

St. George Conference Q&A - 3/2017
©2017 Denver C. Snuffer

This is based upon both email and written questions I have received.

“Please explain Brigham Young.” (Well, there is the period there.)

Answer: No.

“Why would Brigham Young be seen in the Celestial Kingdom with Joseph Smith by Joseph F. Smith?”

Answer: D&C section 138, which is the vision of the Redemption of the Dead, was received by Joseph F. Smith in the waning days of his life. The church he led at the time was facing enormous challenges and problems at that moment. He had declining health and he was contemplating his own imminent death and concerned about what would come next for him. The vision of the Redemption of the Dead has nothing to do with the problems confronted by the LDS institution he led at the time. It is not an institutional answer. It is a personal revelation to a dying man addressing his individual concerns.

It was important enough to him, that he returned to the meeting of the First Presidency in Quorum of the Twelve and said that he had recently received a series of revelations and that he would write them up.

The visions were received in the late September-early October time frame, then written up, read in the October general conference, and he was dead in November. So, his apprehension about death that the revelation he received addressed, was more than justified. He was dead the next month.

When the document got written up, it was channeled through the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, before it was released. And as a consequence of it getting approved, the language had to be satisfactory to the church’s leaders.

The language about Brigham Young in the middle of that revelation does not hold any reassuring value to Joseph F. Smith about his imminent death, but it is a great comfort to the church and to the members of the church who had followed Brigham Young and his successors.

We do not have a Joseph F. Smith papers project. We also do not have access to the minutes of the First Presidency and the Quorum of The Twelve, those are guarded and only allowed to be inspected very selectively. Therefore what we don't know is if the reference to Brigham Young was in the original write up by Joseph F., or if it was added by someone, and if so, when?

We know a great deal of how many of Joseph Smith Jr.’s revelations were edited and altered. What was revealed to Joseph was oftentimes recorded at the moment it was received. Many

of the originals were not kept, and we have copies of the original. In some cases we have multiple copies of copies, and have the ability to compare different versions. Even some recorded versions that are original and contemporaneous have been changed by later editing; but we have the handwriting to compare with other handwriting samples and therefore can determine who made a change. Sometimes we can also determine when they made a change. That kind of information is available for Joseph Smith, Jr. We have nothing like that for Joseph F. Smith.

Joseph F. Smith testified under oath, as church president, before the US Senate in the Smoot senate confirmation hearings. He was asked point blank if he had ever had a revelation. He denied that he had ever had a revelation. You can read his testimony in Michael Paulos' book, *The Mormon Church on Trial: Transcripts of the Reed Smoot Hearings*.

I believe he testified honestly before the US Senate and commend him for his honesty. That was approximately 13 years before his death. But then a month before his death, as he worried about dying, and was perhaps more contrite, humble and reflective than he had ever been in his life, he did receive a revelation and I don't think he lied then either. Something happened and he did receive several remarkable revelations.

What I don't know is how trustworthy the manuscript is for the Vision of the Redemption of the Dead (Section 138). Because through the Joseph Smith Papers project we know the LDS church makes changes and edits to historical materials, including revelations of Joseph Smith Jr. What the church has later published in many important documents was not the original content, but altered documents to support later church priorities.

So, if you want to know what Brigham Young was doing in the Vision of the Redemption of the Dead, which is not a document that appears in this new set of scriptures as Chris Hamill explained, then you will need to ask Joseph F. Smith. It is not one of the questions I put to him, because frankly I was not interested in that during my visit with him.

“Is it better to sacrifice individual truth-seeking for the sake of marital unity?”

Answer: One of the documents that is in the new set of scriptures is the letter that Hyrum Smith wrote, his general epistle to the church giving advice. I put a copy of that up on my website, you can read it there, but it gives marital advice and the relationship between the man and the woman is given high priority, above religious obligations, including even baptism. And so get the new scriptures, read Hyrum Smith's advice, then you reach your own conclusion.

“Did the event involving the woman taken in adultery happen? It is not in the Testimony of John.”

Answer: Here's my understanding: the incident involving the Lord and the woman taken in adultery really did happen. It was a well-known story that had been handed down all the way back from New Testament times, but it was never in the record of John. As it turns out, the only place that we have it is in the version of the Gospel of John that's been handed down to

us. But that got added by a monk who, like everyone else, believed the story to be authentic, everyone believed the story to be trustworthy, but it wasn't in any of the gospel accounts. Therefore a copyist put it into John's gospel but John didn't put it in there. Accordingly, I did not put it into the Testimony of John. But I don't doubt the incident happened and I don't doubt that the Lord handled it in the way in which it's told. It's just not John's story.

