovery labor in which the person doing the work is attempting to restore original language. It should not matter if someone presently working on the scriptures does the work or if someone else gets out a magnifying glass (or uses a program to increase magnification) to determine what the original document said. The result should be the same.

But I asked at the beginning what “the project” really consists of: because the effort is intended to remove condemnation and rejection. The first step is to respect the Book of Mormon and former commandments, not only to say but to do them. The scriptures project is intended to show the Lord we are willing to recover what “to say” or in other words to recover as best a reconstruction of the scriptures as we can now do. We know that will not be perfect. That opportunity was lost forever. We cannot achieve perfection. What we can do is make a good faith effort to get it as right as presently possible, given the neglect and loss of important information that cannot now be recovered.

We can make as earnest and heartfelt an effort to show our respect as humanly possible in the circumstances. But we know it will not be perfect because of the state of the records now remaining.

So we will do as much as we can, and know that when we present it to the Lord it will be up to Him to determine if He will have mercy on us.

I am very encouraged by the work I have seen done. I have every hope that the scriptures that will result from this effort will be as close as possible to what Joseph Smith left us in his ministry. Not perfect, but close. And I think they will be very valuable, even precious, for anyone who is interested in getting light and truth from the reconstructed materials.

But that is only one step in “the project” and perhaps the easier one at that. The more important step is to distinguish ourselves from those who went before. When you give a fair account of the failure to accomplish Zion, the language of scriptures ascribes the pollution of the earlier saints’ inheritance to contentions, jarrings, envyings, strifes and their lustful and covetous desires. On those qualities I fear we are almost identical to the earlier saints. We have not been able to eradicate those things from ourselves.

I read the foolish opposition that has been and is being advanced and I am astonished at the failure to be grateful and deeply appreciative of the many, many hours of sacrifice that have been freely made by all involved to give something of value to everyone who will receive it. I know the Lord has been displeased by the clamor, the vocal suspicions and the negative assumptions that have been freely published to the world. I mourn because we may succeed in having the best recovered scriptures of all the last-days saints, but still be no better than the worst of them.

So “the project” remains, in my view, still a distant and probably unattainable accomplishment. We seem ill-suited to

become “one” and therefore ill-suited to have the Lord consider us for Zion. He will bring it about. But maybe with people who use the scriptures we are able to produce in order to actually “do” what they require for His people.

We take it one step at a time. Right now the remainder of the work to produce the scriptures is daunting. When finished, it will be presented to the Lord. Everyone is welcome to do that individually, collectively in fellowship groups, in families, or among friends. Everyone can present it to the Lord. Equally. And everyone can seek their own answer from Him. I intend to do so. I hope you will choose to do likewise.

If we have scriptures that please the Lord, then it is equally up to us to live according to their commandments, teachings, precepts, advice, counsel and warnings.

JUNE 14, 2017

Prayer

I received the following email:

Denver,

I know you are used to far more profound questions, but do you have any suggestions on how to make prayer meaningful? I find it hard to pray, given that God knows what's in my head and what I will say, but I have been making an effort to pray more. Any tips?

I sent the following reply:

Talk like you are addressing your most intimate friend and have nothing to hide. Tell Him about your regrets, hopes, frustrations, concerns, fears, and confusion. Before long you will discover that whatever you care about God also cares about.

He can give perspective that changes everything. Prayer should not recognize the distance between us and God, but should become the way we close that distance.

JUNE 24, 2017

New Video

There is a new video on the website for the 500th Anniversary of the Christian Reformation. The video is titled:

Reconsidering Everything

A link is provided by clicking on the name above. You can access all six of the videos on that same page.

JULY 2017

JULY 5, 2017

Scripture Voting

Some issues raised by the scripture project now underway are most appropriately decided by common consent. Here is the link to voting where the issues are set out:

<https://surveyhero.com/c/91d43co>

There will be a second round of voting later this month where additional matters will be addressed.

JULY 8, 2017

Reconciliation (A Little)

A joint accord has been reached by the Lutherans and Catholics on one issue that has divided them since Martin Luther. Luther, because he rejected Catholic authority claims, needed another basis for salvation. He identified God's grace alone as the solution.

Catholicism, however required the accouterments it offered through its claims to priesthood authority, and by extension authoritative ordinances. Therefore the Catholic claims required believers to respond with suitable submission, or works, to be saved.

The joint accord now allows the question of grace vs. works to be buried, as between Catholics and Lutherans. Harmony is found in the statement which contains these words:

By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping us and calling us to good works.

The whole accord can be found here: **Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification** (by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church).

Paragraph 25 explains:

We confess together that sinners are justified by faith in the saving action of God in Christ. By the action of the Holy Spirit in baptism, they are granted the gift of salvation, which lays the basis for the whole Christian life. They place their trust in God's gracious promise by justifying faith, which includes hope in God and love for him.

Such a faith is active in love and thus the Christian cannot and should not remain without works. But whatever in the justified precedes or follows the free gift of faith is neither the basis of justification nor merits it."

The entire statement is interesting and can be seen at the link above.

What if salvation is not determined by grace alone, by works alone, or even some combination of the two? What if it comes

from the ministry of one sent by God to declare salvation? And faith comes by hearing the message like Paul taught (See Romans 10:17). Paul was expounding a passage from Isaiah (Isa. 53:1), a prophet sent by God. Paul was likewise sent with a message from God. What if the meaning is that in order to receive salvation it is essential that the believer receive a message from a minister actually sent by God with a message for our day and time?

What if salvation requires the same thing now as when Isaiah preached and prophesied, and when Paul taught, and when Christ ministered to mankind? What if there is a necessary relationship between the sender of a message (God) and the speaker of the message (one sent by God) in order for the message to actually result in salvation for the hearer-believer?

Who has believed our report, indeed? And who, then, has saving faith?

This is a moment that has been 500 years in the coming. But it does not carry the certifying imprint of God's word. Instead it carries the authority of compromise between two institutions whose link to God is borrowed from those who did speak with and for God, but who have long been dead. Does living faith require a living message? If so neither Lutheran nor Catholic institutions can save. Nor can their new agreement signal anything important for anyone's salvation.

JULY 14, 2017

California Talk September 21

I will be speaking on September 21st at the Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts in the Los Angeles area. If you are in that area I would appreciate any effort you can make to let local non-Mormons know about the talk.

The talk is tailored for a Christian audience and is connected with the 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation was needed, but was only part of what God planned to happen before the Second Coming of the Lord. The Restoration is also necessary.

There are many things about Christian history that the paid, Protestant and Catholic clergy will avoid. I am not a paid minister, and no donations will be solicited at the talk. It is a sacrifice and a labor of love intended solely to help advance preparations for the Lord's return.

Individual efforts by those of you willing to help inform others in the Los Angeles area will be appreciated. Feel free to use your best efforts to make people aware of the planned talk. It will be at the following address:

Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts, Sierra Room
12700 Center Court Drive, Cerritos, California.

More information is available at the "2017 Events" page on the website Commemorating the 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation: <https://www.christianreformation500years.info/talks.html>.

JULY 16, 2017

Spanish Language Lectures on Faith

An on-line version of *The Lectures on Faith* (LECTURAS SOBRE LA FE) is now available and linked by clicking on that title.

It is also available as an inexpensive book on Amazon at this link:

[Lecturas Sobre La Fe](#)

If you know of a Spanish-speaking reader who would be interested, please share the link.

JULY 21, 2017

Covenant People

Man does not make covenants with God. God offers a covenant and people either accept or reject God's offer. But until God offers, mankind can do nothing to create a covenant with or for God.

The preface to the Doctrine and Covenants was a revelation intended to introduce an accompanying volume.

the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord neither his servants neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles shall be cut off *from among the people*; for they have strayed from mine ordinances and have broken mine everlasting covenant. They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness but *every man walketh in his own way and after the Image of his own God whose Image is in the likeness of the world and whose substance is that of an Idol* which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon even Babylon the great which shall fall. (D&C 1, Emphasis added)

The Lord cannot fulfill His promises, prophecies and covenants without a covenant people. There are always those who will stray and break His covenant. Among the problems the Lord has to overcome when He makes an effort to gather people together to become His, is the tendency of the proud and defiant to "walk in his own way" and to have an "Image of his own God" as the guide. The path to becoming God's people does not lie in a solitary walk by those who claim they have their "own way" to follow. It is to be found by living the commandments of Christ among brothers and sisters who grow to have one heart and one mind.

Given the tendency of wicked men to exploit the weak, society has made it impossible to live the Sermon on the Mount or Sermon

at Bountiful as a solitary individual. In a godly society where people 'do unto others other than as they wish to have done to them,' it is possible to live in peace. Those Sermons by the Lord are meant to change a culture. It is the blueprint for a community that can grow in understanding until they have one heart and one mind. The Lord's teachings lead inevitably to having "no poor among them" because the society is able to learn to have peace with one another.

JULY 23, 2017

A Prayer for Covenant

A prayer for the Lord to establish His covenant is now available as a downloadable PDF document. It can be accessed either on the "Downloads" page or directly by clicking on this link:

[Prayer for Covenant](#)

An answer has been received and it is linked below:

[Answer and Covenant](#)

JULY 29, 2017

Other Sheep Indeed

The talk I gave today at the Sunstone Conference was based on a paper that is now available as a download. It can be accessed by clicking on the title below:

[Other Sheep Indeed](#)

AUGUST 2017

AUGUST 16, 2017

Sexual Fidelity

There are too many false, foolish and untrue things said about me for me to be able to denounce them all. I could accomplish nothing else

if I were to spend my time denying all these falsehoods. So I leave them unaddressed and continue to move forward accomplishing such little good as I am able.

One recent false attack suggests that, contrary to the many talks, posts, books and teachings I have provided defending sexual purity before marriage and fidelity after marriage, that I am somehow involved in promoting something called “bonded marriage.” I may not have the name right. I do not fully understand the false idea.

Let me be clear, again, that I denounce polygamy, adultery, fornication and sexual impurity. Those who read what I write know there is really no reason for me to even make this denunciation. But almost all opinions about me are formed second-hand, and the tale-bearers speak their falsehoods with the enthusiasm that persuades many people of their lies.

A recent incident involving a man’s improper conduct was discussed in a private meeting a few weeks ago. I attended a portion of that meeting. The man involved was charged, in part, with spreading a false teaching. The facts turned out that he was not spreading the falsehood, but was the victim of the teaching. He, and a married woman together were taught the falsehood by a woman who believed in the idea. The woman who introduced it to them contacted me directly and confessed she was the source of the false teaching and regretted very much her involvement with the fiasco. To my surprise, two other women contacted me and admitted they had a role in teaching this false idea and were also aware of the harm that followed such erroneous beliefs.

To me the man stated that he realized his error, confessed his mistake, denounced the teaching, and sought to apologize many times to those involved with him before the private meeting I attended. He had also been rebaptized to repent of his error. I don’t

defend his actions. I never said he was “innocent.” I did say he was penitent. His penitence before the meeting and while I was present at the meeting was apparent. He admitted his wrongdoing, despite the personal humiliation involved, and he wept over his failure.

As for the man’s involvement in the scriptures project, he had no effect on the final product by his preliminary work. He worked on the Book of Mormon, and everything he did was discarded a couple of months ago and the whole redone. It was redone because of a recently released publication that provided side-by-side comparisons for every single word of every version of the Book of Mormon in existence. These include, among others, the original, the printer’s manuscript, the 1830, 1837, 1840, 1841, 1840 London, 1920, 1981, and all the others. Every word from the beginning word to the last was detailed. The set was purchased and provided to those who were doing the work. The books were used by two teams; each having two members. All of them are in Utah. Both teams worked as pairs with one another to recheck every word and solve the word discrepancies, deferring to the original manuscript whenever it was available. Joseph’s 1840 version was deferred to secondly. Joseph made changes in 1837 and 1840 to conform back to the original translation.

What the man contributed most meaningfully was peace-making between members of the committee when discussions resulted in disputes. He helped make peace. The rule for the committee was that any question required unanimous agreement. He was part of the unanimity, and no one ever made a solo decision. His greatest contribution was to be the voice speaking for peace and harmony as difficult challenges were faced during the work.

Not only do I teach marital fidelity and sexual propriety, but the new scriptures will include Hyrum Smith’s general epistle to

the church, published when he was the presiding authority in the church. His general epistle teaches marital fidelity, and counsels against breaking up marriages because of religious differences.

A man should have only one wife. And he should be faithful to her. Likewise wives should be faithful to their husbands. Everyone should act honorably and keep their marital vows, even when there are differences between spouses over religious ideas.

I alone am responsible for receiving from the Lord the content of the Prayer for Covenant, Answer to Prayer, and Covenant language. The Prayer for Covenant was provided by revelation from the Lord to me alone. It took me nearly 200,000 words in a book to say what the Lord, by inspiration, provided in the Prayer in less than 3,000 words. He is a great deal better at revealing the truth than am I.

Women who participated in the private meeting have now released a statement that is linked below:

Clarifying Light and Darkness

(<http://www.totheremnant.com/2017/08/bringing-things-to-light.html>)

CHAPTER 2

Time For a Cool Change

AUGUST 18, 2017

New Christian Movement

An article about the upcoming Boise Conference appears in the Religious News Service:

The new Christian Movement: Starting over after 2,000 years
(<https://religionnews.com/2017/08/18/the-new-christian-movement-starting-over-after-2000-years/>)

SEPTEMBER 2017

SEPTEMBER 17, 2017

New Video

There is a new video on the Christian Reformation website and on YouTube. Below is a link to:

The Protestant Reformation video page
(<https://www.christianreformation500years.info/>)

The YouTube video posting
(<https://youtu.be/ot2l6tP1oU8>)

This Thursday I will be speaking in California in the first of three talks to be given this fall to Christian audiences.

SEPTEMBER 29, 2017

Guide and Standard Website

The original intent for the scriptures.info website was to house the scripture project and provide research tools. Because the Guide and Standard has now become the subject of extensive discussion, the topic needs to be moved onto a new discussion site. The Scripture Committee has developed a new website for discussion of the Guide and Standard and as a venue for announcements. The new site is titled *Scriptures Project* and can be accessed by clicking on the link below:

Scriptures Project

This will allow the original scriptures.info site to remain dedicated to the original purpose of providing the various source materials for the scriptures as a reference and research site.

SEPTEMBER 30, 2017

Update and Correction

I announced the new website for the scriptures committee in my last post. I characterized it as a “Guide and Standard” website. That is the issue currently occupying a lot of attention, but the committee’s website has a larger purpose. The committee’s website is for reporting to the assembly of believers what the scripture committee is doing and how the final steps for publishing the scriptures are progressing. Providing a platform for those who don’t have a platform of their own is a secondary (and necessary) function. Submitted proposals might have personal opinion in

them, but the committee does not see a need to curtail anything unless it is disrespectful.

I wanted to correct my earlier, limited description of the new website. The site provides its own explanation of the purpose and scope.

OCTOBER 2017

OCTOBER 4, 2017

Dallas Talk

I will be speaking on Thursday, October 19th at the J. Erik Jonsson Central Library in Dallas, Texas from 6–7:30 P.M. CST. This is the second in a series of talks about Christianity and the Reformation and will be followed by a third talk in Atlanta, Georgia in November.

If you live in the Dallas, Texas or Atlanta, Georgia areas, and are willing to help us with invitation and other needs for the lectures being delivered in those cities, please contact Vern or Whitney Horning: vernwhit@msn.com

OCTOBER 6, 2017

New Video

A new video has been posted on YouTube. The content has been taken from the first talk in LA, with video images added. The video and link are below:

A Message to All Christians

Throughout the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation we are reaching out to Christians to share the restored gospel. This year is a countdown to the 500th year of Martin Luther's 95 Theses. Next year will be the 500th year. It is time for all who consider

themselves “Christian” to consider carefully Christian history and the Christian message.

OCTOBER 28, 2017

Reformation Sunday

October 29, 2017 is Reformation Sunday. It is the Sunday closest to the date Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Whittenburg Castle church. The document raised questions and propositions for debate. It was intended to lead to a meaningful discussion among Catholics, in the hope it would cause a reform to the institution.

The institution did not accept the invitation to meaningfully discuss the issues raised, and instead of reflecting on their own conduct, they condemned Martin Luther. Martin Luther was a devout Catholic. His questions were sincere. His loyalty to the institution was unaffected by the errors he saw in the scandalous selling of indulgences to finance projects in Rome.

Rome believed itself above criticism. They assumed their historic control was a right conferred by God. Therefore, the sincerity of Martin Luther and the legitimacy of his questions and propositions meant nothing to the institution. They branded Luther a heretic and threatened his life. This was the worst possible approach for Catholicism, and the best possible result for Christianity.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York has recently acknowledged that, the Catholic Church was plagued with generalized corruption at the time of Luther “which we cannot deny.” He described the effect Luther had, “It was the striking of a match, creating a bonfire—the flames of which are still burning.”

Luther’s flame burns still because it was grounded in Christian sincerity, founded on legitimate criticism of institutional corruption,

and advocated by a man whose faith led him on a quest to find and acknowledge truth despite all opposition encountered. The result was a society divided into camps that vilified or praised, threatened or protected, believed or condemned him. The ideas he advocated have literally changed the world. Those he persuaded have grown in numbers over the past 500 years.

Reformation Sunday should not pass without reflecting on the changes Martin Luther brought about to the world today. Although a flawed man, he was nonetheless an instrument in God's hand to change our world for the better. If you own a Bible you can read in your native language, you owe a debt to Martin Luther. If you are either Catholic or Protestant, your church today is a result of changes caused by Martin Luther's flames. Catholicism was reformed and Protestant churches came into existence as the result of Martin Luther.

NOVEMBER 2017

NOVEMBER 10, 2017

New Video

A new video is now available. It is taken from the second talk, given in Dallas, Texas, to Christians. The video can be viewed here:

A Message to All Christians.

NOVEMBER 14, 2017

New Paper - Update November 21st

I gave a talk on Reformation Sunday about the priesthood. A paper based on the talk is now available as a download. The document is titled "The Holy Order" and can be accessed either on the Downloads page or through this link:

The Holy Order

The paper has been updated to correct some typos and add some missing words. Also a new footnote 58 has been added to clarify that the example used involved Moses. The example illustrated ancient Israel's tribal identity issues involving Moses, and was "patriarchal." In most Native American cultures today clan identity is reckoned from the wife's clan, and is "matriarchal."

NOVEMBER 26, 2017

Abuse of Authority

The presiding high priest in the LDS church at Guymon's Mill in early 1838 was Aaron Lyon. Guymon's Mill was about eight miles east of Far West. Aaron Lyon's wife died and left him with young children to care for as a single parent.

In 1837, a young woman named Sarah Jackson moved there ahead of her husband who was then serving a mission. Her husband was expected to join her a few months later, but by early 1838 he had not come yet.

Sarah Jackson went to Aaron Lyon as the presiding high priest to ask if he would pray for a revelation to know the reason for her husband's absence. Lyon complied with the request and said her husband would not be joining her because he was on a mission now preaching to the dead because he was dead. Lyon also told Sarah Jackson that he had learned by revelation that she was to be his (Lyon's) wife, and that if she did not marry him, her life would turn out to be miserable.

Sarah Jackson believed Aaron Lyon was a man of God, and believed what he told her. She mourned her husband's death, and then consented to marry Lyon. The marriage was just a few days away when Sarah's husband arrived home from his mission, alive

and well, to join his wife in Guymon's Mill. He was justifiably angry at the news concerning Aaron Lyon and his wife.

A church court was held on April 28, 1838 and Aaron Lyon was demoted from his rank as presiding high priest. In the testimony at the court, the following evidence was entered by Sarah Jackson:

Lyon told Sarah Jackson: "the Lord had appointed him a wife, by revelation, and he knew her name." Further,

that the Lord told [Lyon] that [Jackson's] husband was dead and preaching to the spirits in prison, and that I was presented before [Lyon], and that the Lord told him that I was to be his wife. (*JSP, Documents*, Vol. 6, p. 123)

Further, according to Sarah Jackson, Lyon

told me that if I refused this I should be forever miserable, for he had a complete view of my future state and he would write it down, for he knew just how it would be. (*Id.*, p. 124)

Aaron Lyon relied on his position as presiding high priest to coerce Sarah Jackson into accepting his claims because, he explained, "them that are ordained to this high authority are ordained of God and you have as much right to believe me [Lyon] as to believe Paul" (*Id.*). He followed this up with the grave warning that "the vengeance of God was about to be poured speedily upon me if I did not agree to [Lyon's] evil designs" (*Id.*).

Less than six months after this incident, in October 1838, Joseph Smith was arrested and imprisoned. The longest part of his imprisonment happened in Liberty, Missouri where, while in confinement, he wrote a letter explaining how fragile priesthood authority was and how quickly almost all men forfeit that authority after it is conferred upon them. He explained in that letter:

Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—that the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man. We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. Hence many are called, but few are chosen. No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

The trial of Aaron Lyon would have been in recent memory as Joseph reflected on those who had been ordained to the priesthood. Aaron Lyon claimed authority “by virtue of the priesthood.” He claimed it certified that what he said was reliable, as ‘believable as the Apostle Paul.’ Lyon exercised dominion and compulsion over Sarah Jackson. He used his priestly claims to justify his ambition to obtain Sarah Jackson as his wife.

The only way to preach, teach or expound truth is by persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness and meekness. But those tools are comparatively weak when compared with priestly authority claims invoking the false premise that God backs the man even when the man does not back God.

NOVEMBER 30, 2017

Completing and Publishing Scriptures

I've written a number of books. About 20% of the work is writing them. About 80% of the work is getting them laid out correctly, formatted, and ready for print. The scriptures project is now in that final labor-intensive stage before publication.

The hope was to have them in print before Christmas. Based on what I learned in a meeting last evening, that does not seem possible. Too much of the final process remains to be completed for them to be in print by the end of the year. When I learn that they are ready to print, I will announce that here.

DECEMBER 2017

DECEMBER 17, 2017

Motives

Never assume a person is motivated by a corrupt heart when their actions can just as easily be explained by stupidity.

DECEMBER 25, 2017

The New Covenants

There will be three volumes of scripture: The Old Covenants, to be volume 1. The New Covenants, to be volume 2. Teachings and Commandments, to be volume 3.

The second volume of the new edition of the scriptures is now available to download from scripturesproject.blogspot.com.

It is now available in print through Amazon at this link:

The New Covenants.

It contains the New Testament and Book of Mormon in a single volume, titled The New Covenants. Joseph Smith always intended for these two to be in a single book. Until now, however, Joseph's hope was never realized.

This volume includes the most accurately produced version of the Book of Mormon in print and most complete version of Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible, otherwise called the Joseph Smith Translation. Errors and omissions in earlier versions have been carefully corrected.

The other two volumes will be available soon. The final formatting process is underway for both of those volumes. All three volumes will be initially printed only in paperback. This will give readers the opportunity to review the paperback version for a few months, and bring any printing errors to the attention of the scripture committee so they can be corrected. Once all layout issues are resolved, a thinner, leather bound, onion-skin paper version will be published to make them easy to carry.

This is the culmination of more than two years of effort by dozens of volunteers spending thousands of hours to make this possible. It is an historic accomplishment. Everyone who has assisted deserves our gratitude.

DECEMBER 27, 2017

Spring Conference-Phoenix

There will be a general conference in Phoenix, Arizona on March 24 and 25. I have been invited and plan to speak. Below is a link to the conference site:

Spring 2018 Conference: Wisdom through the ages.

Details and updates will be made at that site. The plan is to broadcast it live on the internet for any who are unable to attend.

JANUARY 2018

JANUARY 3, 2018

Thomas Monson Died

Thomas Monson died last evening. I assume many people are aware of this but some people read this website from far distant places and may not yet know of his passing.

He was the last one of the general authorities who were serving in the LDS church when I was baptized in 1973. With his passing there are none of that original group left.

This makes the elderly Russell Nelson the new heir to the president's position and the one who now possesses and controls all of the LDS church's assets—or in church parlance the holder of all the keys.

Thomas Monson was a kindly man who projected an image of concern and care for members of his church. His passing leaves two vacancies in the church's top leadership council which the new president will be entitled to fill.

JANUARY 7, 2018

Cursed: Denied Priesthood

For Joseph Smith, 1838 was a terrible year. Rumors of immorality, begun that year by Oliver Cowdery, were given credibility because Oliver was the scribe who recorded most of the Book of Mormon text. They are still believed by most Mormon sects, including the LDS church. Cowdery's insinuations resulted in him being brought

before a church court on April 12, 1838 by the Far West High Council. A total of nine charges were brought against Cowdery.

At the time, Cowdery was the Assistant President to the Church and respected as the “second elder” of the church. Cowdery had been one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon and was responsible for selecting and ordaining the first Twelve Apostles. Cowdery’s church trial was perhaps the most significant to be held in the history of the church.

The nine charges against Cowdery included this one: “For seeking to destroy the character of President Joseph Smith Junior by falsely insinuating that he was guilty of adultery etc.” After taking evidence, the High Council ultimately ex-communicated Oliver Cowdery and cleared Joseph of the charge. The minutes of the High Council said they dealt with “the girl business,” meaning Oliver’s allegations against Joseph. Joseph was exonerated (See Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983), 162–163).

The un-substantiated charge that Joseph was an adulterer has remained with Mormonism, moving from rumor, to widespread accusation, and finally into accepted LDS history. Today, essentially every Mormon sect either reluctantly admits, or vigorously advocates that carnal relations with plural wives originated with Joseph Smith, and therefore Oliver Cowdery was justified in accusing Joseph Smith of adultery. The closer the historical record is examined, however, the less evidence there appears to support Joseph as the instigator of sexual relations with multiple women. That same historical record has more evidence to implicate Brigham Young and consider that he changed what Joseph Smith believed. Joseph denounced adultery, and fathered children with Emma

Smith alone. Brigham Young vigorously advocated carnal sexuality in the hear-and-now with multiple women as a religious sacrament.

Unlike Joseph Smith, Brigham Young not only publicly advocated the practice, but also fathered children with many women. Joseph denounced it publicly and excommunicated those who he found engaged in it, and fathered children only with Emma Smith, his lawful wife. Despite this clear difference, the LDS church claims Brigham Young only practiced publicly what Joseph Smith did privately.

Even if you believe the LDS account of history (which I do not), the differences between the public statements and open conduct of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young could not be more dissimilar. The way the LDS institution has reconciled the great disparity between them is to assert Joseph was a liar, and Brigham Young was not! They cannot be reconciled, and one of them will be damned (See D&C 76:103–106).

Oliver Cowdery was not alone in forsaking Mormonism and Joseph Smith in 1838. Many of the most prominent members and leaders of the church likewise abandoned Joseph that year.

David Whitmer, another of the Three Witnesses, resigned his membership in 1838, but was not formally excommunicated. His brother John Whitmer, the church historian, was excommunicated and took the history with him, refusing to return it to Joseph.

Prominent and respected Mormons, Hiram Page (one of the Eight Witnesses) and W.W. Phelps (a member of the high council), also left the church in 1838. So did three members of the twelve, and other church leaders and members.

On July 4, 1838 Sidney Rigdon delivered the infamous “Salt Sermon,” warning that dissenters were worthy of being “trodden, like salt that lost its savor” under the feet of the saints. Because of

the talk, former close friends and church leaders Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, W.W. Phelps and Lyman E. Johnson were warned to leave Far West or face “a fatal calamity.” They became enemies of Joseph. Mormons were in turmoil. In response to the threats against these men, all but Phelps fled Far West.

Rigdon’s Salt Sermon did not just threaten disaffected Mormons. He also threatened a “war of extermination” against the non-Mormons of Missouri if they did not stop annoying the Mormons. The threats ignited anti-Mormon opposition. Many of the disaffected Mormons changed sides and joined the Missouri mobs attacking Mormon settlements. These former leaders used their credibility as insiders to incite greater anger and hostility toward the church. The animosities soon turned into armed conflict and arson.

Missourians believed Mormons threatened them. Mormons thought they were acting in defense, and justified their own violence as “defending” themselves. Civil order completely broke down. Historians have named the resulting conflict “The Mormon War.” Angry Mormons fought against angry Missourians. Both sides blamed the other for causing the violence.

In October 1838, responding to the outbreak of hostility between Mormons and Missourians, Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs issued an “Extermination Order” directing that Mormons be slain or driven from the State of Missouri. The Order gave violence *against* Mormons legitimacy and made Mormon *responses* an act of war against the state.

Many of these former Mormon leaders signed affidavits accusing Joseph Smith and his church organization of criminal and moral wrongdoing. Thomas Marsh, president of the Quorum

of the Twelve Apostles, signed an affidavit on October 24, 1838 condemning and blaming Joseph for causing all the violence. The Marsh allegations were endorsed by a second affidavit from fellow apostle Orson Hyde. The Marsh affidavit was signed the same day open warfare commenced and stated in part that “Joseph Smith, the Prophet, had preached [at Far West]...that all the Mormons who refused to take up arms, if necessary, in difficulties with the citizens, should be shot, or otherwise put to death[.]” The affidavits identified Joseph Smith as the one responsible for Mormon violence directed at Missouri citizens. After recounting circumstantial evidence of thefts by Mormons that he claimed were supervised by Joseph, the Marsh affidavit stated,

They have among them a company consisting of all that are considered true Mormons, called the Danites, who have taken an oath to support the heads of the Church in all things, that they say or do, whether right or wrong. ... On Saturday last, I am informed by the Mormons that they had a meeting at Far West, at which they appointed a company of twelve, by the name of the Destruction Company, for the purpose of burning and destroying; ... they passed a decree that no Mormon dissenter should leave Caldwell county alive; and that such as attempted to do it, should be shot down, and sent to tell their tale in eternity. In a conversation between Dr. Avard and other Mormons, said Avard proposed to start a pestilence among the Gentiles, as he called them, by poisoning their corn, fruit, &c., and saying it was the work of the Lord; and said Avard advocated lying for the support of their religion, and said it was no harm to lie for the Lord!! The plan of said Smith, the Prophet, is to take this State; and he professes to his people to

intend taking the United States, and ultimately the whole world. This is the belief of the Church, and my own opinion of the Prophet's plans and intentions. It is my opinion that neither said Joseph Smith, the Prophet, nor any one of the principal men, who is firm in the faith, could be indicted for any offense in the county of Caldwell. The Prophet inculcates the notion, and it is believed by every true Mormon that Smith's prophecies are superior to the law of the land. I have heard the Prophet say that he should yet tread down his enemies, and walk over their dead bodies; that if he was not let alone, he would be a second Mahomet [Mohammad] to this generation, and that he would make it one gore of blood from the Rocky Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean; that like Mahomet, whose motto, in treating for peace, was "Al Koran or the Sword," so should it be eventually with us, "Joseph Smith or the Sword." These last statements were made during the last summer.

In calmer days, both Marsh and Hyde would recant their sworn affidavits. But in 1838 their statements were thought to be entirely truthful, and provided justification for the Missouri political leaders, militia and general population to see Joseph Smith and Mormons as a clear and present danger to them and their property.

The first skirmishes between Mormons and Missourians began in August 1838 at a polling station when Mormons tried to vote. A band of Mormons led by Sampson Avard confronted election judge Adam Black about the failure to protect Mormon voting rights. Joseph Smith was among these Mormons. Judge Black attributed threats of violence to Avard, and said Joseph did not approve and instead possessed no such heart for violence.

In the aftermath of the fight at the polling station, Avard's authority to direct the Mormon militia was removed by Joseph

Smith and Avarad was reassigned as a surgeon. The re-assignment was because Joseph did not want violence to be used to resolve conflicts and Avarad thought otherwise. Avarad testified in November 1838,

I once had a command as an officer, but Joseph Smith, jr., removed me from it, and I asked him the reason, and he assigned that he had another office for me. Afterwards Mr. Rigdon told me I was to fill the office of surgeon, to attend to the sick and wounded. (Testimony before Judge Austin A. King, 5th District Court of Missouri, November 12, 1838)

Avarad continued to support violence against perceived enemies, and formed a group that came to be known as the “Danites.” Joseph denied that he approved or supported Avarad’s group or violent actions. Historians have debated the question of Joseph’s involvement with the Danite organization and activities. Joseph’s denials have been questioned largely because of testimony against Joseph given by Avarad in late 1838 before Judge King.

While Avarad was acting in the role of a surgeon, the battle of Crooked River was fought on October 24, 1838. The Extermination Order was issued immediately after, on October 27, 1838. Three days later, October 30, 1838 at Haun’s Mill, the Missouri Militia, led by Colonel William Jennings, Sheriff of Livingston County, massacred a group of Mormons. Some even after they surrendered. None of the Missouri Militia were killed. The Mormon dead totaled at least 17, including a 78 year-old Revolutionary War veteran, whose body was decapitated and dismembered after he had surrendered, and two boys, ages 9 and 10.

Joseph Smith was tricked by George Hinkle into surrendering at the city of Far West while it was under siege. He thought he was going to meet with Missouri Militia leaders to negotiate peace.

Hinkle lied to Joseph and brought him and other leaders to the militia, to be immediately arrested for treason.

On November 1st Joseph was sentenced to death “at 9 o’clock tomorrow morning in a public square at Far West.” Militia leader Donaphin refused to carry out the order, and Joseph’s life was spared.

In the lead up to his arrest, and then during imprisonment, disaffected Mormons were far more dangerous and threatening to Joseph than the non-Mormons. It was Mormon lies about him that caused the peril.

Joseph’s original arrest at Far West was arranged by an agreement George Hinkle made with the commander of the Missouri Militia. The church leaders were inside Far West, which at the time was fortified and would be difficult for the militia to take without serious loss of life. Hinkle was sent to negotiate with the militia poised outside Far West as the representative for the community.

Hinkle agreed with militia commander Colonel Lucas to surrender church leaders to the militia, but lied to Joseph and the others. He did not disclose they would be arrested, but led them to believe they were going to meet with Col. Lucas to negotiate an end to the conflict. Joseph was surprised when Hinkle led him into the camp as a prisoner. George Hinkle was a traitor.

Joseph Smith wrote several documents while imprisoned in Missouri. Specific dissidents are named and their treachery explained in those documents. The individuals and their wrongdoing are set out below:

From jail Joseph petitioned for habeas corpus. In the petition he mentioned George Hinkle:

Joseph Smith Jr is now unlawfully confined and restrained of his liberty in Liberty jail Clay County (Mo) that he has been

restrained of his liberty near five months your petitioners clame that the whole transaction which has been the cause of his confinement (is) unlawfull from the first to the Last he was taken from his home by a fraude being practised upon him by a man by the name of George M Hinkle... (*JSP, Documents* Vol. 6, p. 344; as in original)

Hinkle is mentioned in another letter, along with John Corrill, Reed Peck, David Whitmer and WW Phelps:

Look at Mr [George M.] Hinkle. A wolf in sheep's clothing. Look at his brother John Corrill Look at the beloved brother Reed Peck who aided him in leading us, as the savior was led, into the camp as a lamb prepared for the slaughter and a sheep dumb before his shearer so we opened not our mouth But these men like Balaam being greedy for a reward sold us into the hands of those who loved them, for the world loves his own. I would remember W[illiam] W. Phelps who comes up before us as one of Job's comforters. God suffered such kind of beings to afflict Job, but it never entered into their hearts that Job would get out of it all. This poor man who professes to be much of a prophet has no other dumb ass to ride but David Whitmer to forbid his madness when he goes up to curse Israel, and this ass not being of the same kind of Balaams therefore the angel notwithstanding appeared unto him yet he could not penetrate his understanding sufficiently so but what he brays out cursings instead of blessings. (*JSP, Documents* Vol. 6, p. 300-301; as in original)

Sampson Avard led the Danites, a secret Mormon, quasi-military organization that terrorized Missourians and exacted revenge against them. They burned houses and engaged in assaults

to retaliate against the local non-Mormons. Avard was responsible for Joseph, Hyrum and others being held on the charge of treason. Without Avard's testimony it was unlikely for enough evidence to be shown for probable cause to hold them on the charge of treason. Joseph wrote from jail about Avard the following:

We have learned also since we have been in prison that many false and pernicious things which were calculated to lead the saints far astray and to do great injury (have been taught by Dr. [Sampson] Avard) as coming from the Presidency and we have reason to fear (that) many (other) designing and corrupt characters like unto himself (have been teaching many things) which the presidency never knew of being taught in the church by any body untill after they were made prisoners, which if they had known of, they would have spurned them and their authors from them as they would the gates of hell. Thus we find that there has been frauds and secret abominations and evil works of darkness going on leading the minds of the weak and unwary into confusion and distraction, and palming it all the time upon upon the presidency while mean time the presidency were ignorant as well as innocent of these things, which were practicing in the church in their name. (*JSP, Documents Vol. 6, p. 306*)

Joseph wrote about the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon (David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris) along with William McLellan, John Whitmer, Thomas Marsh and Orson Hyde. All of these were identified in the following condemnation written by Joseph in Liberty Jail:

Such characters as [William E.] McLellan, John Whitmer, O[liver] Cowdery, Martin Harris, who are too mean to mention

and we had liked to have forgotten them. [Thomas B.] Marsh & [Orson] Hyde whose hearts are full of corruption, whose cloak of hypocrisy was not sufficient to shield them or to hold them up in the hour of trouble, who after having escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of God and become again entangled and overcome the latter end is worse than the first. But it has happened unto them according to the words of the savior, the dog has returned to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Again if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking (for) of judgement and fire indignation to come which shall devour these adversaries. For he who despiseth Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses of how much more severe punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy who hath sold his brother and denied the new and everlasting covenant. (*JSP, Documents* Vol. 6, pp. 307–308)

WW Phelps was another Mormon dissenter who was removed from leadership and then excommunicated in June 1838. He was one of the witnesses who testified against Joseph Smith in the Missouri treason hearings and accused him of being responsible for violence and treason. Phelps may have been motivated to testify against Joseph Smith to protect himself from criminal charges. He had been seen by Patrick Lynch, the clerk in Stolling's grocery store, as one of the Mormon mob that robbed the store and then burned it (*JSP, Documents* Vol. 6, pp. 417–419).

Joseph was not fooled by these men. He recognized they were traitors and liars. But he revealed to his wife his own spirit of forgiveness about them. Writing from jail to his wife, after 5 months

and 5 days of imprisonment, Joseph counseled Emma “neither harber [sic] a spirit of revenge” (*JSP, Documents* Vol. 6, p. 405). Joseph’s advice to his wife contrasts sharply with the revealed word from the Lord to Joseph.

Early in 1839, after nearly a half-year of imprisonment, Joseph Smith wrote a letter from Liberty Jail to the saints. The letter included several revelations. One revelation declared these words:

[C]ursed are all those that shall lift up the heal against mine anointed saith the Lord and cry they have sin[n]ed when they have not sined before me saith the Lord but have done that which was meat in mine eyes and which I commanded them but those who cry transgression do it because they are the servants of sin and are the children of disobediance themselvs and those who swear false against my servants that they might bring them unto bondage and death. Wo unto them because they have offended my little ones they shall be severed from the ordinances of mine house their basket shall not be full their houses and their barnes shall famish and they themselvs shall be dispised by those that flattered them they shall not have right to the priesthood nor their posterity after them from generation to generation it had been better for them that a millstone had been hanged about their necks and they ~~having~~ drownd in the depth of the see... (*JSP, Documents* Vol. 6, p. 366; all as in original)

It was the Lord who said those men who bore false witness against Joseph “**shall not have right to the priesthood nor their posterity after them from generation to generation[.]**” Even as late as the 1830s it was possible for men to so offend God that He will curse both them and their posterity from any right to the priesthood.

Such a heavy cursing raises two questions: First, upon whom was this curse imposed? Second, what did they do to merit such a heavy burden?

The probable candidates who earned this cursing are those Joseph identified in his letters describing the lies and false testimony against him. They were: George Hinkle, John Corrill, Reed Peck, Sampson Avard, William McLellin, John Whitmer, David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, Thomas Marsh, Orson Hyde and WW Phelps. Each of these men and their wrongdoings are mentioned by Joseph Smith in his correspondence from jail in Missouri.

The three witnesses to the Book of Mormon are in almost every priesthood line of authority throughout Mormonism. Think of the irony of that for a moment. They were cursed and “shall not have right to the priesthood nor their posterity after them from generation to generation” yet Mormons point to them as the source through which the priesthood authority has descended until today.

This loss was because God sent a messenger, Joseph Smith, to say what God gave him to speak as God’s message to that generation. But these men rejected the messenger and fought against him. They accused Joseph of wrongdoing and sin when there was none.

What are the implications today for those historians and institutions who, like Oliver Cowdery, say Joseph Smith was an adulterer and a liar? Are they any different from those who testified against him in 1838 and 1839? It calls to mind another revelation God declared while Joseph remained in Liberty Jail:

fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee; While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings

constantly from under thy hand. And thy people shall never be turned against thee by the testimony of traitors. (D&C 122:1-3)

Are fools who hold Joseph Smith in derision today any less accountable?

I DO NOT believe Joseph Smith was an adulterer. He was not a liar, nor a hypocrite. But almost every Mormon institution, and certainly the largest ones, either proclaim or admit Joseph was all these things. I do not. I think he was pure in heart, noble, and virtuous. Must a person themselves be pure in heart, wise, noble, and virtuous before they qualify to seek worthy counsel, authority and blessings through Joseph Smith's legacy?

One of the most ghastly legacies still happening as a result of Brigham Young's openly adulterous version of Mormonism is best understood in a recent article in a December 28th *Salt Lake Tribune* article: *After polygamist leaders used underage girls for sex, lawsuit says, one teen was forced to be a scribe for the rituals.* The article describes the allegations in a newly filed lawsuit against the FLDS leaders. Among other things it relates the following:

Starting when she was 8 years old, the woman [victim] says, she would be taken from her home, wearing a bag over her head, to an unknown location—typically an FLDS temple in the Colorado City, Ariz., area or other church—or trust-owned properties—where she would be assigned a number for a religious ritual, according to the lawsuit.

There, she was reportedly sexually assaulted by the Jeffses, Nielsen or other church members and leaders. When the men weren't assaulting her, she says, they watched.

While these are unproven allegations at present, the lawsuit will be based on these and other horrific allegations. These contemptible

deviant sexual practices are an outgrowth of the legacy bequeathed to the LDS by Brigham Young. Carol Lynn Pearson's recent book, *The Ghost of Eternal Polygamy*, recounts how plural wivery continues to invade and haunt the thinking of LDS Mormon women. Though the LDS church finally abandoned the practice in 1904 this cancer originated with it. I do not believe the deviant sexual legacy is Joseph's, who denounced adultery, but is Brigham's, who celebrated sexual access to multiple women as a religious sacrament.

How many descendants of George Hinkle, John Corrill, Reed Peck, Sampson Avard, William McLellin, John Whitmer, David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, Thomas Marsh, Orson Hyde and WW Phelps today think they hold priesthood, when God said they were cursed as part of these men's posterity? It would be interesting to know how many men today *are* cursed and have forfeited any right to priesthood because they, like those who were responsible for Joseph's imprisonment, foolishly hold Joseph in derision.

As for myself, I believe Joseph when a sermon of his on May 26, 1844 is quoted in *DHC* 6:411: "What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can find only one." He made this comment in response to the false accusations contained in the Nauvoo Expositor.

I believe Joseph when he, referring to the 1835 D&C, C1, affirmed it was his belief that:

Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy; we declare that we believe that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in the case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again." I believe Joseph Smith was truthful when, as

editor of the *Times and Seasons*, he disavowed polygamy and stated the foregoing verse was “the only rule allowed by the church.” (*Times and Seasons*, vol. 3, p. 909 (1842)) He repeated that same position again at *Times and Seasons*, vol. 3, p. 939 (1842).

In 1844 Joseph and Hyrum Smith announced the excommunication of Hiram Brown for “preaching Polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines, in the county of Lapeer, state of Michigan” (*Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, p. 423 (1844)).

Hyrum Smith, with Joseph’s approval, published a statement denying plural wives or polygamy, explaining all such teaching is false doctrine:

... some of your elders say, that a man having a certain priesthood, may have as many wives as he pleases, and that doctrine is taught here: I say unto you that that man teaches false doctrine, for there is no such doctrine taught here; neither is there any such thing practiced here. (*Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, p. 474 (March, 1844))

God identified those who deride Joseph and Hyrum Smith as “fools.” Writing histories and teaching as doctrine that Joseph and Hyrum were liars is, to any reasonable mind, “derision” of them. Like those condemned in 1839, should all who deride Joseph as a liar today question their claim to hold priesthood authority? Has God continued to curse both them and their posterity from any right to the priesthood?

As explained in the talk on Priesthood given in Orem, Utah on November 2, 2013, priesthood is a fellowship. Joseph Smith was clearly in fellowship with God and angels, and therefore one whose priesthood included the ministering of angels, the Son of God, and God the Father. He held priesthood.

JANUARY 15, 2018

Website Updates

The website has been changed and updated. This is done preliminary to adding podcasts to the site.

In the “Downloads” section there is a new recording of a talk given Sunday, January 14th. It is titled “That we might become one.”

JANUARY 29, 2018

Podcast Now Live

The new Podcast function is now live. You can listen to episodes by clicking on the **Podcast button** and then playing the episode.

CHAPTER 3
Look Up and Live

FEBRUARY 2018

FEBRUARY 17, 2018

Unchaste

Latter-day Saints who go through temple rites covenant and promise before God, angels and witnesses to obey the law of chastity; which is that they will have no sexual intercourse except with their spouse to whom they are legally and lawfully married.

In Illinois during the entire 1840s it was illegal to be married to more than a single spouse. In the United States Territories it was likewise a crime to be married to more than one spouse. Because of open, unlawful cohabitation by members of the LDS church beginning in the early 1850s, Congress enacted harsher and harsher penalties to stop that unlawful conduct. Congress ultimately confiscated LDS church property to compel them to obey the law. Apparently the LDS church valued property more than their religion because they abandoned unlawful polygamous marriage as a tenet of their faith.

Because no LDS marriage was lawful except with the first wife, all LDS and Fundamentalist LDS men who took plural wives and had sexual intercourse with them from the 1840s through the present, have violated the law of chastity. They have been and are adulterers.

For this reason I have denounced polygamy and advocated ending the practice of taking multiple wives. Those who violate the law of chastity will be condemned by the commandments of God. Those who took temple covenants violated their commitment before God, angels and witnesses by having sexual intercourse with women to whom they were not legally and lawfully married. According to the Book of Mormon they will be thrust down to hell (2 Ne. 9:34, 36).

Joseph Smith appears likely to have sealed other women to himself. But there is scant proof he treated them as wives and had sexual intercourse with any of them. He fathered children only with Emma Smith, his legal and lawful wife. Others were apparently sealed to him only to bind them into an eternal relationship. That sealing would allow him to take them with him into the Celestial Kingdom as part of his extended family.

FEBRUARY 21, 2018

Reliable Information

I engage in a process that precedes what I consider having possession of any kind of reliable information. Speculation and casual comments I have made are not particularly reliable. Research I've done to try to understand a subject is not reliable. Conversations in emails about some topic may be nothing more than guess work or casual conversation. When information, light and truth come from God, I consider that reliable information worth writing about, talking about or teaching.

Years ago I was contemplating the subject of Christ's original apostles. As I looked into the scriptures, the promise Christ made to the twelve was that in the resurrection they would sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. Judas was among the twelve when the promise was made. Judas fell away, betrayed the Lord and committed suicide. Whatever promise Judas may have had would have required his continued faithfulness. He was not faithful. Therefore, his throne and position as a judge in the resurrection over a tribe of Israel was forfeited. This led to the question of who would fill that vacancy.

I studied the scriptures looking exclusively for an answer to that question. Matthias was chosen to fill the vacancy left by Judas. He was chosen "by lot" which was the agreed method of discovering who the Lord wanted. Assuming that process was inspired, then Matthias would be one candidate.

Christ called Paul to be an apostle and messenger. Paul wrote 2/3 of the New Testament books (letters). He was clearly chosen by God and would be another candidate to replace Judas in the resurrected role given to the twelve. I saw no other likely contender apart from these two. After considering the almost complete absence of Matthias from the New Testament record, and Paul's great contribution, I concluded that the vacancy was filled by Paul.

Having reached a conclusion, I took it to God in prayer. Despite all my effort to study the matter out and reach a conclusion, I learned that I was wrong. I had not found the truth. My efforts did nothing more than qualify me to receive the right answer. It did not make me right.

I learned that of the original tribal leaders, eleven of the twelve fell from their positions as patriarchs. But one of the sons of Jacob never forfeited the right to be the head of his family. Joseph, who

was sold into Egypt, remained worthy, chosen and fixed in his position over his posterity. There were always only eleven vacancies to be filled. Eleven of the twelve apostles, along with Joseph of Egypt, will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel in the resurrection.

The guesses I made, the researched answer I came up with, and my best efforts did not yield reliable information. But by taking thought beforehand and accomplishing that labor, it did qualify me to approach the Lord in prayer and ask and receive His answer. His answer is reliable. Everything else is interesting, perhaps entertaining, and good faith attempts to understand. But they are not reliable in the same way as God's word.

If I have reliable information I teach it. If I do not, I leave the matter alone or clearly qualify it as only my current understanding.

FEBRUARY 28, 2018

New Covenants

The second volume of the new scriptures is now in final form and published. It combines the New Testament and Book of Mormon into a single volume. Joseph Smith always intended for these two to be published together in a single volume.

The New Testament version used is the "Joseph Smith Translation" which incorporates all changes he made, including punctuation changes. It is the first time all of the changes Joseph Smith made are in print.

The earlier version of the Joseph Smith Bible printed by the RLDS church included changes added by their publication committee. Those have been removed from this version. This is the most complete and accurate publication of Joseph's work ever put into print.

The Book of Mormon in the volume is based upon the last version Joseph Smith edited in 1840. It also restores some of what was translated, but was changed, edited or omitted by the print versions previously made available.

There are chapter divisions, and paragraph numbers, but no versification. This makes reading the material very different from earlier versions of the scriptures.

Because this volume contains the new covenant offered by Christ given to the Jews, then to the Nephites, then to the gentiles, and now again to us, it has been titled “New Covenants.”

I’ve been very impressed with the new volume as I have begun to study it. There are important differences from previous scriptures. You can read the material free, on-line at the website scriptures.info, or you can obtain a printed copy from Amazon.com.

FEBRUARY 28, 2018

Turned Out of Synagogues

I was struck with what the Lord said in this passage from the New Covenants,

Matthew 3:35: And again I say unto you, Go into the world and do not care for the world, for the world will hate you and will persecute you and will turn you out of their synagogues. Nevertheless, you shall go forth from house to house teaching the people, and I will go before you.

When the Lord tells us to expect to be “turned out of their synagogues,” I pondered over who would do that casting out. It can only be done by those who own buildings, who control houses of worship, and who expect believers to come to their religious buildings to worship God. It can only be done by those who think

they have the right to enforce their religious ideas by compulsion, demanding conformity and suppressing ideas they dislike.

When we are turned out, Christ directs us to “go forth from house to house teaching the people.” He did not suggest we build a replacement building. He did not say, go to, build your own synagogue and invite them to go worship God there.

God doesn't want or need a synagogue, chapel, or house of worship. He wants us to worship and teach in our homes.

The early Christians did not build any buildings. They worshipped in homes, just as Christ taught. We are unlike them if we build replacement synagogues, instead of worshiping God in our homes.

MARCH 2018

MARCH 3, 2018

Cast His Eyes

Throughout the Book of Mormon, the phrase “cast his eyes,” or some derivative of those words are used to describe briefly looking in a direction. When Nephi looked for his family, he said that he “cast my eyes round about” trying to see where they were (1 Ne. 8:13). When Alma described healing that occurred by looking at the bronze serpent Moses fashioned, he asked if they wouldn't “cast about their eyes” to be rescued (Alma 33:21). When Nephi and Lehi were liberated from prison by a great earthquake, and the Lamanites had fallen to the ground, they “cast their eyes about” to see what had happened and they saw Nephi and Lehi encircled by a pillar of fire (Helaman 5:43–44). When God introduced His Son to the Nephites gathered in Bountiful with a still, small voice

that the people could not understand, they “cast their eyes round about” to try to locate who was speaking (3 Ne. 11:3). When Christ had finished preaching to the group gathered in Bountiful, He “cast his eyes round about upon the multitude” and saw they had tear-filled eyes (3 Ne. 17:5).

In these and other examples, the phrase is used to convey the concept of glancing, looking at the general scenery, or quickly taking in a scene. It does not convey the idea of long, deliberate, careful and studied dissection of something over a lengthy period of time. It happened perfunctorily.

When Christ visited the Nephites He intended to correct their scriptures and then add other scriptures they had not been previously given. This is how that happened:

Behold, other scriptures I would that ye should write, that ye have not. And it came to pass that he said unto Nephi: Bring forth the record which ye have kept. And when Nephi had brought forth the records, and laid them before him, **he cast his eyes upon them and said:** Verily I say unto you, I commanded my servant Samuel, the Lamanite, that he should testify unto this people, that at the day that the Father should glorify his name in me that there were many saints who should arise from the dead, and should appear unto many, and should minister unto them. And he said unto them: Was it not so? (3 Ne. 17:6–9)

The Nephite scriptures were on metal plates. They included records beginning with Lehi, more than 600 years prior to Christ’s visit with them. When the records were brought to Christ, He glanced at them and then made corrections and additions to them.

Christ did not need to study the records. Nor did He need to find the part of the record about Samuel to see what had been

written and what had been omitted. He only “cast his eyes upon them and said” what needed to be added.

Christ could accomplish this with only a glance at the records. So this begs the questions:

Why did the plates/records need to be brought?

Couldn't Christ have accomplished the same thing without the records?

If the records needed to be fetched, then why did Christ not need to spend some time reading and parsing through the record to be able to find the section about Samuel and then determine what had been omitted by reference to the writing?

Of course, this was because Christ possessed the gift and power to do such a thing and could discern the content of the record merely by “casting His eyes upon them.”

This incident reminds me of Joseph Smith translating the plates of the Book of Mormon, sometimes without opening the plates themselves. Sometimes his translation was done with the record in the same room, but the content was viewed and translated by the gift and power of God.

MARCH 6, 2018

Re-Baptism Required

When a new dispensation of Christ's gospel occurs, re-baptism is required. The Jews were practicing baptism before John the Baptist. But first John, then Christ taught that re-baptism was necessary to accept God's new work.