“Will you comment on the Testimony of John and explain how it was received?”

Answer: I don't assert or claim interpretive authority over the text. I will testify to you that the text is a revelation, that it came from God, that it is a gift given to us, and it's His.

Ultimately everything that is part of the Gospel narrative belongs to the Lord and therefore I believe it would be a mistake for me to begin to announce interpretations related to a document when I don't believe that I own that right. If I do so, I run the risk of cutting off other people's insight or inspired reading of a text that may bless and benefit me if I were to hear it. If I close their mind, if I shut their mouths, if I get out ahead of them when they have the right to do so, then I'm the poorer for that and you're the poorer for that.

Joseph Smith once said that he may have made a lot of mistakes but there's no mistakes in the revelations. That was his way of saying they are not his property. And I think careful and solemn and ponderous thought about what failed before and the list of the stuff I read that said, 'this is the criteria of the churches that God intends to destroy' should make all of us look at the life of Joseph Smith, not merely as a marvelous work by a prophet called of God who accomplish great things, but it should make us ask ourselves:

1. Why did it result in what we see now?
2. Why did it not result in Zion?
3. Why did it not result in a temple to which Christ came to restore the fullness or that which has been lost unto you? (D&C 124:28)
4. Why did it not work?
5. Why is there a multi-billion-dollar institution and a number of extraordinarily wealthy splinter cults, all of which have absolutely no interest in turning everything back over to the Lord?
6. What if we don't have anything to give Him?
7. What if you don't have an office to bestow upon Him?
8. What if we don't have anything other than the one thing He requests? A temple.
9. What if that's the only thing we have to give to Him? We don't have a synagogue. We don't have a chapel. We don't have a cathedral. We don't have an executive office building. We don't have a Zions Bank. We don't have real estate developments. We don't have anything to give to the Lord because we gave it to the poor.
10. What if the only thing we give Him is the only thing He's ever asked of us and that is a house, where He can come?
11. How much different would all of the whore and her daughter's belongings look?
12. How much different would the people that belong to the faith, how much different would their lives be lived?
13. How much more equal would we be with one another?

It is like a quip from one of my friends, 'it's a terrible thing to find out your mother is a whore.' And yet that is where Mormonism has gone. In all its iterations it has become part of the Great Whore. So, let's not build ourselves another whore. I pose these questions for you to consider, but I'm not going to answer these questions.

Was the wedding at Cana Jesus' marriage?

Answer: No, in answer to this one. It says on page 3, Jesus and his followers were invited guests at the marriage. That is my understanding, not His wedding. Not that he didn't have a wedding it's just that this is not an account of His wedding.

“Could you lay out the Plan of Salvation more exhaustively?”

Answer: Yes, I could. To the extent that it has been necessary or advisable to do so, I have been speaking and writing on the path to follow Christ from the first book I've written to the latest talk I have given. Although they may seem disconnected, this has all been one talk, one book, one record. It builds from precept to precept. The most important thing for us in this life is to come to know Christ. A great deal can be learned from studying the accounts in scripture written by those whose lives of devotion and obedience equipped them to know the Lord. Testimony from prophets in ages past give us a standard by which to measure everything in our lives today. Through the language of scripture we grow to know the voice of the Lord.

When we are well enough acquainted with the Lord's voice from past scriptural records, we can know when His voice is speaking to us today. It will sound the same. It will point in the same direction. It will encourage you to have faith, repent and be baptized, and the voice will grow into a constant companion and you will have a Holy Spirit, a Comforter, a light, the truth of all things, the record of heaven or the Rock of Heaven to abide with you. As that Holy Spirit endows you with greater light, and correspondingly greater faith, you will eventually be brought into the presence of the Lord. Then you can say you know Him. He is in you, and has filled you with life and light, and you will be able to distinguish between voices who testify of themselves, proclaiming a message to divide and dispute, or if they speak the words of our Lord who wants to gather us into unity. He wants us to become one.

We cannot become one when we give heed to divisive voices. Those who do nothing, sacrifice nothing, labor to promote themselves, and idly stand on the sides not providing support and encouragement for us to become unified cannot know the Lord. He does not divide His sheep. He gathers them. He intends to gather us as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, if we will heed His invitation and labor to complete His work under His direction. Disunity does not come from Him. It comes from our adversary, who opposes our unity, our brotherhood, and our peace.