This is from the New Covenants, Matthew 4:10:

Then said the Pharisees unto him, Why will you not receive us with our baptism, seeing we keep the whole law? But Jesus said unto them, You keep not the law. If you had kept the law,

you would have received me, for I am he that gave the law. I do not receive you with your baptism because it profits you nothing, for when that which is new has come, the old is about to be put away; for no man puts a piece of new cloth on an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up takes from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles, else the bottles break, and the wine runs out, and the bottles perish. But they put new wine into new bottles and both are preserved.

Joseph Smith's edit of the passage makes it clear the topic that led to the new cloth-old garment, new wine-old bottles comparison by Christ was re-baptism.

Part of what the Pharisees had difficulty accepting was that the structure established by Moses was in place and being conducted in a regular manner. They "keep the whole law" in contrast to what John and Christ were doing. The Pharisees had a High Priest, Levite priests, a functioning temple, regularly established ordinances, set feast days, and a large willing population to follow their system of worship.

By contrast what John and Christ offered seemed like a one-off side-show. Without a replacement structure having a visible magisterium set into imposing structures, who wore holy garb, Christ's re-baptism looked homely by comparison. Christ had only a rag-tag body of followers without any visible means of sustaining itself. At the time what Christ supported seemed to be so intangible it would fly to pieces as soon as they killed Him. All He offered was a body of teachings and baptism. It would only be at the end when He would add bread and wine to remember His sacrifice. So they killed Him to end the foolishness. But the body of teachings

proved so enduring, penetrating so deeply into the heart of the faithful, that it has endured and grown across two millennia.

The Pharisees failed to recognize that every new dispensation had been and would be organized according to the circumstances of the people and the work to be accomplished. To show they were humble enough to repent and follow God's new direction they were required to be re-baptized, although they had already undergone an approved and apparently authoritative ordinance set in place by Moses.

Nothing changes in God's work. The test has been and always will be identical in every generation.

MARCH 10, 2018

“Fruit”

Christ said a man is known by his “fruit” (Matthew 6:14). Christ explains how to measure “fruit.”

Either make the tree good and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt, for the tree is known by the fruit. And Jesus said, O you children of vipers, How can you, being evil, **speak good things**? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, brings forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, brings forth evil things. And again I say unto you that **every idle word men shall speak**, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment: for **by your words** you shall be justified, and **by your words** you shall be condemned.

Christ determined that the test for “fruit” is the words we speak. But how should “words” be measured? Anger, conflict, violence, war and division amongst families were just some of the results of the words Christ spoke. If Christ's words were measured by how people

were affected by them, then Christ produced bad fruit. Therefore, the reaction people have to words cannot be an accurate measure of “fruit.” It must be the substance, the truth, or the independent value of the words—separate from how people respond to a man’s words.

Prophets and righteous individuals have been arousing anger, provoking violent reactions, and being called anything from foolish to vile because of their words, and that does nothing to diminish the goodness of their fruit.

MARCH 15, 2018

Scriptures Completed

All volumes of the scriptures are now complete and available for order on Amazon.

The first volume is titled **The Old Covenants**, and contains the Joseph Smith version of the Old Testament.

The second volume is titled **The New Covenants**, and contains both the Joseph Smith version of the New Testament and the most accurate version of the Joseph Smith corrected Book of Mormon. Joseph intended to publish the New Testament and Book of Mormon in a single volume. This is the only project that has honored Joseph’s intentions.

The third volume is titled **Teachings and Commandments**. It contains the original, most accurate version of the revelations to Joseph Smith, the *Lectures on Faith*, several complete letters written by Joseph Smith (like the *Wentworth letter* and *Liberty Jail letter*), and an expanded *Joseph Smith History* as he originally published it while editor of the *Times and Seasons*. It also includes some modern material approved through conference and on-line voting as an act of common consent.

These three volumes will remain in print continually. After at least six months of review, a high quality, leather-bound version will be printed. During the review period, if there are print mistakes discovered, you can send comments to this email: restorationscriptures2017@gmail.com

We are hoping for public input to catch and correct those print errors before the high quality leather-bound version is printed.

MARCH 20, 2018

New Video Series

A new series of videos on the Protestant Reformation website and YouTube has been launched. The series will deal with Christian Restoration. The first video is available and seen here: [Reform was not Enough](#).

MARCH 21, 2018

Phoenix Conference This Weekend

There is a conference taking place in Phoenix, Arizona this weekend. The theme is “[Wisdom Through the Ages](#)”. Conference information can be viewed by clicking on the link.

The organizers have invited me to speak on Sunday. The conference website will link to a live Internet broadcast of some of the events and talks during the conference.

MARCH 26, 2018

Our Divine Parents

A PDF version of yesterday’s talk in Phoenix is now up on the “Downloads” part of this website. The talk (paper) is titled “Our Divine Parents”.

Unfortunately, when converted to PDF the first footnote was cut off. I will reconvert it to PDF and repost it this evening. The first footnote should read this way:

This is a term used twice by Alma the Younger in his instruction to his son Corianton, recorded in New Covenants Alma 19:13 hereafter “NC”); Alma 42:8, 16. Joseph Smith referred to this plan as “eternal progression”.

APRIL 2018

APRIL 7, 2018

Every Man's God

One person believes his understanding of God can control what God is able to do or not do. Another person believes anything new that conflicts with what she thinks about God must be false. They limit what God is able to accomplish with them because they doubt God can be other than they imagine Him to be. It is puzzling to think people with such different views of God assume they will see God's promises fulfilled:

And it shall come to pass in the last days—**when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains** and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it—**many people shall go and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law,** and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people. And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into

pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. O house of Jacob, come, and let us walk in the light of the Lord; yea, come, for you have all gone astray, everyone to his wicked ways. Therefore, O Lord, you have forsaken your people, the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east and listen to fortune-tellers like the Philistines. (OC Isa. 1:6–7, emphasis added)

It is puzzling for people to wish to be “one” when they have such diverse versions of God:

The arm of the Lord shall be revealed and the day cometh that **they who will not hear the voice of the Lord neither his servants** neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles shall be cut off from among the people; for **they have strayed from mine ordinances and have broken mine everlasting covenant.** They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness but **every man walketh in his own way and after the image of his own God whose image is in the likeness of the world and whose substance is that of an Idol** which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon even Babylon the great which shall fall. (T&C Section 54:3, emphasis added)

To understand that scripture requires a definition for “prophets” and “apostles”—which likely has nothing to do with an office in an organization. It requires a definition of “strayed” related to “ordinances” God claims as His. It requires knowing what it means to “hear the voice of the Lord” and some appreciation for how God links together “the voice of the Lord” with “his servants.” But most importantly, it requires the sober realization that if you “imagine” wrongly a false version of God, you are worshiping an idol of your own making.

When the rest of Nephi's family struggled with Lehi's teaching, Nephi took his concerns to the Lord: "I cried unto the Lord. And behold he did visit me and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father" (NC 1 Ne. 1:9). God "visited" Nephi by softening his heart. Because of that, Nephi was able to believe his father. Believing Lehi was the difference between life and death. Lehi took his family away before the destruction of Jerusalem. That departure was "because of [Lehi's] faith to make [him] mighty even unto the power of deliverance" of his family (*Id.*, v. 5). Just listening and obeying God showed God's "mighty power of deliverance."

God's deliverance is no less "mighty" because Lehi had to flee into the wilderness. It was no less mighty because he had to leave behind all his possessions. It saved his life and the lives of his family. That mighty power came because Lehi listened to and obeyed God.

When Lehi later said his sons needed to return to Jerusalem and recover the brass plates of Laban, his older sons complained. Lehi told Nephi, "I have not required it of them, but it is a commandment of the Lord" (*Id.*, v. 10). Nephi didn't need anything other than that. Because his heart had been softened, he believed Lehi's words. He accepted the instruction, and said he knew God would not ask anything be done unless God made it possible to accomplish. Nephi did not require God to tell him. He already understood that Lehi could provide a commandment from God. His heart was softened. He did not question or doubt, but believed his father. He acted on that belief. He accomplished great things. He would later join his father as a prophet in his own right. But first he accepted and obeyed God's commandments from his prophet-father.

The Book of Mormon has some of the greatest messages God has provided to mankind. Without it Zion will not be possible. But, of course, it requires us to implement its teaching.

APRIL 10, 2018

Question About Covenant

I have been asked about two statements: one in the opening remarks at the Boise Conference which did not mention reading the Prayer for Covenant and another one in the note of Section 158 saying that the prayer is to be read with the covenant. The opening remarks included this:

I have been given authority from God to deliver His covenant this day. Every formality required from the days of Adam until now for establishing a covenant has been kept and met. Once the covenant is established, those sustained by seven women (or a man inside his own family) who receive it also have authority to administer the ordinance to others who want to be numbered among God's people. To administer to others, repeat the ordinance. **Read aloud the Lord's Answer and the words of the Covenant.** Ask them to stand and say, *Yes*, and they will become one of the Lord's covenant people. **Do not change the words of the covenant, for to change an ordinance is to break it.** (Isa. 24:5)

The note at the beginning of Section 158 explains:

This covenant can be received at any time, in any place, by any person who has accepted the Doctrine of Christ. Either an authorized priesthood holder who has previously received The Covenant can administer it, or the recording of the Boise Covenant of Christ Conference can be used. **The believer**

receiving The Covenant should have the words of the *Prayer for Covenant* and *Answer to Prayer for Covenant* read to them, following which they have read to them *The Covenant*, and then comply with the directions therein, answering “Yes” out loud at the appropriate moment.

The only reason to read the Prayer is to give context to the Answer. Otherwise you are reading the answer to a question without knowing what the question is. But, to be hyper-technical, the Prayer is not required. Only the Answer and Covenant are required. The Prayer is advisable, but not mandatory.

APRIL 11, 2018

How Can Zion Come From This?

I responded to an email posing the question of how Zion would result from what is presently happening and who is presently involved. I responded by explaining these ideas:

Any solution could be imposed quickly and would result in stabilizing everything—just by adopting a central command structure to compel order. Everyone is already conditioned to accept authority and obey it. But that step would bring peace at the price of altogether losing the hope for Zion. For now it must be this gentle way.

Don't think about this as a time to gather but as a time to prove.

And don't think that we are proving who belongs to a group from among all involved, but who would the Lord choose; what few He would gather out from among them. In His wisdom He has elected to delay the next steps in order to select carefully those who can be gathered. What exists now

obviously cannot be gathered. The freedom and liberty Christ allows us is misused and misunderstood. But God is no less stringent, demanding and exact just because He gently leads along. Only a few among the people could be gathered, and the Lord knows this.

There is no command to build a temple yet, although we know there will be one given. He doesn't want the present assortment of people to be allowed to build His house. There is no place to gather identified yet. He doesn't want the rebellious or froward to know where to go or be to interfere with the peace of that land.

God knows what He is doing. This is the culmination of a plan to finish the ages and vindicate all the promises made to the fathers. The fact that there are wayward and strident children among a people does not mean they will be permitted to either stop the forward movement or to come to the Lord's Zion.

What amazes me is that He has continued to pour out teaching, guidance and profound truths that have been kept hidden from the knowledge of the world to a small body of believers. There is more light and truth being poured out now than has been given to almost any prior generation back to the time of Adam. Few have been privileged to know what we have been allowed to speak of publicly. For some that has made a great difference. For others it has not affected their hearts and minds enough to remove their hardness, their strident and discordant voices, nor to remove their froward countenances. But, remember, the Heavenly Parents "hate" the froward. That clearly disqualifies those individuals from being invited to the Lord's gathering.

I think the Lord knows what He is about. And has everything before Him to decide what to do, how to do it, and when to separate the chosen and bring them to a land of peace. I'm just hoping to be able to receive that invitation and bring my family there.

APRIL 22, 2018

Unable To Take It In

I got an email asking about the phrase describing a revelation that the recipient was “unable to take it in.” I responded:

When God reveals vast amounts of information, truths or visions from a higher order, or material that exceeds our framework of thought, it does not become immediately understood. I have said there are three different stages involved with the greatest revelations:

First, to receive it.

Second, to understand it.

Third, to be capable of teaching it.

Just because it has been received, that does not mean it is understood.

Just because it has been received and understood, that does not mean the recipient is capable of teaching it to others in an understandable or coherent way. It can be a very difficult struggle to move to the point that a person can begin to teach these things to others.

Joseph relentlessly labored and meditated on how to grasp the things opened to his view. That was why he was able to continually teach new truths.

CHAPTER 4

Beauty Amongst the Briars

MAY 2018

MAY 7, 2018

Conference Announcement

The organizers of the upcoming conference have asked that I post their announcement, which I have copied and pasted below:

Teaching Our Children to Honor God through Service

An Invitation to all Fellowships

Preparation for the 2018 Fall Conference

In order to actively participate in the theme of the 2018 Fall Conference, “Preserving the Hope of Zion, by Teaching our Children to Honor God”, we are inviting all fellowships to plan and participate in a community service project. As followers of Christ all over the world we invite you to prayerfully organize and participate with your children in a service project that is needed in your area.

For those fellowships that feel inspired to participate with their children, please document the service projects with pictures and short video clips. You can upload your documentation in

the Google Drive link below. Email the conference committee at preservingthehopeofzion@gmail.com to let us know about your project. Please provide a brief description of what you did. These projects will be shared at the main Sunday conference session. This effort is not meant to brag, or to let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. We hope that the children will be reminded of the joy they feel in serving their community, and be uplifted in viewing the projects of other youth around the globe. In the spirit of charity for others, we desire to strengthen our connection to the Lord and to one another.

And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn *wisdom*, that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God. (Mosiah 1:8, New Covenants)

We look forward to sharing in your experiences and discussing the joy of service to God with each other at the conference. Please plan on participating and sending in your pictures and short video clips **by August 20, 2018**.

“Yea, a man may say, I will show you I have faith without works. But I say, show me your faith without works, and I will show you my faith by my works” (Epistle of Jacob 1:11, New Covenants). To access the content go to:

(<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/o/folders/1X6oG2fQIomNAgziNfl8PtSuwGtAXHtcM>)

1. Click on the Google Drive Link.
2. Right-click in the middle of the screen, select (add) + New Folder to create a new folder for your fellowship group and service project.

3. Right-click to Upload Picture/Videos of your service project/event.
4. After uploading photos/videos, email preservingthehopeofzion@gmail.com and notify the conference committee of your contribution to the volunteer service project for the fall 2018 conference.

We look forward to gathering and fellowshiping with you this coming September.

Have a beautiful summer!

God bless,

The Wasatch Front Planning Committee

MAY 10, 2018

Bogus Brazilian Book of Mormon

I got an email inquiring about the “record coming out of Brazil” that claims to unseal the Book of Mormon’s missing parts. In response I sent this reply:

I usually do not comment on claims others make about visitations, angels, etc. I let every person decide for themselves about such claims.

What I understand of the claims are that Moroni delivered the plates to a fellow in Brazil. That seems to be inconsistent with the record and known history of the restoration.

In a post titled “Nephi” on December 10, 2013 and again in a post titled “The Angel’s Identification” on December 15, 2013 (among other places) I’ve shown, using the historical record, that Joseph Smith originally and consistently identified the angel who delivered the plates as “Nephi” not “Moroni.” Therefore, it seems like the claim to have “Moroni” deliver the

plates is inconsistent with my understanding of history and accountability over the plates.

Once the plates were given to Joseph, he became the custodian. He was responsible for sealing and hiding up the plates when his work was completed. In the New Covenants, 2 Ne. 11:20, Joseph Smith was given direction about what he was to do with the plates when he finished translating the portion to be published:

Wherefore, when thou hast read the words which I have commanded thee and obtained the witnesses which I have promised unto thee, then shalt thou seal up the book again and hide it up unto me that I may preserve the words which thou hast not read until I shall see fit in mine own wisdom to reveal all things unto the children of men.

Because he was the successor responsible for sealing and protecting the records, Joseph followed those directions. I've studied Joseph's life enough to know he would not have violated that trust. Nor would he have given the responsibility to seal and hide the plates to someone else. And Joseph Smith never set foot in Brazil.

There is also the notion of "the economy of heaven" where angels do not do for humans what humans can and ought to do for themselves. For example, the angel did not bring the plates to Joseph, instead Nephi required Joseph to go to the place and engage in the labor to recover the buried object. Angels do not become errand boys relieving us of work devolving upon us.

If these Brazilian claimants knew more about church history, they would have been able to make a more plausible claim. As it stands, I do not think their claims can be credited because

they identify “Moroni” as the custodian when they ought to have used the correct identify of “Nephi.” They make the claim that the plates Joseph Smith sealed and hid up were located in Brazil where Joseph Smith could not have hidden them up to the Lord. They invoke work on an angel to do what mankind is responsible to do. The angel “Moroni” was not resurrected (because he died after Christ’s death and therefore would not have been among those who rose with Christ). Nephi would be resurrected, since he died prior to the resurrection of Christ and would be a candidate for physically handling the object. It is unlikely that a disembodied spirit would transport the plates.

Given how inconsistent the claims are with my understanding of the history and the Book of Mormon’s direction to Joseph Smith, I’ve not troubled the Lord with an inquiry about the matter.

MAY 10, 2018

Joseph Smith Restoration Conference

A conference is organized to focus on the restoration of the gospel through Joseph Smith. Speakers have been invited from different religious groups that claim Joseph Smith as their founder. The conference organizers have asked that I put their notice onto my site, which is copied below:

JOSEPH SMITH
Restoration Conference

Inviting all the branches of the Restoration to come together in unity and hope for Zion

CONFERENCE INFORMATION

The Bible Believers are delighted to invite all churches, branches, and groups everywhere, with us to the original restoration of the gospel through Joseph Smith, to participate in a gathering to promote understanding and fellowship.

A group of bible believers in Boise are hosting this one-day conference, and invite speakers from all the various groups who wish to participate. The purpose is not to evangelize or convert one another, but rather to understand one another and seek common ground.

Please see the website for more detailed information.

SAT, JUNE 23
Boise State University Student Union Building
1950 W University Drive, Boise, ID 83726

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE
Part 1: 10:00 AM-1:00 PM
Lunch: 1:00-2:00 PM (on your own)
Part 2: 2:00-5:00 PM

www.RestorationConference.org

MAY 16, 2018

Improper Assertion of Authority

Joseph Smith spoke at a conference in Philadelphia on January 13th, 1840. Included in his remarks was this recorded prohibition (he called it an “injunction”), the “traveling elders” were to be prevented from encroaching on local authorities.

The “traveling elders” were the twelve and seventy. They were missionaries. They had no right to interfere or encroach on the stakes or wards. The stakes were equal in authority with the twelve and first presidency. The minutes of the conference include these words from Joseph Smith:

directed it should be entered on the minutes as the injunction of the Presidency that traveling Elders should be especially cautious of inroaching on the ground of stationed & presiding Elders and rather direct their efforts to breaking up and occupying new ground. (*JS Papers, Documents*, Vol. 7: September 1839–January 1841, p. 115, spelling as in original)

Meaning that the twelve and seventy should occupy themselves with missionary work (breaking up and occupying new ground) and leave governing stakes to the “stationed and presiding” authorities who held the actual authority to govern.

An organization with divided and co-equal authorities cannot survive the ambition of conspiring men. And church members willingly surrender the right to govern to claimants, even when the claims are improper. The solution is to never establish anything other than equality. Even that presents challenges because impatience, haste, ambition and fear motivates even the best of people.

MAY 28, 2018

Miraculous New Scriptures

I have copies and have begun to review the three volumes of new scriptures: Vol. 1: Old Covenants, Vol. 2: New Covenants and Vol. 3: Teachings & Commandments. They are better than any other scriptures I've ever possessed and mark such an historic advancement of Christ's teachings that it is miraculous.

In the first letter from Liberty Jail (T&C 138) it is written that the voice of the Spirit confirms it will be utterly futile to "hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from Heaven upon the heads of the latter-day saints" (Paragraph 22). Since the restoration began there has never been such a down-pouring of knowledge in a single event as in the publication of these new scriptures.

In a newly added section Joseph Smith explains what he means by "keys of the priesthood" in a way that clears away much confusion. Referring to Noah, who learned from God beforehand about the coming flood, Joseph explained:

the keys of this Priesthood consisted in **obtaining the voice of Jehovah**, that he talked with him in a familiar and friendly manner, that he continued to him the keys, the covenants, the power, and the glory with which he blessed Adam at the beginning, and the offering of sacrifice which also shall be continued at the last time. (T&C 140:16, emphasis added)

Most often the "voice of Jehovah" comes through the words of scripture. We now have more of Jehovah's words in these new volumes of scripture than at any other time in the history of the Restoration.

More than a year before any formal corporate "church" was organized under New York law, Christ identified what He meant by

using the term “church.” Christ explained: “Whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church. Whosoever declareth more or less than this, the same is not of me, but is against me. Therefore he is not of my church” (T&C 1, Part 1:21). Christ’s church consists exclusively of those who repent and return to Him. All other denominational definitions of Christ’s “church” are opposed to Him.

The *Joseph Smith History* has been greatly expanded. The *Lectures on Faith* have been added. Joseph Smith’s revelations have been returned to their original content, with edit changes by unknown hands removed. The Book of Mormon has been recovered to the form Joseph Smith authorized. The Old and New Testaments have been published in the form Joseph Smith intended as “the fullness of the scriptures”.

In these three volumes a flood of missing material has been recovered, and new words from “the voice of Jehovah” are now available to confirm our hope and urge us onward.

This project could not have been accomplished any earlier. The means, materials, and technology required have only recently become available. It is clear that the Lord is moving in His power and majesty to bring about His great design. The promises made to the fathers are moving toward fulfillment. All of this is being done in plain sight, and only those with eyes to see know what great things are now underway. While ignorance expands, confusion reigns, and darkness envelopes the minds of almost all mankind, the Great Jehovah performs a marvelous work and a wonder before the eyes of the world... and only few take note.

Christ’s words are being vindicated, and few there are who will find it.

I am grateful to all those who have labored for the last years to bring this project about. In another year there will be leather-bound, fine paper versions printed to make them more portable than the current paperback version. But for the present they are available free on-line and inexpensively in paperback. It is cause for rejoicing.

JUNE 2018

JUNE 10, 2018

More on the Brazilian Claims

Yesterday I met with Joseph Frederick Smith, the great-grandson of Joseph Smith. I heard his account of his involvement with the claims that a man from Brazil has been given the plates of the Book of Mormon. Listening to him I had no reason to doubt his sincerity. If there is mischief afoot, he is not the author of it, but the victim of it.

I offered him a few words of caution because I believe he will be the one who will be scorned if this proves to be a misadventure. If it all proves to be false, as I suspect it will, then the great-grandson of Joseph Smith will be the largest target of the critics. It will potentially be used as additional fodder for condemning his great-grandfather as well.

So far the Brazilian claims are not connected with any translation of a text, but have been confined to witnesses claiming to have seen plates purporting to be the Book of Mormon. I reminded them that the witnesses to the Book of Mormon in 1830 did not testify apart from a published text. There is a great difference between testifying to attract readers to take the text of the Book of Mormon seriously, as was done in 1830, and testifying without a text for anyone to consider, as now being done.

The claimants assure the public that a text will be forthcoming. Until there is such a thing, there is nothing to consider.

So far all that has been advanced is testimony about “signs.” Since “he that seeks signs shall see signs, but not unto salvation... Behold, faith comes not by signs, but signs follow those that believe” (T&C 50:3). The news of “signs” does nothing to attract me.

All three of the original witnesses to the Book of Mormon eventually abandoned Joseph Smith. The “signs” to them failed to produce enduring faith. That is because signs do not, indeed cannot, produce faith.

When the saints were condemned in 1832, the words of condemnation stated:

And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things that you have received, which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation rests upon the children of Zion, even all, and they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon, and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do, according to that which I have written, that they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father’s Kingdom. (T&C 82:20)

Coincidentally, I have written nearly 4 million words testifying, explaining, exhorting and teaching primarily from the Book of Mormon, and secondarily from the other works of Joseph Smith. I have labored for years to directly remove the condemnation, by remembering and teaching the Book of Mormon. I know of nothing that the man in Brazil has labored to do to remove the condemnation. I only hear of miraculous events wholly divorced

from any sincere effort by those involved to repent and remove the condemnation imposed in 1832 upon all the children of Zion.

If there is ever a text to examine, I will gladly review it. I accept truth from any source. I would like to see what God withheld from the published Book of Mormon because it was too sacred to reveal to the public in Joseph Smith's day. Since I have seen things which are not lawful for man to utter, nor is man capable of making them known, I would very much recognize a true text that removes the veil and puts on public display those most sacred and unspeakable things. I expect to be able to recognize immediately if the text is authentic. If it proves to be true, it will be an astonishing thing for the world.

Heretofore the Lord has commanded, "You shall keep the mysteries of the Kingdom unto yourself, for it is not given to the world to know the mysteries" (T&C 26:20). If there is a text, it will no doubt explain why these heretofore withheld precious mysteries are now being published for the world to see.

In the history of the world, God's greatest mysteries were kept from public display. They become known according to a pattern:

Knowledge of the mysteries of godliness is obtained only through obedience to God. He ordained this method to make His greatest truths universally available to all His humble followers training for the ministry. (T&C 159:31)

I very much appreciated the visit, and when our meeting ended, sincerely wished for God to go with Joseph Frederick Smith. We agree on more than we disagree. I regard him as a brother in Christ.

JUNE 17, 2018

Congress

After the Mormons were expelled from Missouri, a delegation was sent to Washington DC by Joseph Smith in a vain attempt to obtain financial reparations for Mormon property losses. Joseph was temporarily there and met with the President. Neither Joseph nor the President were impressed with the other.

After Joseph left DC, others stayed behind to pursue Congressional assistance. Joseph was updated by letters from them. On April 1, 1840, Horace Hotchkiss sent a letter describing how things were not moving along. In that letter he gave his appraisal of Congress:

I am not, I confess, much disappointed in the result; as I know the vacillating, fawning character of many, in both Houses of Congress; and these are not their worst traits either. For they not only lack the moral courage to do right, but will do what they know to be positively wrong, if they can make political capital by it.[They] will abandon you, me, or anyone else with perfect indifference and heartless treachery, if by doing it they can obtain governmental favor or political preferment. (*JS Papers, Documents* Vol. 7, p. 236—spellings and grammar corrected from original)

Congress, it seems, is so stable an institution that its character has remained unchanged for a century-and-a-half.

JUNE 24, 2018

Consecration Ended by Joseph Smith

After the experiences in the early common-stock companies, and in community efforts in Kirtland, Ohio, Independence, and Far

West, Missouri, Joseph Smith ended any attempts at consecration. In a council meeting on March 6, 1840 in Montrose, Iowa Territory, he announced to the church the Lord rescinded consecration:

He said that the Law of consecration could not be kept here, & that **it was the will of the Lord that we should desist from trying to keep it**, & if persisted in it would produce a perfect abortion, & that he assumed the whole responsibility of not keeping it until proposed by himself. (*JS Papers, Documents Vol. 7*, p. 215, emphasis added, all spelling as in original)

Joseph died before the Lord gave any command to resume it. Therefore the earlier commandment, still in the T&C, as well as the D&C, is not to be kept. Since it was the will of the Lord that consecration end, it will require a new command from the Lord to resume the attempt.

JULY 2018

JULY 2, 2018

Restoration Conference Recording

A recording of all the talks given in the Joseph Smith Restoration Conference held in Boise last month are now available to watch at:

[Restoration Conference Website](#)

I learned things from others about the current state of the Restoration and thought all of the talks were interesting and worthwhile. I am grateful for the opportunity we had to attend.

JULY 29, 2018

Sunstone Paper

Yesterday I presented a paper at the Sunstone Symposium. The text is now available as a download. You can go directly to that paper by clicking on the title below:

[The Restoration's Shattered Promises and Great Hope](#)

SEPTEMBER 2018

SEPTEMBER 21, 2018

Two New Recordings

There are two new recordings up on the Christian Reformation Website, and also on YouTube.

These include the audio: [An Address to Christians](#)

And also the video: [Restoration Video 2: Essential Missing Parts](#)

If you know of any Christians who would be interested in learning that Christianity needed to be restored following a universal apostasy, please refer them to these two new recordings and the Christian Reformation Website generally.

SEPTEMBER 29, 2018

Conference Underway

A conference is underway in Layton, Utah. The information about the event is at this website: [Preserving the Hope of Zion](#). I have been invited to talk by the organizers, and will be speaking tomorrow afternoon.

Also, a new recording addressing Christians is now on the [ChristianReformation500years](#) website and can be accessed by

clicking on that name. If you know any Christians who would be interested in the talk please bring it to their attention.

OCTOBER 2018

OCTOBER 2, 2018

New Paper

The talk I gave at the conference last weekend is now available to read or download as a paper. It is titled (and linked): [Keep the Covenant: Do the Work](#).

OCTOBER 7, 2018

New Paper

I have put up a new paper that contains the Answer: Build a House and my present initial understanding of the meaning of the Answer. It is on the downloads page and can be reached through this link:

[Build a House](#)

My initial interpretation begins following the Answer on page 3 of the document. Of course it is not an attempt to extract all the meaning of the Answer, but only the most obvious initial meaning that is apparent to me.

OCTOBER 31, 2018

New Video

A new video in the Christian Restoration series is now available either through the christianreformation500years.info or on YouTube through this link:

[Christian Restoration Part 3: Early Attempts](#)

This is the third installment in a seven-part series.

NOVEMBER 2018

NOVEMBER 21, 2018

Upcoming Talks

I've been invited to speak in South Carolina at a conference being organized there to take place January 12th and 13th. I plan to attend and talk. An announcement about the details will be made soon through the event calendar on the Restoration Archives site. I wanted to make it known as early as possible.

I also plan to give a talk in Centerville, Utah sometime in February.

CHAPTER 5
Adultery

DECEMBER 2018

DECEMBER 11, 2018

Adulterous Pretensions

Two emissaries from a Canadian fellow who I've been informed is an advocate of plural wivery, just left my office. They delivered a written message from Joseph Rockwell and Dean Taylor. Joseph Rockwell was the author of the "Escape to Polygamy" website. On that site on September 5, 2010 he wrote a post titled "Engagement" in which he said his wife wanted him to take another wife and so he was now engaged to marry again. Another post on September 11, 2010 "Into the Light" wrote about the "deep longing to bring more wives into our family and have our family grow." So he's an adulterer.

The message is couched in "Thus Saith the Lord" and commands me to not fight against the work of some "Father" that Rockwell submits to obey. The whole contains a spirit that I recognize. It is false. It seeks to portray wickedness as righteousness, and to gain control and authority over others.

I am now commanded by this false spirit to “repent” and not fight against this Rockwellian foolishness. I don’t intend to obey.

I’m not supposed to “seek to destroy that which the Father has commanded.” But, since I have no part in obedience to this deceiving “Father” I plan to give it no heed.

It occurred to me that, for whatever entertainment value this has, I would put this note up on my website.

DECEMBER 14, 2018

What About Disputing?

I got emails and phone calls asking about Christ’s statement in 3 Nephi:

there shall be no disputations among you, as there hath hitherto been, neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there hath hitherto been. For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the Devil, who is the father of contention; and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

I replied that you can disagree without an angry disputation. You can have good humor even while you detect a false spirit and reject it. You can wish people well as they go on their way, while altogether condemning their message as originating in a malignant source.

It is not required that you attempt to persuade every person of their errors. If you make it clear you do not want to participate in their errors, that is enough.

And you can do all those things without ever becoming angry and allowing your heart to become stirred up to contention and argument.

If you refuse to make your rejection of false spirits clear, then you are contributing to evil. It is impossible to stand for the truth without rejecting errors and false spirits when they come to confront you. Christ expected us to do that. He even rebuked Peter, telling him: “Get thee behind me, Satan” when Peter opposed the will of the Father. Yet the same Christ announced the doctrine that we are not supposed to “contend” in “anger” with one another. The only conclusion we can reach is that Christ followed the principle He taught, and we can do so also while standing firm and detecting a false spirit when confronted by it.

DECEMBER 16, 2018

Adultery

Adultery is such a significant sin and so destructive to society that it is prohibited in the Ten Commandments: “You shall not commit adultery” (OC Exo. 12:10).

In answer to a question from Peter, Christ explained about the evils in the heart of men:

out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adultery, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemy. These are things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands defiles not a man. (NC Matt. 8:10)

A short time after this a group of both Pharisees and Sadducees came to demand a sign be given to them by Christ. These two groups normally conflicted with each other over religious beliefs. However, they came together to confront Christ, unified in the question they posed. Christ not only refused, but gave a principle or key that is important to understand: “A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah” (NC Matt 8:15).

This key given by Christ is reliable. One of the effects of an adulterous heart is the inability to accept truth without a sign. But signs do not produce faith. Signs cannot produce faith.

And he that seeks signs shall see signs, but not unto salvation. Verily I say unto you, There are those among you who seek signs, and there have been such even from the beginning. But behold, faith comes not by signs, but signs follow those that believe. Yea, signs come by faith, not by the will of men nor as they please, but by the will of God. Yea, signs come by faith unto mighty works, for without faith no man pleases God. (T&C 50:3)

Those with adulterous hearts require something coarse to convince them because they lack faith. When they obtain a sign and follow after it, they still do not have faith, because signs cannot produce it.

Joseph Smith commented on sign-seeking:

When I was preaching in Philadelphia, a Quaker called out for a sign. I told him to be still. After the sermon, he again asked for a sign. I told the congregation the man was an adulterer; that a wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and that the Lord had said to me in a revelation, that any man who wanted a sign was an adulterous person. 'It is true,' cried one, 'for I caught him in the very act,' which the man afterwards confessed when he was baptized. (*TPJS*, p. 278, *DHC* 5:268; Feb. 9 1843)

When signs attract followers, the resulting congregation of followers are all vulnerable to the sin of adultery. This is one of the reasons why so many were adulterers in Nauvoo, and later in Utah, and today among various splinter groups. It is a plague that can only be avoided by removing adulterous thoughts from the heart.

As Christ explained to Peter, it is from the heart that the evil of adultery and fornication originates. It interferes with the light required to have faith. I have consistently warned against this sin. A revelation to Joseph Smith warned:

And verily I say unto you, as I have said before, He that looks on a woman to lust after her, or if any shall commit adultery in their hearts, they shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear. (T&C 50:4)

No adulterer is fit for Zion. The nature of that sin is to destroy families, create conflict, inspire violence, and prevent the Spirit of God from holding influence over the victims. When put outside that influence, these victims of their own lusts are open to the influence of other, false spirits. False spirits gladly minister to sign-seekers.

DECEMBER 17, 2018

Adultery, Part 2

Adultery has been a plague on the restoration beginning while Joseph was still alive. Nauvoo was filled with adulterers. Once John Bennett was exposed in 1842, Joseph Smith brought charges before the Nauvoo High Council against any of those he learned were involved.

As part of the many High Council proceedings Joseph brought, when men or women confessed and named others, those others were also charged before the High Council.

From 1842 till his death, Joseph publicly and privately condemned adultery. Despite all Joseph said to oppose it, the formal practice of that abomination was adopted by the highest levels of the church as a sacrament as soon as Joseph and Hyrum were killed.

In March 1844 Hyrum wrote a letter explaining that the false teaching of adulterous men using lies about some 'higher priesthood' were altogether false. His letter is part of the new volume of scripture, the Teachings and Commandments, as section 152. It reads in relevant part:

some of your elders say that a man having a certain Priesthood may have as many wives as he pleases, and that doctrine is taught here at Nauvoo: I say unto you that that man teaches false doctrine, for there is no such doctrine taught here, neither is there any such thing practiced here. And any man that is found teaching privately or publicly any such doctrine is culpable, and will stand a chance to be brought before the high council, and lose his license and membership also Therefore, he had better beware what he is about (T&C 152:1).

Hyrum's letter accurately described what Joseph was doing: bringing adulterers who took plural wives before the High Council to be cast out.

That false idea is still propounded by the same false spirit that derailed the restoration at the beginning. Today there are still false claims of 'higher priesthood' with the ability to violate the commandment against committing adultery. That spirit appeals to the pride and vanity of the foolish and gullible. No one ought to be taken in by it.

Consider what the effect would be on a society that welcomed and practiced such an abomination. It would destabilize families, produce broken homes, leave children victims of their parents selfishness and betrayal, and foster such widespread disunity and division it would be impossible to become of one heart and one mind.

The very purpose of the temptation to adopt adultery as a sacrament is the destruction of Zion. Adulterous people cannot be part of Zion. Their abomination is contrary to the very idea. That sin is urged by a false spirit. It has succeeded in preventing Zion before, and must not be permitted to do so again.

DECEMBER 18, 2018

Adultery, Part 3

There is a reason why such a serious sin as adultery ought to be avoided altogether, even if it is only as a foolish temptation contemplating the possibility of a plural wife. We all need greater light and knowledge. The only way it can be acquired is by heed and diligence to the commandments of God. Any other path is a diversion, intended to waylay you and prevent you from developing as God intends.

Peter urged in his second letter:

And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge, temperance, and to temperance, patience, and to patience, godliness, and to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (NC 2 Peter 1:2)

Peter explained the required steps for our progression. As soon as you acquire the faith to act, you next must add virtue. Virtue in turn leads to knowledge, because it is only through heed and diligence we gain knowledge.

As the people of King Benjamin demonstrated by their conversion to the truth, and their covenantal commitment to obey

the truth, they gained the strength to do good. They no longer had any desire for evil:

Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us! And also, we know of their surety and truth because of the spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually. (NC Mosiah 3:1)

A person who has the disposition to do evil and commit adultery is NOT yet converted. They are NOT yet redeemed. They still must repent and turn to God.

Joseph Smith explained that the gospel path requires us to increase in obedience to God. There is nothing static or stationary about the gospel. We must increase our obedience to participate in gospel conversion,

We consider that God has created man with a mind capable of instruction, and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion to the heed and diligence given to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect: and that the nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin; and like the ancients, arrives at that point where he is wrapped in the power and glory of his Master and is caught up to dwell with Him. (*TJPS* p. 51).

If you remain attracted to adultery and fornication, you have not yet lost every desire for sin. Your views of right and wrong cannot be clear if you fail to see the evil in such disobedience.

There is a revelation for our day that says,

And that which does not edify is not of God, and is darkness. That which is of God is light, and he that receives light and

continues in God, receives more light, and that light grows brighter and brighter until the perfect day. (T&C 36:4)

Light grows *if* you are in the gospel path. It grows brighter and brighter only when you forsake sin and give heed and diligence to the commandments. Adultery destroys that progress and robs you of light.

Alma explained,

[H]e that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word. And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God, until they know them in full. And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the Devil and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell. (NC Alma 9:3)

Those who think they can follow God and yet commit adultery are deceived and giving heed to a false spirit. It is impossible to be both on the path to greater light and also engaged in such a serious sin.

Add to your faith virtue. It is perilous to do otherwise. You open yourself to deception and being led by false spirits and false prophets when you choose to ignore the commandment “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

DECEMBER 20, 2018

Adultery, Part 4

There are false teachings advocated in secret by people who are either deceived by a false spirit or willingly sinful. These false teachings

include such notions as: It is not a sin to have sexual relations outside of marriage if both participants are unmarried. This, of course, is false, and the scriptures condemn such fornication and sexual impurity. “As touching the gentiles who believe, we have written and concluded that they ... keep themselves from things offered to idols, ... and from fornication” (NC Acts 12:9).

Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God has both raised up the Lord and will also raise up us by his own power. Do you not know that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid. What? Do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body? For two, says he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man commits is against the body of Christ, and he who commits fornication sins against his own body. (NC 1 Cor 1:23)

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like; of the which I tell you, as I have also told in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (NC Gal. 1:21).

Fornication will prevent you from inheriting the kingdom of God. It is as offensive as adultery, and often condemned in the same statement alongside adultery.

Those who teach this evil often conceal their teachings from the public, choosing to do so in secret. They teach it secretly because

they are ashamed of this false, repugnant idea. Teaching in secret is an indication they recognize what they teach is false.

By concealing their sin, they hope their lies will protect them. The scriptures make it clear this will do them no good.

Last of all, these all are they **who will not be gathered with the saints**, to be caught up unto the church of the Firstborn and received into the Cloud. These are they who are **liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers**, and whoever **loves and makes a lie**. These are they who suffer the wrath of God on the earth. These are they who suffer the vengeance of Eternal fire. These are they who are cast down to Hell and suffer the wrath of Almighty God. (T&C 69:27)

Part of the success of such false teachings comes from carefully keeping it hidden. Hiding their false teachings only makes them liars who love and make a lie to advance their adultery and whoredoms.

From all such teachings and teachers you should flee. Their teachings are calculated only to corrupt, deceive and destroy.

DECEMBER 21, 2018

Adultery, Conclusion

I hate this subject. I hate that is it necessary to discuss such indignities. There is so much that needs to be taught and learned. It perplexes me why it is necessary to address so basic and obvious an evil to people who say they want to follow God.

Among us are those whose aggressive preaching of evil sexual practices provokes the Lord to reiterate to us the words of Jeremiah:

My heart within me is broken because of the prophets, all my bones shake, I am like a drunk man and like a man whom wine

has overcome, because of the Lord and because of the words of his holiness. For the land is full of adulterers, for because of swearing the land mourns, the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil and their force is not right. For both prophet and priest are corrupt, yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, says the Lord. Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness, they shall be driven on and fall therein for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, says the Lord. And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria: they prophesied in Baal and caused my people Israel to err. I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem a horrible thing: they commit adultery and walk in lies, they strengthen also the hands of evildoers that none does return from his wickedness. They are all of them unto me as Sodom and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. (OC Jeremiah 8:18)

It does not matter if this sin is advocated under a new name. No change of vocabulary will justify this sin. Calling it celestial does not make it less hellish. Teaching it is no sin to engage in adultery because you and your victim were bonded to one another before the foundation of the world is a lie designed to seduce the foolish.

The restoration began with the Lord offering to extract us from this perversity. In the first message to Joseph Smith Christ quoted language from scripture to describe the world. The rest of Paul's passage from which Christ's words were taken declares that people are,

lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. From such turn away, for of this sort are they which creep into houses and lead captive silly women loaded with sins, led away with diverse

lusts, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. (NC 2 Tim. 1:8)

Diverse lusts can be given any name a clever man or woman chooses, but it does not improve the sinful and destructive nature of the failure.

There are many ways to prevent Zion. One of the most successful tools to bar individuals from rising up to Zion is to have them defile the marriage relationship through sexual sin. Having sexual relations outside the marriage covenant is unholy, ungodly and designed to create so corrupt a people that they will be barred from God's presence.

There is a great mountain to climb. A beast guards the passageway. That beast takes many forms. Sexual sin is one of its forms. Do not let it destroy you.

DECEMBER 23, 2018

New Restoration Video

There is a new video about the restoration that is linked below:
The Christian Restoration: Part 4.

It is the fourth installment of a planned seven-part series on the restoration of the gospel.

JANUARY 2019

JANUARY 1, 2019

Upcoming 2019 Talks

I will be talking at the following venues and dates:

January 12-13: South Carolina Area Conference: Book of Mormon Covenant Conference (speaking on the 13th)

March 3: Centerville Theatre (speaking at 3 p.m.)

April 19–21: Conference: A Hope in Christ: The Temple. This conference will involve some interesting sessions on Saturday that I plan to attend. I'm also hoping to meet more of you who are there.

CHAPTER 6

Signs, Symbols and Tokens

JANUARY 5, 2019

“this” and “that”

Symbolism substitutes one thing to represent another. There is always “this” that stands in the place of “that.” The value of the symbol is in teaching about “that” by employing “this” as a teaching tool.

In temple symbolism, the “this” used has no real value, but “that” holds eternal value. If an unbelieving person obtains access to “this” temple symbol, but fails to understand its relationship to “that” which is eternal, they have nothing of value. Likewise, when the symbol *this* has no meaning for those who believe in the temple, then it fails to have any value for the believer as well.

God’s highest truths frequently use symbols. Christ used parables to teach about *that* by using the familiar to substitute as a representation. He explained that this was to prevent those who were unworthy of the symbol from comprehending the truths. Seeing, they “see not” and hearing they “hear not” (See, NC Matt. 7:2; Mark 2:13). So we understand that merely getting *this* without understanding *that* is worthless.

Temple rites are a gift from God that is filled with *this* for *that*.

Ignorance leads to apostasy because the ignorant cannot see that *this* holds powerful value to teach about *that*. Even the greatest symbols can become nothing when they are not understood and are discarded by the ignorant. Then

they shall return again to their own place, to enjoy that which they are willing to receive, because they were not willing to enjoy that which they might have received. For what does it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift. (T&C 86:4)

Before the temple endowment was given, God explained what He intended to accomplish through the future rites:

I say unto you that your anointings, and your washings, and your baptisms for the dead, and your solemn assemblies, and your memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi, and for your oracles in your most holy places, wherein you receive conversations, and your statutes and judgments for the beginning of the revelations and foundation of Zion, and for the glory and honor, and endowment of all her municipals, are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house, which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name. (T&C 141:12)

God intended the symbols to convey glory, honor and a gift or endowment upon the people who received them. The symbols are not the real thing, but they teach and point to the real thing that is required for salvation.

In the temple ceremony there are symbols for certain virtues that are called “keys.” These keys use hand contact and words as

the symbol (*this*) to substitute for the actual virtues of obedience, sacrifice, chastity, gospel and consecration (*that*).

In the Egyptian ceremonial there was a symbolic weighing of the heart against the Ma'at feather, along with the 42 negative confessions that a person had not sinned, had not robbed with violence, had not stolen, had not uttered lies, had not committed adultery, and so on. These rites were intended to teach the person to avoid bad behaviors and acquire the seven virtues of truth, justice, balance, order, compassion, harmony, and reciprocity.

Like the ceremonies of Egypt, the restored temple rites were also intended to symbolize the acquisition of the virtues of obedience, sacrifice, chastity, gospel and consecration. The ceremony also put the initiate through a symbolic judgment in the presence of a judge who conversed with the initiate through the veil, asking for them to present the symbols (*this*) to demonstrate they had acquired and were in possession of the required virtues (*that*).

Anyone can learn of the ceremonial symbols without possessing the required virtues. But to satisfy the God-judge who meets mankind as they pass through the veil at death, the initiate must possess the actual virtues these key words and hand contacts represent. They must have the real thing.

Throughout the restored temple ceremonies the symbols are introduced sequentially, first on the right side. Therefore, interpreting the symbols focuses on understanding the significance of the right side.

To teach Christ's gospel using symbol, part of the temple ceremony included putting a robe on the left shoulder and tying a girdle around the waist on the right hip. By putting the robe on the left shoulder, the right shoulder was left uncovered. Anciently, clothing was valuable, and most labor was manual. A bare shoulder

could become calloused through work, and if scratched or cut, could heal. But a torn robe took effort and time to repair, and any injury to the garment would shorten its life. Therefore, clothing was protected from this daily labor when possible by leaving the weight-bearing shoulder uncovered. Leaving the right shoulder bare in the temple ceremony symbolized that at that stage of the initiation there was still the need to carry a burden on the right side. The work was not done.

The belly is the symbolic center of our appetites and passions. Tying the bow of the girdle on the right side symbolized the need to bind the belly, or control the appetites and passions that so often lead to sin and conflict. The bow symbolized the effort required to conquer the unruly body.

There was also a bow over the right ear for the man, the bow having three loops. Placing these over the right ear symbolized the need to hear, or hearken. The three loops above the ear symbolize first the Godhead who are above. These loops secondly also symbolize the fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob whose names are often used to identify the true God. By obeying the true God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the person can accomplish the labor symbolized by the bare shoulder and bind the inappropriate appetites and unruly passions portrayed in the knotted girdle on the right hip.

When the individual achieves these required developmental improvements symbolized in this robing, then they remove all these accouterments and put them on again. Removing them was the symbol that all progress made will not be enough if you are unwilling to lay them aside, sacrifice what you have obtained from God, in order to receive more. Nothing can be gained if you are unwilling to change as often as God may require of you. Even if

you mourn the loss of what you must lay aside, when God asks it of you it must be done to progress further.

As the symbolic journey continued, the robe and girdle were again donned and changed. This time the robe moved to the right shoulder and the bow is tied on the left hip. Because the symbols are interpreted from the right side, this movement shows that the hard work has been accomplished, and the robe can be safely worn upon the shoulder. The physical battle is over and the body has been controlled. They have won honor through their progression in light and truth. There is no longer a knot or tie on the right hip, but only the smooth girdle surrounding the belly because desires, appetites and passions have been defeated. Progress has been made. This is why they were part of temple worship.

JANUARY 7, 2019

“this” and “that” Part 2

Like the parables Christ taught, temple rites have always used symbols to use “this” act or performance in order to reveal truths about “that” which is eternal. Temples are a great storehouse of symbolism, or one great parable used to teach truths about God. For example, under the Law of Moses, the rites of animal sacrifice required for various sins and cleansings were used to teach about the future sacrifice of a Redeemer.

The Scribes and Pharisees did not understand Christ’s parables. Those stories meant nothing to them. If it had been left to the Scribes and Pharisees, Christ’s parables would have been discarded. Imagine what Christianity would lack if we did not have the parable of the Good Samaritan, or the mustard seed, or the lost coin, or the Prodigal Son because the Scribes and Pharisees saw no reason to retain them.

When it comes to symbols (*this*) representing something else (*that*), the temple clothing given in the initiation is filled with symbolism. Depicted in the beginning of temple ceremony are six days of creation. They include six organizing labors divided into increments called “days.” Day 1: organizing together disorganized material to form a world. Day 2: dividing the water from the land. Day 3: establishing the lights in the firmament as signs. Day 4: placing plant life. Day 5: placing animal life. Day 6: putting man on earth. Despite the interruption, the seventh day was ordained to be a time of rest from labor.

There are also six articles of clothing. Article 1: robe. Article 2: slippers, Article 3: cap. Article 4: apron. Article 5: girdle. Article 6: undergarment. Each of these articles of clothing is worn by the initiate to symbolize, among other things, the creation labors, or one of the six days of creation. The slippers represent to the initiate the second day of creation. Until the dry land appeared, there was no place for man to walk.

The temple clothing symbolizes other things as well. The slippers in particular have an important second meaning; one that is more intimate than the appearance of dry land on the second day of creation. Slippers are removed and then put on again as part of the temple clothing so as to draw attention to them. Unlike the robes, which are changed from one shoulder to another to symbolize progression, nothing is done with the slippers when the robes change shoulders. Once they are donned as part of the temple regalia, they are to remain on the initiate even while other articles are moved. This is because once a soul begins to walk in the path of righteousness they are never to depart from that path.

The journey of the saved soul remains ongoing until we are in the presence of God. The slippers represent staying on the

path; having remained true and faithful in all things. This in turn qualifies the individual to converse with the Lord through the veil and receive further light and knowledge. A house of God must symbolize this, as explained by Micah: “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths” (OC Micah 1:9; see also Isa. 1:6). The symbol of staying on that path is critical because that is the only way to obtain salvation: “none of these can I hope except they shall be reconciled unto Christ, and enter into the narrow gate, and walk in the straight path which leads to life, and continue in the path until the end of the day of probation” (NC 2 Ne. 15:1). Following this path has been the message delivered by true prophets among the Jews and Nephites. “Cry unto this people, saying, Repent ye, repent ye, and prepare the way of the Lord, and walk in his paths, which are straight” (NC Alma 5:3; see also NC Matt. 2:1).

The slippers and other articles of ceremonial clothing represent one of the days of creation, or symbolize part of the creation itself. Wearing these six symbols means the initiate represents the creation. When the initiate enters through the veil into God’s presence, that entry represents redemption of the initiate, and also symbolizes the redemption of all creation. This means that the creating process continues even if only one couple is redeemed. Through the redemption of the man and woman as one, they will continue to create worlds without end (See NC Eph. 1:11; T&C 69:28). Christ testified,

Moreover, those who are here on this journey with me will be added upon for evermore if they have faith in me. They will rise up to likewise generate endless lives, worlds without end. (T&C 171: Chapter 5:16)

The symbolic journey of the initiate is also the symbolic continuation of all creation. There will be other souls created, and other worlds established like the world in which we presently live. Thus the journey on that path continues worlds without end. Taking off the slippers and putting them on again as part of the temple clothing is a profound symbol of eternal truth.

JANUARY 8, 2019

“this” and “that” Part 3

In a temple ceremony, a veil is used as a symbol to separate the initiate from the Lord. *This* is a symbol of the division between heaven and earth, between time and eternity, or between the sacred and the commonplace. Beyond the veil are the angels, gods and spirits (*that*). Here there are mortals.

Passing through that veil (*that*) happens in one of two ways. One way is to gain knowledge of God’s mysteries and living true and faithful to them. *This* is symbolized in the temple ceremony, but *that* actually happened in the case of the brother of Jared.

And because of the knowledge of this man, he could not be kept from beholding within the veil. And he saw the finger of Jesus, which when he saw, he fell with fear, for he knew that it was the finger of the Lord. And he had faith no longer, for he knew, nothing doubting. Wherefore, having this perfect knowledge of God, he could not be kept from within the veil. Therefore, he saw Jesus, and he did minister unto him. (NC Ether 1:14)

Temple rites explain that anyone who arrives at the veil boundary who has been true and faithful in all things is entitled to converse with the Lord through the veil. Once the Lord is satisfied they possess the required attributes, then they can enter into His presence.

The second way of passing through *that* veil is explained by Alma,

[B]ehold, it has been made known unto me by an angel that the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body, yea, the spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life. (NC Alma 19:6)

The ceremony employs two veils to symbolize the separation between mortality and eternity, the sacred and the profane. The boundary veil is used during the ceremony to test the initiate before permitting the individual to enter into the presence of the Lord. The second veil is used to symbolize the role of the woman.

Except for what happens in the womb of the woman, everything in mortality is subject to entropy. Women have the ordained power to produce new life. Everything else decays and dies. Her power defies the universal effects of entropy.

The ceremonial boundary veil that acts as the divider between worlds represents when the initiate is tested by heaven. This takes place before they are permitted to pass from earth to heaven, from time to eternity and from the commonplace to the sacred. In direct contrast, the veil of the woman represents the transition of pre-earth eternal spirits into mortality, when the sacred becomes embodied. She, along with God, veils in flesh the spirits from beyond the veil. "You have clothed me with skin and flesh, and have framed me with bones and sinews" (OC Job 4:10). Therefore, the woman's veil represents the inverse of the other veil. The boundary veil symbolizes losing the flesh to leave mortality, and her veil endows the immortal spirit with mortal flesh.

Like her heavenly counterpart, the woman represents creation. This process, like that which is beyond the boundary veil, is sacred. Both veils symbolize the sacred.

Woman is veiled to show that in a fallen world, trapped by decay and death, creation continues through her. Life springs anew and what is sacred and pure is born into mortal life. It would not be proper to remove the ceremonial veiling from the woman unless the intention was to abort the symbol of new life and creation. It destroys the symbol of the sacred power given to woman. The destroyer, of course, seeks to end life and impose misrule and death.

Of all the symbols in the temple rites, some of the most important and least understood involve the woman. The role of man is knowledge and the role of woman is wisdom. In the paper “Our Divine Parents”, pages 35 through 38, there is a discussion about Moses’ parable of the creation of man and woman. The woman had a direct relation to the Heavenly Mother, from whom she obtained the power to produce new life. That power resides with the Eternal Mother, and had to be endowed by Her for the mortal woman to inherit that eternal power. The creation of woman was designed to preserve, despite the fall of man, the Divine Mother’s power allowing life to continue despite the relentless pull of entropy toward dissolution, decay and the grave. This originally elevated the woman.

JANUARY 9, 2019

“this” and “that” Conclusion

The man was created first for a reason. He was also given dominion and governance over this world for the same reason. This was not for his sake, but to save this creation. The man needed to be accountable and responsible for everything in the creation, and

for what would happen here. He had to be given rule so that he would be the accountable party for the fall. This, in turn, results in his redemption also redeeming everything under his dominion also from the fall.

For the woman to be redeemed, God put her under the purview and accountability of the man: “your desire shall be to your husband and he shall rule over you” (OC Gen. 2:18; see also T&C 110: Lecture 2:16). Paul was explaining this in his letter to the Corinthians:

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman, the man, and the head of Christ, God. (NC 1 Cor 1:44)

Although Paul is considered a chauvinist because of his explanation, this was the order established in the beginning by God, not by Paul. Paul wanted others to understand it.

Man cannot change the order ordained by God. Paul’s attempt to explain it does not mean Paul preferred it. He just understood it. He hoped to help others also understand it.

In accordance with the Divine ordination, the temple rites should include the covenant wherein the woman solemnly covenants and promises before God, angels, and witnesses at an altar that she will observe and keep the law of her husband and abide by his counsel in righteousness/or heed his counsel in righteousness. However worded, the covenant must track with the original order established by God for the man and woman.

The objective is unity, or for them to become one. Christ reiterated that God’s decree should be respected, not set aside by men. “Have you not read that he who made man at the beginning

made him male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more two, but one flesh” (NC Matt. 9:19).

Paul’s teaching to the Corinthians also explained, every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is even all one, as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God. But the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man, neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have a covering on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. (1 Cor. 1:44)

This obscure practice Paul refers to is grounded in something other than Paul’s bias. Covering the woman with a veil during prayer has always been part of the correct order. It is a profound and important symbol.

Because the woman’s creation was directly from the Heavenly Mother, as explained in *Our Divine Parents*, saving the man could not save the woman unless the woman was placed in the role God established. By placing her under his rule, it allowed her redemption. Saving all that was under the rule of the man will also include saving the woman. By God’s decree, salvation was extended to the woman

through her husband's rule. This is the reason temple covenants necessarily put the woman under the rule of her husband.

This is obviously not a license for the man to engage in misrule. To "rule" is to be responsible to teach all those in one's dominion. A ruler is a teacher responsible for instructing others. Teaching by the ruler is required to be done without any appeal to authority, but by persuasion, meekness, and gentleness, love unfeigned and pure knowledge (T&C 139:6).

In order to be saved, a woman must be under the dominion of her husband. Paul hoped to teach the Ephesians to follow the Divine order in love and respect. He taught,

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the savior of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself, for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it even as the Lord the church; for we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife,

even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband.
(NC Eph. 1:20–21)

If husbands reflected the pattern of Christ's love for His church in cherishing their wives, then submitting or hearkening to the rule of the loving husband would be a light burden. Husbands would elevate and be considerate of their wives. He would cherish her, and there would be no resentment or conflict between them.

The cure for a husband's failure to cherish his wife is not to rebel against and destroy the order established by God. Doing so brings only condemnation. Isaiah foretold, "The Earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant" (OC Isa. 7:1). There is no honor in destroying the ordinance. That defiles the whole earth, as Isaiah explained. The solution is instead for the ignorant and foolish husband to repent.

JANUARY 23, 2019

Power in the Priesthood

I was asked yesterday about a definition for the term "Power in the Priesthood" and I responded:

Power in the Priesthood: Generally, having heaven acknowledge the priest's acts as authorized, such as in baptism and blessing the sacrament. But also includes any endowment conferred directly by the Lord upon a person to accomplish an act, deliver a message, perform a mission, or labor on the Lord's behalf with His authorization. Not every act done by men claiming authority from God is acknowledged by God, but only those acts with power in the priesthood belong to Him. Hence the Lord's saying, *many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord,*

have we not prophesied in your name, and in your name have cast out devils, and in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I say, You never knew me. Depart from me, you that work iniquity.

There is another, related term, **Blessings of the Priesthood**: This refers to the results of receiving an authorized priesthood holder's administration to a recipient. The blessings of the priesthood endure even after the death of the priesthood holder. Although Joseph Smith died in June 1844, the blessings he conferred while here endured until early in the 20th Century.

JANUARY 29, 2019

Development

The pathway to the ideal always requires a walk through the practical. It is not a single leap to become Zion. It is a journey, filled with challenges and opportunities. Time, planning, resources, faith, labor, sacrifice, and patience along with compromises and temporary steps will be taken before we get there.

The first increments are perhaps the most important on the journey. In the parable of the 10 virgins, by the time the wedding party arrived it was too late for half the virgins to enter.

Those who stand back and await to see what will be produced rob themselves of the chance to prepare now. Then when the crisis comes, it will be too late.

Time, careful and difficult steps are required beforehand. No one lacking the preparation will be able to endure the society of those who did prepare beforehand.

However modest and simple the steps now underway may appear, they are vital. They are leading to something much greater.

We are on the pathway to the ideal, but for the present must deal with the practical. Those participating have begun the journey already.

FEBRUARY 2019

FEBRUARY 5, 2019

Changing Minds

Brashness does not invite. But gentleness can compel. Whatever changes the heart will change the mind.

CHAPTER 7

The Hope of The Restoration

FEBRUARY 7, 2019

March 3rd Talk

On Sunday, March 3rd, I will be giving a talk in Centerville, Utah at 3:00 pm. Everyone is invited and it will be free to the public.

Critics have offered many reasons to feel discouraged about the restoration of the gospel. Many are discouraged. But if you continue to believe God was behind the work that began with Joseph Smith, the upcoming talk will help encourage you in that belief. If you have lost hope, and would like to reclaim it, the talk will give you reason to hope again.

I hope that fundamentalists, former-Mormons, curious Christians, and active Latter-day Saints will attend. There will be something in the talk for everyone.

FEBRUARY 8, 2019

Unfolding Past Failures

The failure of the restoration offered in Joseph Smith's lifetime happened despite repeated warnings from the Lord. In September 1832 there was this,

And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received, which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation rests upon the children of Zion, even all, and they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon, and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do, according to that which I have written, that they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father's Kingdom. Otherwise, there remains a scourge and a judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion, for shall the children of the Kingdom pollute my holy land? Verily, verily I say unto you, Nay. (T&C 82:20)

At that point, vanity, unbelief and hypocrisy were polluting the land. The cure would have been to repent and remember the Book of Mormon as a covenant, and honor that covenant.

In February 1834, this additional warning came, "if they shall pollute their inheritances they shall be thrown down, for I will not spare them if they shall pollute their inheritances" (T&C 104:3).

In April 1834 the failures to repent included even the members of the United Firm,

Therefore, inasmuch as some of my servants have not kept the commandment, but have broken the covenant, by covetousness and with feigned words, I have cursed them with a very sore and grievous curse" (T&C 105:1). The failure extended to the saints who had moved to "Zion" in Missouri, "The covenants being broken through transgression, by covetousness and feigned words. (*Id.* 12)

In 1835 Joseph published the *Lectures on Faith* to try to elevate the saints (T&C 110).

The objective was to help the saints understand their transgressions, abandon their covetousness and no longer pollute the land.

In January 1841 at another location, a final opportunity was given the people by the Lord,

build a house unto my name for the Most High to dwell therein. For there is not place found on the earth that he may come and restore again that which was lost unto you, of which he has taken away, even the fullness of the Priesthood....I command you, all you my saints, to build a house unto me, and I grant unto you a sufficient time to build a house unto me,...if you do not these things, at the end of the appointment, you shall be rejected as a church, with your dead. (T&C 141:10-11)

The final opportunity included this warning,

if my people will hearken unto my voice and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, They shall not be moved out of their place. But if they will not hearken to my voice, nor unto the voice of these men whom I have appointed, they shall not be blessed, because they pollute my holy grounds, and my holy ordinances and charters, and my holy words which I give unto them. And it shall come to pass that if you build a house unto my name and do not the things that I say, I will not perform the oath which I make unto you, neither fulfill the promises which you expect at my hands, says the Lord. For instead of blessings, you, by your own works, bring cursings, wrath, indignation, and judgments upon your own heads, by your follies and by

all your abominations which you practice before me, says the Lord. (*Id.* 13–14)

A short time later both the men the Lord appointed (Joseph and Hyrum) and the entire community of Nauvoo, were “moved out of their place.”

Should those involved be able to detect their own covetousness? Could they see they were transgressing the ordinances? Did they know their minds were darkened because of the failure to remember the Book of Mormon? Is there a difference between “saying” and “doing” the things God commands? Is that difference easy to see?

Their history is in plain view for us to see and understand. We are supposed to learn from and avoid those past failures.

FEBRUARY 14, 2019

Eight Essays

Here is a link to a new book containing essays:

Eight Essays

It contains eight essays, seven of which are already available on this website as a downloadable pdf. The seven essays are: *The Lost Piece of Silver*, *Cutting Down the Tree of Life*, *Was There an Original*, *Other Sheep Indeed*, *Shattered Promises and Great Hope*, *The Holy Order*, and *Our Divine Parents*. The eighth is a short essay titled, *Problems in Restoration History*.

I have received requests to move books into hardback format. This book is hardback and a test to see if there is any demand for material already available to the public, but available in a hardback option. Hardbacks are more expensive than paperbacks, and if there is an actual demand, books that are now only available in paperback form can be printed as hardbacks.

MARCH 2019

MARCH 1, 2019

March 3 Talk

I will be speaking this Sunday at 3 pm at the Centerpoint Legacy Theatre located at 525 North 400 West, Centerville. The talk is free to the public and everyone is invited to attend. The main theatre seats approximately 550 people.

I want to extend an invitation to those who have a negative opinion about me.

The doors will open at approximately 2:15. Beginning at about 20 minutes before the talk there will be a video presentation about the Restoration.

If you are interested but unable to attend, arrangements have been made to record the talk and make it available on-line later that evening.

MARCH 5, 2019

Failures

I was emailed a paper that evaluated and condemned a number of things about the efforts now underway to recover and continue the restoration. It made many good points. I responded to the fellow who emailed it to me with the following:

An “accuser” is always going to find plenty to condemn. Even Christ was continually condemned. Much of the criticism of Christ was justified and legitimate, in the sense that it was grounded in religious conviction, based on observable conduct that could be accurately interpreted against Christ as failures or lapses. The opposition Christ encountered from the religious society in which

He lived ultimately resulted in Christ's death and the scattering of the flock. In short, if you want to see Christ's life as a failure, it was certainly possible to do so by that generation.

Like it is so often the case, there is plenty to accuse and condemn among the people I associate with. There will always be plenty to accuse and condemn. Those who choose to focus on the shortcomings will have enough and to spare in their search to find something to condemn.

It is much harder to unite people, and appeal to their sense of the greatest self. To have people aspire to unity of heart and purpose is, above all else, an almost unattainable end for humanity in general and gentiles in particular. Patience, love, persuasion and pure knowledge are unneeded when a person chooses to condemn and accuse. All that is needed is a flaw, a crack, or a discernible mote in the other's eye. And in this world, there will always be some flaw, some crack, or some mote invariably present. It is the accuser who works the flaw into a failure by their worm-tongue. It is the accuser who uses the crack to divide and break. It is the accuser who dismisses the mote as utter blindness.

Christ, however, seems to help the flawed, and encourage them onward. It is Christ who helps to patch the crack and strengthen the weak. It is Christ who points out all the glory still visible to the one having the mote, and encourages them to wash away their own failure to see. This Christ does all the while refraining from belittling and condemning, and while teaching the one with the flaw, the crack, and the mote to struggle onward. He counsels the weak to not cast about to see and dismiss others' weaknesses. While weakness is always on display, Christ advises against taking advantage of it.

I think the criticism and the condemnation is fully justified. It would be naive to think the people are ready for Zion.

I think the work remains undone to help these flawed, cracked and partially blinded people to become better. It requires patience and love and gentle encouragement to change men's hearts.

Of course, those who want to remain in a library and look down from the upper floors of the library building will never experience the challenge of stretching their own hearts, tugging and straining their joints and sinews to help lift others. They can enjoy the folly they behold from their vantage point. That will spare them from the bruises and bleeding of the people laboring outdoors beneath them. But the academic will never live the experiences required to actually put into practice the lofty ideals about which they pontificate. They will never embed in their joints and sinews the scars and callouses required to become like their Master. They will not choose to know Him by walking beside Him, with the few who are the humble followers of Christ. They will arrive with soft hands and fragrant bodies. The laborers will arrive with rough hewn and bruised hands, and God will then judge between them.

This effort is messy. It will continue to be messy. It is hard. It will be much harder. It will probably fail, because in this world noble ventures are overwhelmed by the darkness that prevails here below. But even if it fails to accomplish the fulfillment of prophecy, those who labor the hardest will find themselves the most "added upon" by their labors. They will also find they have not developed any skill in accusing others, for they have not spent their time in that way. They are likely to have the greatest charity for others, because they will understand that they sought for heaven, and having only scaled a great mountain will feel themselves humbled by their shortcomings. But I suspect the Lord will regard them

as “true and faithful” and be delighted at their scaling of a great mountain that only few have managed in mortality.

Godliness is a very rare thing among mortals. But it is godliness we seek. And charity toward all men. Therefore we ought to have little time to compose accusations and judgments, and when we encounter them we ought to humbly acknowledge we are worthy of condemnation because we only imitate our Lord, we are not Him. We only seek to obey Him, but know we will unwittingly disobey.

Thank you for sending the paper. It makes many justified criticisms. I always appreciate knowing more fully the errors among us—errors I share and labor continually to repair.

MARCH 6, 2019

Predators

I was asked this last weekend about what a fellowship should do when a predator or threatening individual comes among them. Apparently some people think that you must allow anyone to participate, no matter how argumentative or threatening they behave.

The adulterous and predatory almost always cannot be reformed, and must be excluded. They will victimize and destroy. We are commanded to cast out those who steal, love and make a lie, commit adultery and refuse to repent. The Teaching & Commandment we have been given instructs us:

[Y]ou shall not kill; he that kills shall die. You shall not steal, and he that steals and will not repent *shall be cast out*. You shall not lie; he that lies and will not repent *shall be cast out*. You shall love your wife with all your heart and shall cleave unto her and none else, and he that looks upon a woman to

lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the Spirit, and if he repent not he *shall be cast out*. You shall not commit adultery, and he that commits adultery and repents not *shall be cast out*; and he that commits adultery and repents with all his heart, and forsakes and does it no more, you shall forgive him; but if he does it again, he shall not be forgiven, but *shall be cast out*. You shall not speak evil of your neighbor or do him any harm. You know my laws, they are given in my scriptures. He that sins and repents not *shall be cast out*. If you love me, you shall serve me and *keep all my commandments*. (T&C 26:8, emphasis added)

This is still binding. If your fellowship includes those who ought to be “cast out” you have the obligation to do so rather than encouraging evil by tolerating it. Be patient, but be firm. If a person refuses to repent and forsake sins, end fellowship with them and invite penitent others who are interested in practicing obedience and love.

Christ’s gospel is not impractical. It is designed to give those who seek righteousness to be able to achieve it. Tolerance and compassion are needed. But tolerance and compassion do not include acceptance of sin. Particularly the sins listed in the above revelation.

I would not go out of my way to uncover the sins of others. But if they wear their sins openly, you have an obligation to “cast them out.”

MARCH 11, 2019

March 3 Recording

An audio recording of the talk on March 3 is now up on the Restoration Archives website. The recording is linked below:

[Signs Follow Faith, March 3, 2019](#)

MARCH 31, 2019

Sealed Book of Mormon

I received a copy of the Brazilian-produced “Sealed Book of Mormon” and spent a few hours reading it. I gave it fair consideration. If you read it for yourself consider the following five questions:

1. Does it conform to the predicted content the 1830 published Book of Mormon explains was withheld for a wise purpose?
2. Does it make sense to you that this content should be sealed and withheld from public scrutiny until there will be faith enough to receive it?
3. Does the content conform to or contradict other existing scripture, including the Book of Moses restored through Joseph Smith?
4. Does it edify, enlighten, and increase light and knowledge about God?
5. What new sacred and important things does it teach about the plans of God for these last days?

APRIL 2019

APRIL 6, 2019

New Restoration Video

A new video in the Restoration series was released today, April 6th, to commemorate the date on which it is believed Christ was born. The video is titled (and linked) here:

[Campbellites and Mormons Intersect](#)

APRIL 9, 2019

Updates on Scriptures

After years of painstaking work to get the details correct, last week the scripture committee met to do a final review of the labor. As far as any of those involved could report to each other, the work had been completed and reviewed for errors, and was now ready to typeset and publish.

Bids have been gathered and samples of work have been purchased to make a decision on a printer for a leather-bound, high-quality version. This will allow a lighter, more portable copy to be carried in hand.

After the meeting I was asked to petition the Lord for approval of the completed project, which I did and April 6th obtained the Lord's word approving the finished project. However, given the fact that more is expected to be revealed, it may not be appropriate to use the word "finished" for these scriptures. But the recovery project is coming to an end.

In the upcoming conference in Colorado the scripture committee will be giving a report on the work. They also hope to have a sample of the selected printer's work to show to those

interested in purchasing a leather copy. There are also a few matters to be voted on to determine if they should be added before printing.

The new scriptures finally publish the New Testament and Book of Mormon as a single volume, as Joseph Smith planned. They include the most correct version of the Book of Mormon, the first complete Joseph Smith Version of the Bible, and the most accurate version of the revelations and letters of Joseph Smith.

The upcoming conference in Grand Junction, Colorado set for April 19–21 has a website linked here: [Conference: A Hope in Christ: The Temple](#)

APRIL 15, 2019

Independence Missouri Talk

The Community of Christ (formerly Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) held their Worldwide Conference this last week. On Wednesday I spoke at the Harry S. Truman Library to a group of them in Independence. The talk was recorded.

Celebrating the Family of Joseph Smith

There is a growing gulf between some rank-and-file members of the Community of Christ and their central leadership. Their leaders are pursuing a more tolerant, inclusive and permissive form for their faith. They ordain women, including to their highest offices, openly accept homosexual relations, de-emphasize the Book of Mormon, and have greatly reduced their regard for Joseph Smith Jr.

The results of their changing attitude is reflected in attendance at the Old Stone Church. That building was built during Joseph Smith III's presidency. Just a couple decades ago that church was home to two branches that met there every Sunday. Both Sunday services were attended by approximately 700 people. Today there is

only one service each Sunday, and it is attended by approximately 140 people.

Religion has value to people who want to learn how to improve their lives, increase their connection to heaven, and feel the inner sanctity that comes from increasing light and truth. When religion tolerates darkness, allows foolish and destructive behavior without correction, and neglects light and truth, it loses its value and consequently any appeal. When religion is just another outlet for worldliness and wickedness, it has lost its savor and is good for nothing but to be trodden under foot (NC 3 Ne. 5:20).

Wickedness never was and never will be happiness (NC Alma 19:10). When religion fails to produce happiness by denouncing wickedness, it fails. People lose interest. The Community of Christ is not the only denomination seeing their attendance erode because of the drift away from light and truth.

APRIL 21, 2019

Grand Junction Talk

I delivered a talk at a conference in Grand Junction, Colorado today. A copy of the transcript of that talk is attached here: [Civilization](#)

Also at the conference a new video was previewed to those in attendance, and the video is now available on-line. It is linked here: [Mormonism: Decline and Fall](#).

APRIL 28, 2019

Scripture Vote Announcement

Another vote is being taken on an addition to the scriptures. Anyone wishing to participate can vote at the [Scriptures Project website](#).

Also, the Question and Answer portion of the Grand Junction Conference is now up on the Restoration Archives and linked here:

[Q&A Grand Junction](#)

MAY 2019

MAY 3, 2019

Old Time Wives' Tales

I still get emails about the marriages of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I got one suggesting the example of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob might justify multiple wife-taking. In response I wrote the following:

Abraham had one wife, Sarah, who was barren.

Sarah wanted a “surrogate” to bear a child for her.

The surrogate was not a wife, but a “concubine” for surrogacy.

The surrogate bore the child, but did not turn him over to Sarah to raise after weaned. Instead she turned the heart of the child against Sarah.

Sarah bore a child, who was unexpected and became the heir.

Eventually the surrogate’s son threatened Sarah’s son, and both the surrogate and her son were driven off.

Sarah remained the only wife throughout.

Isaac had only one wife.

Jacob contracted to wed Rachel.

The father of Rachel committed fraud to deceive Jacob, resulting in an unwelcome and unintended wife with whom he spent a wedding night that obligated him to keep her as wife.

Jacob overcame the fraud to obtain Rachel, but remained obligated to Leah.

Rachel, his beloved wife, was barren. She also provided a surrogate (concubine) to have a child for her.

Leah bore children, but then ceased to be fertile and also wanted a surrogate (concubine) to bear a child for her.

Jacob intended to have one wife, Rachel. The circumstances produced offspring that were murderously jealous of the son born to the beloved wife. These other siblings conspired to murder Joseph.

There is little lovely, of good report, or praiseworthy in these events and relationships.

D&C 132 was not the revelation Joseph received, and was altered before publication. The original does not exist. We have a purported copy from a store clerk, Joseph Kingsbury, who never acted as scribe for Joseph.

The Nauvoo High Council had the original read to them, and they reported it had nothing to do with modern practice, but was only related to explaining ancient events.

MAY 5, 2019

Website Hosting Change

This site will be getting a new hosting service. The volume of material and number of visits has made a more robust hosting service necessary. The change will happen this coming week. As part of that, this site may be down for a day, possibly two. If that happens, just try again a day later.

Sorry for any inconvenience. But this will improve service.

MAY 14, 2019

Home Fellowships

Christ warned His followers they would be cast out of the congregational buildings (synagogues). Christ expected that those who cast them out would keep possession of the buildings. For Christ's outcast followers, they were told to then worship in their homes:

And again I say unto you, Go into the world and do not care for the world, for **the world** will hate you and will persecute you and **will turn you out of their synagogues**. Nevertheless, you shall go forth **from house to house teaching** the people, and I will go before you. (NC Matt. 3:35)

Christ's prophecy describes the religious people in control of the religious buildings as merely part of "the world." They may have brick-and-mortar structures to house their false faith, but they remain only part of "the world."

Christ's disciples only need houses in which to teach His truths.

How much greater good can be done when resources are not diverted to buying land and building synagogues. All those funds become available to help the poor among the believers. Christ makes it clear that He and His Father are not jealous of the tithes and offerings of His people. He wants the poor, the widows and the fatherless to have claim on the resources gathered by His followers.

Christ's teaching goes hand-in-hand with Malachi's warning about diverting wealth to benefit the priests, rather than gathering the tithes and offerings to bless His house (people) with "food" to meet their need:

Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed me. But you say, Wherein have we robbed you? In tithes and offerings. You are

cursed with a curse, for you have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it. (OC Mal. 1:7)

If believing people gather their tithes, there will be enough for food in God's house, or for God's people. It should never be the case that meetinghouses divert resources away from caring for the poor, the widows, the fatherless. Nor should anyone be compensated for priestly service. Faith requires sacrifice, not compensation. If you are paid for your service, then your service cannot produce faith.

MAY 30, 2019

Restoration Conference

On Saturday, June 8th at the Boise State University Student Union Building another Restoration Conference will take place. Speakers will come from various "Restoration" groups/denominations. This is the second year for this conference.

All are invited. The purpose is not to evangelize or convert attendees, but rather to understand one another and seek common ground. As part of the event participants will also worship through hymns and music, and are invited to a fellowshiping potluck dinner after the conference at a local park.

The room for the event is the Simplot Ballroom in the Student Union Building, beginning at 10 AM.

CHAPTER 8

The Strange Act Continues

JUNE 2019

JUNE 2, 2019

Rebaptism

John the Baptist went before Christ and he baptized those who believed his message. Because the Jews were already baptizing, John's ordinance seemed unnecessary. The Pharisees took offense because they thought their form of baptism was sufficient to provide salvation. But Christ taught that any time a new dispensation of the gospel commences, the obligation to be baptized into that dispensation is required by heaven.

NC Matt. 4:10: Then said the Pharisees unto him, Why will you not receive us with our baptism, seeing we keep the whole law? But Jesus said unto them, You keep not the law. If you had kept the law, you would have received me, for I am he that gave the law. I receive not you with your baptism because it profits you nothing, for when that which is new has come, the old is about to be put away; for no man puts a piece of new cloth on an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up takes from

the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles, else the bottles break, and the wine runs out, and the bottles perish. But they put new wine into new bottles and both are preserved.

When a new dispensation has begun, like now, baptism is required. This is the only way you can demonstrate that you “hear His voice” and are willing to heed His word. This is why rebaptism was taking place in Christ’s day. Anyone anyplace in the world can make arrangements to be baptized through the website bornofwater.org

JUNE 5, 2019

June 6, 1944

75 years ago the Allies opened a northern assault on the Third Reich on the beaches of Normandy, France. Thousands died during the early hours of the effort. Stepping over the bodies of fallen comrades, the Allied forces pressed forward against entrenched Nazi positions. Those violent 24 hours changed the course of the Second World War and the course of history. It was accomplished by ordinary men, fighting against their fears and desire to live, who committed to do their duty no matter the price.

My father was among those who landed on Omaha Beach that morning. Each June 6th my thoughts turn to him and that perilous day now 75 years behind us. I am grateful to him and all his comrades who defeated the great evil of that day. They preserved the freedom we now enjoy. The events on that date should never be forgotten.

JUNE 12, 2019

Boise Joseph Smith Restoration Conference

The Restoration Conference held last weekend was very good. I thought every talk was worth hearing. It was well attended, and everyone who was able to participate gained something.

The Conference proceedings are now available on YouTube at these links: [Morning Session talks](#). [Afternoon Session talks](#).

For anyone who missed the Conference, these links allow you to view the proceedings.

JUNE 15, 2019

Youth Conference

A Conference for youth ages 12–18 is planned for August 3–4. Information and registration is available here:

Be Ye Kind

The Conference theme is taken from Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even for Christ's sake God hath forgiven you (Ephesians 1:12).

JUNE 27, 2019

June 27, 1844

Today is the anniversary of the deaths of Hyrum and Joseph Smith. It comes at the annual cycle when light begins to dim. A great eclipse of light happened on that day. What was left has proven inadequate to allow the restoration to be completed.

We are now 175 years past that tragedy. Between that day and today fools, knaves, pretenders, and ambitious men have rushed forward offering themselves as replacement “prophets, seers, revelators, translators, presidents and God’s spokesmen.” But reviving the restoration requires more than vanity and self-proclaiming profiteers.

Even in the most successful organizations that exploit the name and memory of Hyrum and Joseph it should be apparent that something absolutely necessary was gone when the two brothers were slain. Yet fortunes continue to accumulate and abuse of one another spreads wide and far among the pseudo-followers of Hyrum and Joseph Smith.

Joseph’s last dream of a dilapidated and neglected farm he would no longer claim has surely come to pass. Angry men with “knives” in hand certainly now fight over it.

Truer words were never spoken than when Joseph declared to the Nauvoo crowd they never knew him. The descendants of that group share in that first generation’s ignorance of that man.

Joseph was an honorable, honest and virtuous man to whom the pure in heart, wise, noble and virtuous seek constantly for counsel, authority and blessings. Only fools hold him in derision.

JULY 2019

JULY 3, 2019

New Talk

A talk I gave in Montgomery, Alabama is now available for anyone interested to hear on the Christian Reformation website. The talk is linked below:

8th Address to Christians

JULY 4, 2019

Always a Strange Act

When Christ taught, many did not believe Him. In fact, He was not worthy of their notice. The people were devoted to the Sanhedrin, the Chief Priests, Rabbis, the Pharisee and Sadducee leaders. The only notice most of the religious people took of Christ was to regard Him as a troublemaker.

Christ did not make the effort to be understood by the leading religious figures. Instead, He obscured His teachings, which prevented the leaders from awakening to His message. This caused the disciples to inquire why He did not make it easier for them to recognize and accept Him as the Messiah.

NC Matt. 7:2-3: Then the disciples came and said unto him, Why do you speak unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given; for whoever receives, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance. But whoever continues not to receive, from him shall be taken away even that he has. Therefore, I speak to them in parables because they seeing, see not, and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah concerning them, which says, By hearing you shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing you shall see and shall not perceive; for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. And blessed are you because these things have come unto you that you

might understand them. And truly I say unto you, many righteous prophets have desired to see these days which you see, and have not seen them, and to hear that which you hear, and have not heard.

When the Lord begins a new dispensation, anyone can recognize Christ's "strange act," and only a few ever do. Why doesn't Christ make the effort to assure that everyone "sees" and "hears?" Why does Christ accept the reality that only a few will ever "understand?" If you want to be "healed," what obligation does that impose on you?

The greatest irony of all is that "many righteous prophets have desired to see" the historic moments when the Lord's great work takes place, but the religious people who live in those moments ignore it. They lack eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to understand.

This never changes. The test is underway, and it is no different than the test the Lord always requires mankind to take. Few there be who pass it.

JULY 5, 2019

Bad History

When the LDS Historian's Office writes about history they are prone to both troubling equivocation and unjustified dogmatism. They do not, however, make forthright admissions about how little evidence exists for some traditions. In the recent *Joseph Smith Papers, Documents* Vol. 8, the following is in the Introduction:

Another, more controversial doctrine that developed in 1841 was plural marriage. Although *no documents in this volume will address it*, later documents attest that Joseph Smith married two plural wives during the months covered in this volume. Joseph Smith's understanding of plural marriage *seems to have* developed

over time, *perhaps beginning* as early as 1831 in Kirtland. *There is evidence* that Smith began discussing with close associates *some form* of plural marriage in the early 1830s and that he first married a plural wife, Fanny Alger, *sometime* in the mid-1830s. However, Smith did not begin practicing it extensively until the church was headquartered in Nauvoo. *It appears* that plural marriage was part of a broader restoration of Old Testament concepts and practices that included covenants, priesthoods, and temples. Although he had already been married to his wife Emma for fourteen years, Joseph Smith privately married Louisa Beman on 5 April 1841 and Zina Huntington Jacobs on 27 October 1841. (*JSP, Documents*, Vol. 8, February – November 1841, emphasis added)

There are no contemporary documents that definitively address this. No talks, no letters, no evidence traceable to Joseph Smith. They write there “seems to have” “perhaps” been something “sometime” earlier and “it appears” something may have been afoot. All ambiguous language, and yet, this ambiguity is followed by the absolute, clear, unequivocal assertion regarding two 1841 plural marriages.

For the statement about these two 1841 marriages, footnote 84 on page xxxiii cites to the affidavit book Joseph F. Smith gathered in 1869. Both affidavits were signed 28 years after these purported marriages took place.

In the Chronology for the book, on page 397, the entry for April 5, 1841 states Joseph B. Noble sealed Joseph to Beman. On page 399, the entry for October 27, 1841 states Demick Huntington sealed Joseph to Jacobs. The support for these entries is footnote 84 on page xxxiii.

They should have omitted any mention about a subject for which there is no contemporary proof. Instead, they make assumptions based on affidavits composed twenty-eight years later. Those affidavits were written while there were pending legal issues threatening to imprison LDS leaders and confiscate LDS church property. It would be better to remain silent, rather than advocate as a reliable fact what is dubious at best.

Why not admit there is no contemporary proof? Why not say nothing at the time proved Joseph entered into either of these purported marriages? Why not say that twenty-eight years later two women in Utah signed affidavits while lawsuits were pending and threatened? That would be a better telling of the history.

JULY 25, 2019

Cornerstone and Center Stake

On February 15, 1841 Joseph Smith signed an authorization for Hyrum Smith and Isaac Garland to act as agents for the church. Among other things the authorization mentions that Nauvoo was “the corner stone of Zion” (*JSP, Documents* Vol. 8, page 46).

In a letter to the saints abroad, published May 24, 1841, Joseph urged all saints to gather to Nauvoo, Illinois “without delay.” It said, “This is important, and should be attended to by all who feel an interest in the prosperity of this the corner stone of Zion” (*Id.*, p. 156).

To make the point that Nauvoo was where the saints were to gather as the center point, the letter announced that all stakes were dissolved, excepting only the ones in Nauvoo and across the Mississippi River in Iowa:

Let it therefore be understood, that all the stakes, excepting those in this country, and in Lee county, Iowa, are discontinued,

and the saints instructed to settle in this county as soon as circumstances will permit. (*Id*).

Of course, three years later locations were changing again. Joseph looked much further westward to establish the center stake and corner stone for Zion. Somewhere in the western Rocky Mountains where a New Jerusalem would be built. Joseph was slain before he could take that journey. Therefore, that location has yet to be revealed.

AUGUST 2019

AUGUST 15, 2019

Paperback Scriptures

Some of the Restoration Edition scriptures are now available for purchase in paperback format. Please go to www.scriptures.info for more information.

Scriptures.shop is still a work in progress. Only some of the volumes and options are available right now, with more coming available as Ingram completes the on boarding process. There are 36 different variations (18 paperbacks, 18 hardcovers) that will ultimately be available. The process of getting them all posted and live will probably take 2–3 more weeks.

AUGUST 18, 2019

September 2019 Conference

September 20–22, 2019 in Boise, Idaho there will be a conference held. The theme of the conference is Keeping the Covenant.

Information and schedule are at this website, which will be updated between now and the conference: [Keeping the Covenant General Conference](#).

The variety of events has expanded over the last few years. Although some parts of the conference are broadcast over the Internet, and others are recorded for later listening, break-out sessions are not always available unless you attend.

Come meet new people, and renew friendships at this event.

SEPTEMBER 2019

SEPTEMBER 14, 2019

Ordering Scriptures

It is now possible to order a leather-bound, 100% cotton paper set of scriptures through this website: scriptures.shop

The opportunity to order will last until October 15th, and then the order will be placed with the printer. It is likely there will be another future printing, but when (and even if) that happens is unknown.

The printer will produce all the copies in a single order. We must purchase that order and pay for it, because the printer is not producing these in a print-on-demand process. There will be a single printing of a set number. The number will depend on the quantity of orders that are placed.

Paperback versions will remain print-on-demand and available for purchase at any time. It is only the leather-bound version that is special order and limited quantity.

The link provided above will provide you with the other information and instructions on how to place an order.

I am very grateful for all the labor provided by the many volunteers to make these possible. I also want to thank in advance all those who will be handling the shipping and distribution that will be involved in finishing this process.

SEPTEMBER 15, 2019

Scripture Ordering Choices

The link I put up yesterday about the leather edition of the scriptures will only allow special-order for a limited time, with delivery of the entire order expected in early 2020.

The website scriptures.shop has added a significant volume of new content to help those who are ordering new leather scriptures. It is designed to allow a person to learn about each cover type, as well as the process for making the leather-bound edition.

During the Special Order window that will last only until October 15th, a wide variety of choices of multiple colors and cover types will be available, with pictures and explanations available on scriptures.shop. Most sets are \$99, which includes delivery within the USA.

As to the pricing, although the price may seem to be unbelievably low for books of this outstanding quality, it is because much of the development and production of these scriptures has been subsidized by volunteers who have made generous donations of time and money, and because the Restoration Scriptures Foundation does *not* seek to earn a profit from providing the scriptures. Although many of the hard costs involved with making these scriptures are already known, some variable costs such as freight, packaging, and postage cannot be known until the time when an order is actually delivered. Those costs have been estimated and included in the order price. In the event of a shortfall because the price was set too low, several generous people have offered to help cover it. However, in the event the price produces an overage after all orders have been filled, the plan is to donate it to the temple fund. It is my

understanding that it is likely the shortfall or overage will be less than \$100 on the entire special order of a minimum of 1,400 books.

For those planning to attend next week's General Conference in Boise, ID, there will be a Leather Scriptures Booth, where you will be able to see and hold the various prototypes. Once you place an order an email confirmation of your order will be sent to you.

The preferred payment method is check or money order, to avoid the processing fees associated with credit card transactions. Especially for orders of \$500 or more, they ask that you consider completing your checkout using the "check or money order" payment method, then drop a check for the total amount in the mail to the address on your order confirmation email.

SEPTEMBER 17, 2019

Scriptures and Boise Conference

The restoration was begun through Joseph Smith but was not completed. In order to complete, it must begin where it last ended. Joseph laid a foundation that has been compromised and must be respected. To respect the work done by the Lord through Joseph Smith, we first need to recover all that has been lost from that initial work.

The scriptures are the result of the best efforts of numerous volunteers to complete the labor of research and recovery to restore the Joseph Smith Revision of the Bible, the most accurate version of the Book of Mormon as Joseph intended it to read, and the most reliable account of the revelations given through Joseph. They differ in numerous ways, some of them quite significant, from existing versions of scripture.

The new leather bound version of the scriptures attempts to print sacred material in a quality that mirrors the value of the

contents. The final specifications for the leather bound printing were provided to a large degree by a man who has decades of experience in handcrafted custom book-binding. He has restored many old volumes, including copies of the first edition of the Book of Mormon printed in EB Grandin's shop.

Samples of the leather bound options will be available to inspect during the upcoming conference in Boise.

We hope to continue on with the Lord's guidance, to allow Him to complete the restoration, and fulfill His covenants with the fathers. I intend to address that topic in the upcoming conference in Boise.

SEPTEMBER 23, 2019

New Video

The 7th and final video in the second series about the Christian Restoration is now available. It is linked below:

The Restoration Continues Today

This final video is a companion to the talk given in the Boise Conference yesterday.

OCTOBER 2019

OCTOBER 10, 2019

Scripture Order Deadline

The deadline to order leather-bound scriptures ends on October 15th, next Tuesday. Once that deadline ends, no other orders will be possible. Although it is anticipated a handful of extra copies will be printed, the only way to know you will be able to obtain a copy is to place an order prior to that deadline.

Orders are made at: scriptures.shop

When this printing is completed it is not known when, or even if, there will be another printing.

CHAPTER 9

Light and Truth

OCTOBER 18, 2019

Twins

I spoke with a friend this morning about marriage. He thought the results of the relationship between husband and wife over time would be akin to becoming “twins:” deeply attached, intuitively connected, continually identified together, separate and distinct and yet unified. I liked the thought.

OCTOBER 18, 2019

Interview

I was interviewed by Shawn McCraney for his Heart of the Matter broadcast. It is now up on YouTube and linked here:

Part 1 Interview

The second installment is linked here:

Part 2 Interview

I dislike interviews. But was ultimately persuaded by Rock Waterman to do this one. This is part 1 of a three-part interview.

OCTOBER 22, 2019

Interview Conclusion

The third and final installment of the interview with Shawn McCraney is now on YouTube and linked here: [Interview-Part 3](#)

All three segments were recorded at the same time, but released in three installments.

OCTOBER 24, 2019

Light and Truth

A passage in the Teachings and Commandments explains God's glory in these words:

The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth. Light and truth forsake that evil one. Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning, and God having redeemed man from the Fall, man became again, in their infant state, innocent before God. And that wicked one comes and takes away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers. (T&C 93:11)

Light and truth are another way to define "intelligence." And "truth" is likewise defined as "knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come" (T&C 93:8). Which raises the question of how we can know of things as they are, were, and are to come?

The most obvious source to know of things past, present and in the future is to study scripture. Scriptures require us to have faith enough to believe they are trustworthy. Exercising that degree of faith lets the believer learn about things as they are, were, and are to come, while the unbeliever rejects that opportunity.

The Book of Mormon assumes many readers will disbelieve it. Nephi recorded that Christ posed this question for the reader to contemplate: “Wherefore murmur ye because that ye shall receive more of my word?” (NC 2 Ne. 12:9). The question is rhetorical, but certainly worth contemplating: Why do we disbelieve something that originated with Christ?

The explanation is in that first statement from the T&C: “[the] wicked one comes and takes away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers.” Rejecting the words of Christ is itself “disobedience.” And justifying that rejection because it is something new and contrary to the “tradition of [your] fathers” is wrong.

The result is that the believer gains more “light and truth” than the one who refuses to believe. They are “more intelligent” because they accept more “light and truth.”

Departing from traditions can be frightening. But fear is the opposite of faith. The Book of Mormon challenges us to test truths by accepting and applying them in our life, to determine what effect the truth has (NC Alma 16:28). If it proves to have a good effect, then you can trust the truth is godly and good. And if it proves to have a bad effect, then you can reject it. Applying that test requires only the smallest degree of belief. That small step should be possible, even for the most tradition-bound and fearful.

NOVEMBER 2019

NOVEMBER 3, 2019

Baptism in Living Water

For the first century and a half of Christianity, the rite of baptism was performed using living water.

That was not just because of the poverty of the early Christians, but also because of their understanding of the text in KJV Jeremiah 2:12–13 (NC 1:5) and also 17:13 (NC 7:1).

The earliest depictions of baptism in early Christian art were invariably in a lake, stream or river. The iconography of the early Christians depicting living water ended in about the fourth century, but a lot of things changed around that time also.

The early text of instructions known as **The Didache** is believed to have been written in the first century. In Chapter 7, verse 2, it instructs to perform baptism in this way: “Concerning baptism, baptize thus: Having first rehearsed all these things, ‘baptize, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,’ in running water[.]”

Both Matthew and Mark clarify that John the Baptist performed baptism, including of Jesus Christ, in the River Jordan (NC Matt. 2:3–4; Mark 1:1–2).

NOVEMBER 17, 2019

Condemnation Removed

Reflecting on the scriptures project, I have concluded nobody involved was as important to the outcome as the work itself. By September 1832, those involved early in the restoration provoked the Lord to condemn them. His rebuke stated,

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

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

The work was necessary to end “treating lightly” the “new covenant, even the Book of Mormon, and the former commandments which [the Lord] has given.” Until some group would “repent and remember,” the condemnation decreed in September 1832 continued to “rest upon the children of Zion, even all.”

It is impossible for any group of people to emerge from under that condemnation without repenting and remembering, as the Lord demanded.

As the labor proceeded, it attracted the notice of heaven. The Lord worked alongside the volunteers. His inspiration was evident to all of those involved.

If the effort to “repent and remember” had been undertaken in 1832, the recovery effort could have been more complete and more accurate. The first and subsequent generations neglected it, leaving it for the fourth generation to accomplish. We have only a remnant of the original material available to us.

Despite our present limitations, the scripture recovery effort was enough to remove the Lord's condemnation. Once it was presented to the Lord, He not only removed the condemnation, but committed to working to complete the restoration process. He has spoken and committed:

And I, the Lord your God, will be with you and will never forsake you, and I will lead you in the path which will bring peace to you in the troubling season now fast approaching. I will raise you up and protect you, abide with you, and gather you in due time, and this shall be a land of promise to you as your inheritance from me. The earth will yield its increase, and you will flourish upon the mountains and upon the hills, and the wicked will not come against you because the fear of the Lord will be with you. I will visit my house, which the remnant of my people shall build, and I will dwell therein, to be among you, and no one will need to say, Know ye the Lord, for you all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. I will teach you things that have been hidden from the foundation of the world and your understanding will reach unto Heaven. And you shall be called the children of the Most High God, and I will preserve you against the harvest. And the angels sent to harvest the world will gather the wicked into bundles to be burned, but will pass over you as my peculiar treasure. (T&C 158:12-18)

The outcome of the labor is described by the Lord in these words:

These scriptures are sent forth to be my warning to the world, my comfort to the faithful, my counsel to the meek, my reproof to the proud, my rebuke to the contentious, and my condemnation of the wicked. They are my invitation to all mankind to flee from corruption, repent and be baptized in my name, and prepare for the coming judgment. (T&C 177:3)

The Lord's favor can still be rejected and we can provoke our own condemnation. The rule for most dispensations is failure. But we have the opportunity to succeed and prophecy promises some generation will succeed at the end.

NOVEMBER 25, 2019

Learning

In mortality, our worst failures improve us far more than our greatest successes. If we do not return from this experience bearing scars and injuries from life, then we have avoided much of what we were sent here to experience.

DECEMBER 2019

DECEMBER 2, 2019

So Why Seal This?

Recent on-line activity has resulted in email inquiries sent to me. My mind has not changed: The bogus Brazil Sealed Book of Mormon contains nothing I would consider worth keeping under a seal from publication. It certainly does not contain the promised content to: “reveal all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof” (NC 2 Ne. 11:19). I am familiar with what that content would look like, and nothing resembling that is contained in the Sealed Book of Mormon text.

There is some interest in the idea of reincarnation implied in that text. I’ve never taught reincarnation. Quite the contrary, I’ve denounced it. There are too many living claimants to be returning “Peters” and “Jeremiahs” and “Moseses” for me to put any stock into these claims. As far as I can tell, those who teach reincarnation do so to make the claim they are some notable figure from scripture returned again to earth, and therefore deserve my attention and respect.

I think if one were a notable figure from scripture they would do something notable for the cause of Christ here and now. Failing

to accomplish anything notable to advance faith in Christ here and now belies the claim to be some great, historic, prophetic figure from the past returned to live again.

So if you're a returned significant past scriptural figure and are here now... for what possible reason? To bask in the glory of past achievements? Do you have a job to do on the Lord's errand? Why not do THAT rather than lay claim to your unprovable past accomplishments and honors?

I make no claim to be some significant figure from the past. I'm not reincarnated with tales of my past glories. I'm just trying to serve the Lord here and now and hoping to do some little work before I die to please the Lord. All the while aware of my own limitations, inadequacies, and shortcomings.

DECEMBER 6, 2019

The Messiah

This is the season when we commemorate the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem. He was born in humble circumstances, although His lineage entitled Him to the throne of King David. The time of His arrival was in the aftermath of the Maccabean rebellion which many remembered as an unwise attempt to reestablish Jewish cultural control and reject foreign influences.

The Messiah was largely rejected, and officially opposed by the Jewish hierarchy who wanted to preserve relations with Rome. The authority to kill Him openly and without meaningful opposition from His few followers shows how small a following He achieved in His lifetime.

In most objective measures, His life failed to achieve any measurable success before His death. But once He died things changed.

The course of history did not alter because of the Messiah's death. That sent His few followers into hiding, fearful for their own lives. History changed because of what happened three days later, as days were reckoned by those people.

It was the Messiah's rise from death that changed all history. He achieved victory over death, and those who witnessed it changed from timid and cowering followers of a dead teacher into bold and fearless apostles who heralded to the world the startling message: "He is risen!"

That message remains the singular most important accomplishment in the history of mortal man. It gives all mankind hope. It changes everything. As Job prophesied of himself and of everyman: "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God!" (KJV Job 19:26).

Because of Him, we shall also rise. And rising we shall face judgment. Now is the time to prepare for that judgment by the deeds we do, the words we speak and the thoughts we entertain.

DECEMBER 15, 2019

Revelation

My wife and I were discussing on our hike this morning how often "feeling the spirit" is used as a barometer to decide if something is from God. The phrase means that the person "feeling the spirit" has a satisfying, good impression that makes them think they have uncovered something from God.

Joseph Smith suggested revelation involves receiving "intelligence" and not necessarily something that makes you feel good. He described it as, "pure intelligence flowing into you, it may give you sudden strokes of ideas," which may produce a wide variety of reactions.

When Enoch received revelation about the earth, he reported this: “And as Enoch saw thus, he had bitterness of soul, and wept over his brethren, and said unto the Heavens, I will refuse to be comforted” (OC Gen. 4:19).

What if God sends a true message about the terrible state of mankind, and the news is bad? Can God only tell us good things? If you will only allow yourself to “feel the spirit” when you hear good news, how can you ever be told your awful state before God? How does this message from 1832 make you feel about things:

And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received, which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation rests upon the children of Zion, even all, and they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon, and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say but to do according to that which I have written, that they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father’s kingdom. (T&C 82:20)

That message is frightening, true, inspired, from God, and should cause alarm.

Here is a description of us, and of what is coming:

this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord, who say to the seers, See not—and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits, get out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us. Wherefore, thus says the Holy One of Israel: Because you despise this word, and trust in oppression and

perverseness, and rely thereon, therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking comes suddenly, at an instant. And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces, he shall not spare, so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a shard to take fire from the hearth, or to take water out of the pit. (OC Isaiah 9:9)

Because the people prefer to hear lies, the priests, preachers, bishops and clergy tell lies and live off their flocks. It is with us as foretold by Ezekiel:

but the shepherds fed themselves and fed not my flock, therefore, O you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves anymore, for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be food for them. (OC Ezek. 17:6)

There is a lot of work to be done, and much of it is required because of the awful state of things at present. Do not expect morality to improve. In this downward trek, do not make accommodation for declining morality in your families.

Even the elect can be deceived when they only "feel the spirit" as they hear good things, smooth messages, welcome news. It is always unwelcome when you awaken people from a sound sleep. But the Book of Mormon challenges us to "Awake!" and then to "Arise!" When you have been stirred out of a sound slumber, then with patience and kindness try to awaken others, and invite them to also arise.

DECEMBER 21, 2019

Handel's Messiah

We went to see the Oratorio Society of Utah's 104th year of Handel's Messiah at the University of Utah this last week. Handel tried to add music to accompany the words of scripture describing the Messiah. His composition was delightful and at times awe-inspiring. It is the language of scripture, however, that conveys the message of the Messiah in such sublime words that even Handel's great work cannot equal the scriptures:

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

These words demand attention, startle the thoughtful mind, and tell us that the ancients knew that God would enter this world as a child.

There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the City of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

The words of this great message make such an indelible impression on the minds of those who heard them that they echo down from generation to generation. We can still hear this! We still consider that declaration with wonder! And we too can recite it once we have heard these words.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying:- Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, goodwill towards men.

It is almost too much to take in. Heavenly hosts breaking into psalms of praise for the child born that day in the City of David.

Handel's great composition retells the Lord's life and sacrifice, death and resurrection, and foretells His future return. But the words of scripture are almost equaled only in Handel's swelling Chorus:

King of kings forever and ever hallelujah hallelujah; and Lord of lords forever and ever - hallelujah hallelujah; King of kings forever and ever - hallelujah hallelujah; and Lord of lords forever and ever - hallelujah hallelujah; King of kings forever and ever - hallelujah hallelujah; and Lord of lords; King of kings and Lord of lords; And he shall reign forever and ever!

This well known chorus frames the language of scripture in a masterpiece of music. But the scriptures still outshine every attempt to add to the record. The performance was a great evening, and we appreciated the opportunity to witness its performance.

DECEMBER 23, 2019

December 23, 1805

On this day in 1805 Joseph Smith was born in Sharon, Vermont. I thought it appropriate to post a handful of his quotes that I find worth reflecting upon from time to time:

“Truth is Mormonism. God is the author of it.”

“Ever keep in exercise the principle of mercy, and be ready to forgive our brother on the first intimations of repentance, and asking forgiveness; and should we even forgive our brother, or

even our enemy, before he repent or ask forgiveness, our heavenly Father would be equally as merciful unto us.”

“We don’t ask any people to throw away any good they have got; we only ask them to come and get more.”

“I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”

“And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives! For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God.”

DECEMBER 25, 2019

Merry Christmas

Mankind began in God’s presence, but fell from grace. From the time of the fall there was a promised Redeemer who would restore mankind back to God’s presence.

Generation after generation few individuals ever regained God’s presence. God’s great desire for mankind to return to Him is best illustrated by the coming of the Messiah into this world as a mortal child. This is what we celebrate today.

God so wanted our return to Him, that He condescended to come here to be with us. God-with-us: Immanuel! The great “El” —singular form of Elohim— came to be with us. When we failed to ascend to Him, failed to awaken and arise, He came to us!

This act testifies to God's willingness to have us return to Him. More than any other invitation extended in all scripture, God's descent to be here among us shows His desire to have us be with Him.

This day is worth celebrating. But it is also a time for sober reflection on the mercy, kindness and greatness of God. Despite all our failings, He longs for us to return and to "be with us!"

CHAPTER 10

Life

JANUARY 2020

JANUARY 5, 2020

Beautiful Day

We finally went to see *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*. I was not really interested in the film, and couldn't imagine it would hold much interest for me. But my wife was adamant about seeing it, so last night I relented.

This was one of the best movies I've ever seen. Delightful. Amazingly well done. I'd recommend seeing it in a movie theatre if it is still playing near you.

Hiking this morning in the snow on Traverse Ridge I found myself reflecting on the film. Goodness is infectious. And Mr. Rogers makes Pittsburg a warm and welcoming place.

JANUARY 26, 2020

Law of Moses

The Nephites followed the Law of Moses because it justified their faith in the Messiah who would come to atone for sins.

Yea, and they did keep the law of Moses; for it was expedient that they should keep the law of Moses as yet, for it was not all fulfilled. But notwithstanding the law of Moses, they did look forward to the coming of Christ, considering that the law of Moses was a type of his coming, and believing that they must keep those outward performances until the time that he should be revealed unto them. Now they did not suppose that salvation came by the law of Moses, but the law of Moses did serve to strengthen their faith in Christ; (NC Alma 14:15)

But they always understood the Law of Moses would eventually be fulfilled, and at that point keeping the law would end.