“Is there a tradition we brought over from the LDS church where influential people rely on the authority of their persona instead of putting God's word as they received it, likely because they haven't actually received it. Do you think we need to be more

careful about this? And is Sidney Rigdon an example of pushing and pulling Joseph to damage the restoration?"

Answer: Well, yeah but I try to be. This one was good.

You can't just dismiss Sidney Rigdon as an invidious influence. That would be a mistake. Emma Smith was better educated than was Joseph. Emma Smith was a sounding board for Joseph. You don't need to know much more than one incident in order to grasp what I'm telling you. Joseph Smith was translating the beginning of the Book of Mormon, he found out there was a wall around Jerusalem, and he inquired of Emma, 'Was there a wall around Jerusalem?' Emma says, 'yes' because she knew it and he didn't. Emma had a better education than did Joseph and Joseph deferred to her and relied on her.

The Lord called her an 'elect lady' and that was not an inappropriate title to have been given to Emma, It's a title that the Lord's given to another woman about whom a great deal could be said but I'm going to pass over that. We're talking about Rigdon.

Rigdon came to Joseph as an accomplished, polished, Campbellite preacher who succeeded in church building, congregation development, ministerial persuasion, he was a polished orator and by contrast Joseph was emerging from a frontier farm cocoon. He was emerging out of an isolated role as a translator. He had not had any requirement to address an audience of any significance. And then came Sidney Rigdon, essentially to the rescue. Here Joseph received a built-in mentor who was capable of providing Joseph with input about the very role to which Joseph was now being transferred. And Rigdon helped him.

Rigdon was so influential that even in his late King Follett discourse, he made an aside to Rigdon. "Mark it Elder Rigdon, I'm going to prove it from the Bible." and he went on to preach the greatest sermon of his career. This shows the influence, the positive influence that Rigdon had on him.

Rigdon declined over the years. There were reasons for that: The mobbing and the fairly significant head injury that Rigdon suffered, resulted in the inability thereafter to do what he'd been doing to help. His age and infirmities made his confinement in the Liberty Jail more difficult for him because he was older and unable to survive in that environment as others who were younger and more vigorous. There are a lot of reasons why Rigdon may have made some missteps later on.

When Christ established and organized the New Testament dispensation, Christ patterned what he did as a reminiscence, or an homage to the family of Israel. He ministered among the Jews, who prized their family connection to Abraham. The gentiles would not be approached until after His death. But during his immediate ministry, Christ served among the Jews who repeatedly claimed they were the children of Abraham. And as children of Abraham that gave to them the credential that would allow them to pass into heaven. And so, He organized His dispensation with Peter, James, and John, to mimic Abraham Isaac and Jacob, and the twelve apostles to mimic the twelve princes of Israel, and the seventy to mimic the seventy descendants of Jacob that entered Egypt in Exodus 1:5. And so Christ made an homage, a

stand up, a mirror, a structure to resonate with the people to whom He was serving to remind them of the family of Abraham.

Sidney Rigdon was caught up in the fire of completing the Protestant Reformation, which had never achieved the potential of a return of the spiritual gifts. Rigdon believed spiritual gifts belonged to the true New Testament religion. The Campbellites did not share that view. Rigdon was a renegade Campbellite by holding that belief. Then Joseph published a book by miraculous means and Rigdon was intrigued by the Book of Mormon, leaves his flock, and his congregational success to travel to Joseph. When he joined Joseph, a lot of fellow Campbellites converted as well.

Rigdon and the Campbellites already believed in a New Testament church. They wanted to fully restore it. They already had faith, repentance, baptism. They already had some expectation of the Holy Ghost. The first principles and ordinances of the gospel did not start with the Wentworth letter's list (Articles of Faith), they started with Rigdon and the Campbellites and were imported into Mormonism.

When Rigdon came to Mormonism he already had followers, and they all aspired to recover the New Testament church with miraculous gifts included in the bargain. They thought if they could get that, they would then have it all.

Joseph had the dilemma of how to organize the people and Rigdon, who was a trusted confidante, and who had been provided to Joseph for good reasons, helped Joseph in the next phase. Rigdon gave the only kind of counsel one would expect from a restorationist New Testament vantage point. He counseled Joseph to inquire how to structure a New Testament model. Joseph inquired and the Lord answered.