And now ye have said that salvation cometh by the law of Moses. I say unto you that it is expedient that ye should keep the law of Moses as yet; but I say unto you that the time shall come when it shall no more be expedient to keep the law of Moses. (NC Mosiah 8:1)

The Law of Moses ended when Jesus Christ atoned for sin and fulfilled the demands of justice, thereby making mercy possible. Christ told the people at Bountiful:

I have come to fulfill the law; therefore, it hath an end. Behold, I do not destroy the prophets, for as many as have not been fulfilled in me, verily I say unto you, shall all be fulfilled. And because I said unto you that old things hath passed away, I do not destroy that which hath been spoken concerning things which are to come. For behold, the covenant which I have made with my people is not all fulfilled, but the law which was given unto Moses hath an end in me. (NC 3 Ne. 7:2)

This final sacrifice under the Law of Moses fulfilled all the requirements of justice. It created the possibility for infinite mercy:

And that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal. And thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name, this being the intent of this last sacrifice: to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance. (NC Alma 16:34)

The Law of Moses was not part of the original faith taught in the Garden of Eden to Adam, and believed by the first fathers. But rather, “the law was added because of transgressions,” (NC Gal. 1:10), which is why it would be fulfilled, come to an end, and it would no longer be expedient for mankind to follow. The process of restoring will not include a return of practicing the Law of Moses. God intends to preach again the Gospel to us, which He also preached to Abraham when he was restored to the covenant: “God ... preached before the gospel unto Abraham” (NC Gal. 1:7). Abraham believed and received the covenant, but did not know or obey the Law of Moses.

There is a great deal left to be restored. But among the many things still to be done, renewing the Law of Moses is not among them.

FEBRUARY 2020

FEBRUARY 3, 2020

Multiple Mortalities

Several individuals have advocated teaching multiple mortalities as a central doctrine of Christ's gospel. I have always discouraged anyone from teaching it, and have spoken against it on a few occasions.

The most frequently taught version is the worst form of that idea. It holds that people live here repeatedly, going from spirit

world, through birth into mortality, then passing into the spirit world through death, only to later reappear here again through yet another birth. I have denounced this idea for many reasons, but mainly because it is silly and extremely unwise to teach.

First, the silliness: From all mortals who have ever lived, we have a record of some kind for about one-ten-billionth-of-one-percent (or something close to that). Yet those who advocate the teaching claim they have come to the solemn realization that they are some past historic character returned to earth, and now seek recognition for their self-identification with some past historic figure. EVERY ONE of those I have heard who advocate this teaching claim an association with a known past-figure. This is outrageously unlikely. Going with this false idea for a moment, it begs the questions: How can you trust your memory about such a past identity when you hardly remember details from a few years ago? At birth, a veil was placed between you and events in the spirit world. How can you recall events from an earlier birth-death-spirit world-birth with such accuracy that you “know” who you were/are?

Second, and perhaps yet more silly: What difference does it make? We are on probation here. If we fail now, we will be judged for that failure. If we passed the probation in an earlier mortality, why return to hell to retake a test when failure is the norm? Or did we fail and want to retake the test? Because we all likely failed to be here again, then we are probably past prostitutes in Sodom, or critics of Noah, or battlefield fodder for an Oriental monarch. Not likely Peter, Joseph or Ezekiel. However, advocates of multiple mortalities prefer to advance the notion of returning as nobility or greatness in themselves and those they teach.

More seriously, this idea is unwise because it really DOES NOT MATTER, even if it were true. We are here on probation. It began

when we took our first breath and will end when we take our last. God loans us the breath of life, and we are accountable for every act, thought and word we choose (See NC Alma 9:4).

Moreover, if this teaching were important to the plan of God, then the scriptures would hold it forth in plainness. It would not require mangling the text to find it, but would be there plainly. Instead the scriptures teach against the idea: “it is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment” (NC Heb. 1:28).

Then we have insight from the experience of Peter, Jacob and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. In a revelation to Joseph Smith about that event, the Lord stated,

And I will show it plainly, as I showed it unto my disciples as I stood before them in the flesh and spoke unto them, saying, As you have asked of me concerning these signs of my coming, in the day when I shall come in my glory in the clouds of Heaven, to fulfill the promises that I have made unto your fathers, for as you have looked upon the long absence of your spirits from your bodies to be a bondage, I will show unto you how the day of redemption shall come, and also the restoration of the scattered Israel. (T&C 31:4)

These disciples saw the future until the Second Coming and the resurrection of the dead. They did not want to remain in the grave, separated from the body, in the world of the dead (spirit world) until the resurrection. That “long absence” would, to them, be a “bondage.” If they were to live again before Christ’s Second Coming, time after time, this would not have been their reaction.

When the disciples saw what awaited them in the “long absence of [their] spirits from [their] bodies,” they all three asked for a way to avoid “bondage” in the spirit world until the resurrection. Rather

than the spirit world, John asked to “tarry in the flesh” and minister as an angel here (T&C 1 JSH 13:18; T&C 171 - *TSJ* 12:19).

Peter chose another way to avoid the “long absence” of spirit from body. He asked to go quickly through death into resurrection so he could ascend to Christ’s kingdom. Christ responded to Peter, “you desired that you might speedily come unto me in my kingdom” (T&C 1 JSH 13:19). Both John’s and Peter’s requests avoided imprisonment by death awaiting the Second Coming. If Peter and John were not returning to the flesh prior to the Lord’s return, what can justify teaching multiple mortalities by returning to live here again?

The idea that we may at some long distant, future cycle of going from one estate to another (T&C 145, Abr. 6:2–3), through one creation into another (OC Gen. 1:6), worlds without end (T&C 69:28; 157:38; 175:23), is something quite different from the idea of multiple mortalities taught by individuals now. The challenge is here and now. Dreaming of past greatness is no more profitable than dreaming of mansions above:

Then wake up and do something more
Than dream of your mansion above.
Doing good is a pleasure, a joy beyond measure,
A blessing of duty and love (“Have I Done Any Good?”)

The teaching is harmful, inspires foolishness and vanity, and does nothing to advance the obligation to live nobly. I believe it is untrue, and that while we may have many opportunities in future estates to face challenges and opportunities for growth, we will pass through this creation once. After that we will be called upon to render an account for what we did while here. Take no thought for tomorrow, therefore, but improve our time today.

FEBRUARY 3, 2020

Email: Depression

I got an email from a young person about her peers. She explained her concerns, including, in part, the following:

It breaks my heart to know what emotions and thoughts my friend experiences, because I've had a taste of them. Other friends and loved ones I know deal with depression, anxiety, loneliness, feelings of worthlessness, suicidal thoughts, and PTSD- some of them under 18.

I responded to her as follows:

I plan to speak about some of this in the upcoming March Conference. Not directly, but generally to try to help people see there is a great fog of lies surrounding us continually. There is a vision that Enoch had, Moses restored, and is now part of the Old Covenants in Genesis. In the LDS scriptures it is in the Pearl of Great Price, Book of Moses. In that vision Satan had the whole world bound in a great chain, and he looked up at heaven and laughed. It is in OC Gen. 4:15: "And he beheld Satan, and he had a great chain in his hand, and he veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced."

That great chain is not physical, but mental. The chain used by our common enemy is made of lies and deceit.

People are not depressed irrationally. They are responding in a normal way to an abnormal perception made of lies. They despair because they think there is reason to be despairing. But that is because they accept what the "world" is telling them about our present condition. Part of waking up is realizing that most of what is said, taught, claimed and broadcast in society is

filled with lies about mankind's condition, the state of society, and lies designed to inspire envy, jealousy and discouragement.

I have tried to awaken people to the reality that God lives and cares very much for those who respond to His voice. He intends to protect and care for His sheep. His commandments are calculated to free us from the imprisonment of worldliness and sin. He is trying to free us, not to impose upon us. I think God intends for you and those now living to participate in the building of a new society, a New Jerusalem, a place of peace apart from the world. But for now we await further command from Him, while still living in a society ever more in the chains of the enemy.

Thank you for your email. I will join you in praying for your friends. The Lord's advice to people both in His day and today is the same, "Be of good cheer."

FEBRUARY 10, 2020

March Children's Conference

In the upcoming March 20–22 Conference in Hurricane, Utah there will be specific activities planned for the youth. To help the Conference organizers they ask that those who plan to attend register to help with arrangements.

The link to the site is here: **BEHOLD, Your Little Ones**

FEBRUARY 15, 2020

Life

From the bottom of the deepest ocean trench to the top of the highest mountain, the zone that covers nearly the whole of known life, is only something over a dozen miles- not much

when set against the roominess of the cosmos at large. For humans it is even worse... no less than 99.5% of the world's habitable space by volume, according to one estimate, is fundamentally- in practical terms completely- off limits to us. (*A Short History of Nearly Everything*, Bill Bryson, p. 239)

This creation is a grand undertaking, vast in scope, infinite in size, with billions of years from the past displayed nightly in the vault of heaven. Both science and Genesis tell us the greatest part of this whole creation was made before man arrived on the scene. Science declares mankind is the greatest step in evolutionary development. Genesis identifies the creation of man and woman as the final step in God fashioning something "very good."

Surely God appreciates His vast handiwork. Mankind is made to be "like God" comprehending and appreciating this great undertaking. My wife and I hike almost every day. No matter which trail is taken, every venture is unique. Seasons change. Light shifts. The shadows on the same path are different as the sun moves across the horizon from Solstice to Equinox to Solstice, year by year.

And again, verily I say unto you, he has given a law unto all things, by which they move in their times and their seasons, and their courses are fixed, even the courses of the heavens and the earth, which comprehend the earth and all the planets. And they give light to each other in their times and in their seasons, in their minutes, in their hours, in their days, in their weeks, in their months, in their years. All these are one year with God, but not with man. The earth rolls upon her wings, and the sun gives his light by day, and the moon gives her light by night, and the stars also give their light as they roll upon their wings, in their glory, in the midst of the power of God. Unto

what shall I liken these kingdoms that you may understand? Behold all these are kingdoms, and any man who has seen any or the least of these has seen God moving in his majesty and power. (T&C 86:7–8)

FEBRUARY 20, 2020

Japan Conference

A regional conference in Japan is scheduled for April 3–5. A link to the conference announcement appears below:

The Search for Truth

This important outreach will include people who plan to participate from several nations in the Far East. All are invited to attend.

FEBRUARY 21, 2020

Glorious Destiny

The Restoration has a glorious destiny. It does not matter if “restoration churches” or organized institutions falter, stumble and fall. As Joseph Smith explained it:

“the standard of truth has been erected. No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing.” That “standard of truth” is the Book of Mormon, not an institution. And it will continue to “go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished and the great Jehovah shall say, The work is done.” (T&C 146:20)

We will continue to advance the message. We have no structure to be compromised by aspiring men.

We have nothing diverting tithing money away from helping the poor.

We have no organization exerting control.

We believe in faith, repentance and baptism for the remission of sin, and that the holy ghost will follow to lead and inspire those who repent and are baptized.

We believe in gathering together often to partake of the sacrament.

These are things taught to us in our scriptures.

When other “restoration churches” are compromising with the world, adopting more worldliness, losing light, and violating commandments, we invite anyone who believes in the Restoration and would like to remain true and faithful to God’s commands to fellowship with us. Here is where you can find a group of those who believe in and seek to preserve the Restoration: [Fellowship Locator](#).

MARCH 2020

MARCH 1, 2020

Temple Fund

I received a request to put this statement up from the sisters gathering funds for the temple project:

Statement Regarding Financial Accountability For Donated Temple Funds

We hereby inform all interested parties that all monetary gifts donated for the temple fund have been and are currently held in their entirety without any disbursement for any reason to this date, March 1, 2020. Not one cent has been spent, or is expected to be spent, until construction commences.

Every donation is carefully recorded in two separate records maintained by members of the committee.

We plan to provide full transparency of all gifts (with donor names withheld for privacy) as well as an accounting for all expenditures when the temple is complete.

The fund at this point has earned over \$11,000.00 in interest, which also has not been spent, and which will continue to accumulate as part of the temple funds, until construction begins.

The Temple Fund Committee

Karen Strong

Janette VanLeer

Elaine Henderson

MARCH 13, 2020

Hurricane Conference

On March 20–22 there is a Conference scheduled in Hurricane, Utah. The website for details can be found here: [The Heavens Are Open](#)

I look forward to seeing those of you who choose to attend. The opportunity to meet together is always a wonderful experience.

I flew to Denver, Colorado this last week and noted the airline travelers, hotel guests and rental car providers are all having fewer customers. That was a welcome change from what I normally confront in travel. Politics, it seems, are now played with a recklessness and frenzy that puts on quite a show.

Amid all the despair and gloom I noticed that the sunrise and sunset continues to display daily beauty and the constant reassurance that what God ordains will happen. Even in the light-polluted night sky of the Wasatch Front, right now, overhead we have Orion, Venus, Castor and Pollux still visible. A few nights ago

the twins of Gemini seemed to be standing with their feet on the moon. Ursa Major still points to Polaris, and that fixed point in the northern sky is visible despite the streetlights of my community.

While we were hiking last Saturday we ran into the rafter of turkeys that have been absent for the last month. (A “flock” of turkeys is called a “rafter.”) It was nice to see them again. Cycles in nature continue unabated.

When I see mankind fearfully running about and acting on their dread, I think of how ancient prophets compared man to the unruly sea. The ‘seas heaving themselves beyond their bounds’ is a familiar scriptural metaphor used to describe panic in the last days. ‘Men’s hearts failing them for fear’ is another way the bemused prophets and our Lord described how society will behave as the end approaches.

I look forward to next week’s conference.

MARCH 18, 2020

Update...

The Hurricane, Utah conference is taking place in rented facilities and the lessor requires compliance with the current crowd-size limitation. Therefore, although I will be speaking as scheduled, no more than 10 people will be allowed to be present. It will be streamed over the Internet through the conference website. The best way to participate will be through the live streaming.

There was a 5.7 earthquake this morning in the Salt Lake Valley. It was centered in Magna. The trumpet of the Angel Moroni statue atop the Salt Lake Temple was shaken off.

There is still a lot of work to be done. The talk I will give at the upcoming conference is titled: “**The Heavens are Open (And Therefore We Have Work To Do)**”.

CHAPTER 11

Aequinoctium: In Perfect Balance

MARCH 19, 2020

Equinox

A new video series begins today. The series is titled: *The Heavens Are Open Again*. The first video in the planned seven-part series was made live today at this link: [The Heavens Are Open Again, Part I: Condemnation](#)

This evening is the equinox. The First Vision happened near the Spring Equinox. The four year recurring visitation of Nephi with Joseph Smith took place on the Fall Equinox. These movements of the sun on the horizon were anciently associated with heavenly contact, and devotional festivals. Their relevance seem to have been reconfirmed at the beginning of the Restoration.

The sun is now racing across the horizon, moving more than 1 degree daily to the north. Daylight has been growing in the northern hemisphere since the Winter Solstice, but it now is moving rapidly toward the Summer Solstice.

The symbolism of these movements are largely forgotten by modern Christianity and even Mormonism. But they are indeed part of the gospel of Christ, as I intend to mention this coming Sunday during my talk.

Despite our forgetfulness, heaven still uses this occasion to convey ideas for believers. Does God still speak through an earthquake? Does removing the trumpet from the temple's "angel" atop the highest spire say anything to believers today?

I've thought for several years that the shift from primarily proclaiming the Book of Mormon to now requiring fidelity to an organization's leaders as a precondition for baptism, has gutted the Lord's intended message. If the primacy of the Book of Mormon is no longer an organization's central message, then there is no further need to proclaim themselves to the world.

MARCH 20, 2020

Tomorrow's Schedule

Tomorrow's conference schedule of breakout sessions are going ahead. For topics, speakers and times go to the conference web page to get the Zoom links for the virtual breakout sessions. They will take place tomorrow as originally planned.

Sunday I will be speaking and it will also be accessible through a link provided on the conference web page.

MARCH 23, 2020

Transcript of Talk

A transcript of the talk I delivered in the Conference in Hurricane, Utah yesterday is now available as a download. It is linked here: "[The Heavens are Open \(And Therefore We Have Work to Do\)](#)".

The transcript includes 93 footnotes that I did not read during the talk.

At a later time a transcript of the Q&A discussion will be provided.

MARCH 26, 2020

Priesthood Instruction

On October 5, 1840 in a conference at Nauvoo, Joseph Smith had Robert B. Thompson read the instructions on “priesthood” Joseph wrote for the conference. It is significant Joseph wrote the talk before the conference. His talks were almost always spontaneous, and our record relies on note-takers in the audience. Joseph thought his priesthood instruction was important enough to organize and write in advance.

He mentioned a high priesthood that

is the Grand head and holds the hig[h]est Authority which pertains to the priesthood—the keys of the Kingdom of God in all ages of the world to the latest posterity on the earth—and is the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation and every important ~~matter~~ truth is revealed from heaven.

This channel that reveals knowledge commenced with Adam and “he was the first to hold the spiritual blessings.” “Adam holds the keys of the dispensation of the fulness of times, i.e., the dispensation of all the times that have been and will be revealed through him from the beginning to Christ and from Christ to the end of ^{AA}all world the dispensations that have to be revealed.”

Joseph explained the dispensations are to gather together everything in Christ. The purpose of “the last dispensation is, that all things pertaining to that dispensation should be conducted precisely in accordance with the preceeding dispensations.”

Christ “set the ordinances to be the same for Ever and ever and set Adam to watch over them to reveal them from heaven to

man or to send Angels to reveal them[.]” When angels do come to minister, “These angels are under the direction of Michael or Adam who acts under the direction of Christ.”

Joseph explained there was an order that heaven follows, and mankind is required to also conform to the pattern established by heaven. “Adam received commandments and instruction from God, this was the order from the beginning; that he received revelations, Commandments, and ordinances at the beginning[.]” And it was necessary to follow that pattern to be saved.

Dispensation after dispensation it has been Adam who has either ministered or sent angels to minister the conditions for salvation. Each dispensation is required to conform to the pattern ordained by Adam if people in the dispensation are to be saved.

“This then is the nature of the priesthood, every man holding the presidency of his dispensation and one man holding the presidency of them all even Adam.” Further, “the ordinances must be kept in the very way God has appointed, otherwise their priesthood will prove a cursing instead of a blessing.”

[The] keys of this [patriarchal or presidency] priesthood consisted in obtaining the voice of Jehovah that he talked with him in a familiare and friendly manner, that he continued to him the keys, the covenants, the power and the glory with which he blessed Adam at the beginning and the offering of sacrifice which also shall be continued at the last time. for all the ordinances and duties that ever have been required by the priesthood under the directions and commandments of the Almighty ~~in the last dispensation at the end thereof~~ in any of the dispensations, shall all be had in the last dispensations[.]

Animal sacrifice is most notably associated with the Law of Moses. However, Joseph clarified that,

It is not to be understood that, the law of Moses will be fully established again with all its rights and (variety of ceremonies) ceremonies this has never been spoken off by the prophets) but those things which existed prior to Mose's day viz sacrifice, will be continued[.]

The foregoing is taken from *JS Papers, Documents* Vol. 7, September 1839–January 1841, pp. 434–441, retyped as in the original. The entire talk goes through p. 442.

Joseph's talk is best understood in the context of tying "dispensations" and "ordinances" to temple rites. Had he lived long enough to complete the rites he began, there would undoubtedly have been much more returned by Father Adam for the benefit of his posterity. We have the assurance that this process of restoring will continue and will eventually lead to a full and final restoration.

It is interesting that Joseph uses both the singular and the plural when he mentioned the "last dispensations." Clearly when Joseph was slain the restoration was not completed. Therefore, another dispensation will be needed to finish the work. Perhaps it will come as a "thief in the night" and arrive while the vast majority of ignorant mankind will believe they cannot and will not be surprised by God.

MARCH 28, 2020

Hiking Today

The restrictions in place and proposed to respond to the Coronavirus do not restrict hiking. So the daily hiking my wife and I do will not be interrupted.

Today we saw two bluebirds flying together across the trail. Robins are returning by the dozens. There are hundreds of geese in the area. There is a herd of 16 deer that graze on the east hillside above Draper City.

Winter ended and Spring began on the Equinox a few days ago. Nature is reawakening after months of slumber. Hiking puts you into Nature's cycles and lets you observe first hand Christ's management of this creation:

through Jesus Christ his Son, he that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth, which truth shines. This is the light of Christ, as also he is in the sun and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made; as also he is in the moon and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; as also the light of the stars and the power thereof by which they were made; and the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which now shines, which gives you light, is through him who enlightens your eyes, which is the same light that quickens your understandings, which light proceeds forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space: the light which is in all things, which gives life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sits upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. (T&C 86:1)

If you get tired of home confinement, consider hiking in nature as an alternative way to spend time. An hour with God's handiwork can give you insight into our Creator (and it's fun).

APRIL 2020

APRIL 2, 2020

Recent Email

There is a critic who has written to me from time to time in the past. He actively posts on line under a pseudonym and I think even has a website blog somewhere. In any event I heard from him again and responded to him. He linked to a number of websites that are critical of Mormonism generally and of Joseph Smith. I responded to his email and have copied my response below:

I will take the time to review the links. Although I am busy, I do have a little more time because of the virus slowing down everything.

Thank you for caring enough to provide input. It is apparent to me that you do value the search for truth and are sincerely committed to principle.

Many times disagreements are not the result of a person's failure to study matters through. They are the result of studying different materials and becoming persuaded by one viewpoint because of the lengthy investment of time and effort to understand that viewpoint. The disagreement flows from two different libraries being in conflict, not the ignorance or lack of diligence of either party.

I did not come to Mormonism as an eager, willing convert looking to make a change. I was quite content to leave Mormonism neglected. But once I was persuaded to at least consider it seriously, I began to study carefully what the religion taught, its historical bases, and the opposing literature. That examination has never stopped. I have read more material

that challenges or criticizes Mormonism than the supporting materials. I did that primarily because there is more available material criticizing Mormonism than there is supporting it in sheer volume.

I'm actually interested in the materials you linked and sincerely will consider it. I did a quick review and saw that many of the arguments or points are familiar and often repeated. But hopefully there will be some new stuff as well.

As you know, the LDS form of Mormonism is its own worst enemy. They have oversold some things and neglected others, and in the process have distorted both the restoration and Joseph Smith. He has become a caricature and not a real person in both LDS Mormonism and in the hands of the critics. One of the reasons for writing the book *A Man Without Doubt* was to let Joseph step out from behind the many portrayals offered of him and let him speak for himself. He was not at all the person most people think him to be.

The *Joseph Smith Papers* project is also disappointing. But at least it contains original material, some of which has not been previously released. It helps somewhat. But the editors have mangled the content with their footnotes and commentary trying to force a viewpoint on the reader.

I've said that all history is fiction. Nothing is lived in the way it is later explained in hindsight. I have a lot of original journal, diary and correspondence materials involved in the relevant time period from 1820 to 1900. These "lived experiences" are more authentic than what the historians interpret and retell. Their lives are like yours and mine. We have our hopes, plans and expectations that are invariably frustrated, changed, abandoned and we adapt to the new circumstances. Reading

through the daily struggles of those involved lets me identify with them because everyone shares the “life experience” of how this world tosses us back and forth. But historians tell the events as if they were God, with purpose and destiny always informing the storyline. But God doesn’t tell the story. He may inform a person’s life with insight, or inspire hope, or speak from time to time (almost always to correct and challenge the humble soul). But the “story” of life for everyman is the story of surprise, frustration, disappointment, sorrow, relief, appreciation, humiliation leading to humility, and challenge. But acceptance of these circumstances can lead to happiness and even satisfaction as we trouble through it all. In Liberty Jail the inspired inquiry was posited: “The Son of Man hath descended below it all; art thou greater than He?” Knowing of the Lord’s condescension helps us all bear up a little more bravely, with a little more determination, and with a little more humility.

Joseph certainly was not without his limitations and shortcomings. But, then again, so was Peter, and Moses, and Isaiah, and Elijah. Can we learn from Joseph’s life something good to take us closer to God? I leave it to you to answer that question.

All my best to you and your family;

APRIL 5, 2020

Hosanna Shout!

A few words of instruction on the “Hosanna Shout” appear to be needed:

A languid repetition in unison of:

“Hosanna...hosanna...hosanna”

is not good form. The “shout” ought to be shouted! And doing so

in unison always detracts, and forces into order what ought to be individual enthusiasm, uncontrolled, unregulated, and motivated by each person's heartfelt emotion.

Here is a description of such an event in an authentic outburst at the laying of the foundation of the Second Temple:

And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers who were old men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice. And many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people; for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off. (OC Ezra 1:17)

This outburst was loud shouting, weeping, and the words "could not be discerned" because of the outcry.

Should there ever be an occasion for an authentic "Hosanna Shout!" among people of God, it should be rousing, loud, enthusiastic and uncontrolled. It should attract the attention of Heaven itself by the purity of the outburst from the hearts of the participants.

APRIL 6, 2020

Christ's Love of Us

Our new scriptures have many things that are uniquely ours and do not inform any other Christian believer's understanding. The differences are important to note.

We have the most complete and accurate version of the Joseph Smith Translation. We have the most complete and accurate version

of the Book of Mormon. We have the most complete and accurate version of Joseph's "Doctrine and Covenants" including revelations never canonized and Lectures on Faith, that were never decanonized, but nevertheless removed from scripture. But we also have new revelations and instructions given by God to us and exclusively for us.

Here is one insight into Christ's love for us that can only be found in our scriptures:

God wants for us to understand Him. He is eager to meet with and touch us, as we should be to know and touch Him. God loves His children equally, but we love Him unequally in return. If we would love Him as he loves us, we would leap into His open arms and rejoice in the touch of our Lord. (T&C 159:8–9)

These words are humbling to contemplate.

It cannot be overstated how important scriptures are to understanding Christ's gospel. We have an advantage to understanding His gospel through our unique scriptures, if we are willing to study them.

APRIL 14, 2020

New Sacrament Prayer Recording

Because of the current circumstances, there are recordings of the sacrament prayers now available on this site. If you go to the tab marked "Downloads" there will be a sub-tab that appears with the words "Sacrament Administration" — if you click on that link it will take you to both recordings. It is also available under the "Important Links" section as "Sacrament". Either one will take you to the recordings.

The present circumstances leave some widows and single-mothers in circumstances that may require them to abandon the sacrament until the lock down ends. To help them continue to have access to the ordinance, the blessings have been recorded for anyone to use at home.

APRIL 14, 2020

Measuring Success and Failure (guest post by my wife)



How do we measure success and failure? Grades A, B, C, D or F? Pass/fail. High scores on video games? The bigger number on a scoreboard at a sporting event? What about college entrance exam scores, admissions to prestigious universities. Am I successful if I have a lot of stuff? A lot of money? The list goes on and on. How is success or failure measured in relationships? Is it as simple as good or bad? Is it based on how much contention, or how little contention? Divorce? Respect? Love? Do positive emotions have to be reciprocal to be considered a success? Does any of this resonate?

How do we measure success as a parent? Successful children? What does that look like? Is there a reasonable measurement? Is it the same for everyone? Is there such a thing as religious success or failure? How would I be able to tell? Can someone measure it for me? Can I measure it for you? Can it be measured now, or do I have to wait until I die? Will “judgment day” show my success or failure?

What are some other words for success: *victory, attainment, realization, achievement, happiness, ascendancy*. Other words for failure: *misstep, deficiency, breakdown, collapse, bungle, prodigal*.

We have a saying in my family. It goes something like this, “Can I give you a compliment? You’re doing it wrong.” I think we are doing it wrong. I think success is most usefully measured by our attempts, our diligence, our efforts, our perseverance, our struggles, our missteps (don’t call them failures), our earnestness, and our sincere desires to self-actualize—which is just fancy speak for the drive we all have to develop our talents and work towards our greatest potential. Relationship success can be correlated to Aristotle’s concept of eudaimonia—fancy speak for flourishing, or constantly moving upwards in our levels of fulfillment and expressiveness within our relationships.

I think the foregoing explanations are lead-ins to what might be a successful religious person. Someone who desires to follow God. A person who selflessly serves. A mother who sacrifices. A man who seeks to lay up heavenly treasures instead of earthly treasures. People who use their gifts and talents to build God’s Kingdom on the Earth. This is the same as self-actualization and eudaimonia expanded out to our spiritual and religious impulses. There are no person-to-person comparisons. My endeavors or expectations will probably be different than everyone else. If I am looking to others for my measure, I will likely always “fail,” and worse, because of

the distraction, I will miss out on how I might actually realize my highest religious ideals. I am unaware of any **good** achievement markers for any of these areas. It is never based on: What can I GET? What can I POSSESS?

Stop it! Stop looking at your efforts in terms of success or failure. Stop comparing your outcomes with other people. Stop imposing on yourself unrealistic expectations of what *achievements* represent success or failure. More importantly, spend time contemplating how God looks at our efforts. How is God speaking to you about your struggles, your associations, your investment in the Godly? Your life is a gift from Him. Is your life pleasing for heaven to watch? God is paying attention, and you are briefly on-stage. How do you want your hour to be remembered by God and by you? Are you pursuing your best self in all aspects of your life? Will you be ready to hear, “Well done thou good and faithful servant,” regardless of your “successes” or “failures?”

APRIL 15, 2020

Providing for Families

Our scriptures command us: “women have claim on their husbands until they are taken” (T&C 79:1). Meaning that husbands are under a duty to provide support for their wives.

That same section also commands: “All children have claim upon their parents until they are of age” (*Id*). Meaning that both parents have a duty to support and care for their children’s needs. This, of course, means food, clothing, housing, medical care, education and transportation.

Paul put it more bluntly: “But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (NC 1 Tim. 1:13).

Christ cautioned about bringing an offering to the temple altar without paying your debts:

Therefore, if you shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, or if you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has anything against you, leave there your gift before the altar, and go your way unto your brother, and first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. (NC Matt. 3:19)

The gift is not acceptable while there remains a debt to be paid to another. Gifts can wait. Debts come first.

I would recommend spouses discuss and agree on how to obey these commandments. I've spoken with several people about donating to the temple and have reminded them that family obligations come first. If someone fails to provide for their family, while giving to the temple, that is not just unwise, it is disobedience.

APRIL 26, 2020

Psalms 14

Joseph Smith changed the 14th Psalm from reading: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." To read instead:

The fool has said in his heart, There is no man that has seen God because he shows himself not unto us, therefore there is no God. Behold, they are corrupt. They have done abominable works and none of them does good.

This is a profound change that recasts the problem from skepticism about God's existence to skepticism about any message of God showing Himself to anyone.

Joseph also changes “Oh that the salvation of Israel were to come out of Zion!” to read instead: “Oh that Zion were established out of Heaven, the salvation of Israel. O Lord, when will you establish Zion?”

Another profound change that recasts the the origin of salvation itself. Zion is to be established out of heaven. And the Lord will establish it.

The Joseph Smith revisions of the scriptures make numerous small, but often profound, changes.

APRIL 30, 2020

The Fall of Adam and Eve

The Book of Mormon, which is the cornerstone of the religion established through the ministry of Joseph Smith, gives a more meaningful explanation of the fall. In 2 Nephi Chapter 1, paragraphs 9–10, we read:

And I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read, must needs suppose that **an angel of God**, according to that which is written, **had fallen from Heaven**. Wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God. And because he had fallen from Heaven and had become miserable for ever, he sought also the misery of all mankind. Wherefore, he said unto Eve—yea, even that old serpent which is the Devil, which is **the father of all lies**—wherefore, he said, Partake of the forbidden fruit and ye shall not die, but **ye shall be as God**, knowing good and evil. And after Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit, **they were driven out from the Garden of Eden** to till the earth. And they have brought forth children, yea, even the family of all the earth. And the days of the children of men

were prolonged according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh. Wherefore, their state became **a state of probation**, and their time was lengthened, according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men. For he gave commandment that **all men must repent**, for he shewed unto **all men that they were lost** because of the transgression of their parents.

And now behold, if Adam had not transgressed, he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the Garden of Eden. And **all things which were created must have remained in the same state which they were after they were created; and they must have remained for ever and had no end**. And they would have had **no children**. Wherefore, they would have remained in a state of innocence, having **no joy** for they knew **no misery**, doing **no good** for they knew **no sin**. But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things. Adam fell that men might be, and **men are that they might have joy**. And the **Messiah** cometh in the fullness of time, that he may **redeem the children of men from the Fall**. And because that they are redeemed from the Fall, they have become **free for ever**—knowing good from evil—to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given. Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh, and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are **free to choose liberty and eternal life** through the great Mediator of all men, or **to choose captivity and death** according to the captivity and power of the Devil, for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

We learn from this that the Devil was once an angel of heaven. He fell from that state. His fall was because he did things that were evil before God. This tells us that freedom to choose remains possible even in heaven, where God is present. Responsibility and accountability do not end after this life, but continue into the heavens.

Having chosen to fight against God's commandments, the angel was cast out. But having been there, he understands the heavens, and he knows how to imitate heavenly things.

His deceptions rely on lies. In my recent Hurricane Conference talk I said,

A great fog of lies spreads over the earth again today. There is decreasing light because of false, evil and destructive ideas. Life expectancy in the United States has declined for the first time, largely due to two causes: suicide and drug abuse. There is a crisis of depression, loneliness and mental illness underway. Pollution of our minds is a far greater threat than anything we see in the physical environment.... Today's greatest pollutions are lies, deceits and advocating all manner of abominations, as if they were good. Abusive and wicked practices are now advocated boldly, and incorporated into our entertainment media and culture fearlessly. Their advocates have no shame, no fear of judgment, and no concern for godliness.

This environment, as the Book of Mormon explains, is as it is because of the work of a fallen angel in a fallen world.

But despite this, the fall of man has provided the opportunity to choose between liberty and eternal life on the one hand, and captivity and death on the other. But God intends for mankind to have joy.

The way to overcome this fallen state was provided by the Messiah, who came to redeem mankind from the fall. His labor was to rectify the imbalance, and to let us escape from captivity here in this dark world.

There was an Adam, and there was an Eve. And there was an angel that fell from heaven. The struggle that began with those individuals at the beginning is a struggle that continues today. We have the same opportunity to choose that our first parents had. We have become free for ever. But, like our first parents, we are accountable for the choices we make.

Some theologians question the account of Adam and Eve. But the most correct book, and cornerstone of our religion, reaffirms that they existed, and their choices affect all of us still.

Read the account above again. I've highlighted some of the words to make them stand out. The word "probation" in particular is worth note. Here a great part of passing the probation is to recognize and reject the lies that are everywhere in this dark place.

MAY 2020

MAY 3, 2020

Email about Adam and Eve

I got an email inquiry after my last post. The inquiry raised the issue of potential Deuteronomist corruption of the account of Adam and Eve. I responded:

The damage done by the Deuteronomists did not have any effect on the Brass Plates maintained by Laban. They were a much older account. That older account was what informed the descendants of Lehi.

Most of the Deuteronomist mischief came during and after the Babylonian captivity. The family of Lehi departed prior to the captivity.

Adam and Eve were ordained for a priestly role in the Garden of Eden, and were in God's presence while serving in that capacity. Once cast out, the challenge forever after has been to recreate Eden and have God's presence return to the Earth. Not just to visit but to take up His abode here. That is the reason for establishing temples by God's people repeatedly in history. But the objective has always been the same: the return of Eden, the return of God, and the redemption of the Earth from the fall.

The problem was not partaking of the knowledge of good and evil. That was always the destiny of Adam and Eve. The problem was partaking in violation of the Sabbath. We lost the day of rest, mankind made himself rather than God the center of creation, and the original Sabbath day did not return until Christ's resurrection.

It is apparent that Christ never intended to re-establish Eden in the Old World. He made some considerable advancement to that end among the Nephites. Who knows what was done among the others He visited in the post-resurrection ministry. But the burden of prophecy is clear; There will be a final Temple of God in which He returns to dwell on Earth. That will require priestly men and women to perform the obligations imposed for Divine worship, opening the heavens, and having Gods, angels and mankind associate with one another.

God always intended to have mankind gain knowledge of good and evil. But God also intended that the center would be occupied by God, not by man's ambition and self-will. Christ

did nothing but what the Father directed be done. He said nothing other than what the Father commanded Him to say. He suffered the will of the Father in all things. Christ performed the priestly service that Adam and Eve neglected to perform.

CHAPTER 12

Through a Lens Darkly

MAY 9, 2020

Revealing

A newly published “revelation” in Volume 10 of the *Joseph Smith Papers, Documents* series is quite revealing, but not in the sense that the LDS church urges. It reveals the institutional need to vindicate later leaders by assuming a document is reliable if it helps support their position.

The “revelation” is dated 27 July 1842. The document was typed in April of 1912. It was something the typist got from his father, which he believed came from his grandfather. There is no original. And there is nothing in the journals, diaries or other sources prepared contemporaneously by Joseph Smith or any of his known scribes.

There is little doubt that this provenance for the document would result in it being questioned and likely rejected as an authentic and reliable piece of history, if not for its content. The content suggests something that has haunted and complicated LDS church history since 1852. Before a general conference announcement by Orson Pratt in 1852, polygamy was a taboo subject.

All of Joseph Smith's public acts and statements about multiple wives denounced the idea as immoral adultery. Public awareness of adultery in Nauvoo began in early May 1842 because the Mayor of Nauvoo, John C. Bennett was excommunicated for adultery. Joseph Smith condemned Bennett, exposed his wrongdoing, and spoke against this adulterous "spiritual wifery" advocated by Bennett.

Joseph investigated the widespread adultery in Nauvoo. He brought charges before the Nauvoo High Council to expose and uproot this sinful behavior. Joseph spoke to the Relief Society about virtue and righteousness. Even John C. Bennett testified,

he never knew the said Smith to countenance any improper conduct whatever, either in public or private; and that he never did teach to me in private that an illegal illicit intercourse with females was, under any circumstances, justifiable; and that I never knew him so to teach others. (*Times and Seasons*, 1 July 1842, p. 841)

This new "revelation" was purportedly written on July 27, 1842. This was two months after Bennett's exposure and excommunication on May 11, 1842. This was 26 days after the Bennett testimony about Joseph Smith's refusal "to countenance any improper conduct, either in public or private."

The July 27, 1842 document is important for the LDS church to recognize, accept and defend because it gives some faint support to connecting Joseph Smith with the teaching of plural wives. This document is helpful to LDS interests because the LDS church publicly advocated polygamy beginning in 1852, they claim to have preserved the religion founded by Joseph Smith, and they claim authority from him. Those claims are undermined if they cannot connect Joseph Smith to the practice.

There is no way to determine if the missing original was connected to Joseph Smith. There is no way to check to see if it was faithfully transmitted. There is no way to see if some of the language is interlineated. There is no way to compare if the same handwriting wrote the whole of the document, or if interlineated materials are in a different hand.

The document instructs Newel K. Whitney to seal his daughter Sarah to Joseph Smith. The only reference to “wife” in the sealing document is a parenthetical phrase appearing between two comas in the typewritten version. The language is: “..., to be his wife, ...” and because it is typewritten and not the original there is no way to know if those words were there originally. This is important because, as I have explained elsewhere, Joseph Smith had one “sealing” version until October 1843, and at that time added another. The one added in October 1843 was “man to man sealing” or “adoption.” The purpose of all “sealing” was to tie the one sealed to Joseph Smith for salvation in the afterlife.

After Joseph Smith’s death, Sarah Whitney married Heber C. Kimball and bore 7 children. She had no children with Joseph Smith, and the *JSP, Documents Vol. 10* acknowledges that:

sealing was a salvific rite... It promised immortality and eternal life to Sarah Ann, and by extension her entire family, through her sealing to J[oseph] S[mith]....no documentation exists as to whether Sarah Ann and JS’s relationship was sexual in nature. (P. 311)

I think Joseph Smith sealed others to him, men and women, as part of the plan of salvation. I think his interest was in saving others, not sexual relations with women other than Emma. All the children born of Joseph Smith came through Emma Smith alone.

This addition to the *Joseph Smith Papers* is a disappointment, given the dubious provenance of the document. At best it deserves only mention in a footnote. Wholesale endorsement of the document as reliable does not reflect well on the project. It smacks more of institutional protection than of good history preservation.

The document is a “revelation” primarily in what it reveals about the institution publishing the *Papers*.

MAY 24, 2020

“Real Intent”

The Book of Mormon uniquely uses the term “real intent.” “Real intent” is required for acceptable prayer: “it [is] counted evil unto a man if he shall pray and not with **real intent** of heart.” And, to obtain the gift of the holy ghost, real intent is mandatory: “I know that if ye shall follow the Son with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with **real intent**, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ by baptism—yea, by following your Lord and Savior down into the water according to his word—behold, then shall ye receive the holy ghost.”

Repentance is also dependent upon “real intent” to obtain forgiveness: “But as oft as they repented and sought forgiveness with **real intent**, they were forgiven.”

The best description of “real intent” comes from the resurrected Nephi, who appeared to Joseph Smith and revealed the existence of a buried record. After informing Joseph of the plates and departing, Nephi returned and after repeating the same message again, he added this:

a caution to me, telling me that Satan would try to tempt me (in consequence of the indigent circumstances of my father’s family)

to get the plates for the purpose of getting rich. This he forbid me, saying that I must have **no other object in view** in getting the plates **but to glorify God**, and **must not be influenced by any other motive but that of building his kingdom**, otherwise I could not get them.

This is Joseph Smith's best explanation of "real intent." He got it from an angel.

Christ continually alluded to "real intent" as He explained His ministry: When praying for those who believed in and would follow Him:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be agreed as one as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be agreed as one in us, that the world may believe that you have sent me.

When answering a question about His Father, Christ explained:

If you had known me, you should have known my Father also, and from henceforth you know him and have seen him. . . . He that has seen me has seen the Father. And how can you then say, Show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwells in me. He does the works.

When praying and suffering in Gethsemane, He acknowledged His submission to the Father's will: "O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, **not as I will, but as you will.**"

When He defined who He was to the Nephites, His identity was tied directly to submission to the Father:

I have drank out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning.

The tendency to seek our own will is evil. It is also evil to feign we cooperate with heaven, when our real desire is to get something from heaven. “Real intent” involves the authentic, complete submission to the will of Heaven because that has become your sole objective. Not to get a great reward. Not to negotiate some blessing here and now. Not to become great in the eyes of Heaven. Just to have no other object in mind than to glorify God. It is the intent to not be influenced by any other motive but building His kingdom.

Service to God mustn't be done for another desire or motive, or it is not “real intent” and is accounted as evil.

God's will should be good enough to justify seeking to do it. In the beginning it was not good enough to keep Adam and Eve awaiting the command to partake of knowledge of good and evil. Instead they acted in pursuit of something desirable to benefit them, even though it was not yet God's will for them. They acted apart from God's will. They transgressed because they rebelled.

Christ was the opposite of our first mortal parents. He acted only on His Parent's will. He acted with “real intent” in all He said, did and thought.

JUNE 2020

JUNE 13, 2020

Restoration Conference

This next week I will be speaking at another Restoration Conference. The website is linked [HERE](#). This is the third year a conference about the restoration has been held. Speakers come from different traditions that acknowledge Joseph Smith as the founder. The conference this year celebrates the 200 year anniversary of the First Vision.

Last week I spoke at a [Unity in Humanity Interfaith conference](#).

The conference was recorded and is available to watch on YouTube.

Later this month I have agreed to do an interview. Once it is recorded I will put up on this site to a link for that website.

JUNE 21, 2020

Video Series Part 2

The second installment for the new video series is now live. The link to the video is here:

[“The Heavens Are Open Again: Part 2: Rejection”](#).

This series will have seven video segments when completed.

The Boise Restoration Conference has concluded and the videos of the proceedings can be viewed at this link: [Restoration Conference Website](#).

JUNE 22, 2020

Devil’s “Kingdom”

The “kingdom of the devil” is actually a misnomer. It is never well organized because of the jealousy, ambition, self-interest and greed

of those attracted to his agenda. It destroys, but cannot create. It collapses from its own contradictions. This is why when the devil claims to “rule from the rivers to the ends of the earth” what you behold on the pages of history are plagues, despair, war, chaos and conflict.

We are getting an interesting display of what the “devil’s kingdom” looks like in modern politics. A cacophony of discordant foolishness that results in destroying, not creating, dependency, not sufficiency, and anger, not peace.

These forces excite interest and attract attention.

Zion, on the other hand, is rather bland and disinteresting. No fighting. No conflict. No intrigue. No hostility. Just quiet cooperation and labor to provide sufficient and to spare.

Therefore Zion will hold little interest for most of the world. Too bland. Too simple. Too uninteresting for today’s headlines.

Ahh, if only we could control our compulsion for conflicts.

JUNE 27, 2020

June 27

Today marks the anniversary of Hyrum and Joseph Smith’s deaths. Brothers who fell victim while in state custody, unable to escape from the organized militia that came to kill them.

This morning I have been reading the letter they wrote while in a Missouri prison five years before they were killed. The false accusations of former Mormons caused their imprisonment both in Missouri and in Illinois.

They wrote from Liberty Jail: “Truth is Mormonism. God is the author of it.” I see no reason to shy away from the nickname “Mormon” or “Mormonism.”

Killing Hyrum and Joseph inflicted an incalculable loss on mankind. Today it is difficult for the world to comprehend just how much was lost to humanity because of the continual flood of falsehoods still heaped on them. What was true in 1839 continues to be true today: Hyrum and Joseph are still subject to attack by

renegades, liars, priests, thieves, and murders, who are all alike tenacious of their crafts and creeds, have poured down from their spiritual wickedness in high places, and from their strongholds of the divine, a flood of dirt, and mire, and filthiness, and vomit upon [their] heads.

These two brothers were and are victims of “ignorance, superstition, and bigotry, placing itself where it ought not.” And so lies have gained an upper hand in the world, and truth is overcome by a torrent of slander.

Studying carefully the words of Joseph Smith uncovers a man of remarkable poise and virtue. A loving and loyal husband who does not deserve to have his words twisted to make him seem otherwise. Hyrum Smith was so Christlike a man that in his day no one doubted his truthfulness, virtue and fidelity.

Murdering Hyrum and Joseph on June 27, 1844 let others get control of the records, and to alter and distort events to support a new regime. The largest group of Mormons then used the slain leaders as cover for their new agenda.

The loss of those two remains incalculable. A fog of lies, like a great veil, enshrines ignorance about these two valiant brothers. The Lord explained to Joseph while in that Missouri prison that the world would always be divided in opinions about him:

The ends of the earth shall inquire after your name, and fools shall have you in derision, and hell shall rage against you, while

the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under your hand. And your people shall never be turned against you by the testimony of traitors, and although their influence shall cast you into trouble, and into bars and walls, you shall be had in honor.

Fools still deride. Hell still rages. The testimony of traitors is still given credence. But wise people whose hearts are pure see through the slander and acknowledge the virtue and blessings God restored through these two brothers.

Today I have been reflecting on the killings of Hyrum and Joseph. I am grateful to God for all they accomplished.

JULY 2020

JULY 4, 2020

Independence Day

On this Independence Day it is sobering to see how valuable elected offices in the national government have now become. They control trillions of dollars in spending. Consequently aspiring men and women fight with words and deeds to gain the upper hand and occupy elected office.

Campaigns are now far more than billboards, radio commercials, television ads and speeches. They include protests, riots, burning buildings, assault and killing. Make no mistake, however, that you are witnessing nothing other than national political struggles to obtain elected offices.

Politics has invaded everything. Entertainment and news now advocates for one political party or another. It is tiresome and

riddled with deceit by all involved. It is not news. And it is far from entertaining.

The volume of propaganda now being urged by both political sides is impossible to ignore and hard to tolerate.

The Constitution was written by inspired men to account for the low, mean and vulgar people now holding elected office. As we celebrate Independence Day, I am most of all grateful for the Founding Fathers, who foresaw the petty, ambitious and selfish knaves who would use clever slogans and gaudy displays to fool the public into electing them. I am grateful for separation of powers which results in ambitious office holders fighting among themselves.

Our system of government allows most of us to be left alone to live our lives as we choose.

JULY 8, 2020

Joseph Smith's "Translation"

The Bible was revised by Joseph Smith because of a direct commandment from the Lord. That effort is referred to as a "translation" although it did not involve what any of us would regard as that. It was a revision and expansion of the text made by revelation.

In the same year the Book of Mormon was published, a revelation on 9 December 1830 commanded a new version of the Bible be undertaken. The product was described as how the Bible would look from the Lord's bosom:

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

Later that same month the Lord interrupted the work, and referred to it as a “translation”: “A commandment to Sidney and Joseph, saying, Behold, I say unto you that it is not expedient in me that you should translate any more until you shall go to the Ohio” (T&C 20:1). This is referring to the work being done on revising the Bible to conform to what was in the Lord’s bosom.

Once in Ohio a revelation on 4 February 1831 directed that “Joseph should have a house built in which to live and translate” (T&C 25:3). Again, this is the Bible project.

Five days later another revelation commanded that the teachers in the church should teach the “scriptures which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon.” It goes on to mention that teaching must be “directed by the spirit” and cautioned “if you receive not the spirit, you shall not teach[.]” This was to be followed “until the fullness of my scriptures are given” (T&C 26:5). The phrase “fullness of my scriptures” was a reference to the revised Bible underway.

On 7 March 1831 a revelation allowed the Bible revision to shift from the Old Testament to the New Testament. That revelation made an extensive explanation of the Lord’s teaching to His Jerusalem disciples (which would substantially alter part of Matthew). After clarifying what Christ told those disciples, the Lord states, “it shall not be given unto you to know any further than this until the New Testament be translated, and in it all these things shall be made known” (T&C 31:13). Compare Matthew 11 with T&C 31 in the new scriptures and you will see how the Lord’s revision clarifies and improves New Testament material.

In an October 1831 conference, Joseph declared:

God had often sealed up the Heavens because of covetousness in the church. Said the Lord would cut his work short in

righteousness and except the church receive the fullness of the scriptures they would yet fall.

All prior efforts to publish the revised Bible, which is sometimes called the “Inspired Version” and sometimes called the “Joseph Smith Translation,” have failed to faithfully follow Joseph Smith’s work. The new scriptures are the most accurate and complete text of the Bible coming from the Lord’s bosom.

As I have been reviewing the new scriptures I have been pleased, edified and astonished at the value they provide for the Lord’s elect. Although I do not claim any “elect” status, I am grateful to eavesdrop on the Lord’s communication to them. If I am attentive enough, perhaps I may inch a little closer to that.

All of the new scriptures, including the revised Bible, are available for free on-line at scriptures.info. Paperback copies are available through Amazon. The materials are also now available for handheld platforms.

JULY 11, 2020

Learn Duty or Not Worthy

Many of the revelations are the same in the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C) and the Teachings and Commandments (T&C). But some of the revelations are almost completely different. D&C 107, for example, is not really a revelation but an amalgamation of a variety of things tied together with commentary. It reads as if it were a revelation.

I read language in D&C Section 107 for 40 years without realizing how big a mess that document actually is. Today as I read T&C 59 in the new scriptures, I came across familiar words from D&C 107. But an actual November 1831 revelation is in the T&C.

As I looked into the changes there is a whole different meaning that the T&C provides which is lost in the D&C narrative.

T&C 59 paragraphs 10–12 state the following:

10 And again, the duty of the president of the office of the high priesthood is to preside over the whole church and to be like unto Moses.

11 Behold, here is wisdom—yea, to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church.

12 Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed in all diligence. He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved shall not be counted worthy to stand. Even so, amen.

Under T&C 59 Paragraph 10, the president over the whole church is required to be “like unto Moses.” This obligation is then defined in Paragraph 11: “to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church.”

But the heart of this matter is states in Paragraph 12: “let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed in all diligence.” Making it clear that the president is required to learn to do the duty of seership, to learn to be a revelator, learn to be a translator, and learn to be a prophet. These are not automatic. These are responsibilities to be undertaken.

But Paragraph 12 continues to caution anyone with a duty that if they are slothful and fail to perform their duty he is to be “not counted worthy to stand.” Meaning that if they can’t accomplish

what is required of the office, they are not worthy to remain in that office.

This is a very different text than what is found in D&C 107. The D&C language appears to make holding the office alone enough to establish the office-holder's status as a seer, revelator, translator, and prophet. T&C instead imposes an obligation that the office-holder may fail to discharge. If the office-holder fails to accomplish the requirements, then he is not worthy to remain in office.

The new scriptures continue to amaze and enlighten me.

JULY 15, 2020

Fullness of Scriptures

The term “fullness of the scriptures” does not just appear in the Teachings and Commandments. It is also used by Christ in the New Covenants in the Book of Luke.

A lawyer confronted Christ about the reproach Christ addressed to the Pharisees, saying, “Master, thus saying, you reproach us also.” Thereupon Christ expounded on how abused the law had become under their stewardship. In His condemnation Christ stated:

Woe unto you lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge, the fullness of the scriptures. You enter not in yourselves into the kingdom, and those who were entering in, you hinder (NC Luke 8:17)

This idea is echoed in the revelation to Nephi:

because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book—which were plain unto the understanding of the children of men, according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God—that because of these

things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceeding great many do stumble. (NC 1 Ne. 3:22)

The Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible was not optional. Without it no one can enter into the kingdom. The fullness of the scriptures (*JST Bible*) is a mandatory restoration of what was in the heart of the Lord (T&C 18:6).

The new scriptures are essential for believers to be able to recover truth and proceed forward. Without them we have no better chance of seeing Zion than the residue of Christianity.

JULY 17, 2020

Scripture Purchase

The best location to purchase the new scriptures is through the website: scriptures.shop.

The original print-on-demand arrangement through Amazon was more expensive than the arrangements made with another print-on-demand publisher, and so Amazon was replaced. Paperback versions in various sizes can be purchased through this website.

The leather-bound version was arranged with pre-orders and pre-payment. However, a few extra copies were purchased with donor support, and they will be sold once they arrive through the same scriptures.shop website.

Apparently now the only copies available through Amazon are used, older paperback copies that were printed for people to review before voting on accepting them. If you want the final product, go to the website linked above.

JULY 18, 2020

The Great Servant

When I read again any book, I try to imagine reading it for the first time. I try to wonder what will happen next, casting aside anything I already know about the story's end. I find myself rooting for a different outcome than the one I know is coming. I hope for Joseph and Hyrum to escape and live on. I hope for the Lord to be accepted and acknowledged by the leaders of the Jews.

Alas, the story always ends in the same way as before. And sometimes I find myself mourning again at the poignant scenes of death and loss. In the life of Christ this grief is only temporary as you read further to see He conquers death.

I'm now re-reading the Gospel of John. As that last Passover approached, Christ knew His end was near. He alone knew death was coming, followed by triumph. But all the suggestions and outright declarations did not help the disciples grasp what Christ was about to do.

Because I know the story, I can understand the Lord's words. I know what is coming. But I try to put myself into those disciples' shoes and see the account through John's eyes.

I hike almost every day with my wife. She will often wear sandals, and I most often wear shoes. In the dry summer season traffic turns the trails to dust. After only 4 miles we stomp our feet to remove some of that dust. That sheds a small cloud of dust.

To remove the rest requires us to use the hose to wash it away. If the feet are not washed, anything you step on or brush up against will bear the dusty evidence of the hike.

During the Lord's life people's feet held not just dust from walking, but any visit to the courtyard of sacrifice in the temple added the blood of slain animals to the contamination of the feet.

Animal blood ceremonially represented the people's sins. This blood would stick to the feet until washed away.

At that last Passover, Christ knelt to wash the feet of His disciples. Peter objected most strongly, but the others were likewise hesitant to see the Lord kneel as if their servant. He told them that if He did not clean their feet they would have no part with Him. He said they would not understand what He was doing until later, and so they should indulge Him and allow Him to proceed.

He washed away the dust of this world. He removed the sins the disciples bore. He renewed the forgiveness once experienced through washing at baptism with another ceremony. This washing would remove any contamination these disciples had acquired between the time of their baptism and that Passover evening.

He necessarily touched the dust and blood that was on His disciples feet in order to remove it from them. When Christ touched lepers it made Him ceremonially unclean. But by healing the leper, the stigma of that uncleanliness was removed and they were made clean. Christ's touch was able to cleanse and heal, not just the leper, but on this occasion also His disciples.

Christ would die soon after washing His disciples' feet on that evening. The dust, blood and sins of the disciples were washed away, and Christ then poured out His own sacrificial blood and life to likewise cleanse and heal all mankind.

Enoch saw the evil and violence mankind inflicted upon one another, and the destruction of mankind at the time of Noah. Enoch "had bitterness of soul, and wept over his brethren, and said unto the Heavens, I will refuse to be comforted" (NC Gen. 4:19). But when Enoch saw the suffering of Christ, he rejoiced:

Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, even in the flesh, and his soul rejoiced, saying, The Righteous is lifted

up and the Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world. And through faith I am in the bosom of the Father, and behold, Zion is with me. (NC Gen. 4:20)

Despite all my desire to see the Lord spared from suffering, He performed an act of love and kindness for us all. My emotions try to pull Him away from those awful moments of torment, sacrifice, suffering and death. But, like Enoch, I see that it must be so. And I rejoice in The Great Servant's acts of servitude. He served His Father. But while in the service of His Father, He was only in the service of His fellowman. By His stripes we are healed. And His suffering will justify many.

AUGUST 2020

AUGUST 9, 2020

Priestcraft

Nephi provided a definition of the term “priestcraft” in his writings. He explained, “priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world, but they seek not the welfare of Zion” (RE/NC 2 Ne. 11:170).

The Book of Alma opens with the first example of priestcraft. The man's teaching is summarized:

declaring unto the people that every priest and teacher ought to become popular and they ought not to labor with their own hands, but that they ought to be supported by the people. And he also testified unto the people that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice, for the Lord

had created all men and had also redeemed all men; and in the end, all men should have eternal life. (Alma 1:1)

Consider for a moment the difference between a priest who values popularity and one who has no interest in being popular. As I've read the Old Testament it is abundantly clear that the most frequent message of an actual prophet delivering a message from God is something that is very unwelcome. Prophets offend. But the first example of priestcraft comes from a man seeking to be popular.

Not only that, but he thinks preaching should become profitable. People should support the priest. There is a profit motive involved in priestcraft.

The man's message is fashioned to solicit followers and get financial support: Everyone will be saved!

In contrast to this, Alma explains how actual priests ought to function:

And when their priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God, they all returned again diligently unto their labors, and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers; for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner. And thus they were all equal; and they did all labor, every man according to his strength. (Alma 1:5)

Alma confronted the man and declared: "Behold, this is the first time that priestcraft has been introduced among this people" (Alma 1:2).

Religion today is practiced almost entirely through priestcraft. Religions want to be popular. Their advocates want to be compensated for preaching. They either have no idea of Zion, or

they use that idea to promote their own causes having nothing to do with establishing Zion.

Religion is very big business because of priestcraft.

Alma's record is framed as an explanation, using actual examples from his lifetime, of how 'this-leads-to-that.' The original false teacher who introduced priestcraft was responsible for breaking apart Alma's community. The conflict between the false religion taught through priestcraft, with true religion involving prophets delivering God's message is laid out in Alma's record. Ultimately violence and death flows from false religion.

Our new scriptures helps clarify why priestcraft destroys souls. It does not and cannot produce faith:

Let us here observe that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation. For from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things: it was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life, and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice because he seeks to do his will, he does know most assuredly that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not nor will not seek his face in vain. Under these circumstances, then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life.

It is in vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they in like manner offer unto him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him. (T&C 110: LoF 6:7-8)

AUGUST 17, 2020

Fall Retreat Information

A Fall Retreat has been organized by volunteers to be held at Living Waters Ranch beginning Friday, September 4th. The organizers have asked me to post several important reminders for all attendees. Please read through them below:

Check-in begins at 1:00 PM on Friday, September 4th. If you have not booked or paid for your lodging yet, please do so immediately. Accommodations at the Ranch are almost full, but there are some bunkbeds and dry tent and RV camping sites left. Please go to <https://retreat.restorationarchives.com/#lodging> to identify your lodging options.

If you are planning to attend the Retreat, the organizers from the Boise Fellowship urge you to contact them before August 20th to let them know if you will be eating meals at the Ranch. The Ranch cooks have to travel many hours away to purchase the groceries necessary to prepare our meals for us, so if you have not made sure your party's name is on the list, there will likely not be food for you. Please contact Lori Larsen at loriblarsen@gmail.com or 801-503-4747 to add your name to the list. Remember that payment for meals must be made IN CASH at the time of the meal.

Exact change will be appreciated but not necessary. Meal times, menus, and purchase prices can be found on the Retreat website.

There will be a Retreat Kickoff Meeting and Welcome Party on Friday night beginning at 7:00 PM. Important details about the weekend will be given at the meeting, so please attend if you can. If you are able, please bring an appetizer and/or drinks to the Welcome Party. We will have coolers available for drinks. (Please bring your own small coolers for alcoholic drinks you may wish to bring. There will not be a community cooler for alcohol since there will be many minors attending this event. Please drink responsibly, and share your drinks responsibly.)

No pets are allowed at Living Waters Ranch. Please arrange care for your pets and do not bring them (even dogs) to the Retreat.

Because Idaho law prohibits minors from partaking of alcohol, even for religious reasons, we are asking each family/group to bring their own wine and grape juice and administer it to their family members according to their age. Bread and cups will be provided.

The average weather in Challis, Idaho in September is a high of 74 and a low of 41, so the weather will likely be variable. Plan to bring warm clothing, as it will always get cold as the evening progresses, but also bring t-shirts and shorts. Depending on where you are staying and in what type of accommodation, you will need to make sure you're aware of what things you need to bring. Please note that if you're staying in a bunkhouse or tent/RV, you will need to bring your own bedding and towels (shower houses are available). If you're staying in a Living Waters Mini-Lodge, Chalet, Motel, or School of Ministry room, bedding and towels are provided.

Here are other important items to bring with you:

- Cash for Meals (meals **MUST** be reserved by August 20th with Lori Larsen)

- Appetizer and/or drinks for the Friday Night Welcome Party
- Wine and/or grape juice for your family/group for Sacramento on Sunday
- Camp Chairs
- Swimming Suits (hot springs nearby)
- Hiking Boots/Tennis Shoes
- Warm Clothing
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses/Hats
- Bug Repellent
- Snacks (remember, there are only 2 planned meals per day)
- Pillows, Bedding, and Towels (if not provided in your lodging)
- Camping Gear (if you're staying in a tent)
- Roasting Sticks
- Games
- Sports Equipment/Balls (baseballs, kickballs, etc)
- Scriptures/Journals/Books
- Guitars, Harmonicas, etc.

We look forward to seeing you soon! If you have additional questions, please visit the Retreat website at <https://retreat.restorationarchives.com>. If you cannot find answers to your questions on the website, please fill out the form on the website, and the organizers will get back to you promptly.

CHAPTER 13

Parsing the Perplexities

SEPTEMBER 2020

SEPTEMBER 2, 2020

Results

The Lord foretold the challenges His followers would face. Challenges would come first from false Christs—meaning those who claimed they were anointed by God to lead others when God had not sent them. Next He warned of violence and wars. Nature would also fight against mankind with earthquakes, famines, and pestilences. Religious persecutions would be inevitable. But through it all the Lord advised patience: “In your patience, possess your souls” (NC Luke 12:15). This advice to be patient in order to possess your souls was repeated in 1833 (See T&C 101:6).

Zion cannot be forced or demanded. The Lord explained that Zion will be gathered, but “not in haste, lest there should be confusion, which brings pestilence” (T&C 50:6).

Recent revelations have given us a great advantage in the quest to see Zion. But right now it appears to me that we are all more focused on the results we hope to obtain, while ignoring the process.

If I understand the Lord's Answer to us (T&C 157), He is almost entirely focused on the process and wants us to forget about results. The results will only follow once we have figured out how to treat one another. Results are a by-product of getting the process right. Results are NOT something to be obtained using the wrong process.

Following Christ's visit the Nephites attained a remarkable era of joy and peace because of how they behaved.

[B]ecause of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people; and there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness. And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God. (4 Ne. 1:3)

When the idea of Zion was revealed in Joseph Smith's day, the people wanted it, rushed to occupy it, but utterly failed to prepare to live in peace. Unlike the Nephites of 4th Nephi, those hasty saints failed and were violently chased from that land because "there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore, by these things they polluted their inheritances" (T&C 101:3). They were the opposite of the Nephites who lived in peace.

The process matters more than the results. If the process is wrong, results are impossible. But if the process is right, the results are inevitable.

SEPTEMBER 8, 2020

Interview Now Available

Some months ago I did an interview with Rick Bennett whose site is called Gospel Tangents. The first installments of that interview is now available at this link: [New Scriptures in Remnant Movement](#).

Apparently it is the practice of Gospel Tangents to edit the interviews and to make them available in installments. The first two installments are now up, and more will follow.

Another recording of the interview was made at the same time, and that audio recording will become available on the Restoration Archives at some point.

This last weekend we attended the Retreat in Challis, Idaho. For many people, myself included, it was Connie Waterman's song as the sacrament was prepared that will be long remembered. Her song of hope and faith, sung from a wheelchair while the sacrament was being prepared behind her, was profoundly and deeply moving.

SEPTEMBER 13, 2020

Egyptian Records

The first records of God's dealing with mankind were written by Adam and his immediate posterity. It was called "a book of remembrance" (Gen 3:14—all citations are to the Restoration Edition of scripture). That record was written in "a language which was pure and undefiled" (*Id.*). We know those records existed when Abraham was alive thousands of years later. "[T]he records of the Fathers, even the Patriarchs, ...the Lord, my God, preserved in my own hands" (Abr. 2:4).

By the time of Moses, however, the original records were lost. Moses had to rewrite the record of the creation based on the revelation he received directly from the Lord. Moses was commanded, "

you shall write the things which I shall speak. And in a day when the children of men shall esteem my words as naught, and take many of them from the book which you shall write, behold, I will raise up another like unto you, and they shall be

had again among the children of men, among even as many as shall believe. (Gen. 1:7)

Moses was raised by the daughter of Pharaoh. Pharaoh's daughter named him, and treated him as "her son" (Exo. 1:5). Accordingly, when Moses was commanded to write the record revealed to him by the Lord, he would have recorded it in the language he understood, the language his adopted mother taught him, or in Egyptian.

The record of the Old Covenants was re-recorded through revelation by Moses in Egyptian. This is why a copy of Moses' account is described as "the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass" were composed "in the language of the Egyptians" (Mosiah 1:1).

That Egyptian language had two earliest forms: the first to develop was hieroglyphic. This form was perpetuated to record religious texts and was the more formal or sacred form of their writing. A second developed thereafter, and while still early in Egyptian language development, called hieratic. This second form was cursive and was the more likely form used on the Brass Plates.

Understanding the formal, religious hieroglyphic language was completely lost, and has been only recovered in a small part through the work done after discovering the Rosetta Stone. In July 1799, French soldiers were rebuilding a fort near the town of Rosetta and discovered a stone inscribed with three scripts: hieroglyphs in the top register, Greek at the bottom and a script later identified as "Demotic" in the middle. Demotic was a later form of Egyptian writing and was the common form spoken at the time the Rosetta Stone was originally carved.

Using the Greek from the Rosetta Stone as a guide to decipher the hieroglyphs an attempt has been made to understand

hieroglyphic Egyptian. The contents of the carving on the stone is a decree from Ptolemy V, and dates from 196 BC. This is very late in Egyptian history, during the Ptolemaic period, when Greeks controlled Egypt following Alexander the Great's conquest of Egypt in 332 BC. General Ptolemy assumed control over Egypt following Alexander's death. The likelihood that the 196 BC form of the hieroglyphic language is an accurate guide for their language millennia earlier is at best doubtful.

It is both foolish and arrogant to assume that this Ptolemaic era writing is a sound basis for projecting backward over three thousand years to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphics. In the end, the question must be asked: Do you trust scholar's attempt to reconstruct antiquity using a partial record from 196 BC when it conflicts with the revelation given to Joseph Smith claiming to be a prophet, seer and translator?

It is interesting that Joseph Smith tied the records of the Brass Plates as well as the record of the Nephites (Mormon 4:11) to Egyptian. Since Joseph translated over 500 pages of Hieratic Egyptian text for the Book of Mormon, he read and understood the language better than any scholar, including all who have lived since the discovery of the Rosetta Stone and all living today.

Since I accept Joseph's claims of being a prophet, seer and translator at face value, it is easy for me to resolve conflicts over Egyptian texts in favor of Joseph and against the scholarly critics.

SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

Angels are not Kosher

This quote is taken from an article written by Rabbi Dovid Heber titled "Meat And Dairy - A Kosher Consumer's Handbook":

Kosher homes typically have two sets cookware, dishes, and cutlery—one for meat and one for dairy. This is because it is Biblically prohibited to eat something that contains both milk and meat that were cooked together. Because of this concern, the Rabbis decreed that one who wants to eat a dairy product must wait six hours after eating meat.

He cites to The Torah, which states three times—“Do not cook a young animal in its mother’s milk.” He explains, from these, the Gemara derives three prohibitions—one may not eat milk and meat together, one may not cook them together, and one may not derive benefit from such cooked mixtures. If they were mixed without heat (e.g. a sandwich containing slices of cold salami and cheese) the mixture is Rabbinically prohibited to eat (See *Shulchan Aruch* YD 87:1). Also, he explains the Gemara Chulin (105a) states that Mar Ukva waited until the “next meal” before eating dairy. The overwhelming majority of Rabbis in the 11th to 15 Centuries were of the opinion that this means one must wait six hours. The Law based on the Torah, as stated in *Shulchan Aruch* YD 89:1, is that one must wait a full six hours.

However, the angels who visited Abraham did not observe this rule. Of course the Law of Moses was instituted generations later. However, if this rule were of eternal significance it would be expected that the angels would refuse to violate the standard, although mankind would not be asked to do so until centuries later. Here is how that event transpired:

Abraham ran unto the heard and fetched a calf, tender and good, and gave it unto a young man, and he hastened to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set before them. And he stood by them under the tree and they did eat. (Gen. 7:35 in the Restoration Scriptures).

Later, having finished eating the non-kosher meal, “the angels rose up from there” and went on (*Id.* paragraph 37).

As Joseph Smith explained,

It is not to be understood that the law of Moses will be established again with all its rites and variety of ceremonies; this has never been spoken of by the Prophets; but those things which existed prior to Moses’ day, namely sacrifice, will be continued.

This is because the Law of Moses came to an end through the Messiah (See Mosiah 8:1; 3 Ne. 7:2).

I see no harm if someone wants to observe the Law of Moses. But if they do so, they should understand the purpose of that Law was to foreshadow and testify of the Messiah. Of His sacrifice that offered Himself for sin. Of His taking upon Himself the chastisement of our peace. That He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, and with his stripes we are healed (Isa. 19:2).

But there is no need to observe a Law which the angels disregarded when visiting Abraham. There is, on the other hand, every need to recognize and accept the Lord’s anointed, the Messiah, to whom the Law of Moses pointed.

SEPTEMBER 22, 2020

Part 3 New Video

A new video in the restoration series is now available to watch. It is linked here: [Part 3: Three Great Things Left Undone](#).

This is the third in a planned 7 part video series. I am grateful the work was completed to allow it to be released on the Equinox.

I am also informed a new spring conference is being organized. The topic being discussed is the religion of the first fathers. I hope to be able to provide some useful information about that topic.

SEPTEMBER 28, 2020

Japan Conference

The Japan Conference that was scheduled earlier this year but postponed due to the COVID-19 issues will now take place this coming Friday and Saturday, October 2nd and 3rd. There are two ways to watch the live stream event: First, you may go to YouTube channel directly: bit.ly/JapanLiveStream. Or you can view the Japan conference web page: bit.ly/JapanRestorationConf.

October 2nd sessions will begin at 6 PM Mountain Daylight Time.

October 3rd sessions will begin at 5:30 PM Mountain Daylight Time.

I extend my personal gratitude to Chris VanCampen and his wife Noriko, who have labored for months to make this event possible. They have brought together a very interesting lineup of speakers, all of whom will contribute to the Conference theme: *The Search for Truth*.

OCTOBER 2020

OCTOBER 26, 2020

Spring Conference

I've accepted an invitation to speak at a general conference during the week of Passover this coming spring. It's to be held in the sunny southern Nevada area. I understand the organizers of the

conference are also planning for an extended retreat/gathering at or near where the conference will occur.

Frequent online presentations on the conference theme, **The Religion of the Fathers** as well as other topics will help us review what we have already been given on the topic until the conference. For a calendar of these online presentations visit the conference website, <http://religionofthefathers.com>

I have been working on a talk for the conference for a few weeks now. The subject is important and I hope to contribute something worthwhile at the event.

NOVEMBER 2020

NOVEMBER 22, 2020

Possessing This Land

God established an ancient covenant over the land occupied by Americans. That covenant was explained to the Brother of Jared. With all going on at the present, the words seem as timely as today's headlines. Ether 1:6-7 in the new scriptures is posted below:

[W]hoso should possess this land of promise, from that time henceforth and for ever should serve him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off when the fullness of his wrath should come upon them.

And now we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God or they shall be swept off when the fullness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fullness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity. For behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands. Wherefore, he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be

swept off, for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fullness of iniquity among the children of the land that they are swept off. And this cometh unto you, O ye gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God, that ye may repent and not continue in your iniquities until the fullness be come, that ye may not bring down the fullness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land hath hitherto done. Behold, this is a choice land; and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under Heaven if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, who has been manifested by the things which we have written.

NOVEMBER 25, 2020

Republic and Arrogance

The Electoral College was adopted by the Constitutional fathers to prevent a dictatorship by population centers. But concentration of power in population centers is trending more and more.

Washington DC, Boston, New York, Pittsburg, Detroit, Chicago and Philadelphia are utterly dependent upon rural American to exist. They cannot eat without constant re-supply coming from rural America.

If rural America, called “fly-over-country” by the urban centers of political power, were ever to awaken to their ability to decimate, even destroy the urban centers, it would recalibrate political power in the United States.

At some point, it is foreseeable, that rural America will tire of the arrogance of the crowded and vulnerable big cities. When that happens, the Republic itself will undergo a needed realignment and the arrogant will be humbled.

We live in an interesting time. Our day resembles the time when the United States of America was founded: When a great number awakened to tyranny and decided to brook it no longer.

NOVEMBER 27, 2020

Puppets and Puppeteers

America was founded in revolutionary fire as men and women yearned to be free from oppressive and arrogant monarchs. They fled from every nation in Europe, and after the founding of a new nation they fled from every nation on earth. America was created from the human impulse to be free.

There is a resilient and deeply imbedded impulse that inclines Americans toward freedom. Although the schools of America have been corrupted and compromised, and leaders of media and commerce are easily manipulated into assuming it is possible to become puppeteers controlling the American public, there remains the problem of making puppets.

If Americans cannot be satisfied that an actual election with accurate vote counts have taken place, it will not take long before the putative puppeteers learn they have no puppets to control. It will not end well.

It is critical for the peace in America that everyone be openly and fully satisfied that the voting has been accurate, and all indications of fraud have been ruled out.

DECEMBER 13, 2020

JST and Book of Mormon

I received a very good question from someone who has worked on the scripture recovery effort. His question is the following:

“And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you.” In 3 Ne 7:1, Christ explains, “Behold, ye have heard the things which I have taught before I ascended to my Father.” But when we look at the same teachings in, for example, Matthew 3:47, Christ is quoted as saying the exact opposite: “And then will I say, You never knew me.” And this was a correction Joseph made in the JST. I’m trying to reconcile the conflict/discrepancy. Christ can know you, whether or not you know Him. So Joseph’s change makes a great deal of sense. But I also recognize that Christ’s statement in 3 Nephi can be a way of indicating that those making the claim were not acknowledged servants of His, but simply wannabes. Is it possible, perhaps likely, that Joseph’s understanding was such that he didn’t catch the difference until later in time, working on the JST? We seem to have a few instances of that already.

I responded to his question as follows:

I understand that at the time of translating the Book of Mormon Joseph was charged by God with creating a translated text that the gentiles of the day would accept as scripture. If it had not been acceptable to the gentiles as scripture in 1830, they would not have perpetuated it. It needed to be perpetuated. So the wording was to allow gentiles to accept it and then to print and reprint it, preserving it for a later effort to conclude the restoration.

When Joseph did the *JST*, the charge from God was different. In that work he was restoring the “fullness of the scriptures” to remove errors from the King James Version. It was not to go out to the world, but only to believers inside the restoration. Ultimately, the gentiles of his day were not even allowed to receive the *JST*, and when it finally did roll out it was from a group who altered and corrupted it to include their changes, and omitted many of Joseph’s.

Our Restoration Edition which the Lord approved in 2017 is the first time the fullness of the scriptures have been provided. In it the change Joseph made to the text is revealed, or preserved. But that does not mean we should do anything to alter the Book of Mormon text because it preserves the record in the form gentiles were willing to accept in 1830. This is why we need the new scriptures to include both accounts.

If the difference is noticed, it will provoke an investigation. That should result in uncovering what Joseph did, under the inspiration from heaven, to give the investigator insight into God’s merciful patience with mankind’s weaknesses.

DECEMBER 15, 2020

Shirking

The US Supreme Court dismissed the Texas election challenge on procedural grounds, and did not reach the merits. As much as the Supreme Court may not want to choose the President, there is a far greater likelihood of national violence and splintering without a Supreme Court decision on the merits of these election challenges.

It does not matter which way the Supreme Court decides the issue. It is only important that they do so. Without a resolution

there are going to be ongoing conflicts from the serious charges raised about irregularities in voting that will only grow over time. But a Supreme Court decision will operate to stabilize the unrest. We may not like a referee's call during a game, but both sides accept the outcome, even if it is a bad call.

The Supreme Court may not want to or like deciding the challenge on the merits. But shirking that responsibility will prove to be destructive in the long run.

DECEMBER 18, 2020

Doug Mendenhall

My friend Doug Mendenhall passed away this evening. He died of complications related to COVID. I want to thank the doctors and nurses at the Provo Regional Hospital for their heroic efforts over the last 10 days to care for Doug.

Doug was a faithful friend who was true to his word. He volunteered to attend and record all 10 lectures that began in Boise, Idaho and ended in Phoenix, Arizona. He brought his equipment to record those talks, and are available today because of him. He made it possible for us to hear them again now.

I grieve the passing of my good friend. He was energetic, committed and upbeat.

DECEMBER 21, 2020

Restoration Video Part 4

A new video about the continuing restoration is now live on YouTube. It is linked here: [Abandonment and Renewal](#). This is the fourth installment in the 7 part series dealing with the continuation of the restoration that began with Joseph Smith, and ended with his death.

DECEMBER 22, 2020

Destroying a Nation

In the vernacular of the Book of Mormon, to “destroy” did not mean annihilation. It meant to end the organized existence of people or to terminate their independent government, deprive them of a land, and end their cultural dominance. In the Book of Mormon, people were destroyed when they lost control over their government and land. Their ability to preserve their own values and choose the way they were governed was imposed on them by others. Often, but not always, it was from a different ethnic group. Once people were destroyed, they were oppressed and suffered. Often they were oppressed with grievous taxes and had religious liberties removed.

Destroyed people faced a choice: either repent, in which case they came through the period of oppression with another chance; or if they were angry and rebellious, they would then be “swept away.” Being destroyed is not at all the same as being “swept away.” It is possible for people to have been destroyed and not even realize it. But when they are “swept away,” they face extinction and cannot help but notice it.

Book of Mormon themes about destroying people are not history, but prophecy. They are intended to awaken people to things as they happen, so they will understand and repent before it is too late.

God has decreed there will be “a full end of all nations” (T&C 85:3). Despite this, His people have also been told, “Fear not, O Jacob my servant, says the Lord, for I am with you. For I will make a full end of all the nations to which I have driven you. But I will not make a full end of you” (Jeremiah 17:4).

DECEMBER 23, 2020

Birthdate

Light increases and darkness decreases beginning a day ago. Today is Joseph Smith's birthdate. The date is no accident. It symbolizes the reason for his life.

Many people who once held Joseph in high regard now believe he was a pretender and a fraud. His life history has been smothered by lies. In September 1823 an angel explained to him, as Joseph recorded:

He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me and that his name was Nephi, that God had a work for me to do, and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people.

Even the critics spreading lies about his life fulfill the prophecy.

Joseph did not lie to conceal his sins. He did not betray his wife. He respected her, and the correspondence between Emma and Joseph show their devotion to each other. Both of them denied Joseph had other wives. But after his murder many adulterous witnesses who practiced polygamy claimed otherwise. Someone is lying. Either the adulterers lied or Joseph and Emma did. Jeremiah suggests some sins are related: "they commit adultery, and walk in lies" (Jer. 8:18). Lying and adultery go together.

The life he lived and sacrificed ought to be regarded with a little more sympathy and trust. He earned it. You can download the paper I wrote and listen to the talk I gave on plural marriage from this website. And the paper on problems with Mormon history is also available to read. I have considered carefully the subject, and

researched it for decades. Joseph Smith was not an adulterer, despite all the poorly supported claims by open adulterers to the contrary.

The inspired prayer offered to repent and return to the Lord included these words about the unrepentant Nauvoo gentiles who never knew Joseph:

The wickedness of the gentile saints dismayed the people of Illinois who had welcomed them, and provoked the anger of their indignant neighbors, who then implemented your judgments against the rebellious saints. The former gentile saints were driven into the wilderness, and relocated into a desolate land, where they suffered hunger, cold, and sickness. In that isolation the gentile leaders were emboldened to openly practice abominations and wrongly teach the people to call them sacraments, as they reigned with blood and horror over the people. Secret murders, open defiance, and the slaughter of over 200 men, women, and children fixed the anger and opposition of the entire United States, who were moved by your will to curtail the barbarism of the gentile saints. Even today the gentile saints justify lying to others as part of their religion, believing you will vindicate them in their dishonesty. They seek deep to hide their counsel from others, and now deny your judgments against their ancestors, claiming you have never rejected them. They have, as you foretold, spoken both good and evil of your prophet Joseph. They ascribe many of their wicked practices to Joseph, who correctly told their ancestors that they never knew him—for indeed, the gentile saints have grown distant from you because of their willful rebellion, pride, foolishness, and blindness. We acknowledge that we must distinguish ourselves from them, admit the errors of the past, and in the depths of humility, seek to be reclaimed as yours.

(T&C 156:6–7)

As I think on Joseph Smith's birthdate I think of honor, virtue, sacrifice, humility, fidelity to God, struggles, and martyrdom. It leaves me grateful for his life. I want to speak only good of him, just as the angel Nephi said would happen.

DECEMBER 24, 2020

Tomorrow

On the night before Christ's birth, believers faced death in the Americas because a sign foretold by Samuel had not happened. A prophet named Nephi prayed that night for deliverance on behalf of others.

And behold, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, Lift up your head and be of good cheer. For behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world, to shew unto the world that I will fulfill all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets. Behold, I come unto my own to fulfill all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world, and to do the will both of the Father and of the Son—of the Father because of me, and of the Son because of my flesh. And behold, the time is at hand and this night shall the sign be given. (3 Ne. 1:3)

We celebrate Christ's birth tomorrow, although there is little reason to think His birth happened near the winter solstice. He came as the Lamb of God, to be slain. Few people recognized the season, and fewer recognized the signs when He came. Prophetic words were ignored or misunderstood, and religious leaders thought it was impossible for Him to be the fulfillment.

God calls His plan a “strange act.” It is “strange” because of the difficulty mankind has in recognizing God’s accomplishments. Christ seemed too ordinary, too obscure, living at the wrong place, with the wrong qualifications for contemporaries to recognize.

The world always mistook false prophets for true ones, and those that were sent of God they considered to be false prophets, and hence they killed, stoned, punished, and imprisoned the true prophets, and they had to hide themselves in deserts, and dens, and caves of the earth, and though the most honorable men of the earth, they banished them from their society as vagabonds, while they cherished, honored, and supported knaves, vagabonds, hypocrites, impostors, and the basest of men. (T&C 146:6)

Perhaps the only way heaven can get things done is through God’s “strange act” — unrecognized, unaccepted, and with stealth. God came before much like a “thief in the night.” He will come again.

And again, verily I say unto you, the coming of the Lord draws nigh and it overtakes the world as a thief in the night. Therefore, gird up your loins that you may be the children of the light, and that day shall not overtake you as a thief. (T&C 108:2)

DECEMBER 25, 2020

Christmas Day

Today we commemorate the birth of Christ. The names and titles He held reflect His eternal importance. Here is a list of only a few:

Firstborn Son

Only Begotten

Wonderful Counselor

Mighty God
Prince of Peace
Lion of Judah
Lamb of God
Immanuel
Messiah, Christ, Anointed
Everlasting Father
Holy One of Israel
Redeemer
Savior
Shepherd
Resurrection and the Life
Rock of Heaven
Bread of Life
Chief Cornerstone
King of kings
Lord of lords
The Word of God
Man of Sorrows
Bridegroom
Author and Finisher of our Faith
Shiloh
Master
Rabbi
Judge
True Vine
Husbandman
Great Angel
Dayspring
Alpha and Omega

The Branch
Beloved
The Root of David
The Way, the Truth and the Life
Bright and Morning Star
Son of the Morning
Light of the World
Image of the Father
Anchor of our Faith
Mediator
Son of Man
Son of God
Captain of Salvation
Hope of Nations
Advocate
Horn of Salvation
King of the Jews
Son of David
Endless
Eternal
Amen

JANUARY 2021

JANUARY 2, 2021

Idleness

“You shall not be idle, for he that is idle shall not eat the bread, nor wear the garment of the laborer” (T&C 26:10).

“But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim. 1:13).

It is apparent that Zion will require endless labor to reverse the fall and allow the covenant promise to be realized:

The earth will yield its increase, and you will flourish upon the mountains and upon the hills, and the wicked will not come against you because the fear of the Lord will be with you. (T&C 158:14)

For the earth to “yield” will require her to give way to persistent effort to reclaim the paradise that is possible here, if she is tended to by a husbandman willing to work by the sweat of his brow (Gen. 2:8–18).

There will be no magic, only great effort. And the wicked (including the idler who is unwilling to labor for their bread and weave for their garment) will not come up to Zion, because they fear the great effort required there.

Learn a trade. Become competent at providing service, cultivating the earth, tending flocks, forging metal, harvesting lumber, performing carpentry, weaving, sewing, and a thousand other needed tasks for surviving and prospering.

The fellowships are a laboratory in which daily interaction allows believers to learn about one another. Idlers are proving themselves. Laborers are also proving themselves. God is also watching. This is a valuable, but temporary, time of proving. It will be followed by an even greater time of labor, sacrifice, and proving.

CHAPTER 14

A Correct Understanding

JANUARY 7, 2021

Politics

Politics makes a poor religion.

JANUARY 10, 2021

Destruction and Rejoicing

Lehi and others warned their contemporaries that they “must repent or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed” (1 Ne. 1:2 RE). Although he made the warning, he prayed for the people he had been warning, “even with all his heart in behalf of his people” (*Id.*, paragraph 3). This should make us ask, who exactly were “his people?”

While praying on behalf of “his people” a pillar of fire descended “and he saw and heard much” (*Id.*). This overcame him, and he went home and collapsed. As he laid on his bed, he was “carried away in a vision” (*Id.*). In the vision he was shown “concerning Jerusalem: that it should be destroyed and the inhabitants thereof; many should perish by the sword and many should be carried away captive into Babylon” (*Id.*).

Terrible destruction was just around the corner. His city and many of its residents would die, and the rest would go into captivity. But Lehi's response seems oddly out of place. Instead of being sorrowful at what he saw instead,

he did exclaim many things unto the Lord, such as, Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the Heavens, and thy power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth; and because thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee that they shall perish! (*Id.*)

Why this reaction?

Destruction was coming, but that had nothing to do with those who "come unto" the Lord. People were to be destroyed and enslaved, but Lehi's prayer on behalf of "his people" gave him assurance that "they shall not perish" because they had come unto the Lord.

When wickedness overcomes people who have been taught to be better, it is a natural progression for them to be destroyed. The Book of Mormon has been available for nearly two centuries. It warns us and our ancestors of the following:

we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God or they shall be swept off when the fullness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fullness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity. For behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands. Wherefore, he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off, for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fullness of iniquity among the children of the land that

they are swept off. And this cometh unto you, O ye gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God, that ye may repent and not continue in your iniquities until the fullness be come, that ye may not bring down the fullness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land hath hitherto done. Behold, this is a choice land; and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under Heaven if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, who has been manifested by the things which we have written. (Ether 1:7 RE)

But destruction does not await those whom the Lord has promised by covenant that:

And you shall be called the children of the Most High God, and I will preserve you against the harvest. And the angels sent to harvest the world will gather the wicked into bundles to be burned, but will pass over you as my peculiar treasure. (T&C 158:17–18)

So there is reason to fear coming judgments upon the wicked, but also reason to exclaim, like Lehi: Great and marvelous are your works, O Lord God Almighty! Your throne is high in the Heavens, and your power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth; and because you are merciful, you will not suffer those who come unto you that they shall perish!

JANUARY 14, 2021

Valuables

Father Lehi prophesied after a pillar of fire opened before him, a visionary encounter with the Lord, and reading a book of God's plans for the future. His message was met with intolerance. He

was ridiculed and mocked for claiming the Jews were about to be destroyed. His message of a coming Messiah made them want to kill him:

when the Jews heard these things they were angry with him, yea, even as with the prophets of old, whom they had cast out and stoned and slain; and they also sought his life that they might take it away. (1 Ne. 1:5 RE)

The Lord commended Lehi for delivering the message, but then “the Lord commanded my father, even in a dream, that he should take his family and depart into the wilderness” (*Id.*, paragraph 6). By fleeing he and his family would be spared from both the immediate threat of murder and the looming destruction of Jerusalem.

When Lehi departed the text clarifies for us what is valuable and what is not valuable. The contrast is a profound revelation for us to consider about our own circumstances. Here is what was left behind: “And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things,” Here is what he took with him: “and took nothing with him save it were his family, and provisions, and tents, and he departed into the wilderness” (*Id.*, paragraph 7).

Our family and the provisions to care for them are our only true valuables. Wealth is not.

The lessons from the Book of Mormon are becoming increasingly relevant to our circumstances. It is more prophecy than history. Hugh Nibley said, “The Book of Mormon is an inexhaustible encyclopedia of knowledge.” That supply of knowledge only requires study to yield its wisdom for us.

JANUARY 19, 2021

Hear His Voice

Moses foretold of Christ as the one, indispensable prophet who must be heard. Moses prophecy is in Deu. 6:4 RE:

I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto you, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass that whoever will not listen unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

The prophecy concerns the Lord's forthcoming "words." Our obligation is to "listen unto" them. There have been many voices since that prophecy pretending to be God's. But just like

there are save two churches only: the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the Devil. Wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church which is the mother of abominations, and she is the whore of all the earth. (1 Ne. 3:27)

It is the same for voices: the Lord offers His voice, and the adversary shouts from every direction to distract and confuse.

Nephi understood this prophecy and taught that it would be fulfilled by Christ:

And the Lord will surely prepare a way for his people, unto the fulfilling of the words of Moses, which he spake, saying, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me. Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that all those who will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people. And now I, Nephi, declare unto you that this prophet of whom Moses

spake was the Holy One of Israel; wherefore, he shall execute judgment in righteousness. (1 Ne. 7:5)

After the resurrection of Christ, Peter declared to the people of Jerusalem that this prophecy by Moses was about the Prince of Life whom they had slain:

For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall you hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul who will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people. (Acts 2:3)

Following His resurrection, Christ declared He was the one Moses foretold, and that hearing His voice was required or you will be cut off:

Behold, I am he of whom Moses spake, saying, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul who will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people. (3 Ne. 9:8)

When the angel Nephi visited Joseph Smith, he also referred to the prophecy of Moses, and that it referred to Christ. However, he clarified that the time of destroying or cutting off those who would not hear His voice was future:

He quoted also the third chapter of Acts, twenty-second and twenty-third verses [Acts 2:3 RE], precisely as they stand in our New Testament. He said that that prophet was Christ, but the day had not yet come when they who would not hear his voice should be cut off from among the people, but soon would come. (*JS-H* 3:3)

While it has always been necessary to hear “that prophet,” this particular explanation of the prophecy makes the final critical time to hear His voice sometime after 1823.

Accordingly, sometime after 1823 there will be a generation when those who fail to “hear his voice” will be “cut off” (Christ and Nephi) or “destroyed” (Peter).

Implicit in Moses’ prophecy is that if we will hear His voice then we will not be cut off or destroyed. The Lord is deliberate. He knows how to separate people and identify those who will hear His voice.

Because this prophecy is in the Old Covenants, New Testament, Book of Mormon and Teachings & Commandments, I have pondered what this means. Today the clearest place to find the Lord’s voice is in the Book of Mormon. It testifies on almost every page of Christ and has His words throughout the book.

Although I did not recognize it at the time, the Covenant offered by the Lord in 2017 includes as part of the Covenant itself, language that identifies those who accept it as they who “hear His voice.” That is the first question posed by Him in the Covenant:

First: Do you believe all the words of the Lord which have been read to you this day, and know them to be true and from the Lord Jesus Christ, who has condescended to provide them to you, and do you covenant with Him to cease to do evil and to seek to continually do good? (T&C 158:2)

This question is asked first in the Covenant. Its placement suggests its importance. It appears the Lord asks the question to protect those who answer, “yes” against the very thing Moses said God “will require it of [us].”

The second question then directs attention to the Book of Mormon as a covenant:

Second: Do you have faith in these things and receive the scriptures approved by the Lord as a standard to govern you in your daily walk in life, to accept the obligations established by the Book of Mormon as a covenant, and to use the scriptures to correct yourselves and to guide your words, thoughts, and deeds? (*Id.* Paragraph 3)

The Lord's voice has been raised. It is our obligation to listen. As the final steps are taken by both heaven and hell, and people are hearing or rejecting His voice, it becomes increasingly important to study the scriptures. In them we think we have eternal life, and they all testify of Him (See, John 5:7).

JANUARY 23, 2021

Lehi's Prophecy

Lehi had several visions, including an extended visit from the Lord where he was given a heavenly record to read. After the brass plates were recovered, Nephi recorded that,

my father Lehi took the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass and he did search them from the beginning. And he beheld that they did contain the five books of Moses, which gave an account of the creation of the world and also of Adam and Eve, who were our first parents, and also a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah, and also the prophecies of the holy prophets from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah. (RE 1 Ne. 1:22)

The result of his study was more prophecy:

And now when my father saw all these things, he was filled with the spirit and began to prophesy concerning his seed—that these plates of brass should go forth unto all nations, kindreds, and tongues, and people, who were of his seed. Wherefore, he said that these plates of brass should never perish; neither should they be dimmed anymore by time. And he prophesied many things concerning his seed. (*Id.*)

Later Lehi prophesied about the Messiah, John the Baptist, and the future destiny of Israel, including his descendants (1 Ne. 3:2–4). In his prophecy, Lehi compares the scattering and gathering of Israel to grafting an olive tree:

Yea, even my father spake much concerning the gentiles, and also concerning the house of Israel, that they should be compared like unto an olive tree whose branches should be broken off and should be scattered upon all the face of the earth. Wherefore, he said it must needs be that we should be led with one accord into the land of promise, unto the fulfilling of the word of the Lord that we should be scattered upon all the face of the earth. And after the house of Israel should be scattered, they should be gathered together again, or in fine, after the gentiles had received the fullness of the gospel, the natural branches of the olive tree—or the remnants of the house of Israel—should be grafted in, or come to the knowledge of the true Messiah, their Lord and their Redeemer. (*Id.*, 4)

Lehi's prophecy was original. But the brass plates included the allegory of the olive tree which Lehi's son, Jacob, would later copy into the small plates of Nephi. That allegory (Jacob 3:7–28) was the apparent inspiration for Lehi's prophecy. Jacob also prophesied

about Israel, using the allegory of Zenos. Jacob's prophecy consisted of reading Zenos' words after which he declared this:

as I said unto you that I would prophesy, behold, this is my prophecy, that the things which this prophet Zenos spake concerning the house of Israel, in the which he likened them unto a tame olive tree, must surely come to pass. And in the day that he shall set his hand again the second time to recover his people, is the day, yea, even the last time, that the servants of the Lord shall go forth in his power to nourish and prune his vineyard. And after that, the end soon cometh. (Jacob 4:1)

Compare the words of Micah 1:9:

But in the last days, it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For the law shall go forth of Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem

With the words of Isaiah 1:5:

it shall come to pass in the last days, when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem

Divine, original prophecy can be inspired by the words of earlier prophets. Just like the message of angels can be quotes from scripture. Nephi appeared to Joseph Smith to inform him of the Nephite record, and,

After telling me these things he commenced quoting the prophecies of the Old Testament. He first quoted part of the third chapter of Malachi [RE Mal. 1:6–8], and he quoted also the fourth or last chapter of the same prophecy [Mal. 1:9–11] continuing on to quote Isaiah 5:3–5, Acts 2:3, and Joel 1:12.

The words of prophets and angels are taken from scripture. Therefore, studying scripture is central to understanding God’s will. What He has done, is now doing, and will soon accomplish are all set out in scripture. Lehi’s example sets out the pattern of prophets and angels.

FEBRUARY 2021

FEBRUARY 3, 2021

Understanding Your Soul

On Saturday February 6 at 10 AM MST I will be talking to the youth. I plan to discuss the topic of “Understanding Your Soul.” The discussion will be available through Zoom at the following link:

[Understanding Your Soul](#)

All the youth are invited to listen in, and those who can attend in person are invited to do so. It will originate at the upstairs meeting room of the Athena Event Center located at 111 West 9000 South in Sandy, Utah.

FEBRUARY 7, 2021

Recording of Talk

A recording of the talk to the youth titled Understanding Your Soul is available at this link: [Understanding Your Soul](#).

FEBRUARY 21, 2021

T&C 50:6-7

In T&C 50:6-7 the following instruction (and commandment) was given:

But, unto him that keeps my commandments, I will give the mysteries of my Kingdom, and the same shall be in him a well of living water springing up unto everlasting life. And now behold, this is the will of the Lord your God concerning his saints—that they should assemble themselves together unto the land of Zion, not in haste, lest there should be confusion, which brings pestilence.

Behold, the land of Zion; I, the Lord, hold it in my own hands. Nevertheless, I, the Lord, render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's. Wherefore, I, the Lord, will that you should purchase the lands, that you may have advantage of the world, that you may have claim on the world, that they may not be stirred up unto anger. For Satan puts it into their hearts to anger against you and to the shedding of blood. Wherefore, the land of Zion shall not be obtained but by purchase or by blood; otherwise, there is no inheritance for you. And if by purchase, behold, you are blessed, and if by blood, as you are forbidden to shed blood, lo, your enemies are upon you and you shall be scourged from city to city, and from synagogue to synagogue, and but few shall stand to receive an inheritance.

This 1831 instruction remains as relevant to us today as when originally given. There is a direct cause and effect between keeping commandments and gaining understanding. Christ taught: “If any man will do [God’s] will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it is of God or whether I speak of myself” (NC John 6:4).

Haste is no better today than it was before. Cutting corners and moving quickly always results in compromises. There are not short-cuts in following the Lord. He is the prototype, as explained in Lecture 7, paragraph 9 of the *Lectures on Faith*:

Where is the prototype? Or where is the saved being? We conclude as to the answer of this question there will be no dispute among those who believe the Bible that it is Christ. All will agree in this, that he is the prototype or standard of salvation, or in other words, that he is a saved being. And if we should continue our interrogation, and ask how it is that he is saved, the answer would be, because he is a just and holy being. And if he were anything different from what he is he would not be saved, for his salvation depends on his being precisely what he is and nothing else. (T&C 110)

Christ explained the process He followed:

Truly, truly I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do; for whatever things he does, the Son likewise does these also, for the Father loves the Son and shows him all things that he himself does. (NC John 5:4)

If we follow Him, we will also obey the commandments and let them direct our behavior. We will not act in haste, but proceed wisely, patiently, and respecting the demands of Caesar. It does not matter that Caesar (or “Babylon” or “the world”) is corrupt, vain, anti-Christ, and doomed, we “may have advantage of the world” by

satisfying their demands. By meeting their demands, we get to have a “claim on the world” rather than the world having claim on us.

There are clearly many signs underway in the heavens above and in the earth beneath. NC Luke 12:17 Christ told our generation to “look up” and realize He will soon come. Of course the meaning of “soon” is the Lord’s, and He alone will set the event. But the generation now lives who will see Him vindicate His prophecies.

There are great reasons to be optimistic and hopeful. Far more reasons for that than for despair and gloom. Keeping the commandments is the first step in having the mysteries of God’s last-days “strange act” revealed (T&C 101:20).

MARCH 2021

MARCH 19, 2021

Tom Nibley

My friend Tom Nibley has died. He was 70 years old. The son of Hugh Nibley, his was the most memorable and provocative talk at his father’s funeral. I thought it took some nerve to deliver his remarks in the presence of Dallin Oaks, Jeffrey Holland, and Merrill Bateman. In that he was much like his father.

The last time we ate lunch together he was ill and commented that he did not think he would ever return to Utah again in this life. He could be stubborn, and I wonder now if he died to prove himself right. He was a bright, witty, insightful and kindly man who will be missed.

MARCH 20, 2021

Recovering Scripture

Part 5 of the video series on the continuing restoration is now live.

Part 5: Recovering Scripture

Today is the Equinox and the video is released to commemorate the date.

MARCH 28, 2021

Conference Talk

We returned from the conference in Aravada Springs. A transcript of the talk I gave at the conference is now available for download here: [Religion of the Fathers](#)

The setting was beautiful and the conference was well organized. I appreciate the invitation and opportunity to speak. The conference is continuing today and this next week (but I had to return for work tomorrow).

APRIL 2021

APRIL 1, 2021

Easter

This weekend is associated with the death and resurrection of the rejected Messiah, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The One whose shed blood was foreshadowed in the Passover and the Day of Atonement rites.

He was wounded for our transgressions. The chastisement of our peace was put upon Him.

His apparent defeat on the cross was turned into triumph by His resurrection. That triumph was not only His but all mankind's.

We have every reason to rejoice this coming Sunday. He who was slain lives. Though we will die, we, too, will live again. He intends to wipe away every tear, and bring us forth rejoicing.

Spring awakens nature, and new life springs from the ground, the trees, and the animal kingdom. All the world breaks out in its symbolic testimony confirming that the Messiah brings new life for all of this creation.

He suffered terribly, enduring more than any man could endure. And He secured a triumph greater than any man could achieve.

APRIL 18, 2021

“Other Books”

Nephi received an extended tutorial from an angel that resulted in prophecy about events now happening. The prophecy mentions “other books” that would come by the power of the Lamb of God to the gentiles (1 Ne. 3:24).

At the time the Book of Mormon was translated and published in 1829 – 1830 there was nothing available to help Joseph Smith and early believers understand what these “other books” would include. Work on the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible would not begin until June 1830. Work on the Book of Abraham would not begin until July 1835. Neither of these would be finished for many years following the Book of Mormon translation and publication. Yet the Nephi prophecy anticipated both of these, and more. The Teachings & Commandments include two centuries of additional material provided by the power of the Lamb of God to the gentiles from 1820 to 2019.

The purpose of these other books is to convince three groups of today’s people. Nephi explains they are:

unto the convincing of the gentiles, and the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the Jews who were scattered upon all the face of the earth, that the records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true.

These “other books” are to first persuade the gentiles, so they will undertake the effort required to bring them to the other two groups.

The second group are “the remnant of the seed of my brethren” or the Native American descendants living today. Although a poor effort has been attempted in the past, we are today actively working to bring these records to the second group.

The third group are “the Jews who were scattered upon all the face of the earth.” Essentially no effort has been made in the past to accomplish this work. But we are now also actively working to accomplish this as well.

The objective of the records is explained by Nephi:

These last records which thou hast seen among the gentiles shall establish the truth of the first, which are of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them, and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father and the Savior of the world, and that all men must come unto him or they cannot be saved.

There needed to be a Savior. The Jewish Messiah was and is the only one who can save all mankind. The twelve apostles who accompanied Him in His mortality at Jerusalem testified that He lived, sacrificed His life, and rose from the grave. He promised to likewise raise all mankind from the grave and reverse the fall of Adam. They testified that His blood was shed for all sin, and to fully reconcile mankind to God.

Just as Nephi foretold, the “other books” not only confirm the testimony of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, but also make known many plain and precious things that have been removed from existing scripture. The Book of Mormon and “other books” combine to restore plain and precious truths we need to understand. They help us awaken and arise, and flee from the coming wrath.

APRIL 22, 2021

D. Michael Quinn Passing

Former LDS Assistant Historian and BYU faculty member D. Michael Quinn died last evening. He was an important and prolific writer whose contributions were not always welcome in the community he served. When I first read his work I thought him a heretic, writing agenda-driven and unreliable assortments of anti-Mormon tripe. His writing drove me to find and read the primary sources rather than the “faithful histories” I relied on as an LDS convert. The more I became acquainted with the primary sources, the more I realized Michael’s conclusions were not only reasonable, but in many ways more truthful than the LDS orthodox “faithful histories.”

His writing resulted in his excommunication from the LDS church. But even before my own excommunication, I didn’t hold that against him. Like me he never doubted the authenticity of the restoration or the Divine calling of Joseph Smith. He was just more willing to pursue a truthful telling of the restoration than was willing to submit to church dictates, when they conflicted.

His writing drove me to acquire a new library of Mormon historical sources and to research more deeply into the life, ministry, and teachings of Joseph Smith, as well as what happened to the faith following Joseph’s death. Michael was and always will be a

watershed figure in Mormon history. I am indebted to and grateful for his important life's work.

I did not agree with all of his conclusions. We shared dinner one evening and discussed our differences on the issue of plural marriage. He was engaging, interesting, and open to examining ideas that challenged his own. I doubt he could have produced as much important material if he were not open to other's ideas.

He cannot be replaced. He will be missed.

MAY 2021

MAY 3, 2021

Method not Madness

I've heard perplexed news reporters, commentators and politicians say that many of our national government's decisions are inexplicably stupid. One new book attempts to explain the course the United States is taking. It is methodical and deliberate, not random and inadvertent. I read an advance copy of the book and can recommend it as a very good read.

The book is now available through a number of outlets. You can see how to order *Irresistible Revolution* [HERE](#).

If the money supply outstrips the increase of goods and services then the value of money decreases. The growth of the money supply when the national output is either steady or declining will result in money having less value or inflation. Things will cost more.

The United States money supply has increased under both Republican (Trump) and Democrat (Biden) administrations as national debt has soared by trillions of newly printed dollars to cope with the "COVID-19 emergency." That increase of the money supply started by Trump continues unabated by his successor.

Inflation is inevitable. It is impossible for the Federal Reserve Bank to hold interest rates as low as they are now. We are likely to see a significant increase in inflation, interest rates, and related economic troubles because these foolish decisions have been made before and the outcome is predictable.

Foolish choices are not being made, but instead we are seeing deliberate efforts to accomplish an outcome for the United States. *Irresistible Revolution* explains the long history that has led to current circumstances.

CHAPTER 15

What the Hell?

MAY 4, 2021

Distraction

We are facing many serious issues that are being ignored. Instead of dealing with directly relevant challenges that we now face, education, news, governmental and entertainment opinion-leaders urge us to focus on divisive side-issues.

There are very small and extreme groups who use social media to influence the larger population. This is organized and intended to misrepresent public reaction in order to sway opinion. It is unfortunately effective. We are fed a constant stream of misrepresentations, deceptions and distractions to occupy our attention. We have all become “Nero” while “Rome is burning.”

There is a fog of lies so deep, widespread and effective that even the very elect have a challenge to remember what matters most.

The left-leaning media and politicians accuse conservatives of being an actual threat to peace and order. And the right-leaning media outlets engage in a constantly shrill counter-attack accusing “liberals” of being a threat to freedom. The objective of both left and right is to stir up anger against our fellow-man.

Anger distracts us. In a July 2017 revelation the Lord described this condition and urged us to avoid engaging in the angry current social disorder:

Study to learn how to respect your brothers and sisters and to come together by precept, reason, and persuasion, rather than sharply disputing and wrongly condemning each other, causing anger. Take care how you invoke my name. Mankind has been controlled by the adversary through anger and jealousy, which has led to bloodshed and the misery of many souls. Even strong disagreements should not provoke anger, nor to invoke my name in vain as if I had part in your every dispute. (T&C 157:54)

We are being distracted as a very dangerous tactic. Leaders who incite anger run the risk of leading us into “bloodshed and the misery of many souls.” Even if we disagree with one another, strong political disagreements should never be allowed to “provoke anger, nor to invoke [God’s] name in vain, as if [He] had part in our every dispute.” We do that. It should end.

MAY 8, 2021

Every Person

I’ve been thinking about a statement made by the Lord in the Answer to Prayer for Covenant. We have been told, “Even a single soul who stirs up the hearts of others to anger can destroy the peace of all my people.” T&C 157:19

That is a sobering thought. The peace of a whole community can be destroyed by a single individual.

It is little wonder the scriptures report of so few places of peace and unity.

When believers were driven away from the designated gathering place in 1833, the Lord explained their failure:

Behold, I say unto you, there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore, by these things they polluted their inheritances. They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God, therefore the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble. In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel, but in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me. (T&C 101:2)

As I think about it, the voice of the Lord tells us how to conduct ourselves. Some of our behavior seems to reflect very light esteem for His counsel.