The organization of the restoration through Joseph took the form of a New Testament church. And in the long run it didn't work. But with time it has managed to aggregate the very list I read you: gain, popularity, influence, etc. It has produced the antithesis of "no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood." Well, so do you have priesthood? In truth it is nothing to allow you to control others, no administrative right. It is no power over others. It is no influence. How do you then minister? Persuade, pure knowledge, invite and entice exactly as did the three men, Adam, Moses and Christ, who held the greatest dominion in the history of mankind. That must be how we proceed.

When you create a structure, particularly a hierarchical structure, explain how you become of one mind? How does a people become of one mind and one heart when there is no equality? It is the problem that Sister Adolpho raised about the difference between religion and institutionalism on the one hand, and spirituality on the other. If they are distinct, as she said, (and she persuaded me yesterday that they are distinct), then why can we not forget the institutionalism and the religiousness of it all, and simply seek the spirituality of it all? So that we might one day become of one heart and one mind as the excerpt from the email in the announcement of the scriptures project suggested? Hearts unite first, and minds follow after.

If we can knit our hearts together, eventually our minds will follow. And some of you are pretty tough minded, but if you can get your heart united, eventually your mind will come around.

In the draft of the replacement for Section 20, which you'll find in here, there is a suggestion that one fellowship, if it doesn't have needs, can assist another fellowship by providing them with sharing resources. I think that should be possible. But it should be by common consent, it should be a one-time only occurrence. If it needs to occur again, it should be again by common consent and likewise a one-time only occurrence. Because when the church at Rome began to aggregate wealth, they used wealth to gain influence and preeminence over other congregations in the Mediterranean world. The influence of wealth led to political influence and over time they obtained universal, hierarchical command, of a vertically integrated church structure. Then all that was needed to corrupt the whole institution was to corrupt the top.

In fellowships, if they are all independent, and all equipped with the same instruction, and they all function independent of one another, it does not matter how corrupt any single fellowship may become. It will be necessary to corrupt every single one of them to kill the whole. You can't kill the whole by corruption of a single, influential, wealthy entity. Independence and equality provides the truth a better chance to survive.

I think you must be free as fellowships to help one another but if there is a wealthy, regularly financing fellowship, those who receive from it should be just as concerned about the potential for "strings" accompanying the money as the people who are giving should be concerned about the perversity of viewing that as an opportunity to gain power and authority over others. The path of God is razor thin. It may lie in a straight course, but the way in which the Lord walks that straight line He doesn't even cast a shadow to the left or the right. When you walk that line and begin to see the shadow, you've already departed from the path even though you think you're still on it. You have to question every step of the way; every step you take, and measure every word you speak, because you and I are going to be judged on that basis.

"Can you describe the process involved with The Testimony of St. John?"

Answer: I'm going to talk for a moment about a context. And I'm only talking about context in order to answer the question. The context is this, 'while the testimony of John has been put together I have the benefit of a word processing program, at times the rate at which the material is being put into the word processing program is so fast that the language is cryptic and I know what it means and I know what it means to say and I'm getting it down but it needs to be... it needs to be dealt with. The entirety of the thing gets finished and as soon as the entirety is concluded I go back to the very first and I work it through... and I work it through from beginning to end in order to make sure that the language, what will be in the paper, accurately reflects what was revealed. So, I work it all the way through and when I'm satisfied that everything is there, with one exception, because I fought to not write a part of the record. I did not care that John said it, I didn't want to say it as something I recorded. I

fought to keep something out also so that I could answer inquiries about whether this was the completed record of John. I could then say, 'no, it's not complete.'

I fought to eliminate one part of that story that I did not personally want to see in there, but the project couldn't be done until it was added. It was the last thing reluctantly added and it is in there. But I went through it another time, this time looking for punctuation and extraneous words. I wanted everything to read like we read, because this is written now. Let's talk like we talk. I mean thee's and thou's and ye's and all that, that may have had a place back in colonial America and in an age where people were still calling one another "thee" but today that is off-putting. When I went back through it in another review, I was looking for that, and I found two of those, also a couple of words that were in there twice. I don't remember the words at this point, but there were some words two times. I had to delete one.