I know the Lord is determined to fulfill His covenants, the prophecies, and keep His word. But if a single soul can disrupt all the people (and he/she can), then there are only two ways I can see the Lord accomplishing His work. The first would be for Him to be selective about who He gathers. The second would be to send “the day of trouble” again to humble people enough to change their pride into humility.

He is watching us, and taking note of our conduct. I’m assuming the first choice will be the one the Lord follows. At least initially. Then, later, maybe the second will be added.

MAY 9, 2021

What the Hell?

There’s a title intended to make you curious. But, really, what the hell is going on with the COVID-19 vaccination? I’m not a doctor.

But I am a lawyer. And lawyers sue doctors and pharmaceutical companies all the time when they screw up and injure people. Even if they do so negligently with the best of intentions, lawyers sue these health professionals.

As a result of the injuries caused while providing health care, the medical industry has chosen to shift the risk from themselves to those they treat through warnings. If you are warned, and you choose to proceed, then if there is an injury you assumed the risk. You can't blame anyone for the injury you chose to accept.

These warning labels are because of the lawyers. Here are a few examples of warnings on common products you and your children have probably taken (or received) in the normal course of your life:

Ascorbic Acid (Vitamin C): You should not use ascorbic acid if you have ever had an allergic reaction to a vitamin C supplement. Ask a doctor or pharmacist about using ascorbic acid if you have: kidney disease or a history of kidney stones; hereditary iron overload disorder hemochromatosis); or if you smoke (smoking can make ascorbic acid less effective). Your dose needs may be different during pregnancy or while you are breast-feeding a baby. Do not use ascorbic acid without your doctor's advice in either case.

Aspirin: You should not use aspirin if you have a bleeding disorder such as hemophilia, a recent history of stomach or intestinal bleeding, or if you are allergic to an NSAID (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug) such as Advil, Motrin, Aleve, Orudis, Indocin, Lodine, Voltaren, Toradol, Mobic, Relafen, Feldene, and others. Do not give this medication to a child or teenager with a fever, flu symptoms, or chickenpox. Salicylates can cause Reye's syndrome, a serious and sometimes fatal condition in children.

Benadryl: You should not use Benadryl to make a child sleepy. When taking Benadryl, use caution driving, operating machinery, or performing other hazardous activities. Diphenhydramine may cause dizziness or drowsiness. If you experience dizziness or drowsiness, avoid these activities. Use alcohol cautiously. Alcohol may increase drowsiness and dizziness while taking Benadryl. Do not give this medication to a child younger than 2 years old. Always ask a doctor before giving a cough or cold medicine to a child. Death can occur from the misuse of cough and cold medicines in very young children.

Vitamin E: Ask a doctor or pharmacist if it is safe for you to use vitamin E if you have other medical conditions, especially: anemia (low red blood cells); a bleeding or blood clotting disorder such as hemophilia; liver disease; kidney disease; any allergies; an eye disorder called retinitis pigmentosa; a vitamin K deficiency; high cholesterol or triglycerides (a type of fat in the blood); diabetes; a history of cancer; a history of stroke or blood clot; or if you need surgery, or have recently had surgery. FDA pregnancy category C. It is not known whether vitamin E will harm an unborn baby. Taking vitamin E in amounts that do not exceed the recommended dietary allowance (RDA) is considered safe; however, supplementation is not generally recommended unless dietary vitamin E falls below the RDA. Do not use this medicine without a doctor's advice if you are pregnant. It is not known whether vitamin E passes into breast milk or if it could harm a nursing baby. Do not use this medicine without a doctor's advice if you are breast-feeding a baby. Your dose needs may be different during pregnancy or while you are nursing.

Here are the same kinds of warnings you get for childhood vaccines we may have all received:

Measles: Applies to measles virus vaccine: subcutaneous powder for injection. **Local:** Local side effects have included injection site burning/stinging, wheal and flare, erythema, swelling, and vesiculation. **Hypersensitivity:** Hypersensitivity reactions have included anaphylaxis, anaphylactoid reactions, angioneurotic edema (including peripheral or facial edema), and bronchial spasm. **Cardiovascular:** Cardiovascular side effects have included vasculitis. **Dermatologic:** Dermatologic side effects have included Stevens-Johnson Syndrome, erythema multiforme, urticaria, and rash. **Gastrointestinal:** Gastrointestinal side effects have included diarrhea. **Hematologic:** Hematologic side effects have included thrombocytopenia, purpura, regional lymphadenopathy, and leukocytosis. **Musculoskeletal:** Musculoskeletal side effects have included arthralgia and/or arthritis (usually transient and rarely chronic), polyneuritis, myalgia, paresthesia, and rarely chronic arthritis; these symptoms may also occur with natural rubella. **Nervous system:** Nervous system side effects have included measles inclusion body encephalitis (MIBE), encephalopathy, subacute sclerosing panencephalitis (SSPE), Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), febrile convulsions, afebrile convulsions or seizures, ataxia, and ocular palsies. Significant central nervous system reactions such as encephalitis and encephalopathy have been very rarely temporally associated with measles vaccine (occurring within 30 days after vaccination); however, causality has not been determined in any case. A certain number of encephalitis cases unrelated to vaccines is expected to occur in a large childhood population; however,

there is the possibility that some of these cases may have been caused by measles vaccine. The risk of measles vaccine-associated serious neurological disorders is much smaller than the risk for encephalitis and encephalopathy due to natural measles. Subacute sclerosing panencephalitis (SSPE) has been very rarely reported in children after measles vaccination. Some of these cases may have been due to unrecognized measles during the first year of life or possibly due to the measles vaccination. The results of a retrospective case-controlled study by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggest that measles vaccine has had the overall effect of protecting against SSPE by preventing measles with its greater risk of SSPE.

Mumps Vaccine also carries warnings about side effects that include risks of local injury, hypersensitivity, cardiovascular, dermatologic, endocrine, genitourinary, gastrointestinal, hematological, nervous system, ocular, and respiratory. (I'm omitting the details for each of these categories.)

Rubella Vaccine has similar potential side effects and warnings as measles and mumps, and also adds additional warnings about musculoskeletal risks and even deafness.

We know about the risks for these products because human trials allowed us to learn about the side effects through control groups (who do not receive the medication/vaccination) and those who are tested. Large samples over years of testing allow the risks to be identified. Not everyone is susceptible to each risk, and some people are more likely to suffer from specific side effects than others.

Unlike all other compounds, vitamins, medications and vaccines, this is what we are told about the COVID-19 vaccine (which has not undergone human trial testing-unless you consider what is happening at present to be that test): **COVID-19 risks: COVID-19**

vaccines are safe and effective. You may have side effects after vaccination, but these are normal.

How can that be? There is nothing yet documented to justify the claim it is safe, so why tell us that? What does it mean that something has “normal” side effects?

I’m hoping you ask yourself: “What the hell is going on?” (Rather than just trust the appeal to emotions, shaming, and social pressure used today to influence a health decision.) Think this through for yourself. And choose wisely. But if someone makes a different choice than you, refrain from using emotion, shame and social pressure to confront them. Let them go in peace. Every person has the right to choose to be vaccinated, and to choose against it. And every person has the right to then live with the consequences of their choice.

One last matter for you to consider: Because all these vaccinations were developed with emergency authorization, and normal FDA requirements were waived, the pharmaceutical companies are not liable for any injuries caused by the vaccines. Even if they tell you they are “safe and effective” and the vaccines later prove to be neither safe nor effective, you can’t sue the manufacturer.

MAY 11, 2021

WTH, Part 2

This is the second in a series involving the COVID-19 vaccines:

Before they were released for public use the following trials were conducted with the following results for the three versions of the vaccines:

Pfizer: A total of 43,548 participants underwent randomization, of whom 43,448 received injections: 21,720 with BNT162b2 and

21,728 with placebo. A two-dose regimen of BNT162b2 conferred 95% protection against Covid-19 in persons 16 years of age or older.

Moderna: The trial enrolled 30,420 volunteers who were randomly assigned in a 1:1 ratio to receive either vaccine or placebo (15,210 participants in each group). The mRNA-1273 vaccine showed 94.1% efficacy at preventing COVID-19 illness, including severe disease.

Johnson & Johnson: The per-protocol population included 19,630 SARS-COV2–negative participants who received Ad26.COV2.S and 19,691 who received placebo. A single dose of Ad26.COV2.S protected against symptomatic COVID-19 and asymptomatic SARS-COV2 infection and was effective against severe–critical disease, including hospitalization and death.

The present state of testing for these is called Phase 4. Data is now being gathered through the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) to evaluate how these drugs interact in a much larger population.

All of these vaccines have adverse events being reported. An “adverse event” does not automatically mean cause-and-effect. For example, Hank Aaron received a much-publicized injection of the vaccine and died two weeks later. The Fulton County Medical Examiner attributed his death to a stroke, and therefore natural causes unrelated to the vaccine. Locally, this week a healthy 17-year-old high school basketball player received a vaccine shot and then began developing blood clots. He has been hospitalized and his case has received national attention in some media outlets.

In Wisconsin a 16-year-old girl received the vaccine and died shortly after receiving the second injection. This was reported on VAERS, but like Hank Aaron and the Draper basketball player, how and if there is a cause-and-effect will have to be investigated.

It is possible all these and many more reported adverse events are unrelated to the vaccines they received.

Numerous drugs have passed clinical trials and entered into public distribution. Over time reports of adverse events accumulate, are investigated, and cause-and-effect is established. Then the drug is recalled, and oftentimes litigation follows. Fen-Phen, a weight loss drug, was on the market for 24 years before its danger was adequately proven. It was shown to cause potentially fatal pulmonary hypertension and heart valve problems.

Seldane was sold for 13 years before being removed from the US market. It caused potentially fatal disruption in heart rhythms.

Vioxx was an arthritis treatment marketed for 5 years. But it was linked to thousands of fatal heart-attacks and recalled.

Acutane is now known to cause birth defects. Zantac has been linked to cancer.

Perhaps the most notorious recall is Thalidomide. It was the only non-barbiturate sedative known at the time, and this gave the drug massive appeal. When it was discovered to help with morning sickness for pregnant women, many women took it for that purpose. The drug caused numerous horrific birth defects. These deformed children were so numerous and tragic in America that Thalidomide is mentioned in Billy Joel's lyrics in his song, *We Didn't Start the Fire*. The lyrics survey significant historic events from the time of Billy Joel's birth in 1949 until the year the song was written in 1989.

All of these drugs were "safe and effective" until enough data was gathered to show a cause-and-adverse-effect. Then they were dangerous. There are many other similarly recalled drugs, whose adverse effects could not be established until widely distributed and used.

Right now it is possible the three vaccines being administered are indeed safe and effective. But there are obviously those who fear otherwise. Eventually, the VAERS reports will be investigated, and perhaps there will be a cause-and-effect established that leads to a revised opinion from the health community. Or, it may prove that some or all of these vaccines are indeed altogether safe and effective. How any given individual evaluates the risks of receiving or refusing the offered vaccine should be their health choice. An intelligent person could very much want to get the vaccine, and should not be condemned or called foolish for that choice. But an equally intelligent person could decide to delay or refuse the vaccine, and they should also not be condemned or called foolish for the opposite choice.

Why has this choice become a charged, divisive issue today? Think about that, and in the next post I'll suggest some reasons to consider.

MAY 13, 2021

WTH, Part 3

In June 1981 the CDC published an article about five young, white, previously healthy gay men in Los Angeles who died of a rare lung infection. These young men also had other infections that suggested their immune systems were not functioning. Two died before the publication of the article, and the rest would die shortly thereafter. The same day the article was published a New York doctor called the CDC to report a cluster of cases of a rare and unusually aggressive cancer among gay men in New York and California. Three days later the CDC organized a task force to investigate these opportunistic infections.

In December 1981 a pediatric immunologist was treating five black infants showing signs of severe immune deficiency. Three of the children had mothers involved in the sex industry. The doctor recognized the signs of the same illness affecting gay men, but other colleagues dismissed his diagnosis.

Thus began what the New York Times the following year would label GRID (Gay-Related Immune Deficiency). Their acronym would not last. In September of 1982 the CDC would use the term AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), which would last. This syndrome became extremely controversial because of religious sentiments from conservative Christians who viewed the homosexual association of the disease with God's disapproving will and judgment. This resulted in the infection become a political issue.

In January 1983 the CDC hosted a conference with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), National Institutes of Health (NIH), gay activists and the Red Cross to develop a plan. No consensus was reached about what to do.

In March 1983 the CDC published an article reporting that most cases of AIDS have been reported among gay men with multiple sexual partners, people who inject drugs, Haitians, and people with hemophilia. This stigmatized Haitians for two years, until they were dropped from this list in 1985.

In July 1985 Rock Hudson announced he had AIDS. He died in October 1985, age 59. In August of that year an Indiana teenage hemophiliac, Ryan White, was refused entry to his middle school because of contracting AIDS. His case was impossible to dismiss as a moral judgment by an angry Christian god. Public opinion began to change somewhat. Blood transfusions resulted in many other infections, before a test was developed to screen the blood supply.

These events happened in the early years of the AIDS scare. Make no mistake, it was a “scare” and the responses in those early years were emotional, political, religious and very often foolish. There are many things which were said or written in that time frame which, in retrospect, should embarrass those who were vocal.

It would require time, a great deal more research, many deaths, and much greater maturity before the AIDS health threat was successfully addressed and a form of “remission” achieved. The history of those early years should inform us today about reacting, overreacting, and injudicious temperament about illnesses.

Right now, COVID-19 is in the early “scary” years, and much of what is being said is, like the early days of AIDS, emotional, political, religious, and in the long term destined to be regarded as often foolish. We are in a short season of raw emotion that will pass with time. It gives us a chance to consider how we are individually reacting. Should we be as fearful as we are? Remember, there are still a lot of unknowns. Should we be as judgmental and unkind in our reactions to others about this issue as we are? Should we regard the virus as a political opportunity, or something to arouse political sentiments? Should we regard it as vindicating or undermining the will of God? Why?

Friendships have been and are being undermined because of conflicting opinions about this virus. A great deal of the basis for the current opinions are based upon rumors, suspicions, fears and outright lies. Both ill-informed social media and respected leaders have used this as a wedge issue to divide us. Why are we letting that happen? It is our choice to respond with fear and anger. No matter who is cheerleading the decision to become upset and disaffected with one another, we decide whether to control our emotions and to react deliberately and charitably. Oftentimes dividing the public

into opposing camps is a way to distract and confuse people. It hides other, more important, ongoing irresponsibility happening in law, education, business and government.

There are things we ought to be fearing, but they are not on the front page of news outlets, nor trending on social media.

MAY 14, 2021

WTH, Part 4 - Conclusion

COVID-19 has directly affected me. A friend of mine contracted COVID-19 and lost consciousness in his yard. When the ambulance arrived his blood oxygen was only 20%. He was in a coma for 10 days and then died of multiple organ failure.

Four of our children and their spouses contracted COVID-19 last year. They all had mild symptoms.

Some of my children or their spouses have been vaccinated, and others are decidedly opposed to doing so. I think they all hold strong opinions about the vaccination risks. One son got vaccinated to keep a job. One daughter was fired because she refused to be vaccinated.

The current widespread COVID illness has been used to incite anger and fear. “Mankind has been controlled by the adversary through anger and jealousy, which has led to bloodshed and the misery of many souls” (T&C 157:54). “Fear is not only the opposite of faith, but it contains within it the bitterness of hell” (see Genesis 1:4; Glossary, *Fear*).

Those members of our family who are local come to our house every Sunday for dinner. There have been numerous discussions, but there has never been an argument during our family get-togethers about vaccinations.

I disagree with many friends about many issues. Recently, I received an email from a friend who disliked a footnote in my “Religion of the Fathers” paper. After acknowledging our disagreement, I thanked him for his comment, and reassured him of my friendship with him.

COVID-19 has become the battleground for political, social and even religious disagreements. Combatants wrongly call themselves, among other things, “conservative” or “liberal” — both sides are neither. Both sides should be blamed for stirring up anger and fear.

Have you ever listened (or read) media messages while looking only for the emotions of the message? It does not matter which outlet you tune in, each condemns the other with equal indignation. The language is inflammatory. They urge you to be afraid, and to hate the “other side.” People on both sides of the political spectrum are being swept into fear and anger.

It can be avoided. In the closing remarks at the Covenant of Christ Conference, on September 3, 2017, the following warning was given to us all,

Language of scriptures gives a description of the events now underway and calls it the end of the times of the gentiles. This process with the spirit withdrawing will end on this continent, as it did with two prior civilizations in fratricidal and genocidal warfare. For the rest of the world, it will be as in the days of Noah in which, as that light becomes eclipsed, the coldness of men’s hearts is going to result in a constant scene of violence and bloodshed. The wicked will destroy the wicked.

This pandemic is more notable for the effect it has had on the souls of men than even the many deaths that have been caused. I can only urge you to reflect on the dangers of both fear and anger that COVID-19 has exposed.

There will come a desolating sickness, and it will cause death, both directly and indirectly; directly by the illness itself, and indirectly by the violence resulting from fear and anger of the wicked. Together they will constitute an “overflowing scourge” of judgment, death and violence.

And in that generation shall the times of the gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be men standing in that generation that shall not pass until they shall see an overflowing scourge, for a desolating sickness shall cover the land. But my disciples shall stand in holy places and shall not be moved; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices, and curse God, and die. (T&C 31:7)

The Lord counseled us,

Study to learn how to respect your brothers and sisters and to come together by precept, reason, and persuasion, rather than sharply disputing and wrongly condemning each other, causing anger. Take care how you invoke my name. Mankind has been controlled by the adversary through anger and jealousy, which has led to bloodshed and the misery of many souls. Even strong disagreements should not provoke anger, nor to invoke my name in vain as if I had part in your every dispute. (T&C 157:54)

The world will not be charitable with one another. We must do better if we hope to avoid the coming overflowing scourge.

MAY 18, 2021

Hopefully

America has thrived because of the religious foundation upon which it was established. For the entire existence of the US, an overwhelming majority of the population have worshiped the God

of the land, who is Jesus Christ, and in turn were blessed by it. Moroni explained how prosperity is secured on the American land:

Behold, this is a choice land; and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under Heaven if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, who has been manifested by the things which we have written. (Ether 1:7)

Nephi explained to his brothers how every promised land has been lost by God's covenant people when they reject God. He taught,

Behold, the Lord esteemeth all flesh in one; he that is righteous is favored of God. But behold, this people had rejected every word of God, and they were ripe in iniquity, and the fullness of the wrath of God was upon them. And the Lord did curse the land against them and bless it unto our fathers; yea, he did curse it against them unto their destruction, and he did bless it unto our fathers, unto their obtaining power over it. Behold, the Lord hath created the earth that it should be inhabited, and he hath created his children that they should possess it. And he raiseth up a righteous nation and destroyeth the nations of the wicked. And he leadeth away the righteous into precious lands, and the wicked he destroyeth, and curseth the land unto them for their sakes. He ruleth high in the Heavens, for it is his throne, and this earth is his footstool. And he loveth them who will have him to be their God. Behold, he loved our fathers; and he covenanted with them, yea, even Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and he remembered the covenants which he had made; wherefore, he did bring them out of the land of Egypt. And he did straiten them in the wilderness with his rod,

for they hardened their hearts, even as ye have; and the Lord straitened them because of their iniquity. He sent flying fiery serpents among them; and after they were bitten, he prepared a way that they might be healed; and the labor which they had to perform were to look. And because of the simpleness of the way, or the easiness of it, there were many who perished. And they did harden their hearts from time to time, and they did revile against Moses and also against God. Nevertheless, ye know that they were led forth by his matchless power into the land of promise.

And now after all these things, the time has come that they have become wicked, yea, nearly unto ripeness. And I know not but they are at this day about to be destroyed, for I know that the day must surely come that they must be destroyed, save a few only, who shall be led away into captivity; wherefore, the Lord commanded my father that he should depart into the wilderness. And the Jews also sought to take away his life; yea, and ye also have sought to take away his life. Wherefore, ye are murderers in your hearts and ye are like unto them. Ye are swift to do iniquity but slow to remember the Lord your God. (1 Ne. 5:19–21)

God blesses, protects and raises up righteous people, and destroys the wicked. All promised lands are cursed for the sake of the wicked, to help them understand their conduct is destructive.

History has repeated the same cycles. But at the end, the Lord promises to interrupt the cycle. The wicked will plan to kill the righteous, but their plans

shall turn upon their own heads, for they shall war among themselves, and the sword of their own hands shall fall upon

their own heads, and they shall be drunken with their own blood. (1 Ne. 7:4)

Churches have one responsibility: To teach God's commandments and urge that they be obeyed. Churches have and are failing to do that. Therefore, Nephi and Isaiah both promise us that the time

shall come that all churches which are built up to get gain, and all those who are built up to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world and to do all manner of iniquity—yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the Devil—are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake. They are those who must be brought low in the dust, they are those who must be consumed as stubble; and this is according to the words of the prophet. (1 Ne. 7:5)

No one needs to trust in a church with ambitions to get worldly gain. Nor does anyone need to follow a church trying to get power or become popular. And a church with lusts of the flesh (ambition, influence, carnal security, worldliness, immorality, acceptance of sexual confusion) will only lead you into the predicted destruction.

The way to peace is through following God. His commandments save us, both temporally and spiritually. God is the messenger of peace. But we have to choose whether we will heed and obey His message to have peace, or to reject it and dwindle into violence and misery.

The prophecies promise there will be people at the Lord's return who will not be deceived because they obey His commandments. Hopefully there will be many who choose to do so.

MAY 20, 2021

Prospering in the Land

In the final days of Lehi's life, he gave his concluding guidance to his sons. He included Ishmael's sons and the servant Zoram in his counsel.

There is a theme that began early in the Book of Mormon, and is repeated often throughout the entire book. Lehi included that theme in his final instructions: "inasmuch as ye shall keep [God's] commandments, ye shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep [God's] commandments, ye shall be cut off from [God's] presence" (2 Ne. 1:4 RE).

Keeping the commandments and prospering, is contrasted with disobeying the commandments and being "cut off from [God's] presence." Lehi goes on to explain how his posterity could keep the commandments and prosper: He tells them to respect their brother, Nephi, who had been faithful in keeping the commandments and therefore God had worked through Nephi to bless the entire family. Lehi explained:

Rebel no more against your brother, whose views have been glorious, and who hath kept the commandments from the time we left Jerusalem, and who hath been an instrument in the hands of God in bringing us forth into the land of promise; for were it not for him, we must have perished with hunger in the wilderness. Nevertheless, ye sought to take away his life; yea, and he hath suffered much sorrow because of you. And I exceedingly fear and tremble because of you, lest he shall suffer again. For behold, ye have accused him that he sought power and authority over you, but I know that he hath not sought

for power nor authority over you, but he hath sought the glory of God and your own eternal welfare. (*Id.*)

He tells his sons Laman, Lemuel and Sam, and all the sons of Ishmael, specifically, “hearken unto the voice of Nephi” (*Id.*, paragraph 5).

He tells Zoram, “I know that thou art a true friend unto my son Nephi for ever. Wherefore, because thou hast been faithful, thy seed shall be blessed with his seed” (*Id.*).

He tells his son Jacob, “thy soul shall be blessed, and thou shalt dwell safely with thy brother Nephi, and thy days shall be spent in the service of thy God” (*Id.*, paragraph 6).

Lehi tied keeping the commandments, prospering in the land and not being cut off from God’s presence, to “hearkening to the voice of Nephi.” Lehi anticipated this would be difficult for some of his sons. He told them that they wrongly accused Nephi of seeking power and authority over them. But, Lehi explained, as the father he knew Nephi had not sought for power nor authority over the family, but he only sought the glory of God and the family’s eternal welfare.

Lehi did not want his family to be cut off from God’s presence. To retain God’s presence Lehi knew that his son Nephi, although a younger brother to several sons, was the one who kept the commandments and therefore could teach them what God commanded. “God’s presence” for the family was to be found through what Nephi would teach them. Being “cut off from God’s presence” would result from rejecting their brother, Nephi’s, teaching.

That did not mean once they were cut off that they would not have other, spiritual experiences. The Book of Mormon

includes accounts of a number of teachers who were cut off from God's presence and proceeded to teach vain, foolish, corrupt and destructive messages. Some of them came from "angels" who ministered to them. For example, Sherem said "that he had been deceived by the power of the Devil" (Jacob 5:6 RE). Korihor taught corrupt and evil ideas, but ultimately acknowledged he was deceived by an angel:

the Devil has deceived me, for he appeared unto me in the form of an angel and said unto me, Go and reclaim this people, for they have all gone astray after an unknown God. And he said unto me, There is no God. Yea, and he taught me that which I should say, and I have taught his words; and I taught them because they were pleasing unto the carnal mind. And I taught them even until I had much success, insomuch that I verily believed that they were true. (Alma 16:12 RE)

When people are cut off from the presence of God, they are not necessarily cut off from the presence of false spirits, deceiving 'angels of light' and corrupt influences. The consistent result of these false spiritual guides is invariably failing to keep God's commandments. They ultimately lead to carnal, foolish, vain and proud practices that disobey God's commandments.

Lehi's guidance to his posterity was intended to help them keep the commandments of God. He knew that to keep God's commandments his sons needed to heed a voice that would constantly remind them to keep God's commandments. Nephi, a preacher of righteousness, was always careful to honor God's commandments and serve Him.

The theme of keeping God's commandments to prosper in the land is repeated throughout the Book of Mormon. And it is coupled

with the promise that, when we fail to keep the commandments, we are cut off from the presence of God.

JUNE 2021

JUNE 5, 2021

Restoration Conference

The fourth yearly conference focusing on the restoration of the gospel through Joseph Smith will be held June 26th in Boise, Idaho. A link to the conference website is provided here: [Restoration Conference 2021](#)

The conference will feature speakers from various restoration groups including the LDS, Community of Christ, Church of Christ Temple Lot, Church of Christ Bickertonite, JCRB, and other varying branches. The purpose is to allow believers to look back to their past and remember their beginnings as one group united in Christ.

JUNE 12, 2021

New Scriptures

Leather bound, 100% cotton versions of the new scriptures have arrived and are being distributed. The FOREWORD to Volume 3, the Teachings & Commandments states:

JOSEPH SMITH warned in 1831 that “except the church receive the fullness of the Scriptures that they would yet fall.” The “fullness” was defined as the Book of Mormon, the revelations, and the new, inspired Bible revisions (see Teachings and Commandments 105:13–14). Less than one year later, in September 1832, the saints of God were condemned by the Lord and commanded to repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and

the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written (T&C 82:20). This is often interpreted as the Lord rebuking the saints for failing to do according to that which He had written, while the assumption is made that the saints had been correctly saying what He had written. But the saints did not say; they failed to accurately preserve the revelations that God provided to them, and their texts became corrupted.

This volume of scripture is one of three that together constitute a unified effort to recover what the scriptures originally said and to prune away the uninspired alterations of man. This endeavor began with individuals who were separately directed by God to begin this work and were then inspired to find one another. Eventually two groups were formed, each unknown to the other. As they faced the completion of their respective projects in mid-December of 2016, they became aware of one another, and on December 31, 2016, Denver Snuffer Jr. facilitated a meeting between the two groups, in which they determined to unify their efforts. Each group brought different components to the endeavor that provided for a greater outcome than either project had possessed alone. Moving forward, the united team worked closely with one another, with the Lord, and with the Lord's servant, and produced a record that is more accurate and more true to the Lord's intent and to the Restoration.

This edition of scripture stands as a witness to the whole world; it is the sign that the moment has arrived when the things that have been prophesied of in scripture will now occur in a single generation. Mankind doesn't have to accept the witness, they don't even have to notice the witness; it's only required that God send the witness. If He sends the witness, God has done His part. These

scriptures are a new witness of Him and a sign of His invitation to renew communication with mankind.

This volume of scripture includes the revelations given to Joseph Smith, Jr., as well as revelations that have come forth in our day. A compilation of Joseph's revelations were first published in 1833 and titled "Book of Commandments." An expanded volume, titled "Doctrine and Covenants" (D&C), was published in 1835—the name-change referred to the division of contents: the "doctrine" was the Lectures on Faith, and the "covenants" were the revelations and instruction that followed. Subsequent editions of the D&C removed the "doctrine"—the Lectures on Faith. This Restoration Edition of Joseph's revelations has restored the "doctrine" and has been renamed the "Teachings and Commandments" (T&C). This name was chosen to provide a distinction between this book and the D&C (and those groups and churches that accept the D&C as scripture). It is also a reflection of the nature of the contents—Teachings, which instruct and invite, and Commandments, which are required of mankind and are necessary for salvation. This volume of scripture is considered to be a living, expanding canon. People who are in a living covenant with God always have an open canon and expect additional revelation and scripture.

The hand of the Lord has been present in the process of preparing these scriptures. May His Spirit guide you and testify to you as you receive them.

When you get your copy of these new scriptures I would encourage you to read the following parts as you go through each volume: Volume 3: FOREWORD (reproduced above), CANONIZATION (link provided), PREFACE, INTRODUCTION, Volume 2: FOREWORD TO THE NEW COVENANTS, PREFACE TO

THE BOOK OF MORMON, *Book of Mormon* INTRODUCTION, and
Volume I: PREFACE.

These scriptures are not perfect. The Lord has clearly stated their limitations:

The records you have gathered as scriptures yet lack many of my words, have errors throughout, and contain things that are not of me, because the records you used in your labors have not been maintained nor guarded against the cunning plans of false brethren who have been deceived by Satan. (T&C 157:12).

To improve them the Lord had several unreliable sections removed, and replaced them with new revelations (157:25–32 and 33–43) and also made 5 changes to wording in the Book of Mormon (described in the [PREFACE TO THE BOOK OF MORMON](#) (linked above)). Once these were added the Lord accepted these scriptures: “I will accept what you have produced and you need not labor further to recover my words, but to complete your labors as you have agreed” (*Id.*, paragraph 45). These scriptures alone are approved as

the Lord’s word to this generation, as the standard for governing ourselves, as a law, and as a covenant, to establish a rule for our faith, and as the expression of our religion, so we may have correct faith and be enabled to worship you in truth. (Paraphrase of T&C 156:17)

Despite any shortcomings, these scriptures are given to us as the standard for our religion. They have been described by the Lord in these words:

These scriptures are sent forth to be my warning to the world, my comfort to the faithful, my counsel to the meek, my reproof to the proud, my rebuke to the contentious, and my condemnation of the wicked. They are my invitation to all

mankind to flee from corruption, repent and be baptized in my name, and prepare for the coming judgment. (T&C 177:3)

Having them in an enduring, leather-bound, high quality form is indeed an historic event. But that will be only as true as the benefit that comes from studying the contents. We have something enduring in print quality, and precious in content in our hands to study. Therefore we have some work to do.

JUNE 20, 2021

New Part 6 Video

The seven-part series of the Heavens are Open Again now has the sixth installment released. It can be watched at this link: [The Heavens Are Open Again, Part 6: Remembering Remnants](#).

There will be another, final installment released in the future. These are the third series of seven videos each, totaling twenty-one videos when the next (and final) one has been completed. The release of this one was timed to coincide with Father's Day and with the Solstice.

JULY 2021

JULY 11, 2021

Priests Are Not Paid

Alma ordained priests and explained how their religion ought to be practiced. Since the covenant given in 2017 adopts the Book of Mormon as a standard for our faith, Alma's instructions give us guidance. Here is part of what Alma said:

Yea, even he commanded them that they should **preach nothing save it were repentance and faith on the Lord**, who had redeemed his people. And he commanded them that **there**

should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and **one baptism**, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another. And thus he commanded them to preach. And thus they became the children of God.

And he commanded them that they should **observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy**, and also every day they should give thanks to the Lord their God. And he also commanded them that **the priests whom he had ordained should labor with their own hands for their support**. And there was one day in every week that was set apart that they should gather themselves together to teach the people, and to worship the Lord their God, and also as often as it was in their power to assemble themselves together. And **the priests were not to depend upon the people for their support**, but for their labor they were to receive the grace of God, that they might wax strong in the spirit, having the knowledge of God, that they might teach with power and authority from God. And again Alma commanded that the people of the church should **impart of their substance**, everyone according to that which he had: if he have more abundantly, he should impart more abundantly; and he that had but little, but little should be required; and to him that had not should be given. And thus they should impart of their substance of their own free will and good desires towards God, to those priests that stood in need, yea, and to every needy, naked soul. And this he said unto them, having been commanded of God. And they did walk uprightly before God, imparting to one another both temporally and spiritually according to their needs and their wants. (Mosiah 9: Paragraphs 9–11)

The only reward for preaching is to “receive the grace of God.” The restoration has failed to reach its destiny in all the organized restoration congregations because they violate this principle. A compensated clergy cannot “wax strong in the spirit” and therefore cannot “teach with power and authority from God.”

This is because “a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation” (LoF 6:7).

True religion takes your time, resources, energy and effort. Practicing it does not reward you with compensation. Every time there one of our conferences is organized, the organizers donate the resources to rent the facility, and bring the equipment, and arrange for food, to be enjoyed by the participants. When speakers who believe in God’s work today come to participate they travel and contribute at their own expense.

Alma also reminds us there is only “one baptism” and the words for that ordinance have been provided in the Book of Mormon. We should faithfully follow that if we are honoring God’s covenant.

Alma discouraged contention, as would the Lord when He later visited the Nephites. Contention that makes people angry with one another is not just ungodly, it has been addressed in a warning from God to us:

Study to learn how to respect your brothers and sisters and to come together by precept, reason, and persuasion, rather than sharply disputing and wrongly condemning each other, causing anger. Take care how you invoke my name. Mankind has been controlled by the adversary through anger and jealousy, which has led to bloodshed and the misery of many souls. Even strong disagreements should not provoke anger, nor to invoke my name in vain as if I had part in your every dispute. (T&C 157:54)

The commandment to impart of our substance to those in need does not mean an able-bodied man should neglect his duty to support his family with the expectation that others will provide the needed substance for him and his family. As Paul wrote: “But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Tim. 1:13).

Alma’s counsel is as useful today as it was when originally given.

CHAPTER 16

Reconciliation

JULY 24, 2021

Reconciled unto Christ

What do you think of Jesus Christ? That question is far more important than any other question for us to answer. Christ forces us to deal with Him because of the claims He made, and the claims made about Him by his followers.

In a single generation multiple written accounts were created, often differing in details, but agreeing on His claim to be the Son of God. That one generation in which He lived also produced witnesses who declare that He rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and that He promised to return again.

The claims by and about Him make His resurrection the gateway through which all of us will also rise from the grave. He undid death, not only for Himself but for all mankind. BUT when we rise from the grave, He and His followers warn us that Christ then acts as the judge who determines what to do with us following our resurrection. We are told His judgment will be based upon His teachings, and the more closely we follow what He taught the better our lot will be thereafter.

These are claims as astonishing as they are important. But they force us all to choose for ourselves what to think of Christ, and how to react to His teachings.

It is improbable beyond calculation for a single generation to invent Jesus Christ. Because we have multiple written accounts by those who knew Him, and they are clearly distinct witnesses of His life and doings, we can be assured He was a real historic figure.

His influence on His close associates made them no longer fear their own death. Like Christ, His earliest followers accepted their own executions rather than deny their testimony about Him.

The scriptures tell us that it is through Jesus Christ that we are reconciled to God (See 2 Cor. 1:18–19; Rom. 1:22; Eph. 1:6; Col. 1:5; 2 Ne. 11:8; and Jac. 3:3). But Nephi taught of another needed reconciliation: He said he held out no hope for us unless we reconcile ourselves with Christ: “for none of these can I hope except they shall be reconciled unto Christ” (2 Ne. 15:1). Nephi’s concern is the right first one: We do need to reconcile ourselves to Christ first, before Christ can reconcile us with His Father.

Christ took steps to rescue all mankind from the grave. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 1:63). His accomplishment is universal. It does not matter if you are Baptist, Lutheran, Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim, Christ will draw all mankind back to life from the grave.

Once we are brought back from the grave, “we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom. 1:70). Does it not make sense to prepare for that event? Given the importance of the claims by and about Jesus Christ, it is worth the effort required to investigate His teachings.

He explained that any of us can do it:

Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavily loaded, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart. And you shall find rest unto your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matt. 6:8)

That probably does not mean what you think it means, because we think “easy” and “light” mean we will be required to do practically nothing.

Christ’s “yoke” is easy because it spares you from the afflictions, diseases, indignities, disappointments and fears we inevitably encounter when our life is adrift in sin. Christ’s burden is “light” because we are rescued from the corruption, confusion, degradation and slavery imposed on us by a malignant culture urging vanity, selfishness and pride as virtues. Even if the world then hates you, being reconciled with Christ will free you from the control the world’s hate attempts to exercise over you.

A life in Christ is far more meaningful than a life without Him. Far more at peace with Him than without Him. Read the accounts of His life for yourself. Test His teachings by living them. Reconcile yourself to Christ. Find peace.

JULY 25, 2021

Reconciled unto Christ, Part 2

Given the enormity of Christ’s claims, it is natural to doubt. Even after His resurrection, and meeting with the surviving 11 disciples, some of them continued to doubt:

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto

me in Heaven and on earth. Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matt. 13:4)

Those words, “but some doubted” describe more than the 11 who “saw him” and even “worshipped him.” It also describes us, at least from time to time.

What Christ next said was in response to their doubt: “All power is given unto” Him. This authority and power extends both “in Heaven and on earth.” We do not need to doubt. He reiterated His claim, and reassures us of His authority to rescue us.

Good news is sometimes more difficult to accept than bad news. In this world where there is continual insufficiency, ongoing struggles, disappointments from people we relied on to our injury, and conflicts even with those we love, we are used to bad news. We expect illness, even eventual death.

So when the Lord tells us good news our doubts rush in. Some of the disciples saw the resurrected Christ before others. One of the last was Thomas, who refused to accept the testimony of his fellow disciples. He said he could not believe without seeing, even feeling the injuries the Lord received in the crucifixion. Thomas is an important figure for us because of his skepticism. Almost all of us share that with Thomas.

Christ met with Thomas and said to him (about us):

Then says he to Thomas, Reach here your finger and behold my hands, and reach here your hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus says unto him, Thomas,

because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed. (John 11:4)

Thomas was so very human. So very like us all. We are asked to believe, even if we have not seen. We are asked to accept the testimony of others, like Thomas. When we do we are called “blessed” by the Lord for that belief in Him.

Not only Thomas, but also Paul (at the time Saul) testified of Christ:

And it came to pass that as I made my journey, and had come near unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from Heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? And I answered, Who are you, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you persecute. And they that were with me saw indeed the light and were afraid, but they heard not the voice of him that spoke to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise and go into Damascus, and there it shall be told you of all things which are appointed for you to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. (Acts 12:15)

The Brother of Jared also encountered the Lord:

the Lord shewed himself unto him and said, Because thou knowest these things, ye are redeemed from the Fall. Therefore, ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I shew myself unto you. Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life; and that eternally, even they who shall

believe on my name. And they shall become my sons and my daughters. And to none of those now living whom I created have I appeared, for none have believed in me as thou hast. Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image. (Ether 1:13)

Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon assured us:

And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: that he lives. For we saw him, even on the right hand of God, and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father, that by him, and through him, and of him the worlds are made and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God. (T&C 69:5)

I too can testify that He lives, for He has ministered to me, and He has (and does) keep His promise: “And behold, I am with you always, unto the end of the world.”

It is good news. But is good news that ought to be accepted, because it is true. Christ is the Son of God who came into the world to rescue us from despair, sin and death. Doubt not, but be believing.

JULY 26, 2021

Reconciled unto Christ, Part 3

If you believe in Christ, then He has prescribed the steps needed to be taken in order to exhibit or prove your belief in Him. These are His words:

[N]either shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there hath hitherto been. For verily,

verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the Devil, who is the father of contention; and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another, but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away.

Behold, verily, verily I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine. And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me—and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the holy ghost beareth record of the Father and me—and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men everywhere to repent and believe in me. And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved, and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned. (3 Ne. 5:8–9)

He phrases this requirement first in the negative: Do not dispute over His doctrine, and avoid getting angry over religious differences.

Then He phrases it in the positive: If you believe then show it by being baptized. If you are baptized, you will be saved, and if not you will be damned.

Two words need to be understood: “Disputation” is wrong when men’s hearts are provoked to anger. In a modern revelation the Lord explained where this leads, and exactly how religious divisions have caused misery:

Mankind has been controlled by the adversary through anger and jealousy, which has led to bloodshed and the misery of many souls. Even strong disagreements should not provoke anger, nor to invoke my name in vain as if I had part in your every dispute. (T&C 157:54)

Throughout “Christian” history, religious warfare has happened continually. Even today there continues to be violence over religious differences. The Lord commands that to end.

The word “damned” has been defined in the new scriptures Glossary of Terms:

To cease progressing or to regress. Damnation merely means the end of progress. So when one fails to progress in understanding, he voluntarily damns himself. “When God offers a blessing or knowledge to a man, and he refuses to receive it, he will be damned.” If mankind is to be saved, it will be through their acquisition of knowledge. Put otherwise, it is stupidity that damns them; it is knowledge which saves man. Damnation means hedging up the way so that one cannot progress. (T&C Glossary, Damned)

Baptism is required for progress in this and the afterlife. As the New Covenants puts it:

And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water to fulfill all righteousness, Oh, then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water? (2 Ne. 13:2)

As Christ put it before His own baptism, after John said Christ was more worthy than himself: “Suffer me to be baptized of you, for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 2:4). Christ provided the example of the path He expects us to follow. His example included being baptized. If you believe in Him, then you too must be baptized.

If you want to request baptism, you can contact people with authority to administer the ordinance at this website link: **Request Baptism (Born of Water - <https://bornofwater.org>).**

JULY 27, 2021

Reconciled unto Christ, Part 4

Baptism begins a new life. If you follow Christ to that point, then what follows is to keep His commandments. As Christ tells us:

“For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fullness and be glorified in me as I am glorified in the Father. Therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace” (T&C 93:7).

Keeping commandments has a deeper meaning and serves a much higher purpose than public acts intended for notice. We must worship God by keeping the commandments and growing thereby in light and truth and grace. “And no man receives a fullness unless he keeps his commandments. He that keeps his commandments receives truth and light until he is glorified in truth and knows all things” (T&C 93:9).

Jesus Christ grew up in a society that was governed by the Law of Moses. That law established objective standards of conduct: “Thou shalt not kill,” for example. It is easy to comply by not killing someone. But Christ raised the bar and taught a much higher standard. He contrasted the standard He established for us with the Law of Moses:

Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, and it is also written before you, that thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment of God. But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of his judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council, and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hellfire.

Therefore, if ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against

thee, go thy way unto thy brother and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come unto me with full purpose of heart and I will receive you.

Agree with thine adversary quickly while thou art in the way with him, lest at any time he shall get thee and thou shalt be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence until thou hast paid the uttermost [cent]. And while ye are in prison, can ye pay even one [cent]? Verily, verily I say unto you, nay. (3 Ne. 5:24–26)

Christ also elevated the commandment of the Law of Moses, “thou shalt not commit adultery,” into something much higher. Christ moved the battle ground from outward behavior into internal thoughts and feelings. He said:

Behold, it is written by them of old time that thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already in his heart. Behold, I give unto you a commandment that ye suffer none of these things to enter into your heart, for it is better that ye should deny yourselves of these things, wherein ye will take up your cross, than that ye should be cast into hell. (3 Ne. 5:27)

The Law of Moses was intended to allow an orderly society to function. But it was never intended to produce the kind of society that God could visit. Abinadi prophesied, “I say unto you that the time shall come when it shall no more be expedient to keep the law of Moses” (Mosiah 8:1).

Salvation was never to be obtained through the Law of Moses, but was always through Jesus Christ. The Law pointed to Christ, and was intended to help people believe in Christ generations

before He would be born. As one prophet explained about those living the Law of Moses before Christ's birth,

believing that they must keep those outward performances until the time that he should be revealed unto them. Now they did not suppose that salvation came by the law of Moses, but the law of Moses did serve to strengthen their faith in Christ. (Alma 14:15)

After His resurrection, Christ explained:

Marvel not that I said unto you that old things had passed away and that all things had become new. Behold, I say unto you that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses. Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel. Therefore, the law in me is fulfilled, for I have come to fulfill the law; therefore, it hath an end. (3 Ne. 7:2)

Christ gave us a new, higher standard. His life demonstrated that standard. He asks us to follow Him. Anyone with the conviction that Christ is who He claimed to be, will choose to follow Him. He explained, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 6:29).

JULY 28, 2021

Reconciled unto Christ, Part 5

There is a passage about how an earlier body of believers practiced their religion. It states,

And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins. (2 Nr. 11:8)

They talked of Christ. And apparently had enough to say that their worship never ran out of things to say.

They rejoiced in Christ. This is the result of having enough understanding of Him to be able to talk continually about Him. Understanding Him leads to rejoicing in Him.

They preached of Christ. Again, with plenty to preach.

And they prophesied of Christ. While we do not have all their prophecies, but here is one example taken from what we do have:

he shall go forth suffering pains, and afflictions, and temptations of every kind, and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith, He will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people. And he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities. Now the spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless, the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh, that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance. And now behold, this is the testimony which is in me. (Alma 5:3)

This prophecy, while related to Isaiah's promise of the coming "man of sorrows" is still distinct from Isaiah's "suffering servant" prophecy, and adds unique additional confirmation about Christ's role and achievement in saving mankind.

He will take the "pains and sicknesses of his people." Just how fully this took place is clarified in a revelation given in 2007. The Lord suffered waves of torment, described in T&C 161. These came in pairs. Each was greater than the one before, and lasted for many

hours. These waves of torment were explained to a witness who reported:

He pondered and asked, Why were there waves of torment? Why did they increase in difficulty? How were they organized as they seemed to fit a pattern? After long inquiring into the things which he had seen, the Lord, who is patient and merciful and willing to instruct those who call upon Him, again appeared to the man on the 20th of December, 2007. He made known unto him that the waves of torment suffered by the Lord came in pairs which mirrored each other. The first of each wave poured upon the Lord those feelings, regrets, recriminations, and pains felt by those who injured their fellow man. Then followed a second wave, which mirrored the first, but imposed the pains suffered by the victims of the acts committed by those in the first wave. Instead of the pains of those who inflict hurt or harm, it was now the anger, bitterness, and resentments felt by those who suffered these wrongs.

From each wave of suffering, whether as the one afflicting or as the victim of those wrongs, the Lord would overcome the evil feelings associated with these wrongs, and find His heart again filled with peace. This was why, in the vision of the suffering of the Lord, it was in the second waves that there appeared oftentimes to be injuries to His body.

The greater difficulty in these paired waves of torment was always overcoming the suffering of the victim. With these waves the Lord learned to overcome the victims' resentments, to forgive, and to heal both body and spirit. This was more difficult than overcoming the struggles arising from the one who committed the evil. This is because the one doing evil knows he has done wrong and feels a natural regret when he sees

himself aright. The victim, however, always feels it is their right to hold resentment, to judge their persecutor, and to withhold peace and love for their fellow men. The Lord was required to overcome both so that he could succor both.

In the pairing of the waves, the first torment was of the mind and spirit, and the second was torment of mind, spirit, and body.

The Lord experienced all the horror and regret wicked men feel for their crimes when they finally see the truth. He experienced the suffering of their victims whose righteous anger and natural resentment and disappointment must also be shed, and forgiveness given, in order for them to find peace. He overcame them all. He descended below them all. He comprehends it all. And he knows how to bring peace to them all. He knows how to love others whether they are the one who has given offense or the one who is a victim of the offense.

In the final wave, the most brutal, most evil, most heinous sins men inflict upon one another were felt by Him as a victim of the worst men can do. He knew how it felt to wrongly suffer death. He knew what it was like to be a mother holding a child in her arms as they are both killed by those who delight in their suffering. He knew how it was for ambitious men to rid themselves of a rival by conspiracy and murder. He knew what it was to have virtue robbed from the innocent. He knew betrayal, treachery, and abuse in all its worst degrading horror. There was no cruelty, no offense, no evil that mankind has suffered or will suffer that was not put upon Him.

He knew what it is like for men to satisfy their ambition by clothing their hypocrisy in religious garb. He also felt what it was like to be the victim of religious oppression by those who

pretend to practice virtue while oppressing others. He knew the hearts of those who would kill Him. Before confronting their condemnation of Him in the flesh, he suffered their torment of mind when they recognized he was the Lord, and then found peace for what they would do by rejecting Him. In this extremity there was madness itself as he mirrored the evil which would destroy Him, and learned how to come to peace with the Father after killing the Son of God, and to love all those involved without restraint and without pretense even before they did these terrible deeds. His suffering, therefore, encompassed all that has happened, all that did happen, and all that would happen in the future.

As a result of what the Lord suffered, there is no condition — physical, spiritual, or mental — that he does not fully understand. He knows how to teach, comfort, succor, and direct any who come to Him seeking forgiveness and peace. This is why the prophet wrote: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. [Isa. 19:2] And again: Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. [Isa. 19:2] He obtained this knowledge by the things he suffered. He suffered that we might avoid sin by being obedient to His commandments. None of us need harm another, if we will follow Him. He knows fully the consequences of sin. He teaches His followers how to avoid sin. (T&C 161: 16–24)

The entire section 161 explains the final suffering and triumph of Christ.

We have every reason to also talk, preach, rejoice, and prophesy about Christ. His work was the greatest accomplished by any soul in this creation. And His accomplishments are eternal and everlasting. Such a life gives us an infinite source for our study.

To be reconciled unto Christ is to begin to understand how great a benefit He can be for us, if we will allow His commandments to become our guide. It begins by accepting His claims as true. And then next being baptized to demonstrate our acceptance of Him.

JULY 29, 2021

Reconciled unto Christ, Part 6

Reconciliation with Christ begins with baptism. Baptism marks the end of your old life and the beginning of a new one. Leaving the old life includes abandoning the errors, evils and worldliness of a fallen society. In exchange for believing in Him, and being baptized to witness your faith in Him, you receive forgiveness of those past mistakes. As one prophet explained,

For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water, and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the holy ghost. And then are ye in this straight and narrow path which leads to eternal life. Yea, ye have entered in by the gate, ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son, and ye have received the holy ghost, which witness of the Father and the Son unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by the way, ye should receive. (2 Ne. 13:3)

This begins a new life in Christ.

And now my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this straight and narrow path, I would ask if all is done. Behold, I

say unto you, nay, for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ, with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save. Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life. (*Id.*, Paragraph 4)

This prophet anticipated that many people would wonder what the words “feasting upon the word of Christ” means. There are two direct ways in which this is done: The first is by studying the scriptures. The New Testament was written by 8 disciples who knew Christ: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James (Jacob), Jude (Judas) and Peter. They did not write to explain everything they knew, understood, or taught in person about Christ. And they wrote for an audience of believers living at the time. While we benefit from those records, they do not contain everything these witnesses knew about Christ. In many ways studying the New Testament is like reading someone else’s mail.

We should want to know Christ like those early witnesses knew Him. We should want a direct and intimate connection with Him, so we can share the faith of those first Christians. The prophet explained the second way we can ‘feast on the word of Christ.’ He wrote:

I suppose that ye ponder somewhat in your hearts concerning that which ye should do after ye have entered in by the way. But behold, why do ye ponder these things in your hearts? Do ye not remember that I said unto you that after ye had received the holy ghost, ye could speak with the tongue of angels? And

now, how could ye speak with the tongue of angels save it were by the holy ghost? Angels speak by the power of the holy ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do. (2 Ne. 14:1)

The holy ghost is the conduit through which Christ will speak to you, now. Today. With the same guidance He provided to those 8 witnesses who wrote the New Testament.

The right to receive that guidance also imposes on us the responsibility to ask. We are not supposed to remain in doubt. As New Testament writer Jacob put it: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and upbraids not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (Jacob 1:2).

The prophet who explained the process emphasized how important it was that we ask and pursue God for guidance:

Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them, it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock. Wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark. For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way and receive the holy ghost, it will shew unto you all things what ye should do. (2 Ne. 14:1)

Christ established the way for all of us to be reconciled unto Him.

AUGUST 2021

AUGUST 1, 2021

Reconciled unto Christ, Part 7

There is more to the Lord than a casual investigation will inform you. The closing words of John's Gospel states:

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen. (John 11:13).

His ministry was far greater than John's record could convey.

The Testimony of St. John is to a similar effect: "In addition to this account, many other things were done by Jesus, which, if they were all written, that library would fill the entire cosmos. Amen" (*TSJ* 12:22).

Revelation to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon included the testimony of the Father about His Son:

For we saw him, even on the right hand of God, and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father, that by him, and through him, and of him the worlds are made and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God. (T&C 69:5)

His work before this world was infinite, and included many worlds. This testimony from God the Father expands greatly our understanding of Christ, and how far His creative power extends.

Christ's power and influence sustains all of the creation. He is the power of the distant sun, moon, and stars:

This is the light of Christ, as also he is in the sun and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made; as also

he is in the moon and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; as also the light of the stars and the power thereof by which they were made; and the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which now shines, which gives you light, is through him who enlightens your eyes, which is the same light that quickens your understandings, which light proceeds forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space: the light which is in all things, which gives life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sits upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. (T&C 86:1)

The way to know more about Christ, and to be more fully reconciled unto Him, is to give heed and diligence to what He asks of us:

It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless, they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart — only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him. And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word. And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God, until they know them in full. And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the Devil and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell. (Alma 9:3)

Moses gave heed to the Lord. He met with Him face-to-face. The Lord showed Moses the creation of this world, which allowed him to write the account we have in Genesis. In the revelation, the Lord explained to Moses,

Wherefore, look, and I will show you the workmanship of my hands — but not all, for my works are without end, and also my words, for they never cease. Wherefore, no man can behold all my works except he behold all my glory, and no man can behold all my glory and afterward remain in the flesh on the earth. (Gen. 1:1)

Moses' reconciliation with the Lord affirmed that God's "works are without end" and continue to roll on. Likewise the Lord's "words [are without end], for they never cease." He speaks still. To you and to me. He has never stopped. He will never stop speaking.

As part of ordaining His creation, our Lord,

has given a law unto all things, by which they move in their times and their seasons, and their courses are fixed, even the courses of the heavens and the earth, which comprehend the earth and all the planets. And they give light to each other in their times and in their seasons, in their minutes, in their hours, in their days, in their weeks, in their months, in their years. All these are one year with God, but not with man. The earth rolls upon her wings, and the sun gives his light by day, and the moon gives her light by night, and the stars also give their light as they roll upon their wings, in their glory, in the midst of the power of God.

Unto what shall I liken these kingdoms that you may understand? Behold all these are kingdoms, and any man who

has seen any or the least of these has seen God moving in his majesty and power. (T&C 86:7–8)

This is one description of Christ:

He comprehends all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him, and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things, and all things are by him, and of him, even God, for ever and ever. (T&C 86:6)

There is nothing that exists that does not have Christ's imprint upon or within it.

He invites us to be reconciled unto Him. That is not a small thing, but a lifelong pursuit of knowledge, truth, revelation, enlightenment, expanding understanding, ascending to His presence, and growing into a perfect comprehension of Him and His work: "That which is of God is light, and he that receives light and continues in God receives more light, and that light grows brighter and brighter until the perfect day" (T&C 36:4).

AUGUST 4, 2021

Leather Scriptures

Extra leather-bound scripture sets are in-stock and available for purchase right now. Inventory is limited to only what is available on-hand. Once something is sold out, more sets will not be available until another printing. For orders placed right now, delivery will take about 2 weeks. If you missed the first pre-order window or you're hoping to pickup additional sets, please visit scriptures.shop to see what is available and to place an order.

The store opened for sales of the extra sets yesterday, and there was a huge flurry of orders. They sold approximately 250 scripture

sets that single day. They have approximately 300 sets remaining. There is no scheduled reorder planned, and it may be some time before the opportunity to purchase leather sets returns.

CHAPTER 17

Jehovah and Jesus

AUGUST 6, 2021

Jehovah and Jesus

I got this question in my email:

I have been in Hawaii for three years and I can see too many similarities between Jehovah of our scriptures and Pele the Hawaiian volcano goddess. Pele and Jehovah speak from fiery and smokey and loud volcanoes. But Pele is kinder and less vicious than Jehovah. The Torah Jehovah is like a Netflix horror movie monster killing and burning whole families and sadistically loving to smell their burning flesh. How can Jehovah be Jesus?

It is an interesting question. But it focuses exclusively on Jehovah/Jesus. It fails to acknowledge the state of the people Jehovah chose to reveal Himself to in His effort to morally advance them.

There was a law of retaliation given by Jehovah. It was the *lex talionis*. It is the one that imposed “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.” Leviticus 12:3 states in part,

Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. As he has caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again. And he

that kills a beast, he shall restore it. And he that kills a man, he shall be put to death.

We look at that from our perspective and find that kind of retribution abhorrent. Just because someone was blinded in a fight we would not tolerate blinding the other participant. It seems disproportionate to us. But in the circumstance of the time when this law was given by Jehovah it was intended to limit the retaliation. The culture of the time tolerated killing someone for the loss of an eye, or maiming them for the loss of a tooth. The law of retaliation made it unlawful to exact a greater price than one that equaled the loss suffered by the victim.

Jehovah was dialing back the violence. Limiting the injuries. Setting a tone for civilization that advanced peace from an uncontrolled, violent response to a limited and controlled response.

We do not even think like ancient man. Our language and theirs are so different that the concern raised in the question would be hard to express in a way to make the concern understood by ancient mankind. Their minds viewed everything in concrete, personified ways that were controlled and directed continually by the will of God (or more correctly by gods). They expressed events primarily in verbs describing actions.

We think in abstract and impersonal ideas. We think events everywhere occur according to universal laws, and we look to determine how events take place based on consistencies and rules. We use adjectives to express most of what happens.

Jehovah was dealing with so different a group of people from those Jesus dealt with that there can be no comparison. Civilization changed. Minds and thinking altered over time. You cannot go backward and redefine things in a moral construct that uses later

ideas and values to weigh earlier civilizations. When you make that step you reach perverse conclusions because you impose a viewpoint that was never even considered at the time.

When dealing with an infant a parent behaves far differently that that same parent behaves when their child is a teenager. And then again the same parent and same child relate very differently when the child is middle aged and a parent herself. Some of what the child understands when she becomes a parent is beyond the ability of that same person to understand when she was a teen. Civilization has been like a developing child, and Jehovah has dealt with mankind differently in different stages, as the circumstances require.

Today we are losing some of the more important ideas and patterns of thought that were present a generation ago. Society is becoming less tolerant and more violent year by year. Unfortunately, we appear to be headed to a point in which we will need the law of retribution to be imposed again so that ideas do not become the target of punishment and imposing suffering.

AUGUST 7, 2021

Jehovah and Jesus, Part 2

Aside from the necessary direction given to ancient Israel to defend and protect itself from violent and perverse adjoining tribes, there are four events in scripture where Jehovah/Jesus directly cause the deaths of significant numbers of people. Two were (or will be) global. Two were local.

The first of the two global events took place at the time of Noah. In that generation a mass killing happened at Jehovah's hands. People separated themselves. On the one hand, there was a city of peace and righteousness, called Zion. "the Lord called his people

Zion because they were of one heart, and of one mind, and dwelled in righteousness, and there was no poor among them.” (Gen. 4:14)

On the other hand, “there were wars and bloodsheds among them,” and “God saw that the wickedness of man had become great in the earth. And every man was lifted up in the imagination of the thoughts of his heart, being only evil continually.” (Gen. 4:14; 5:9) Jehovah saved the righteous, and killed the wicked.

The second global event will take place in very similar circumstances and for very similar reasons. That future event will happen at Jesus Christ’s hands. It is described in one section of the T&C as follows:

And with one heart and with one mind gather up your riches that you may purchase an inheritance which shall hereafter be appointed you, and it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God. And the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it. And it shall be called Zion.

And it shall come to pass among the wicked that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety, and there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven, and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be said among the wicked, Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible, wherefore we cannot stand. And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion singing with songs of everlasting joy. (T&C 31:14–15)

Contemporaneous with this separation there will come destruction of the wicked:

For behold, the day comes that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble. And the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings, and you shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall. And you shall tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, says the Lord of Hosts. (Mal. 1:10)

Of the two local destructions, the first was at the hand of Jehovah. “The Lord said unto us, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will destroy them.” (Gen. 7:37)

the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah, for the angels called upon the name of the Lord for brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And thus they overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. (Gen. 7:43)

The second was at the hand of Jesus Christ:

And the city of Zarahemla did take fire; and the city of Moroni did sink into the depths of the sea and the inhabitants thereof were drowned. And the earth was carried up upon the city of Moronihah, that in the place of the city thereof, there became a great mountain. And there was a great and terrible destruction in the land southward. But behold, there was a more great and terrible destruction in the land northward; for behold, the whole face of the land was changed because of the tempests, and the whirlwinds, and the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the exceeding great quaking of the whole earth. (3 Ne. 4:2)

Jesus Christ explained why He caused this destruction,

it is because of their iniquity and abominations that they are fallen. Behold, that great city Zarahemla have I burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof. And behold, that great city Moroni have I caused to be sunk in the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof to be drowned. And behold, that great city Moronihah have I covered with earth, and the inhabitants thereof, to hide their iniquities and their abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come up anymore unto me against them. And behold, the city of Gilgal have I caused to be sunk, and the inhabitants thereof, to be buried up in the depths of the earth; yea, and the city Onihah and the inhabitants thereof, and the city of Mocum and the inhabitants thereof, and the city of Jerusalem and the inhabitants thereof. And waters have I caused to come up in the stead thereof, to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come up anymore unto me against them. And behold, the city of Gadiandi, and the city of Gadiomnah, and the city of Jacob, and the city Gimgimno — all these have I caused to be sunk, and made hills and valleys in the places thereof; and the inhabitants thereof have I buried up in the depths of the earth, to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints should not come up anymore unto me against them. (3 Ne. 4:6)

Jesus Christ then explained that He never wanted any of this to have happened. Instead, He offered a different outcome: Zion. He would have gladly gathered them under His arms, as He had done with Enoch's people, but they refused to come embrace Him:

O ye people of the house of Israel, how oft have I gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and have nourished you! And again, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, yea, O ye people of the house of Israel who have fallen! Yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, ye that dwell at Jerusalem as ye that have fallen, yea, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not! O ye house of Israel whom I have spared, how oft will I gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings if ye will repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart! But if not, O house of Israel, the places of your dwellings shall become desolate until the time of the fulfilling of the covenant to your fathers. (3 Ne. 4:9)

Following the destruction, and His explanation for it, Jesus Christ descends to teach the survivors the Sermon at Bountiful (which mirrored the Sermon on the Mount). Destroying the wicked did not make Him any less kind, nor make His teaching any less noble, inspiring and edifying.

As I read the scriptures, and note the choices people make and the response from Jehovah/Jesus, I can see no difference. They both will exalt and welcome the righteous. They both will prevent the despoiling of this creation. They both permit the freedom of choice for mankind. They both enforce the consequences of those free choices. They both put limits on what mankind will be permitted to do when they become depraved and violent. They appear to me to be “one” — or more correctly, to be the same individual, as I read the scriptures.

AUGUST 9, 2021

Jehovah and Jesus, Part 3

I got a response on the same subject as the earlier email. It asked this:

How about a “Jehovah and Jesus, part 3”? I loved your justification for lex talionis, and I liked the two global and local parallels, but you’ve made some assertions that aren’t accurate, and ignored a whole body of contradictory evidence. E.g., ancient Israel didn’t just “defend and protect itself,” but waged offensive war, as commanded by Jehovah, to exterminate entire ethnic groups in the promised land (Deut. 20:16–20), and enslave other groups at a distance from the promised land (or kill the men, then take the women, children, livestock, and goods as plunder if the group wouldn’t accept the tribute arrangement) (Deut. 20:10–15). Did the Deuteronomists add this crap, or is this really what Jehovah said to do? And there are many more than “four events in scripture where Jehovah/Jesus directly cause the deaths of significant numbers of people.” You’ve got the Egyptian firstborn (Exo. 11:4–5; 12:29–30), the 3,000 Israelite idolaters killed by Levites at the Lord’s command (Exo. 32:25–29), Korah, Dathan, Abiram, their wives and children and “little ones,” and their 250 co-conspirators, plus 14,700 Israelites who complained about that (Num. 16), and multiple plagues sent upon the Israelites for their errors that are described as killing tens of thousands of them. Then there are additional punitive (not retributive) acts at the individual level like Jehovah killing Er for being “wicked” (Gen. 38:7), killing Onan for the use of coitus interruptus to avoid his Levirate marriage duty (Gen. 38:8–10), killing Uzzah for an apparently well-meaning attempt to prevent the Ark of the Covenant from falling off its cart (2 Sam. 6:1–7), and commanding

others to kill the son of an Israelite mother and Egyptian father, who blasphemed (Lev. 24:10–16, 23) and kill a man who gathered wood on the Sabbath (Num. 15:32–36). Anyway, it was a depressing day working through this Old Testament material. I haven't taken the time to review all of these incidents in the Restoration Edition, but I'm guessing they are largely if not completely similar. If they are accurate representations of God's dealings then, of course, they are righteous acts. But one can't help but admit that they don't sound like the Jesus of the New Testament—who did not condemn an adulteress to death (John 8:1–11), even though as Jehovah he had commanded condemning adulterers to death. (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22) Final thoughts?

I hadn't intended to say anything further, but responded to his email as follows:

I wasn't trying to be exhaustive. Just illustrative.

Ancient tribes were insular and violent. Affiliation with one led to prolonged violence against another. Consider the Taliban of Afghanistan today, as an example of how animosities were held, and violently acted upon. It was unsafe to harbor a refugee or a conquered foreign combatant.

Originally the Lord intended to have Israel occupy the lands of others gradually and peacefully, and He assumed the responsibility to move the other occupants out. He offered to remove them gradually, and without the need of any warfare by Israel:

But if you shall indeed obey his voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy unto your enemies and an adversary unto your adversaries. For my angel shall go before you and bring you in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the

Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I will cut them off. You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works, but you shall utterly overthrow them and quite break down their images. And you shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you. There shall nothing cast their young nor be barren in your land. The number of your days I will fulfill. I will send my fear before you, and will destroy all the people to whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs unto you. And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you. I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beast of the field multiply against you. By little and little I will drive them out from before you, until you be increased and inherit the land. (Exo 13:23)

But that arrangement required Israel to serve the Lord and not bow down to foreign gods. Israel did not accept the offer, and the cycles of violence that resulted were not what Jehovah offered, but what Israel required.

The biggest problem remains the vantage point of the question. We can hardly relate to the circumstances of primitive, violent cultures and what was required for the survival of Israel. Jehovah was playing the “long game” with them, and took them through the existing circumstances in the only manner possible with that population.

We are headed pretty much back into that same scene of continual violence, unless we change tracks. I read this account

of events today in Portland a few minutes before seeing your email:

A large group of Antifa carrying shields and melee weapons attacked a group of Evangelical Christians congregating for a prayer and worship event at the waterfront in downtown Portland, Ore. Video recorded at the scene showed children and families running away as black-clad Antifa militants tore apart the sound equipment and assaulted attendees with pepper spray and projectiles.

AUGUST 10, 2021

Jehovah and Jesus, Part 4

When Jehovah chose Israel as His peculiar people, it did not immediately elevate them. Israel apparently assumed that being His “chosen people” automatically conferred righteousness upon them, instead of recognizing that He was about to rework them into something much better. Jeremiah was taught how the “chosen people” were regarded by the Lord:

Then I went down to the potter’s house, and behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter, so he made it again, another vessel as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? — says the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. At what moment I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will withhold the evil that I thought to do unto

them. And at what moment I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will withhold the good with which I said I would benefit them. (Jer. 8:1)

Unfortunately, throughout the Old Covenants from the death of Jacob (Israel) until the time of Jesus Christ, what distinguished Israel most was their prophets constant call for repentance and misfortune. Instead of allowing Jehovah to remove the occupants of the land, they engaged in continual warfare. Choices brought consequences.

Israel received promises when they were rescued from Egyptian slavery:

And it shall come to pass, if you shall listen diligently unto the voice of the Lord your God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command you this day, that the Lord your God will set you on high, above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come on you, and overtake you, if you shall listen unto the voice of the Lord your God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, and the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your cattle and the flocks of your sheep. Blessed shall be your basket and your store. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

The Lord shall cause your enemies that rise up against you to be smitten before your face. They shall come out against you one way, and flee before you seven ways. The Lord shall command the blessing upon you in your storehouses, and in all that you set your hand unto, and he shall bless you in the land which the Lord your God gives you. The Lord shall establish

you a holy people unto himself, as he has sworn unto you, if you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in his ways. And all people of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of you. And the Lord shall make you plenteous in goods, in the fruit of your body, and in the fruit of your cattle, and in the fruit of your ground, in the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers to give you. The Lord shall open unto you his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto your land in his season, and to bless all the work of your hand. And you shall lend unto many nations, and you shall not borrow. And the Lord shall make you the head, and not the tail; and you shall be above only, and you shall not be beneath, if you listen unto the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you this day, to observe and to do them. And you shall not go aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods, to serve them. (Deu. 8:4-5)

But these were conditional promises, predicated on their faithfulness. And they were warned about the consequences of infidelity to God:

But it shall come to pass if you will not listen unto the voice of the Lord your God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command you this day, that all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. Cursed shall be your basket and your store. Cursed shall be the fruit of your body, and the fruit of your land, the increase of your cattle and the flocks of your sheep. Cursed shall you be when you

come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out. The Lord shall send upon you cursing, vexation, and rebuke in all that you set your hand unto in order to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings whereby you have forsaken me. The Lord shall make the pestilence cleave unto you until he has consumed you from off the land to which you go to possess it. The Lord shall smite you with a wasting disease, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue you until you perish. And your heaven that is over your head shall be brass, and the earth that is under you shall be iron. The Lord shall make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven shall it come down upon you until you are destroyed.

The Lord shall cause you to be smitten before your enemies. You shall go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them, and shall be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. And your carcass shall be food unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall frighten them away (*Id.*, 6–7)

Ten northern tribes, led by Ephraim, were taken captive and scattered by Assyria. The two southern tribes, led by Judah, were taken captive by Babylon, with only a remnant of them returning to rebuild the temple. The overwhelming majority of the Lord's "chosen people" chose to be disobedient, and were scattered and lost to history. The animosity of Ephraim and Judah caused the division, and distracted them from worship and obedience to Jehovah.

But Jehovah descended to sacrifice Himself to ransom Israel. He has promised to regather the remnants from everywhere they have been disbursed:

Fear not, for I am with you. I will bring your seed from the east and gather you from the west; I will say to the north, Give up — and to the south, Keep not back. Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth, even everyone that is called by my name; for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him, yea, I have made him. (Isa. 15:11)

Jehovah has planned to remove the animosity between Ephraim and Judah in the end:

And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people which shall be left from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off. Ephraim shall not envy Judah and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. (Isa. 5:5)

In 2017 Jesus Christ spoke of His current work to fulfill those ancient promises. He has declared to us: “And all the outcasts of Israel will I gather to my house, and the jealousy of Ephraim and Judah will end; Ephraim will not envy Judah and Judah will not provoke Ephraim (T&C 157:41).

For this to happen the outcasts will need to understand what their forefathers failed to understand. The Lord expects obedience. He calls His “chosen people” to perform work. The Glossary in

the RE Scriptures has an explanation of being a “Chosen people” that is copied below:

If you go through and read the scriptures about the concept of chosenness, almost always you run into words about forging in a fire the product that God regards as His people, which means that God has a fairly realistic assessment of what people are like, and choosing them doesn't mean He's found a finished product. Choosing them means He's found something with which He's determined to work. High carbon steel requires iron, and it requires a matrix of that carbon to be within the element. Life — all life — is based on carbon. We breathe oxygen. We are carbon based, all of us. In a very real sense, every breath we take, we take and burn it in our furnace. The way that we convey that oxygen throughout the body is by oxidizing iron in our blood. That's why our blood cells turn red when exposed to oxygen, because the iron element fused with the oxygen oxidizes, or rusts, and so it looks red. And then, when it drops the oxygen off where it's going to be consumed in the limbs, it loses that element, and it returns, and it's blue. Forging us in the fire of affliction, breathing into us the breath of life, talking about being chosen, the example of what it takes in order to fashion something that will withstand and hold an edge, all of these things are types and shadows of what it means to be chosen. Chosenness puts you on display in order for the Lord to either prove what foolishness is in the person chosen, or if they succeed, to put them through an ordeal that demonstrates faithfulness and commitment, desire, and earnestness, so that everyone stands back and says: This people represented God, either by the shabby performance and the persecution and the

failure and the folly; or it represents God by the diligence and the effort and the faithfulness.... Within every group of chosen people there are always those who are resilient and faithful enough to pass the test, to hold the edge, to survive when the difficulties come. And when the Lord puts us through the furnace of affliction, our burdens are designed to get us to be able to qualify. Our burdens are designed to make us a little more realistic about our own limitations.

It remains to be seen how a modern remnant of chosen people will conduct themselves before God. Whether called by the name Jehovah or Jesus Christ, it is clear that being His chosen people risks both blessing and cursing. We cannot impress God, for we can accomplish nothing without Him. But we can obey Him and let Him accomplish something with us.

CHAPTER 18

A Front Row Seat

AUGUST 29, 2021

Be of Good Cheer

What you see happening in the world are the birth pains of a new kingdom. The heavens are God's throne and the earth is His footstool. To paraphrase Isaiah 25:2:

Hear the word of the Lord, you that tremble at his word: Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified. But He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed. A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that renders recompense to his enemies. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a son. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth and not cause to bring forth? —says the Lord. Shall I cause to bring forth and shut the womb? —says your God. Rejoice with His covenant people and be glad with her, all you that love her; rejoice for joy with her,

all you that mourn for her, that you may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that you may milk out and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus says the Lord: Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the gentiles like a flowing stream.

And to paraphrase Revelation 4:1:

And there appeared a great sign in heaven, in the likeness of things on the earth: a woman, clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. And the woman, being with child, cried, travailing in birth and pained to be delivered. And she brought forth a male child, a new order of things, who was to rule all nations with the words of God given unto them, even a rod of iron; and her child was in contact with God and his throne.

And again, “for the Devil has come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time” (*Id.*, at 5).

These upheavals in the world are the tantrums of a dying influence from a desperate adversary who knows God has begun to establish His rule and bring again His kingdom. He whose right it is to rule, for He created this world, has and is taking steps to exercise His right. All the foolish, vain and corrupt systems that oppose Him are doomed. As the Lord has put it:

And thus with the sword and by bloodshed, the inhabitants of the earth shall mourn. And with famine, and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven, and the fierce and vivid lightning also, shall the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed has made a full end of all nations[.] (T&C 85:3)

These things are necessary. But, as the Lord has promised in a covenant (and God cannot lie when He establishes His word by covenant—LoF 3:16, 22, 38; Titus 1:1; Ether 1:12),

And I, the Lord your God, will be with you and will never forsake you, and I will lead you in the path which will bring peace to you in the troubling season now fast approaching.

I will raise you up and protect you, abide with you, and gather you in due time, and this shall be a land of promise to you as your inheritance from me.

The earth will yield its increase, and you will flourish upon the mountains and upon the hills, and the wicked will not come against you because the fear of the Lord will be with you.

I will visit my house, which the remnant of my people shall build, and I will dwell therein, to be among you, and no one will need to say, Know ye the Lord, for you all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

I will teach you things that have been hidden from the foundation of the world and your understanding will reach unto Heaven.

And you shall be called the children of the Most High God, and I will preserve you against the harvest.

And the angels sent to harvest the world will gather the wicked into bundles to be burned, but will pass over you as my peculiar treasure. (T&C 158:12–18)

Our challenge is to keep the covenant we have been given so these promises can be vindicated. We have every reason to be of good cheer. The final words in the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant are: **“Be comforted, be of good cheer, rejoice, and look up, for I am with you who remember me, and all those who watch**

for me, always, even unto the end. Amen” (T&C 157:66). We have a front row seat for the most amazing moments in history.

SEPTEMBER 2021

SEPTEMBER 7, 2021

Sunday’s Talk

Last Sunday I gave a talk in Challis, Idaho. A link to that talk is provided below:

Equality Talk at Challis

My talk is just under an hour-and-a-half, and following my remarks two young people, an older brother and younger sister, also make a few remarks. They are from Turkmenistan and give an interesting account of their life’s journey.

SEPTEMBER 9, 2021

New Scriptures

There are only a few remaining sets of the first printing of the Restoration Edition of scriptures in leather-bound, 100% cotton pages. I was at Benchmark Books in Salt Lake City today, and I noticed that they have about a half-dozen sets available for sale. If anyone is interested in obtaining a set from them, their address is: Benchmark Books, 3269 South Main Street–Suite 250, SLC, UT 84115. Phone number (801) 486-3111.

SEPTEMBER 21, 2021

Bret Corbridge’s Passing

We lost Bret Corbridge after his difficult struggle with pneumonia. He was a gentle soul, a man of strong convictions, a ready volunteer and an energetic and productive laborer in the cause of truth. He

just finished a multi-volume draft of a collection summarizing teachings over nearly a decade. One of his last acts was to pass the draft along to me for review.

He leaves behind a devoted wife and children who will need our support and sympathy. I was able to speak with him several times before they put him on a ventilator and he was ready and willing to leave this earth. I encouraged him to stay, but certainly understand the sentiment he had about passing. The one thing holding him here was his devotion to his family and concern for them. In the end, his prognosis for being disabled and needing continuing care tipped the scale. He did not want to become a burden for anyone else, and in particular a burden for his family. He apparently concluded that it was his duty in caring for his family, to not become their burden. His passing was peaceful, but nevertheless heart-wrenching for those who loved the man.

Over the years I have had many visits from Bret. He was always a bundle of energy, and eager to do whatever was asked of him. He was passionate about serving the Lord, and we shall hardly find another of like temperament and commitment. Christ has welcomed a true friend and we have lost a faithful compatriot.

His passing should remind us all that we are frail, and will only be here for a short time. Even if we live a long life, we are here but for a moment. There is every reason to live nobly, choosing to obey the Lord and cherish His gospel, so we may depart this world with a life that testifies (as Bret's life has) of our faith in the Lord.

SEPTEMBER 22, 2021

New Video

The final video, part 7, of the third series is now up and available:

Part 7: The Heavens are Open Again

This is actually the 7th of the third series, or the 21st video. It is intended to let people know where we are presently in the Restoration. Although it is likely many people will be unaware of these videos, it is only necessary that the words be spoken to complete the Lord's obligations to the world. How, or even whether, the world responds is not as important as the Lord having the message delivered and available.

I could not have completed these without the assistance of others. I want to thank all those involved, even though they remain nameless. I do appreciate very much the efforts, labors and sacrifices of others. They are certainly known to the Lord.

OCTOBER 2021

OCTOBER 12, 2021

John Pratt Passing

Our good friend John Pratt passed away and so we have lost another inquisitive and active mind. His work on calendars and tracking the various ways of determining scriptural events has been interesting and edifying.

I last spoke with John in Challis, and exchanged emails with him recently. He seemed so indestructible that I thought he would be with us for yet a long time. I will miss his ever-cheerful presence.

We nearly lost him a few years ago, but he returned to vigor after a serious infection. His recovery then was the result of faith, prayers and blessings. But we don't get to keep anyone forever in this phase.

He will certainly be missed.

OCTOBER 14, 2021

John Pratt Funeral

The funeral for John Pratt will be held at the Wasatch Lawn Memorial Park and Mortuary, located at 3401 S. Highland Drive, Millcreek, UT 84106, on Sunday October 17, with the viewing at 12:30 and funeral beginning at 2 pm.

An obituary will be posted at the Wasatch Lawn Memorial Park and Mortuary website soon, and will contain a link to allow those interested to participate over the Internet. The Website is linked here: Wasatch Lawn

OCTOBER 21, 2021

Preparing

I have been meeting with a group working on preparedness for over a year. Their work has accomplished enough that a website has been launched. Their website is standindependent.com. Below is an announcement from that committee with links to the new website. A Fall conference is being organized for next year in which more will be addressed about the need to prepare to help one another achieve independence from the larger failing society. What appears below was written by the committee, and their names appear at the end:

A work for Zion has begun.

Several months ago, a handful of families in the movement felt inspired to begin an effort to lay up stores against a coming time of want and need. A work group from among interested parties was formed and work was begun to consider questions related to the issue of providing for our families through coming circumstances we may face as the Lord brings His Zion. A growing number of

families have begun the necessary labor to provide for our families against a fast approaching “troubling season,” (T&C 158:12), and what may follow as the Lord moves forward His work to bring His Zion.

We invite every person and family in this movement to join in the labor for Zion now by laying up stores to provide for your family against coming seasons of want and need.

God cannot produce Zion for, or with, people who refuse to labor. Because His promise is for the results of the labor and nothing else. As far as I know, none of us, and certainly I, cannot provide for everyone. But, I can provide for my own family. And each of you should labor to do the same (Denver Snuffer, “Equality”, Challis, Idaho Transcript, pg. 13 of 20).

We are to Labor to Provide for our Families.

We are required to provide for our families now in the present. Looking forward, we will need to provide for our families in a “troubling season now fast approaching” (T&C 158:12) and beyond.

Note: Four years have elapsed since the Lord gave us this instruction (T&C 158:12). You might ask yourselves, what have we done in four years to prepare for a troubling season?

We will need to provide for our families during an undefined length of time following a gathering by the Lord in which our entire efforts and labors may be required to be devoted to subduing and working the earth until she yields sufficient for our needs (For guidance see Denver Snuffer, “Equality”, Challis, Idaho transcript page 10 of 20).

God, in His mercy, is giving us this current season of relative peace, abundance, and prosperity. He is making it possible for us to provide for our families now, and during a fast approaching

‘troubling season’ and beyond as the Lord brings forth His Zion (For guidance see Denver Snuffer, “Equality”, Challis, Idaho Transcript, pages 9–10 of 20).

Many are anxiously engaged preparing to provide for our families’ and fellowships’ coming needs. We invite you to join the work for Zion by beginning your own labor to provide for your family against a coming day of want now fast approaching (T&C 158:12).

What is the Suggested Plan?

Above all things we desire to receive and exactly follow the will and desires of the Lord for us. This must be His work, done at His direction. We desire above all things that He be our guide.

Individuals and Families

1. Determine your families’ needs.
2. Determine what you already have.
3. Prioritize your families’ needs.
4. Lay out a plan to acquire your families’ needs.
5. Begin to produce, acquire, and lay up stores.

Fellowships

1. Counsel together with fellowship members to inspire, encourage, and help them identify family needs and begin to lay up stores.
2. Work together as mutually agreed among fellowship to meet the needs of fellowship members.
3. Review carefully, and prayerfully follow all revealed words of the Lord concerning wise and required use and application of limited temporal resources. (For guidance see Denver Snuffer, “Equality”, Challis, Idaho Transcript, pg. 13–15)

Storehouse Work Group

1. Provide knowledge and resources to assist families and fellowships to identify and meet storage needs.
2. Gather knowledge and resources to build and maintain a central web site that individuals, families, and fellowships may use to help meet their storage needs.
3. Recommend contact between individuals, families, and fellowships with specific resources and storage skills and those searching for those specific resources or skills.
4. Create, manage, and update, a central information exchange hub for “great deals” and storage opportunities (Website “Specials” page).
5. Provide a “Wants / Available” listing page on the web site for items individuals or families may be seeking, or willing to sell or give away.

If you would like to know more, please visit the website [stand independent.com](http://standindependent.com) for resources we have gathered to assist your family and fellowship in your efforts to prepare.

The website [stand independent.com](http://standindependent.com) is a work in progress that will be evolving and changing as we go along. We invite you to share your expertise, ideas, and experiences related to storage topics that may assist all others in their storage efforts. Your stories, ideas, suggestions and other content will be appreciated.

Please contact us at standindependentnow@gmail.com with ideas, experiences, stories, and other suggestions for content to be added to the website. The storehouse work group will determine together by common consent vote all content to be added to the website [stand independent.com](http://standindependent.com)

The storehouse work group: Nephi and Kim Barlow, Evan and Karen Bennett, Terry and Mellody Fausett, Jim and Angela

O'Rullian, McKay Platt, Jon and Tina Saunders, Kimberly and Mike Thompson, Steve and Linda VanLeer, Shalyce Woodard.

OCTOBER 26, 2021

A Stranger

Joseph Smith remarked to a crowd in Nauvoo that,

You don't know me; you never knew my heart. No man knows my history. I cannot tell it: I shall never undertake it. I don't blame any one for not believing my history. If I had not experienced what I have, I would not have believed it myself. I never did harm any man since I was born in the world. My voice is always for peace.

He said this in April 1844, two months before he was killed.

Those there DIDN'T know him. Nor do I think the Latter-day Saints today know him either. There are more lies, misrepresentations and false accusations made about him today than the many falsehoods spread about him while he lived.

Joseph presented a unique opportunity for believers to accomplish something great. But to accomplish those great things necessarily required people who would give heed to the message. In January 1841 the Lord spoke through Joseph to give a final opportunity to realize the great culmination of the restoration. But that would be dependent upon whether "my people will hearken unto my voice and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people" (T&C 141:13).

The Lord's voice spoke through Joseph (who delivered this revelation). And that revelation appointed Hyrum Smith to be the first, to stand at the head and hold the sealing power or Holy Spirit of Promise:

First, I give unto you Hyrum Smith to be a patriarch unto you, to hold the sealing blessings of my church, even the Holy Spirit of Promise whereby you are sealed up unto the day of redemption, that you may not fall, notwithstanding the hour of temptation that may come upon you. (T&C 141:41)

Second, Joseph Smith was to stand as the presiding elder over the church: “I give unto you my servant Joseph to be a presiding elder over all my church, to be a translator, a revelator, a seer, and prophet” (T&C 141:42).

These January 1841 appointments of Hyrum and Joseph were made to identify for the Nauvoo people the “servants whom [the Lord] appointed to lead [His] people.” But 27 months later in a conference held in April 1843, Hyrum was required to condemn the stealing and counterfeit money printing going on in Nauvoo. “(They say) They have a right to steal from any man who is not a member of the Church if they consecrate 2/3 of it. They are also making Bogus money” (*JSP, Documents*, Vol. 12, p. 161). Joseph followed Hyrum’s talk and added his own condemnation. Joseph said, speaking for the Presidency, that

such things have never been tolerated, I despise a thief above ground. because I would know that he would be a detriment to my cause and would steal my horse when I wanted to run away. It has been said that some was afraid to disclose what they know of these secret combinations[.] (*Id.*, p. 162)

Of what use was it to the people of that day to have a living Patriarch embodying the Holy Spirit of Promise, if they were thieves? The only message a prophet could deliver to such a group was to denounce their dishonesty. Why speak of heavenly things to people who were unable to live honorably and honestly with one another?

The greatest opportunity offered mankind in two millennia was squandered by people the Lord has called “fools.” They continue to squander what the Lord offered through Hyrum and Joseph. They pretend to be equals, when they are nothing of the sort. The Lord explained to Joseph that,

The ends of the earth shall inquire after your name, and fools shall have you in derision, and hell shall rage against you, while the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under your hand. And your people shall never be turned against you by the testimony of traitors, and although their influence shall cast you into trouble, and into bars and walls, you shall be had in honor. And but for a small moment, and your voice shall be more terrible in the midst of your enemies than the fierce lion, because of your righteousness, and your God shall stand by you for ever and ever.

It is still that way. Reading the Joseph Smith Papers publication by the LDS Church Historian’s Office reminds me over and over of how they hold him in derision still. Joseph continually reminds people to be virtuous, honest, moral and upright. He denounces immorality, dishonesty, and hypocrisy. “it is against my principles to act the part of a hypocrite, or to dissemble in any wise whatever, with any man” (*JSP, Documents*, Vol. 12, p. 114). But the LDS Church Historian’s Office continually accuses Joseph of hypocrisy, lying, deceiving, and acting the two-faced deceiver. That is their official narrative.

I could not admire, much less follow, an adulterous man as the LDS Church claims to do. At Joseph’s request, Hyrum wrote a letter to the entire church condemning what would later be proclaimed as a principle of salvation for Latter-day Saints:

Behold, this is a wicked generation, full of lyings, and deceit, and craftiness, and the children of the wicked are wiser than the children of light, i.e., they are more crafty, and it seems that it has been the case in all ages of the world. And the man, when he leaves his wife and travels to a foreign nation, while on his way, darkness overpowers his mind, and Satan deceives him and flatters him with the graces of the harlot, and before he is aware, he is disgraced for ever. And greater is the danger for the woman that leaves her husband. And there are several instances where women have left their husbands and come to this place, and in a few weeks or months they have found themselves new husbands and they are living in adultery, and we are obliged to cut them off from the church. There are men also that are guilty of the same crime, as we are credibly informed, we are knowing to their having taken wives here, and are credibly informed that they have wives in England. (T&C 149:4)

One of those adulterous men mentioned in this letter was apparently Brigham Young. But once Brigham Young gained control over the church, he secured a chorus of voices to falsely accuse Joseph and make both him and Hyrum hypocrites and deceivers.

If no one else will proclaim it then I will: Joseph and Hyrum were virtuous men. And unless you are virtuous also you will be condemned by God for your wickedness.

For I, the Lord, cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance; nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven, and he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received. For my spirit shall not always strive with man, says the Lord of Hosts. (T&C 54:5)

The reason gross darkness now flows continually from the LDS Church, Fundamentalist mormons, and the many pretenders claiming to be strong and mighty is because they only seek their own vain ambitions. They undertake to cover their sins rather than to confess them. They gratify their pride, and vain ambition, by claiming they are great in God's eyes, when they are nothing of the sort. They want to exercise control, or dominion, or compulsion, upon the souls of the children of men to further their unrighteous purposes. And therefore we can behold from their words and deeds that the Heavens have withdrawn themselves, the spirit of the Lord is grieved with them, and their pretensions to priesthood or authority have evaporated. They offer conceit and flattery, not light.

Joseph offered humility, light and truth. Hyrum was a moral man of unquestioned integrity. The LDS Church Historian's office shamefully throws mud at both these men to uphold the wickedness of those who got control after their murders.

I know of no way to make this matter clearer than to express my contempt of those who hold Joseph and Hyrum in derision. None of their wealth or status will excuse them before God for these terrible falsehoods and false accusations. Clearly, like their ancestors, they don't know Joseph. They never knew him.

NOVEMBER 2021

NOVEMBER 13, 2021

Upcoming Interview

A friend of mine does a podcast as "Radio Free Mormon" or RFM. He also does a Wednesday evening show/interview on YouTube with the title "Mormonism Live." That YouTube show is hosted by both him and Bill Reel. RFM has often asked me to come on

the show and I've repeatedly refused...until 10 days ago. I agreed to put an announcement up on my website beforehand.

The interview will be on the Wednesday evening prior to Thanksgiving. It will be on the Mormonism Live YouTube channel, and will begin at 6:20. I will put a link up beforehand for anyone interested in listening or watching it.

We've agreed that we won't talk about polygamy. RFM thinks it is too big a subject to cover in an hour-long interview. And I think it is too boring a subject to re-plough again.

We also exchanged views about discussing the subject of 'seeing Christ.' I explained that profound religious experiences are sometimes important to discuss. But when Joseph Smith retold an event and either added a detail, or omitted a point, the differences in retelling became the basis for a great deal of criticism, even skepticism for others.

When I have had an encounter beyond the veil, I have recorded it in my journal. The account was contemporaneous, and reduced to a finite account that could not grow like a fish story with the retelling. Also, it was a reliable record for me to use when (and if) the experience was made public.

I have taken excerpts from my journal and made them public. The committee who assembled the new scriptures thought some of those had enough merit to justify including the accounts in the new scriptures. They proposed adding several accounts to the new scriptures and a conference approved doing so. The accounts in the new scriptures can be read at these places in the new volume titled "Teachings and Commandments":

- T&C 160: <https://scriptures.info/scriptures/tc/section/160>
- T&C 161: <https://scriptures.info/scriptures/tc/section/161>

There are also other materials, visions or revelations in the T&C that are mine, but I think these are the two that would be directly responsive to questions about seeing Christ.

It has been my experience that a certain kind of superficial personality gravitates to claims of the fantastical and supernal. They are, for lack of a better term, sign-seekers. They are drawn to those who tell otherworldly experiences, and are quite fickle in their beliefs. They are easily led, and therefore easily led astray. These superficial folks often display a great deal of enthusiasm, and draw unwanted attention by their attendance at gatherings. I'm not altogether sure about the mental stability of the sign-seekers, but I do know that when great religious claims are made some of the very first attracted to the claimants include these sign-seekers.

I've had enough of them to last a lifetime. I don't want to attract yet more from the Mormonism Live audience. So while I am willing to reference these two sources that people can read and reflect on in their privacy, I will be leaving it at that.

When teaching about something profound, I try to always use scripture as the primary content, and to not resort to adding something from personal experience unless absolutely required to do so. The things of God are of deep import, and careful, ponderous, solemn thought is required. After all, angels only show themselves "unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness" (Moroni 7:30).

I have also noted a number of religious pretenders who are not concerned with elevating others by what they teach. They are instead interested in attracting followers by the claims they make, like Carnival barkers inviting people to throw baseballs, rings or darts. Instead of stuffed animals and cheap pocket knives, they offer salvation. For a fee. Always for a fee.

I try to leave people better off, more well informed, more deeply connected with God and interested in studying scripture and searching for truth themselves. I want other people to connect with God. It troubles me when people want to instead form an attachment to me, as if following me were enough of a religious experience for them.

Also, giving new details about things beyond the veil supplies the pretenders and charlatans with new things to imitate or claim. There are others who scour what I have taught and then mimic, without attribution, to try to gather a following or bolster their spiritual pretensions. It is inevitable, I suppose. But I try to dial it down, and focus on things that will help other people connect to God for themselves. That is what improves lives, improves marriages and improves families. And I take nothing as compensation, always losing money for the cause.

People who are capable of solemn reflection take a much longer time to consider a matter before deciding. I have met some very impressive people who believe as I do. These include some of the best of the LDS who have left that organization in search of something more. These people were among the best and brightest in the LDS organization, when they worshiped there. Associating with them elevates me, and others, who share their company. These people have been rebaptized and joined in the chorus of those who believe God is up to something now. They have not only added, but have taken the initiative to accomplish a great number of things. Books have been written, conferences have been organized, video presentations have been prepared, and profound teaching has taken place.

There is so much left to be done that there is no reason to stop and ask for praise or to be noticed for what has been accomplished

at this point. Right now there are glaring things missing from the restoration: Where is Zion? What is the “fullness of the priesthood” God mentioned to Joseph in January 1841 and how/when will it return? And many other incomplete teachings, ordinances and events that belong to the last dispensation. I’m working on it. I’m a long way short of accomplishing much as yet.

Not sure if the interview will be worth watching. But if anyone is interested, I will put up a link beforehand.

NOVEMBER 20, 2021

Spring Conference

There will be a Spring Conference from March 25-27 in Kentucky. The conference now has a website up at this link: [Hear and Trust the Lord in the Storm](#)

I’ve been invited to speak and look forward to attending. Part of the conference will focus on Christians in that area, and part will focus on those who already believe in the restoration.

NOVEMBER 23, 2021

Tomorrow’s Interview

Tomorrow’s interview can be watched or heard at the following links:

<https://youtu.be/NTwiKfYO6GM> – The link to the youtube video, where one can watch the video version.

<https://mormonismlive.org/> – The website where the audio-only version will be published the day after the live interview.

The interview will begin at 6:20 PM Mountain Time. It is scheduled to go for an hour, and then I’m told there will be some questions from the audience (although I’m not clear on how that will work).

NOVEMBER 28, 2021

New Book

For five years work has been done to reach out to Christians and invite them to consider the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is underway. Much of that work has been put into a new book that is now available. A podcast is now up explaining the reason for the new book and is linked here: [The Testimony of Jesus](#).

The book is in hardback only, and is now available through Amazon at this link: *The Testimony of Jesus: Past, Present and Promise*.

The book is intended to help Christians understand why there is a need for the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be restored. The tortured history of the Christian religion makes it impossible to think Christianity exists in a pure form in any of the organized denominations claiming to offer salvation today.

If God spoke in times past to inspire men who were moved upon by the Holy Ghost, then it makes sense that an unchangeable God would likewise speak again as we approach the return of His Son in glory. Prophecy and common sense tell us that God must do a work again upon the earth before the final judgement of the world takes place. God has sent messengers again. And His voice speaks to us, now.

DECEMBER 2021

DECEMBER 5, 2021

Life Begins Before Birth

A paragraph from the Christmas story in the new scriptures, Luke 1:7, is quoted here:

And in those days, Mary went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah, and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the holy ghost, and she spoke out with a loud voice and said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is it that this blessing is upon me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, as soon as the voice of your salutation sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed are you who believed, for those things which were told you of the angel of the Lord shall be fulfilled.

It is the joy of the unborn child that made him stir in the womb. The unborn John would not have responded to the sound of Mary's voice with "joy" if his mortal life had not begun before birth. She was in the end of the second trimester, in modern pregnancy vernacular. John would not be born for another three months. But his life, ability to respond to the environment outside the womb (including sound), and ability to experience "joy" are all described in this paragraph.

The United States has approved and helped to fund with taxpayer subsidies the abortions of now some 70 million unborn children. It is more state sponsored killing than Hitler inflicted. More than Stalin killed. More than Pol Pot killed. It is within the upper range of the estimated number killed by Mao Zedong. The United States is now reconsidering the outcome of Harry Blackmun's majority opinion in *Roe v. Wade*. It is time to end a tragedy that should never have begun.

DECEMBER 22, 2021

Youth Fast Announcement



A Movement-Wide Fast

Join us, the youth of the remnant, in a fast to valiantly overcome the challenges that are ahead of us. The Lord's hand is working with a people today. This fast is a way for us all to band together as a people and become one.

The youth have decided to fast, and would love for everyone to join us. We have decided to fast for the Lord's guidance in our efforts to do his work. For the entire month of January, choose a fast that will challenge you individually (examples could be social media, sugar, tv, etc...these are a few ideas, but we don't want to limit your decision. Let the spirit guide your choice). We invite you to join us in becoming united as a people of one heart and one mind.

Alma 12:2

“And it came to pass that they journeyed many days in the wilderness, and they fasted much and prayed much that the Lord would grant unto them a portion of his spirit to go with them and abide with them, that they might be an instrument in the hands of God...”

DECEMBER 23, 2021

216 Years

It was 216 years ago today that Joseph Smith was born. Oddly the largest beneficiary of his birth, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has failed to make any note of his birthday.

The Lord used Joseph Smith to set in motion the events promised as signs to precede the Lord's return. In his lifetime Joseph accomplished all the preliminary steps, and died before everything could be completed. After a pause for nearly two centuries, the Lord has set in motion the final set of promised events.

We owe a great debt to Joseph, and could not have the opportunities given to us now if not for him.

DECEMBER 29, 2021

Rhetoric and Reality

Political rhetoric is far divorced from reality. Much of the language coming from political leaders is designed to distract the public rather than to inform us. The current state of things is so mired in deception and distraction that leaders are succeeding in substituting rhetorical nonsense for reality.

Marxism has never succeeded and yet its theories are used as the rhetorical basis to advance totalitarian ambitions. If the production and distribution of goods and services are controlled by any central authority, then nothing remains of freedom and free choice. People cannot survive without food. The planner who controls the distribution of food controls the population. The ambition of Marxists is not to make everyone equal and to distribute goods and services to benefit the public, but it is only to control the public.

There is an inexplicable madness in the desire of men to control others. I do not understand it because I do not share it. It is so difficult to live my own life worthily before God, recognizing that I am accountable to Him for my words, deeds and thoughts that I have no desire to control others. As King Benjamin put it:

But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe to keep the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. (RE Mosiah 2:6)

Why would anyone want to become accountable for controlling others? It is madness.

Yet the current political struggle in every nation is between those who seek freedom and self-determination, and the ambitions of business, banking, political, religious and military leaders who want to consolidate power and control over others. To the extent they succeed to the point that they feel free to impose their will, it will require the killing of the remaining opposition who resist their control.

The United States has leaders who want to govern against the will of the majority. But the leaders employ rhetoric to blind the eyes of the public to their plans. Isaiah described and condemned them and their ambitions: “Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter” (RE Isa. 1:17).

Marxist “values” seem to have an appeal to equality and fairness. But those apparent values have nothing to do with the reality of the ambitions of those who use Marxist rhetoric. It is just a convenient

vocabulary employed to deceive and mislead while power and control is being gained.

If your choices seem to be diminishing, that is because there are those seeking that result. If your freedom to make economic decisions seem to be diminishing, that is because leaders are working to accomplish that. If economic troubles motivate you to consider allowing a different, even radical economic approach to rescue you from the woes you experience, that is because conspirators are working hard to achieve that goal. If you think giving up freedom to travel, or shop, or speak will make you feel safer, that is because rhetoric of fear is working and therefore it will continue to be employed until it no longer is useful to the conspiracies of evil and designing men.

Those seeking power and authority gravitate to high office in governments. They have labored for generations to bring aboard the leaders in business, religions, banking, law and militaries. If there is a significant center of influence anywhere in the world, the conspirators work to bring them aboard. As Paul explained it, “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (RE Eph. 1:25).

The extent of spiritual wickedness in high places in this world has become so great, so widespread, and so confident of its success that the rhetoric is no longer able to deceive many people into accepting a false reality. The hosts of conspirators fear the public awakening to their awful situation, because that will be followed by arising to fight against the conspiracy.

Politics and the news media are filled with insincere people peddling false ideas, to blind and mislead you. When both sides of a political divide seek the same power to control you, then you

should ask yourself if you still have a choice? Do you want Coke or Pepsi—because water is not on the menu.

If control is needed to make it “fair” and more “equal” then what you will wind up with is compulsion to force what those in power decide will be better. And their priorities will never include your freedom to choose. Nor will it allow you to opt out.

CHAPTER 19

Choose Well, Choose You Must

JANUARY 2022

JANUARY 3, 2022

Answers to 4 Questions

I got the following questions and provided the following answers:

1) What exactly is the relationship between Roger Williams, Alexander Campbell, Joseph Smith and Denver Snuffer?

Roger Williams saw the need for a restoration of Christianity, rather than just a reformation.

Alexander Campbell thought it possible to return to Primitive Christianity rather than just continuing the Protestant tradition.

Joseph Smith testified that Jesus Christ called upon him to renew Christianity through a restoration directed by Heaven with all the authority and gifts of the original established by Christ.

I claim to be working to reinvigorate the work Joseph Smith commenced, and to be continuing the process so it will reach a completion. It did not get finished by Joseph Smith, and what he left behind has lapsed into disrepair. It needs to be reinvigorated, and then to be completed. I am working on accomplishing both.

2) I don't understand what is meant by the translations of the Bible by Joseph Smith etc. as part of the three volumes of covenants in a way that is different from the traditional Mormon scriptures. Is the retranslated Book of Mormon considered part of second covenant, and the new works of 2017–2019 some kind of new third covenant?

Joseph Smith was asked by Christ to revise the King James Version of the Bible to add clarifications and restore omissions. He did that and it was not published by the LDS organization as part of their scriptures. In a revised publication by the LDS church in 1980, some of the Joseph Smith revisions and additions were added as footnotes to their scriptures. We have published the entire Joseph Smith revision of the Bible as our scriptures.

The Book of Mormon is considered part of the new covenant. It is not changed other than to conform it to the original translation by Joseph Smith. The process used is described in the Forward to the Book of Mormon in the new scriptures. I link to it here: [Forward](#)

3) At what point was it prophesied or predicted that the initial teachings of Joseph Smith would be corrupted, and the corruption would spread to the entire movement? How was it known thwe way that the Restoration would be “restored” in 2017–2019? And what is the distinction between the newer translations and the original old ones, and what difference do they make?

The work being done by Joseph Smith was condemned in 1832. That is linked here: [T&C 82:20](#)

The people were ultimately rejected by the Lord. That is linked here: [T&C 141:11](#)

An inspired prayer was offered to the Lord, who directed what the contents of the prayer were to include. That prayer rehearses

the history of the restoration and its failure. That prayer is linked here: [T&C 156](#)

4) *Finally, how does your Restoration movement address the issue of the authenticity and origin of the Book of Mormon, with all the alleged anachronisms, mistakes, contradictions, etc. related to the book, the gold plates, the Book of Abraham etc.??*

Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon into the language of his time, using his own vocabulary and background. Every word of the translation required some adaptation of the text to make it fit into modern word usages and vocabulary. As is apparent in the current effort to re-translate the text back into Biblical Hebrew, there are some passages that are difficult in English, but fit comfortably into Biblical Hebrew. Then there are others that are difficult to adapt into the older language. The Book of Mormon was composed by those who spoke the form of Hebrew that existed at 600 BC, but who wrote in a more compact form of language borrowed from Egyptian. Whenever there is a translation there are necessary accommodations to make the text understandable in the new language. We accept Joseph Smith's divinely inspired translation as a reliable text, teaching authentic truths about God and the work of God among ancient people. The closer the teachings are examined and understood, the closer the person abiding the Book of Mormon's teachings will grow to God.

As for the Book of Abraham, here is a talk I gave on the text:
[The Religion of the Fathers](#)

JANUARY 3, 2022

Why was Joseph Killed?

There is a new documentary titled, “Who Killed Joseph Smith?” It was released this last weekend, and can now be viewed on-line at this website: whokilledjosephsmith.com

I was favorably impressed with this attempt to explain how first Hyrum, and then Joseph, were murdered in Carthage Jail. The story told by the Latter-day Saints does not match the physical proof and this documentary does a better job of explaining what happened than does the LDS church’s account. The Latter-day Saints have recognized their original explanation cannot be accurate, and fails to account for physical injuries to the bodies of the slain brothers, and so their explanation has been changed and continues to be modified. These official changes are explained in the new documentary.

The conclusion of the new film will be hard for Latter-day Saints to even consider. To reach a correct conclusion a person must be open to considering any plausible alternative, no matter how unpleasant it may be.

Of course there were outside political and religious people hostile to Joseph Smith. But they were not alone. There were insiders, followers and even accompanying leaders in the inner-circles of the Latter-day Saints who were also disaffected by Joseph Smith’s leadership.

Joseph Smith was surrounded by ambitious and aspiring men. Joseph’s role in the Kirtland Anti-Banking Society failure, his continuing financial struggles, and pending bankruptcy at the time of his death are obvious proof that Joseph was not a successful businessman. There were many others who could manage money better, and who could figure out how to make the organization

Joseph established profitable. Indeed, Brigham Young managed to monetize Mormonism as an institution and leaders have been chosen from business, banking, law and other professions for generations. The single individual who is the owner of the Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is likely the “richest” man in the world today. I put “richest” in quotes because he clearly controls a vast financial empire, but presumably manages it with some degree of caution considering the claimed status as a religious leader. But the LDS Church is, by now, only a minor part of the wealth that office controls.

Joseph Smith never attempted to build a financial empire. He did attempt to establish a religious society, and hoped it could become independent of all other governments. But his impulse to provide for the needs of others, and particularly the poor converts streaming into his community caused many losses and set-backs.

Others who were close to Joseph knew he was an impediment to financial success. And, because of the lusts of the flesh, many later LDS leaders would admit that they got a “revelation” about plural wives while serving on missions in England, years before Joseph Smith purportedly began to teach it to them in complete secrecy. Joseph stood in the way of rolling out plural wives publicly, because he consistently condemned the practice publicly, brought church disciplinary proceedings against people he learned were practicing it, and made it impossible for it to become the standard practice for the society.

If other leaders thought they could do a much better job financially, and knew Joseph Smith would never publicly advocate what they knew God had “revealed” to them in England, then ‘it would be better that one man should die than an entire people be deprived of progress’—so to speak.

Before dismissing outright the possibilities raised in the new documentary, consider whether there were insiders, even in the highest ranks of Nauvoo society, who might benefit from the deaths of Hyrum and Joseph. If the wound in Hyrum's neck was an entry wound, and from a pistol rather than a musket, and the injury to his face was an exit wound also from a pistol, then what? If the mob intended to hang, not shoot, the brothers, and inside the jail room they fell from pistol fire, what happened? Who could have been in the room armed with a pistol to fire upon the brothers?

The film is worth watching.

JANUARY 22, 2022

Awaiting Results...

There has been a global clinical trial underway and we are still awaiting results from those experimental trials. Although the trial is commonly called a "vaccine" it is actually a form of mRNA gene editing experimentation.