When that was all done, then I asked my wife to read it, start to finish. She was not to change it. I asked her to read it to see if there were any errors that she could see in the way the thing was laid out, in the sentence structure, in the paragraph division, in the overall read of the thing. She made several comments that helped me, and some things were turned into staccato sentences instead of run-on sentences. Because short sentences are easier to read than run-on sentences. When that got done, I sent it to the committee and the committee was given free license to do anything with it. I think two people gave to me what they noticed were ambiguous words that could mean this, or could instead mean something else, or could even have a third meaning. And I knew which word meaning it was, so I fixed it. And then, I don't which guy on the committee did this but the idea was to release it as a downloadable PDF on my website so I could say, 'Oh yeah, that's been out there for a while.' And no one would notice it. But someone alerted the universe, and it came to the attention of Adrian Larsen who has a platform for informing a great number of people. And so, whereas I hoped to disclose here, and to say it had been up for months, instead it has become widely read for months.

I say all that for this reason, as background for this: Joseph Smith dictated the Book of Mormon to scribes, the primary one of which was Oliver Cowdery. Scribes, in longhand, wrote the Book of Mormon. When he ended each night, set the pen down, they started the next day at the place where he ended dictation the day before. No one read the material back to him. They just resumed the work at the same spot. In that way it progressed to the end.

Then Oliver took the whole thing and copied it, and he took it to the printer. Then it was typeset and came out in print. It was at that point Joseph Smith got to read the words of the Book of Mormon in the typeset copy from E.B. Grandin's shop. So far as I can tell, from the material I have reviewed, between the time Joseph dictated the Book of Mormon and the time Joseph Smith saw it in print, he had almost no opportunity to do anything with the text. It did not matter what he meant, or that he could have clarified something, nor if he would have even punctuated it differently, he did not get that chance. He didn't have a word processing program. He got one chance to dictate it as he translated it, and then it got written by someone else and it's off to the printer.

So, when the Book of Mormon was reprinted in the 1837 second edition, Joseph Smith supervised the work and made edit changes. He made further edit corrections in 1840. It was the consensus of everyone, myself included, that we should allow Joseph the right to correct it by editing. I can't even write a short letter at my law office without rereading it and sometimes correcting punctuation, sometimes rewriting sentences to have them be more clear. Joseph Smith had the right to do that and so the version in this volume is the one that Joseph edited in 1840. The material will all be in the research notes online and available for public view. We do not hide it. But for the published project, the version that he had a chance to work through in the 1840 edition is the one that was the starting point.

“Was Jesus married?”

Answer: Jesus would not have been accepted as a legitimate rabbinical teacher if he had not been thirty years of age and married. If he was thirty years of age and unmarried, he would have been considered illegitimate. He would have been considered irresponsible and not worthy to teach others. As mission presidents say, “a hazard to society.” But He was addressed as Rabbi and accepted as a legitimate teacher. He had to be thirty years of age and He had to be married.

That is no longer part of some factions of Judaism. Some divisions recognize unmarried Rabbis. Some accept women Rabbis. I am not answering about the current practices, but only about how it was dealt with at the time of Christ.

“What is the significance and meaning of the new name David?”

Answer: Okay, the advice I got was to not even mention this subject. I wasn't going to do it, but Steph and I will discuss me addressing this question on the drive home.

I don't claim anything from having the name. As far as I can tell there's only one way in which it matters to me. I do not claim anything of any significance associated with the revelation of a new name, of the giving of a new name.

To me, the only things about it that were noteworthy are: I was first baptized on September 10th, I was also excommunicated forty years later on the same date, September 10th, I was also given a new name on September 10th. The September the 10th on which I received a new name, was 9-10-11 and to me that was an interesting alignment.

The account accurately depicts that I was not happy with the name. To me it was an unwanted, unlovely appellation. Understand, the name David associated with other people is just fine. I know a lot of Davids and I like their name. I have a partner in my law firm whose first name is David. David is a perfectly good name. But the name David when spoken by God suggests to my mind, not my partner or other people I know and respect having that name. When the name is spoken by God, I think of only one individual: That was the ancient king of Israel who, to me, was a moral failure. And so my mind did not run to my partner or to other people I know and love. My mind ran to that man, the king of Israel who murdered Uriah. To me that man and that context is a harbinger of an ill wind, to say the least. So it wasn't wanted.

The response of the Lord, after I had finished my complaints and I'd worked myself up into an obnoxious and complaining outburst. The Lord's response was so mild, but cutting, that I thought it reflected so well on Him, that when I was told this has to be included in the scripture project, I thought it reflected great credit on the Lord.