A team from MIT has prepared an article to explain the preliminary results uncovered thus far in the clinical trials. Their article appears in the *International Journal of Vaccine Theory, Practice, and Research*, and is titled (and linked) here: "[Worse Than the Disease? Reviewing Some Possible Unintended Consequences of the mRNA Vaccines Against Covid-19.](#)"

They show just how unprecedented the administration of these gene therapies are, including these being the first time PEG (polyethylene glycol) has been injected into subjects. The first time to use mRNA vaccine to protect against an infectious agent. The first time health authorities tell those receiving the injection to expect an adverse reaction. The first vaccine to make no claims about reducing infections, transmission, or deaths from the underlying

illness. The first injection of clinically modified polynucleotides in the general population. And it is the first vaccine against a coronavirus attempted in humans.

The article is very interesting and poses a number of questions that will only be answered over time and as we determine what long-term effects the mRNA therapy will have. They note some evidence now exists that the vaccines produce autoimmune disease reactions, and should be carefully studied to determine if this is a prevalent risk. They warn that there is a risk these injections “could prime the immune system toward development of both auto-inflammatory and autoimmune disease” (*International Journal of Vaccine Theory*, May 10, 2021, p. 53).

Although the article is technical, you can learn a great deal by carefully reading it. When you encounter a word you do not understand, do a search for a definition on-line and it will let you understand what the authors are communicating.

The section of the article, “A Possible Link to Prion Diseases and Neurodegeneration” (*id.*, beginning on page 59) is particularly worth reading and understanding. They raise the idea that neurodegeneration akin to Parkinson’s, ALS, and Alzheimer’s may be one of the long-term risks from the body producing its own spike-proteins.

They recommend a more comprehensive gathering of data from long term adverse effects be undertaken. And that we get more open discussion of the reports from adverse effects so that we can understand what the experiment now underway will show once we have open access to important information.

Right now the vaccine has become a political issue, not a public health issue. True enough the political discussion always insists it is about public health, but in truth there has been little

honest discussion of the actual science. Bombast and emotional appeals about “safety” and “dangers” are not tied to discussion of actual numbers. Little effort has been made to distinguish between asymptomatic infections and symptomatic infections. Nor has there been an adequate consideration of hospitalizations with Covid-19 as opposed to hospitalizations due to Covid-19. So the arguments are waged with a great deal of emotion, and very little reliable information to allow the public to understand the actual risks.

Perhaps we ought to be more curious about the actual risks, not of Covid-19, but of the vaccines that modify mRNA to cause the human body to produce spike proteins.

JANUARY 25, 2022

Hard Hearts/Hard Heads

Good gets called “evil” and evil gets called “good.” Some people need to repent and abandon a sinful idea, but do not even understand they are defending evil and calling it good.

There is a correlation between hearts becoming hardened and unavoidable contention. When men become filled with arrogant pride, they assume they are right, even when they are very wrong. It is impossible for hardened society to have a give-and-take discussion because they refuse to consider other viewpoints. If a false idea is allowed to be set out, and then is denounced and the error exposed and explained patiently, it will not yield any result for the hardhearted.

We will not be able to persuade everyone. The number of humble searchers who are willing to hear a matter before judging it are decreasing.

As the Nephite society drifted toward constant internal and external conflict, the record explains: “And many more things did the people imagine up in their hearts which were foolish and vain; and they were much disturbed, for Satan did stir them up to do iniquity continually. Yea, he did go about spreading rumors and contentions upon all the face of the land, that he might harden the hearts of the people against that which was good and against that which should come. (NC Helaman 5:21)

People are influenced by the perception that an opinion is widely held. There are studies that confirm that the great majority of people can be manipulated to adopt an answer, even when they know it is incorrect, if others in the study group agree. The study of human behavior in the social sciences has been used to help advance political agendas and get the public to accept political outcomes. Social media outlets are not ignorant of these studies. They base their agenda on them.

The “twiter-verse” and Instagram are dominated by a tiny number of activists who urge constantly for their causes. Despite their insignificant numbers, they are made to appear to be a great majority. This influences decisions by corporations, governments and even churches.

Facebook censors opinions to control topics. Ideas are not allowed to be considered, because they are not given the opportunity to be heard.

The “great chain” Enoch saw Satan had that veiled the whole face of the earth, was made of lies. Enoch reported that, “he beheld Satan, and he had a great chain in his hand, and he veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced” (NC Gen. 4:15).

We should be able to recognize that same pattern today. Politicians and businessmen have learned that the ‘popular’ lie can overcome the truth. Even if the lie is unpopular, all that is needed is for it to seem to be overwhelmingly accepted. The media outlets know this, and dispense propaganda to make bad ideas seem to be the common view held by the great majority. Churches are being swept up in this same foolish and vain imaginings.

To guard against it there are a handful of things I try to do: Study the scriptures, particularly the New Covenant or Restoration Edition. Pray in private daily. Do something deliberate for God every day, to bless someone else—even if they do not appreciate it or recognize what motivates you.

There were a few people who were not deceived in Enoch and Noah’s day. And some few will not be overcome by the growing multitude of lies we face daily. I hope to be one of them. There are still great things to be done by believing and faithful people. And therefore great things for us to look forward to, and rejoice.

JANUARY 31, 2022

Persuasion

The only real tools available for a bearer of God’s priesthood are persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness and meekness, love unfeigned, kindness and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul. (See T&C 175:31) Which literally means no power or influence can or should be exerted because of claims to priestly authority or position. (Id.)

The most obvious result of these limitations is that some people will never give a fair hearing to the message. Without an accompanying claim to have authority, some people will dismiss it outright, no matter what the message contains. Even if it is

expressed in kindness and unfeigned love, unless a person is willing to consider the message, it will not be received.

These limitations are inspired. Pure knowledge is not appealing to those who will not hear the Lord's voice. Christ put it this way:

he that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him, the porter opens and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers.
(NC John 6:24)

The door is shut, and a "porter" guards the way. The shepherd is the one who enters by the door, and he tells the guardians to open the way for his sheep. The guardians open at the shepherd's request, and then the shepherd calls his own sheep by name. This part of the Lord's parable brings to mind the idea that He gives names to those who are His. They are not strangers. He brings them into His family by naming them.

The sheep belonging to the shepherd are twice identified: Once by having their names called out, and again by recognizing the voice of their shepherd, to whom they belong. Both the shepherd and the sheep are involved in the process. He leads, invites, persuades, and guides. His sheep respond, accept, recognize, and follow. Both the Lord and His servants can recognize each other.

Other sheep do not respond. No amount of persuasion can pry them away from petrified opinion. It is hard, very hard, to change your religion. I have done it twice. Both times required a great price

to be paid. It was not easy to lose so many friends and associates, and to have those who once called me “brother” shun and disregard me because I heard a voice they could not hear themselves. But after paying the price twice now, I know that it is a very hard thing to ask others to do, and so few will be willing to do so.

Mark Twain once said: “Loyalty to petrified opinion never yet broke a chain or freed a human soul.” He was right. But the chains he spoke of were human slavery, and the greater chains to be broken are of darkness and ungodliness. We all let our opinions petrify. But the Good Shepherd often takes us through stages of understanding that become brighter and brighter until the perfect day. (See T&C 36:4) It is hard to imagine all the opinions that will need changing before we reach the end of that journey.

Religious traditions are very hard to set aside. Particularly when it was taught by your parents, affirmed by your grandparents, and shared across generations before. But traditions embedded in institutions are almost invariably corrupted by the cares of this world. As soon as men get a little power and authority over others, they begin to pursue self-interest and abuse the saints of God. (See T&C 93:9 also T&C 166)

If the Good Shepherd’s voice calls by offending a religious tradition, it is the tradition that must be abandoned, not the Good Shepherd. False traditions and the institutions that perpetuate them spread darkness, not light. As the Lord put it, the “wicked one comes and takes away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers” (T&C 93:11).

I have followed the Good Shepherd when He has called. It has required a great sacrifice of me repeatedly. But now both He and I know where my loyalty lies.

I cannot say it is easy to respond to the Lord's call. But I can assure you that there is no better direction to follow than the one His voice beckons you to take. It may never be easy, but the Lord posed this question to Joseph in a Missouri prison:

if fierce winds become your enemy, if the heavens gather blackness and all the elements combine to hedge up the way, and above all, if the very jaws of hell shall gape open her mouth wide after you, know, my son, that all these things shall give you experience and shall be for your good. The Son of Man has descended below them all. Are you greater than he? (T&C 139:8)

FEBRUARY 2022

FEBRUARY 1, 2022

IT HAS CHANGED

Johns Hopkins University has completed a study of the effect lockdowns have had on the rate of COVID-19 deaths. The conclusion of their study is stated in the "Abstract" at the start of the article. Their summary is:

lockdowns have had little to no effect on COVID-19 mortality. More specifically, stringency index studies find that lockdowns in Europe and the United States only reduced COVID-19 mortality by 0.2% on average. SIPOs were also ineffective, only reducing COVID-19 mortality by 2.9% on average. Specific NPI studies also find **no broad-based evidence of noticeable effects on covid-19 mortality.**

While this meta-analysis concludes that lockdowns have had little to no public health effects, **they have imposed enormous economic and social costs** where they have been adopted. In

consequence, **lockdown policies are ill-founded and should be rejected** as a pandemic policy instrument. (Emphasis added)

The study is linked here: [A Literature Review and Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Lockdowns on covid-19 Mortality](#)

If lockdowns have proven ineffective for the purpose of lowering mortality rates, it is clear that they have proven very effective in subduing populations. Even nations regarded previously as having a vibrant democratic rule with a resilient independent-minded population have quietly accepted the forfeiture of civil rights.

You can expect the political lessons learned by autocrats from the lockdown will not be forgotten. If invoking “common good” and “public health” are enough to make every knee bow, then it is easy to anticipate they will become regular tools in the arsenal of the politically ambitious world leaders.

The political and business landscape has not just been changing:
IT HAS CHANGED.

Think about the position taken by the US Government. A mandatory injection of mRNA drugs has been adopted for the military, and was being enforced on employers with 100 or more employees, until court orders limited that demand. Many states, counties and cities adopted similar mandatory injections. It is presently estimated that 64% of the US population has been injected. This is disappointing for some political leaders and is far less than many other nations. Portugal has 90.5%, Spain 81.9%, Japan 79.2%, New Zealand 76.6%, Germany 73.4%, and Brazil 70.1% (just to mention a few).

If leaders scheme to expose the entire world’s population to something, and an injection does not accomplish the objective, the one thing that holds the potential for reaching everyone is the

food supply. It makes the opening words of the Word of Wisdom seem more relevant today than when first recorded in February 1833:

In consequence of evils and designs which will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you and forewarned you, by giving unto you this word of Wisdom by revelation. (T&C 89:2)

The advice includes:

All wholesome herbs God has ordained for the constitution, and nature, and use of man: every herb in the season thereof and every fruit in the season thereof, all these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving. (Id, Paragraph 4)

Fresh food that has not been processed, particularly if you grow it in your own garden, might be a far better plan for life than relying on increasingly authoritarian suppliers.

Consider how shocking it is (or should be) that ideas are now being suppressed and discussions prohibited. The public is accepting, even approving, the suppression of speech that is considered contrary to the powerful interests of society. Things are not just changing; *IT HAS CHANGED*.

The trends all point in but one direction. In the remaining democracies of the world the public seems bizzarely indifferent to the trends. Elections are opportunities to change courses, but take some effort to oppose the evils and designs that exist in the hearts of conspiring men today. At every level, from local to national, vote for upholding integrity, honesty and freedom:

I, the Lord your God, make you free; therefore, you are free indeed, and the law also makes you free. Nevertheless, when the wicked rule, the people mourn. Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and

wise men you should observe to uphold; otherwise, whatever is less than these comes of evil. (T&C 98:2)

Power does not just corrupt men when they get a little authority over others, but power also always attracts the corrupt. If you believe in freedom and trust your fellow man to govern himself, then you might also want to consider running for office. Recent events have shown that pernicious efforts have been adopted by school boards. There is no place, from cities to states, to the nation, where good, honest and wise people cannot help to preserve freedom.

The most important and enduring things are ideas. They outlast empires. Attacks on the preservation of noble, uplifting, edifying ideas is therefore a greater threat to society than all the battles of Rome, the violence of World Wars I and II, and the persistent regional violence of all history. If ideals and truth can be suppressed, then there is no hope for freedom.

The pandemic has been used most alarmingly as a tool to suppress speech and thought. The results of governmental actions have not been effective in curtailing mortality from the illness. The Johns Hopkins study shows that. But the governmental response has been decidedly effective in curtailing both speech and thought. The willing adoption of an intolerant orthodoxy should be shocking to us all. The widespread opposite reaction of acceptance and defending the orthodoxy is the real lesson we should now take to heart. It should make us all realize we are led by conspiring men.

FEBRUARY 19, 2022

Updates

There is a new book that does a side-by-side comparison of the KJV Gospel of John with the newly revealed Testimony of St. John. The

book is available on Amazon and linked here: [The Testimony of St. John: A newly revealed account of John the Beloved's Testimony of Jesus the Messiah. Includes a side-by-side comparison with the King James Version for enhanced study.](#)

I got an email asking this:

What is the temple for that you're raising money for? Like the biblical temple was an assembly place and a place of liturgical repentance. The Kirtland temple seems to be an assembly hall mainly. The Nauvoo and latter temples of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day saints were, as you know, places of liturgical worship. Mainly ordinances for the dead and some living. Community of Christ's temple seems to be similar to a cathedral. Daily worship. Contemplation. But they didn't really know what to do with it. What would be the purpose of the temple and uses?

I gave this answer:

The Temple facility will be for the following:

- Festivals and Conferences.
- Ordinances and rites some for the living and some for the worthy dead (certainly not any deceased person whose name is learned).
- Instructions and classes, and a library for collecting sacred works from all over the world.
- A place for study and contemplation.
- And singing/worship services.
- Part of the facility will be limited in who will be allowed to enter or participate, and part will be open to the public.
- The overall purpose will be to complete the restoration process and return sacred knowledge to the living so they can

understand the original endowment of knowledge possessed by Adam and Enoch in the beginning, later restored through Abraham—but which has been lost to mankind because of apostasy. That restoration includes endowing those who are prepared to have knowledge that stretches into the heavens, and into the darkest abyss, from eternity to eternity, so that the purposes of the Almighty in this creation can be understood. This results in the exclamation that no one will need to say “know ye the Lord” because those who have learned God’s great purposes and plans will understand the Almighty. And the final accomplishment of it all is to redeem mankind from the Fall so that they can enter into His presence as a Member of the Household of God.

- It will also conform to certain alignments which God intended for men to understand, but which have fallen into disuse and neglect.
- It will require men to forsake foolish traditions and superstitions, and to replace them with knowledge of Heaven and earth, and the Creator who ordained it all.
- In short, it will be a “University” in the sense that word actually conveys, and not in the sense that institutions in this world make use of it.

There is an upcoming Conference in Kentucky on March 25–27 titled: **Hear and Trust the Lord in the Storm**. The Lexington Kentucky Conference Organizing Committee asked me to put this notice up:

There are only a few rooms available on site. The deadline to book a room or sign up for meals is March 4th. The website for the Kentucky Conference is www.trustthelordinthestorm.info.

Matt Lohmeier, Vern and Whitney Horning and Denver Snuffer speak Saturday. Denver's Saturday talk title is **Christianity is Alive and Well: Christ is Actively Preparing To Return**. He and others will be speaking Sunday as well.

For more Conference details, please visit the Conference website linked above.

We hope to see many of you there.

Lexington Kentucky Conference committee

MARCH 2022

MARCH 1, 2022

Conference Talks

Last Saturday in Boise there was a conference addressing issues particularly relevant to Latter-day Saints. The recordings are now available and can be viewed at this site: **Rescuing the Restoration**

Although many people think the Restoration is entirely preserved and accessible exclusively through an organization, such as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, that is not at all the case. In many ways the institutions of the Restoration are so far separated from what Joseph Smith began that the first generation of believers would not recognize the modern church-daughters of that beginning.

These talks provide some valuable insights into the religion begun by Joseph Smith, and how to continue to believe in the Restoration. We can all own our faith. Indeed, we will all be judged

by how we practice our religion, and cannot push responsibility onto the leaders of the various churches. Whether leaders say they cannot lead you astray, or that they are the “only true church” neither of those claims are true. Their churches have been led astray, and none of them are anything different than what the Lord condemned in the First Vision speaking to Joseph. When it comes to the Restoration churches, they are all wrong, and all their creeds are an abomination in the Lord’s sight. The proponents of them are all corrupt. They draw near to God with their lips, but their hearts are far from the Lord; they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof. They cannot be reformed back into God’s favor at this point, for He has begun something new to rescue the Restoration. You would be well advised to get out of their company.

MARCH 6, 2022

Vaccine Thoughts

Upon close inspection, the statistics about the number of vaccinated deaths from the United Kingdom I linked a few days ago are not particularly meaningful. To make a real comparison would require something other than total deaths in a population that is overwhelmingly vaccinated. Scotland is 93% vaccinated (at the highest) and Northern Ireland is 89% vaccinated (at the lowest) in the United Kingdom. Therefore, it is obvious that the overall death rate from Covid will likely be the largest among the vaccinated. But the question is what the death rate is internally among the unvaccinated, considered alone, in comparison with the death rate is for the vaccinated, considered alone.

I have known five people who have died of Covid. I know the majority of them were not vaccinated, and I believe all five were

not vaccinated. I also know a number of people in various health conditions who have been vaccinated, and none of them have died. But my sample size is far too small to reach any scientific conclusion.

The decision to vaccinate or not is something no-one ought decide for another.

My family has been fortunate. A daughter and son-in-law brought it home to Sunday dinner very early on. We all experienced mild symptoms, and minor annoyances, including loss of smell and taste for a while. But no one required any medical attention. It was like an ordinary cold or the flu.

Despite the family having natural immunity, some of our family have chosen to nevertheless be vaccinated and some have not. It is an individual decision, and everyone accepts the choice made.

Bill Gates remarked that the milder Omicron variant is a “natural vaccine.” Viruses generally get far more infectious and far less deadly as mutated strains develop. That is apparently what this Covid virus has been doing. Maybe the continuing variants will follow that normal pattern and we will soon pay no attention to this viral scare.

The political reaction has been decidedly poor and as much damage has been done by the various governments as by the virus itself.

APRIL 2022

APRIL 30, 2022

Abusing Children

Sexual abuse of children leaves mental distress that can last a lifetime. A mental health counselor told me that the overwhelming majority

of those he helped who were institutionalized with serious mental disorders had been abused as children.

Normal sexual development does not involve introducing the idea of choosing sexuality before puberty, and then behaving in ways that disconnect you from your biology.

One of the gravest of abuses underway at present is called “gender affirming surgery” which consists of mutilating the body of the victim.

Far from ‘preventing suicide’ these radical and unwise abuses do nothing to relieve the underlying contradictions suffered by those who reject their own biology. The more this mental disorder is accepted and encouraged, the more people will find themselves unable to find peace living a lie.

There are two sexes, and we all belong to one or the other. That is true all the way from the surface formation of the body to the individual cells of every organ in the body. No matter how you think, what you believe, or how many lies are shouted and celebrated, every one of us are either male or female.

If you choose to live a lie, you will struggle to accommodate that lie. Suicides have not decreased because of the celebration of sexual confusion and dysphoria, but have increased. That is because there is an evil force afoot in the world that seeks the death and misery of all mankind. One of the most successful great evils of our day is the propagation of sexual confusion, and indoctrinating little children into that confusion at an early age.

It is impossible to make a lie the truth. And it is impossible to live a lie and be at peace.

Popular acceptance of a lie cannot make it true.

Advocating and repeating a lie cannot make it true.

Living a lie does not make it true.

We can find joy in this life, but doing so requires us to conform to a pattern ordained by God. That means to be joyful and at peace we must necessarily find the truth and live it.

MAY 2022

MAY 1, 2022

Changing God's Mind

We don't think about God changing His mind, but it happens. An incident involving Isaiah and King Hezekiah illustrates it:

In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, came unto him and said unto him, Thus says the Lord: Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live. Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall and prayed unto the Lord, and said, Remember now, O Lord, I implore you, how I have walked before you in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in your sight. And Hezekiah wept severely. Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying, Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add unto your days fifteen years. And I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city. (OC Isaiah 13:13)

God's word to Isaiah was that the king would "die and not live." True to the Lord's word, Isaiah delivered the message to Hezekiah and left. In the account of this incident in 2 Kings, as Isaiah was leaving, "before Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Return, and tell Hezekiah..." (2 Kings 6:13).

It was immediately following Hezekiah learning of his impending death that the Lord spoke again to Isaiah and decreed another outcome. So Isaiah returned, and delivered a new message, contradicting and rescinding the first decree.

A message from God can be changed. The outcome of His decree can be altered. Although Hezekiah wept, he did not ask for the Lord to alter the outcome, he accepted it. Bitter as it was for him to realize his life was ending, all he asked was for the Lord to remember his life's faithfulness and that he had done good in God's sight.

Accepting God's decree and submitting to His will is more likely to result in the decree changing than by refusing to do so. God can and does take far more into account than can we.

I have seen the illnesses and deaths of friends and fellow believers and been troubled by the losses. I've tried to change God's mind and prayed for a different outcome for many of those who have suffered recently. In response to continuing prayers to understand God's will, I learned on February 25th that:

some people are taken and not healed because in the Wisdom of God the person is ready and if left will recede rather than advance, and some are taken because, if left, would interfere with and delay or hinder God's purposes for others, and some are given to suffer because it gives them the opportunity to develop in Godly attributes they would not otherwise attain. God's Wisdom is greater than man's and sees more than can man. But in all matters there is reason and wisdom in how matters of health, life and death unfold.

MAY 17, 2022

Gen. 4:9 Restoration Edition

One question has been asked about a change to the Restoration Edition of the scriptures more often than any other. It involves Genesis 4:9, which reads in relevant part as follows:

Therefore, it is given to abide in you: the Record of Heaven, the Comforter, the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, the truth of all things, that which quickens all things—which makes alive all things, that which knows all things, and has all power according to Wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment.

This language deletes a phrase (“peaceable things of immortal glory”) and adds in its place “keys of the kingdom of Heaven.” Many ask why this change was made.

There were two working manuscript copies of the Old Testament for the JST. These are referred to as “OT1” and “OT2.” OT1 was presumably the original dictation which went from Gen. 1–24. Then John Whitmer made a copy of OT1 onto OT2 which then became the working copy. OT2 bears marks of later editorial changes by Joseph’s scribes.

Here is how OT1 reads: “comfrorter the peacable things of immortal grory”

There was an editorial change on OT2, which was at the time the working document, and it reads: “the peaceable things of immortal glory” is crossed out and replaced with “keys of the kingdom of heaven”.

The book, *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible*, by Scott Faulring, Kent Jackson, and Robert Matthews states that for this portion of the manuscript that “Sidney was the scribe for almost all of these changes.” They state their belief that “These changes

were dictated by Joseph Smith, and they involve revising both word choices and the meaning of the text, rather than merely repairing writing errors.” The Scripture Committee representative compared the handwriting of this change with examples from Sidney’s handwriting and it seemed to match his.

This very change was brought to the attention of the Scripture Committee, and was referred to me for consideration and a decision. The many statements of Joseph Smith, and revelations received by him, make the “keys of the kingdom” a term with specific meaning. Here are some examples:

“in one sense of the word the keys of the Kingdom, which consists in **the key of knowledge**” T&C 151:12.

“for I have given unto you **the kingdom, and the keys of the mysteries** of the kingdom shall not be taken from my servant Joseph Smith Jr. while he lives, inasmuch as he obeys my ordinances” T&C 51:2.

“And this greater Priesthood administers the gospel and holds **the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God**” T&C 82:12.

Speaking of his brother, Hyrum, the Lord said:

And from this time forth I appoint unto him that he may be a prophet, and a seer, and a revelator unto my church, as well as my servant Joseph, that he may act in concert also with my servant Joseph, and that he shall receive counsel from my servant Joseph, who shall show unto him **the keys whereby he may ask and receive**, and be crowned with the same blessings.

T&C 141:32

As explained in the RE Glossary, “Keys of the Kingdom” means:

To be able to ask and have God answer (see T&C 141:32; compare T&C 26:20; 82:12; 90:1; 131:5; and 151:12). Joseph Smith used the term “keys of the kingdom” to mean when a person can ask and receive an answer each time he asks. Those directed by God hold the keys of the kingdom because the kingdom belongs to God, and God must direct its affairs for it to be His.

The change made to OT2 is consistent with the purpose of the Holy Ghost. It opens a line of communication in which a person can ask God and receive an answer; which is necessary to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. For without communication from the Heavenly King, there is no established people who are His.

This is the sense in which Joseph intended the word change meaning in Genesis 4:9. The Restoration Edition respects that change made by Joseph and included the wording as he edited it to read.

JUNE 2022

JUNE 12, 2022

Voting

There are numerous voting irregularities in the United States that seem to be increasing. The State of Utah is particularly troubled by these issues. The next time you vote in an election, I would recommend that you bring your vote-by-mail ballot with you to the polling station and vote in person. If they tell you that you have already voted, get your mail-in ballot out and show them that you did not vote and ask that the Sheriff be called to investigate voter fraud.

If all you do is mail in your ballot, there is no guarantee that it will actually be counted in the way in which you voted. Two women in Utah are challenging the voting system adopted in Utah, which appears to be particularly corrupted by the Utah authorities. One of them is a friend of mine who I discussed this with earlier this week. They have a website worth looking at which explains some of what they have discovered, and encountered. Their website is linked here: TwoRedPills.org

None of us want to think our voting system has been compromised, but there is a growing body of information that suggests that is exactly the case. One recent article refers to an investigation that found 350,000 dead people on voting rolls in 42 states.

Suppressing votes is no different from allowing false votes to cancel out the will of the voters. The goal of those who manipulate voting to gain power is to overthrow freedom. The Book of Mormon is rather candid about the threat of gentiles losing freedom, followed by their destruction:

And whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they shall be destroyed; for the Lord will not suffer that the blood of his saints which shall be shed by them shall always cry unto him from the ground for vengeance upon them and yet he avengeth them not. Wherefore, O ye gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shewn unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you—which are built up to get power and gain—and the work, yea, even the work of destruction come upon you, yea, even the sword

of the justice of the eternal God shall fall upon you to your overthrow and destruction if ye shall suffer these things to be. Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you, that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation because of this secret combination which shall be among you; or woe be unto it because of the blood of them who have been slain, for they cry from the dust for vengeance upon it, and also upon those who build it up. (NC Ether 3:18)

The first step is to recognize the threat. The next is to expose and oppose it. We need to correct it before we lose our right to choose who holds office. If fraud determines who heads the government, then abuses and evil will surely follow.

JUNE 26, 2022

Comment on T&C 154

Section 154 of the Teachings and Commandments was included in the Scriptures project to preserve some important material that would otherwise be missing. Its content deserves some careful attention.

The material begins with this explanation:

When God delivers a dispensation of the gospel to the earth, the head of that dispensation is granted the right and privilege of organizing the dispensation. As the head organizes their dispensation according to righteous principles and receives God's approval of the pattern, the dispensation is established and remains in effect until apostasy necessitates another restoration. Adam was given the first dispensation, and he patterned it after the order of Heaven. Abraham was also given a dispensation, which he patterned after Adam's dispensation.

This confirms that from the time of Adam until the time of Abraham dispensations were organized in the same way: After “the order of Heaven”—which means after a family. The generations between them had one designated “father” figure who was the family representative presiding and receiving from God the Father the word of counsel and direction for the family. Their names were Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah, Shem, and then some generations later Abraham was adopted into that line to receive “the blessings of the Fathers, and the right whereunto [he] should be ordained to administer the same.” Which held the promise

to be a Father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions and to keep the commandments of God [he] became a rightful heir, a high priest, holding the right belonging to the Fathers. (T&C 145 - BOA 1:1)

But later following apostasy Moses received a new dispensation, but did not reestablish the original Order. Instead, Moses found the hardness of heart of Abraham’s descendants prevented the Order from being established, and so reorganized his dispensation to reflect the challenge of that hardness. “Moses was given a dispensation, but established a different pattern for the children of Israel according to the hardness of their hearts, which dispensation John the Baptist brought to a lawful close” (T&C 145:4). When Moses was taken, the opportunity for the original Order ended:

Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also. And the lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holds the key of the ministering of angels, and the preparatory gospel, which gospel is the gospel of repentance, and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of

carnal commandments, which the Lord in his wrath caused to continue with the house of Aaron, among the children of Israel, until John[.] (T&C 82:14)

Jesus Christ organized His dispensation after Abraham's. (T&C 145:5) Joseph Smith organized an imitation of Christ's dispensation. (T&C 145:6)

It has always been the obligation and right of Adam, who was given dominion over this creation at the beginning, under the guidance of Jesus Christ to establish each dispensation.

And again, God purposed in himself that there should not be an Eternal fullness until every dispensation should be fulfilled and gathered together in one, and that all things whatever that should be gathered together in one, in those dispensations, unto the same fullness and Eternal glory, should be in Christ Jesus. Therefore, he set the ordinances to be the same for ever and ever, and set Adam to watch over them, to reveal them from Heaven to man or to send angels to reveal them. (T&C 140: 5–6)

You can know from this that each of these dispensations, however organized by the head, was approved and permitted by Father Adam. Although the original fit a specific pattern, later dispensations were ordered according to the faithfulness, heed and diligence of the respective generations. We have not seen the original Order for millennia. In Adam's day,

The Order of this Priesthood was confirmed to be handed down from father to son, and rightly belongs to the literal descendants of the chosen seed to whom the promises were made. This Order was instituted in the days of Adam, and came down by lineage[.] (T&C 154:9)

In the present dispensation we have not yet been organized, and there is a reason for that. If we are not going to accomplish all that needs to be done to vindicate the Lord's covenants, then having another incomplete organization linger as a dead relic is something I refuse to accept. I will not leave behind an institution to be corrupted by the cares of this world, accumulate wealth, power, influence and popularity, as has been done with each of the prior dispensations as they lapse into apostasy. If all we accomplish is an incomplete gesture, as has always been the case before, then I do not want to usher in such a tool for the adversary to use.

Adam kept a book in which he recorded teachings, testimony and sacred events:

And a book of remembrance was kept, in which was recorded in the language of Adam, for it was given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration. And by them their children were taught to read and write, having a language which was pure and undefiled. Now this same Priesthood which was in the beginning shall be in the end of the world also (now this prophecy Adam spoke as he was moved upon by the holy ghost). (Gen. 3:14)

Interestingly, Adam did not record his own baptism in the record he kept. Enoch later recorded that event. But what Adam did record testifies about the "same Priesthood which was in the beginning [that] shall be in the end of the world also." He wrote that God the Father commanded him (Adam) to,

believe on his Only Begotten Son, even him who he declared should come in the meridian of time, who was prepared from before the foundation of the world. And thus the gospel began to be preached from the beginning, being declared by holy

angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the holy ghost. And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam by a holy ordinance, and the gospel preached, and a decree sent forth that it should be in the world until the end thereof. And thus it was. Amen. (Gen. 3:13)

It was through a “holy ordinance” that the mission of God’s Only Begotten Son that should come in the meridian of time was declared to Adam. The ordinance taught Adam that this Son of God was prepared before the foundation of the world. It instructed Adam in things before the world, and in the creation of the world, and in the redemption of the world, all through “a holy ordinance.”

And, Adam wrote, “this same Priesthood which was in the beginning shall be in the end of the world also (now this prophecy Adam spoke as he was moved upon by the holy ghost).” But whether we see that in our generation or not is completely dependent upon the heed and diligence we give to the Lord.

There is a specific obligation we know is coming, and until that obligation is fulfilled I will not do anything to organize any institution, church, or pattern. The Lord has explained to us:

Whenever I have people who are mine, I command them to build a house, a holy habitation, a sacred place where my presence can dwell or where the Holy Spirit of Promise can minister, because it is in such a place that it has been ordained to recover you, establish by my word and my oath your marriages, and endow my people with knowledge from on high that will unfold to you the mysteries of godliness, instruct you in my ways, that you may walk in my path. And all the outcasts of Israel will I gather to my house, and the jealousy of Ephraim

and Judah will end; Ephraim will not envy Judah and Judah will not provoke Ephraim. (T&C 157:41)

We do not yet have a command to build a house for the Lord. There are reasons for that.

If, and when, such a command is given, then the “holy ordinance” with which Adam was endowed will be restored to the state Adam determines should be conferred upon us. It is then, and only then, that an Order can be set up in this dispensation. It will be patterned after the Order of Heaven, which is after the pattern of a family, and it will belong to Adam, and Jesus Christ who presides over Adam, and God the Father, and the Hosts of Heaven. But if we fail in this effort, then I would want all of this to fall to the earth, and dwindle into dust, with no power, influence, dominion, popularity, control, and gathering of wealth to be continued from our failed effort. We already have countless institutions founded by the Lord and then hijacked by the adversary claiming to be God’s church and kingdom. WE should recognize the prophetic counsel of Nephi about the present condition of the world’s various church denominations. WE should abhor doing nothing better than what Nephi foretold would be the sad state of religions today. I set his warning out at some length below:

For it shall come to pass in that day that the churches which are built up, and not unto the Lord, when the one shall say unto the other, Behold, I, I am the Lord’s—and the other shall say, I, I am the Lord’s—and thus shall everyone say that hath built up churches and not unto the Lord. And they shall contend one with another, and their priests shall contend one with another, and they shall teach with their learning, and deny the holy ghost which giveth utterance. And they deny the

power of God, the Holy One of Israel. And they say unto the people, Hearken unto us and hear ye our precept, for behold, there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men. Behold, hearken ye unto my precept. If they shall say there is a miracle wrought by the hand of the Lord, believe it not; for this day he is not a God of miracles; he hath done his work. Yea, and there shall be many which shall say, Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die and it shall be well with us. And there shall also be many which shall say, Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God, he will justify in committing a little sin. Yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor, there is no harm in this. And do all these things, for tomorrow we die. And if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God. Yea, and there shall be many which shall teach after this manner false, and vain, and foolish doctrines, and shall be puffed up in their hearts, and shall seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord. And their works shall be in the dark, and the blood of the saints shall cry from the ground against them.

Yea, they have all gone out of the way, they have become corrupted; because of pride, and because of false teachers, and false doctrine, their churches have become corrupted, and their churches are lifted up; because of pride, they are puffed up. They rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries; they rob the poor because of their fine clothing, and they persecute the meek and the poor in heart because in their pride they are puffed up. They wear stiff necks and high heads, yea, and

because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms, they have all gone astray, save it be a few who are the humble followers of Christ. Nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men.

O the wise, and the learned, and the rich, that are puffed up in the pride of their hearts, and all those who preach false doctrines, and all those who commit whoredoms and pervert the right way of the Lord, Woe, woe, woe be unto them, saith the Lord God Almighty, for they shall be thrust down to hell.

Woe unto them that turn aside the just for a thing of naught, and revile against that which is good and say that it is of no worth, for the day shall come that the Lord God will speedily visit the inhabitants of the earth. And in that day that they are fully ripe in iniquity, they shall perish. But behold, if the inhabitants of the earth shall repent of their wickedness and abominations, they shall not be destroyed, saith the Lord of Hosts. But behold, that great and abominable church, the whore of all the earth, must tumble to the earth, and great must be the fall thereof. For the kingdom of the Devil must shake, and they which belong to it must needs be stirred up unto repentance, or the Devil will grasp them with his everlasting chains and they be stirred up to anger and perish. For behold, at that day shall he rage in the hearts of the children of men and stir them up to anger against that which is good. And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say, All is well in Zion, yea, Zion prospereth, all is well. And thus the Devil cheateth their souls and leadeth them away carefully down to hell. And

behold, others he flattereth away and telleth them there is no hell. And he saith unto them, I am no devil, for there is none. And thus he whispereth in their ears until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance. Yea, they are grasped with death and hell; and death, and hell, and the Devil, and all that have been seized therewith must stand before the throne of God and be judged according to their works, from whence they must go into the place prepared for them, even a lake of fire and brimstone, which is Endless torment. Therefore, woe be unto him that is at ease in Zion.

Woe be unto him that crieth, All is well. Yea, woe be unto him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men, and denieth the power of God and the gift of the holy ghost. Yea, woe be unto him that saith, We have received and we need no more. And in fine, woe unto all those who tremble and are angry because of the truth of God. For behold, he that is built upon the rock receiveth it with gladness, and he that is built upon a sandy foundation trembleth, lest he shall fall.

Woe be unto him that shall say, We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough. For behold, thus saith the Lord God, I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. And blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom. For unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough—shall be taken away even that which they have. Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall

hearken unto the precepts of men, save their precepts shall be given by the power of the holy ghost.

Woe be unto the gentiles, saith the Lord God of Hosts, for notwithstanding I shall lengthen out mine arm unto them from day to day, they will deny me. Nevertheless, I will be merciful unto them, saith the Lord God, if they will repent and come unto me, for mine arm is lengthened out all the day long, saith the Lord God of Hosts. (RE 2 Ne. 12:1-7)

It is foolish to want to have such vanity follow from our opportunity. If we can not avoid imitating the ruined landscape of religious failure surrounding us, all contending to corrupt and waylay the souls of men, then we should humbly let it end with us. But if we press on, and gain the Lord's gathering as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, then we should give strict heed and diligence to Him.

Yea, blessed are they whose feet stand upon the land of Zion, who have obeyed my gospel, for they shall receive for their reward the good things of the earth, and it shall bring forth in her strength. And they also shall be crowned with blessings from above, yea, and with commandments not a few, and with revelations in their time, they that are faithful and diligent before me. (T&C 46:1)

Leave behind your ambitions. Depart from your anger, contention, jealousies, and your uncontrolled worldliness. Be sober minded. Control your appetites. Flee from sin. Subdue the flesh. Become meek as a child, and harmless as a dove. Flee from Babylon and shake its dust from off your feet. Awake and arise.

We can fail. WE can succeed. But we will only succeed by our heed and diligence to the Lord's commands.

JULYY 2022

JULY 4, 2022

July 4, 2022

The United States of America is an experiment in limited government. It was founded through the inspiration of God, who took credit for the Constitution. As explained in revelation, the Lord stated plainly about the

constitution of the people, which I have suffered to be established and should be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh, according to just and holy principles, that every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity according to the moral agency which I have given unto them, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment. Therefore, it is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another, and for this purpose have I established the constitution of this land by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood. (T&C 101:17)

We have elected unwise men (and women) to office who do not uphold the Constitution. Therefore we are presently in a post-Constitutional era. But the system allows a return to limited government by electing people to office who will respect the limits of the offices they occupy. As explained in another revelation:

concerning the laws of the land, it is my will that my people should observe to do all things whatever I command them, and that law of the land which is constitutional, supporting the principles of freedom in maintaining rights and privileges belonging to all mankind, is justifiable before me; therefore,

I, the Lord, justify you and your brethren of my church in befriending that law which is the constitutional law of the land. And as pertaining to law of man, whatever is more or less than this comes of evil. I, the Lord your God, make you free; therefore, you are free indeed, and the law also makes you free. Nevertheless, when the wicked rule, the people mourn. Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men you should observe to uphold; otherwise, whatever is less than these comes of evil. (T&C 98:2)

The United States is a country that can avoid violent uprisings and repeated civil wars by changing elected officials at the ballot box. This is an election year. When you decide whether or not to vote, remember that the right to vote is the right to choose how you will be governed.

If you want your rights respected, then vote for those who will maintain the rights and privileges belonging to all mankind. Those in office today are not only disrespectful of individual freedoms, but they are also unwise in their decision-making. That is true of both political parties.

Aspiring men crave control over others. We have trusted aspiring men all too often with elected offices, and they have abused our trust. When you vote, choose wisely.

JULY 8, 2022

Interview Today

I did an interview today with Steven Pnyakker, the host of Mormon Book Reviews. He has asked me for an interview for more than a year, and I relented. The interview is on his YouTube channel and is linked here: [Denver Snuffer Shares His Story With An Evangelical](#)

JULY 13, 2022

Fireside in August

A Fireside has been organized for August 20 at the Holm Heritage Center in Hildale, Utah. I've been invited to speak and will be participating. It is free to the public and being held at that location in the hope of having those who practice plural marriage attend. There are a number of "polygamists" (not technically the right term, by the way) living in that part of the state, and this location is intended to be convenient for them to attend.

The Fireside is titled: "You Never Knew My Heart"—which is a statement made by Joseph Smith to the people in Nauvoo in April 1844, two months before he was killed. Whitney Horning will be speaking before me, giving a talk titled "A Servant's Heart." My talk is titled "...The Pure in Heart, and the Wise, and the Noble, and the Virtuous..." which is a quote from a revelation to Joseph Smith in 1839, while he was in Liberty Jail.

I have heard that these two talks will be broadcast live on Youtube, and I will put up additional details as the date gets closer.

The address of the Fireside is: Holm Heritage Center, 1065 N. Carling Street, Hildale, UT 84784.

Although I do not agree with the practice of plural wives, and hope to see it come to an end, I am not going to Hildale to inflict wounds on members of that community. I hope to have something interesting to say that will let this subject be examined and understood better. Given the radical differences between the community living this marital practice and those who, like myself, practice and believe in monogamy, it is easy for the differences to result in bitter division. I'm hoping both sides become kinder toward one another.

There are libraries of material discussing this subject. Much of it in the form of “histories” that use second, third, fourth and fifth-hand accounts. Everyone’s view is dependent on who you trust. speaking before me, giving a talk titled “A Servant’s Heart.” My talk is titled “...The Pure in Heart, and the Wise, and the Noble, and the Virtuous...” which is a quote from a revelation to Joseph Smith in 1839, while he was in Liberty Jail.

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JULY 14, 2022

Ethics

There is a newly revised Professional Responsibility Rule, governing the ethics of lawyers. I thought it might be of general interest, so I am posting the new standard described by the Utah State Bar below:

RPCo8.04(c). **Misconduct.** AMEND. Codifies in new paragraph (2) Ethics Advisory Opinion 02-05, which concluded that 8.4(1)(c) (conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation) does not apply to government attorneys overseeing an otherwise legal undercover criminal investigation.

If you click on the link to the Ethics Advisory Opinion you will be able to read the reasoning underlying the change.

Our government has been caught in the trap the Lord warned us against: “Verily, verily I say unto you, woe be unto him that lies to deceive because he supposes that another lies to deceive, for such are not exempt from the justice of God.” T&C JSH 10:12

AUGUST 2022

AUGUST 8, 2022

Answer on Forgiveness

In response to prayers over the last several months I received the following Answer to an Inquiry About Forgiveness:

You have inquired of me concerning the questions raised by the scriptures which state, Then came Peter to him and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Until seven times? Jesus said unto him, I say not unto you, until seven times, but, until seventy times seven; on the one hand, and the scripture which states, You shall love your wife with all your heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else, and he that looks upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the spirit, and if he repent not he shall be cast out. You shall not commit adultery, and he that commits adultery and repents not shall be cast out; and

he that commits adultery and repents with all his heart, and forsakes and does it no more, you shall forgive him; but if he does it again, he shall not be forgiven, but shall be cast out; on the other hand. I answer your inquiry as follows:

In the Answer to Prayer for Covenant you were told to, Be like me. You have all been wounded, your hearts pierced through with sorrows because of how the world has treated you. But you have also scarred one another by your unkind treatment of each other, and you do not notice your misconduct toward others because you think yourself justified in this. You bear the scars on your countenances, from the soles of your feet to the head, and every heart is faint. Your visages have been so marred that your hardness, mistrust, suspicions, resentments, fear, jealousies, and anger toward your fellow man bear outward witness of your inner self; you cannot hide it. When I appear to you, instead of confidence, you feel shame. You fear and withdraw from me because you bear the blood and sins of your treatment of brothers and sisters. Come to me and I will make sins as scarlet become white as snow, and I will make you stand boldly before me, confident of my love. I descended below it all, and know the sorrows of you all, and have borne the grief of it all, and I say to you, Forgive one another. Be tender with one another, pursue judgment, bless the oppressed, care for the orphan, and uplift the widow in her need, for I have redeemed you from being orphaned and taken you that you are no longer a widowed people. Rejoice in me, and rejoice with your brethren and sisters who are mine also. Be one.

How can you be one if you gather together with another who has been the adulterer again after being forgiven? And how

can a man love his wife with all his heart and cleave unto her and none else if he commit adultery again after being forgiven?

You did not ask, but remember that I have said also that, You shall not kill, and he that kills shall not have forgiveness, neither in this world nor in the world to come. And again, you shall not kill; he that kills shall die. You shall not steal, and he that steals and will not repent shall be cast out. You shall not lie; he that lies and will not repent shall be cast out. How can you be one with he who murders, with the liar who deceives, and with the thief who steals? I say to you that you cannot be one when you are fractured and your little ones threatened by the disobedience of the adulterer, murderer, liar and thief who will not repent.

You did not ask me, but I say that your question arises from the instructions I gave you: I have told you that to remove authority to use priesthood outside a man's family requires a unanimous decision by twelve women. A council of twelve women must be convened, either in the man's home fellowship among those who are acquainted with his daily walk, or in private at a general conference, also including among the twelve women from the conference those who are acquainted with his daily walk, so that no injustice results. Reinstatement of the man's authority must be considered by the same council of twelve women when the man petitions for the decision to be rescinded, and requires seven of the twelve to agree upon his reinstatement, which can occur at any time. During the period of suspension, nothing affects the man's duties and responsibility in his own family. I say to you, if a man has been suspended for adultery, and then been reinstated, and return again to adultery, he shall not be reinstated again, for to do so

places my community at peril. These words were to guard so that no injustice results. I ask, is there injustice if my people cannot become one because of disobedience? Even a single disobedient soul who breaks the hearts of others by his sinful disobedience can destroy the peace of all my people. I say again, Each of you must equally walk truly in my path, not only to profess, but to do as you profess. You shall not show mercy to the disobedient when to do so results in injustice to the people who seek to become one. You shall not forgive the adulterer and welcome him into the community when he has been forgiven and returns again to his sin. You shall not place the community at peril by embracing the willful and unrepentant among you, to leave your little ones at peril of injury, harm, and destruction. Study the words given in the Answer to Prayer for Covenant, and you will see how to regard one another, how to succor one another, how to protect one another, and how to live in peace with one another. I have given what I have given to be followed, neither to be added to nor taken from, but to be your counsel and guide. Do as you are bidden and you will have peace in this troubled world, which will be your first reward.

AUGUST 8, 2022

August 20th Talk

I will be in Hildale, Utah on the 20th of this month to address the subject of Plural Wives again. It is not a subject I enjoy discussing, but this will be an attempt to at least open the door for those of that outcast community to understand why I disagree with the practice. I'm hoping those who live in the isolated confines of practicing an illegal form of marriage will be willing to at least listen to the

talk. I am not coming to re-injure old wounds, but to explain how I have reached a contrary conclusion.

Both sides should stop fearing a discussion across the divide. I'm not coming to condemn or judge, but to explain my views and why I hold them. It is free to the public and will be held at the Holm Heritage Center, 1065 N. Carling Street, Hildale, UT 84784. I hope members of the various factions will accept the invitation to attend. I'm not going to ask you to join an organization, donate, or purchase anything. I'm just asking for some of your time to listen. I hope to say something of value.

AUGUST 18, 2022

August 20 Fireside Information

This is the schedule for the August 20th Fireside, and other planned activities this same coming weekend:

Friday August 19th

6:00 PM - Gathering at Ianthius & Gwen Barlow's Home -
All are welcome!

6:30 PM - Breaking our fast together (Those that are fasting)

Bring something to BBQ for yourself

Side dishes/refreshments/cutlery will be provided

Ianthius Barlow's Home Address:

2264 E South St, Fredonia, AZ 86022

Google Maps Pin: <https://goo.gl/maps/b7htxPBDFCG4TR3r7>

This is the Apple Maps Pin: https://maps.apple.com/?address=2264%20E%20202600%20S,%20Valentine,%20AZ%20%2086022,%20United%20States&ll=36.943553,-112.922763&q=-Dropped%20Pin&_ext=EiYpiuHoGzN4QkAx644hQmo7X-MA5VLcOeFl5QkBBIUkMG7I6XMBQAw%3D%3D

Saturday August 20th

1:00 PM - Fireside Begins at Holm Heritage Event Center

Agenda will be Whitney Horning, followed by Denver Snuffer, followed by a Q&A (if time allows)

We are anticipating this will be about of 2–3 hours long with a 5–10 minute break to be determined by the speakers.

Once the fireside concludes, we will rearrange the chairs and set up tables to eat and hang out. There will be salads prepared and a taco food truck has agreed to show up. *If you anticipate utilizing the food truck for your dinner meal, please email us so we can give them an approximate headcount.*

EMAIL ADDRESS: august20fireside@gmail.com

The address for the Holm Heritage Event Center is:

965 North Carling Street, Hildale, Utah 84737

Google Maps Pin: [https://goo.gl/maps/](https://goo.gl/maps/AQGmgMWZs3Z7ruE46)

AQGmgMWZs3Z7ruE46

Apple Maps Pin: https://maps.apple.com/?address=1055%20Carling%20St,%20Hurricane,%20UT%20%2084737,%20United%20States&ll=37.008519,-112.970710&q=Dropped%20Pin&_ext=EiYpZZtlUYSAQkAxHCCAtHw+XMA543CLraqBQkBB-WKMIzcQ9XMBQAw%3D%3D

The fireside will also be live streamed live on YouTube, linked here:

https://youtu.be/J5H_bBT_vaA

Sunday August 21st

10:00 AM - Gathering at the Colorado City Cottonwood Park for Sacramento

Bread (including gluten free) and wine will be provided

We will have some seating available. Just in case we don't have enough, please bring your own blanket or a comfy chair if you can.

Sacrament cups will be provided

Following Sacrament, we will have 1 to 2 speakers share a spiritual message.

Cottonwood Park address is: 100-176 Colvin St Colorado City, AZ 86021

Google Maps: <https://goo.gl/maps/5ShM4FMpCQA7Fj2o9>

Apple Maps: https://maps.apple.com/?address=100%E2%80%93176%20Colvin%20St,%20Colorado%20City,%20AZ%20%2086021,%20United%20States&aid=3210002757397407582&ll=36.995605,-112.972929&osp=9902&q=Cottonwood%20Park&_ext=CjIKBQgEEOIBCgQIBRADCgQ-IBhASCgQICgABCgQIUhAHCgQIVRANCgQIWRAGC-gUIpAEQARikKTnLoYg+foJAMdjC4iZZPlzAOQ2h7xOs-foJAQR89j5srPlzA

FIRESIDE FLYER

Flyers for this event have been direct mailed to all 2000 residents of the Colorado City/Hildale Area. Here is a link if you would like to share it with anyone. <https://www.dropbox.com/s/31xmb0a4shsi4nk/Afternoon%20Fireside%20Flyer%20%28CMYK%29.png?dl=0>

INVITATION VIDEO

Here is a link to the invitation video that is being shared around the polygamist community. Please share this with anyone you feel would benefit from this fireside.

<https://youtu.be/MsIXKd6LLZM>

LOCAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Water Canyon Resort still has cabins available for the weekend. They can be reserved at watercanyonresort.com They have also recently just opened an rv/trailer park and those reservations can be made by calling Shane at 435-229-4747.

There is also free camping available on nearby BLM land. Here is a link:

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/canaan-mountain-wilderness>

If you have any questions, please email us at august2ofireside@gmail.com

We hope to see you all soon! And please forward this email along to all those within our community.

Sincerely,

August 20th Fireside Fellowship

AUGUST 20, 2022

Paper Available

The paper used for the Hildale Fireside is now available as a downloadable pdf, for those who are interested in reading the larger, expanded version of the comments I made earlier today. Linked here: [Hildale Fireside Talk Paper: Pure in heart, wise, noble, virtuous...](#)

AUGUST 26, 2022

Rescuing the Restoration

I've intended to put up a link for some time, and am finally getting it done. The book [Rescuing the Restoration: The Lord Sets His Hand Again](#) is available on Amazon. It is a summary prepared by over 30 contributors, and answers many questions about a

religious movement inspired by God (not a church) that is currently underway. It is a grassroots inspired effort to reconnect with what the Lord began in 1820, and documents the things now underway. By clicking on the title it will link you to the book on Amazon.

SEPTEMBER 2022

SEPTEMBER 18, 2022

September 23–25 Conference

Next weekend in Syracuse and Layton Utah there will be a conference focusing on preparation and independence. It is the Stand Independent Fall Conference and the website giving details is linked here: [**If You Are Prepared You Need Not Fear.**](#)

I've been asked to speak on Sunday, the 25th, and have accepted the invitation. During the conference there are a number of workshops and presentations planned that should inform and help those who attend.

Those who want to declare great things, and make themselves appear to be a source of great light and understanding hardly help anyone. There are no end of people offering themselves up to be admired and followed. Between the mentally unstable, foolish, vain and ambitious sideshows that constantly vie for attention, I'm glad there are people of good cheer trying to make a practical difference in our lives. Dreamers and schemers only benefit by leading the gullible and sign-seekers to depart from us.

A firm mind in every form of godliness is hard to find. But vanity and foolishness advertises itself openly, urging you to notice, clamoring for your attention.

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear the word of the Lord; thus says the Lord God: Woe unto the foolish prophets that follow their own spirit and have seen nothing. O Israel, your prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. You have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The Lord says — and the Lord has not sent them; and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. Have you not seen a vain vision, and have you not spoken a lying divination, whereas you say, The Lord says it — albeit I have not spoken? Therefore, thus says the Lord God: Because you have spoken vanity and seen lies, therefore behold, I am against you, says the Lord God. And my hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity and that divine lies. They shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and you shall know that I am the Lord God. (RE Eze. 5:3–4.)

One fool falls into shame and folly and another rushes to occupy his place.

The whole of “Mormonism” from the LDS to the Community of Christ, to the polygamists, Mormonism fracturing and failing from within. There is no end of the purported “prophets, seers and revelators” among all these people, but none of them declare the Lord’s words, teach righteousness and live humbly before God. We are in peril because we go adrift continually.

The Hebrew Translation of the Stick of Joseph is now in the final editing. We hope to have it finished soon. Prophecies have been and are being fulfilled. It is timely to have a conference about standing independent. The world is becoming less stable and more vulnerable to widespread failure daily. It is a good time to learn something about preparation and independence. And a good time to ignore the clamor of foolish men.

SEPTEMBER 28, 2022

Last Conference Talks

The talks from last weekend's conference are now up online. The various links are provided below:

Full Conference Presentation [linked here](#).

Stephanie's talk is [linked here](#).

My talk is [linked here](#).

It was a great gathering and we were able to catch up with some friends. An interfaith conference will be held next month (October) and I will put up links for that as the event gets closer.