I was willing to go to the grave with no one knowing a thing about the new name. I thought that for the most part the entire way in which that unfolded, reflected credit upon the Lord and showed you how a master teacher can convey, in the mildest of ways, a cutting rebuke to teach. I needed to be taught. His mild rebuke contrasts with my ingratitude, complaining and upset. He was gracious to the inappropriate and ungrateful man He addressed. That contrast shows His brilliance. I think that is the meaning of the event.

Now, I don't make any claim for anything beyond that.

As far as I can tell the new name has one utility that I have found. When I cannot otherwise get an answer from God to something about which I'm inquiring, I will remind Him of the identity that He gave to me, and state that it is I who makes this inquiry. When I do that He always answers.

If God gives to you a new name, as far as I can tell, its greatest value comes from obtaining an answer to prayer. If you cannot otherwise get a reply, remind the Lord who you are by referring to your new name, that He gave the name to you, and tell Him it is that person inquiring. The answer always comes, in my experience.

We do not have Zion, we do not have the land or even the final location identified as yet. Some of you believe a tradition about its location, but I have written the history involved in identifying Independence, Missouri and will not repeat it again.

We have not built a house and He has not accepted it. Therefore, anyone claiming they are significant to fulfilling prophecy is foolish. Until the work is done, no claims can legitimately be made. Identity of those mentioned in prophecy is only established by accomplishing work on behalf of the Lord. Until they have done the work, none of us are significant. And that will involve work that matters, not such things as writing a vanity blog and barking out your witticisms, or expounding on your vanity, or writing revelations with a lot of personal pronouns referring to themselves. This ought to be obvious to everyone, but apparently it is not obvious because there are a lot of people that are impressed by such vanity.

I hope all of you will feel at liberty to carefully read, mark and to respond to the project that is now underway. I have met with, corresponded with, and spoke with the people who are working on this project. And it goes without saying but it probably shouldn't be left unsaid: Their wives helped! It is important, I think, that there were women who worked on this project as well. We tend not to say that (but I hope you always just assume that) but given some of the questions that came in, apparently people don't assume that! Which is another thing, I didn't get to that question but at some point I do intend to address the man and woman issue. A lot probably should be said. I don't want to write it up. I want to talk about

it. And the next conference in Boise is going to be dealing with the scriptures. It will probably be a year from now, but I intend to deal with this subject. I drag my feet on a lot of things to make sure that the Lord gives me no alternative before I proceed. I am a more cautious man than any of you probably could ever dream.

There's still an enormous amount to be accomplished and there's probably going to be departures of many people along the way. That's a good thing, because if they are clamoring and complaining and are like the children of Israel in the wilderness with Moses, it would be better to leave them with the fleshpots of Egypt. We won't have contentious people and also Zion. We really do want people to expose their ambition, their pride, arrogance, vanity, lusts and desires. If it is in their heart we want them to let us see their complaining hearts, and to hear their bitter, acrimonious and false accusations. We welcome that, because those are people that ought not be gathered. They should be free to gather into their own collective and do whatever it is they think will bring them joy. But they are not part of God's people and they cannot be broken by us. Therefore, let God break them. Don't bring them with us. If people decide to depart and have no further going with us, remember that many people departed from Christ after his "bread of life" talk. So many departed that He turned to the apostles and asked, "are you leaving too?" Peter said, "where are we going to go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." That was not a particularly ringing endorsement, if you think about it. But it was true. There was and still is no other place to go. The Lord alone has the words of eternal life.

I do hope that you understand how weak and vulnerable and easy to be distracted this world is for one of us. I am keenly aware of my weakness. We have one enormous advantage: We know that what Joseph did failed to establish Zion. The people who followed Joseph did not accomplish what the prophecies foretell. That is an enormous advantage if we will take advantage of it. We don't need to envy anything in any of the various "Mormon" sects, because it didn't work. Therefore we do not need to try to repeat that. It is a dead end.

I've met some of these men for the first time in connection with the scripture project. They are now my friends, brethren to me now, but we were strangers when this project began. I didn't know who they were or what they were getting me into when I began my participation. And I was gratified to discover that strangers to me were brethren in Christ. Every one of them is valued to me now. Some of the email exchanges that went back and forth thrilled me with the substance and the light and the truth that was commanded by some of these brethren. Clearly, they were called to the task and equal to it, and valued by me, valued by the Lord. And putting it all together and combining everyone into the one group and confronting several imponderable dilemmas gave me an opportunity to prayerfully address some issues that are now incorporated into the text. It is not finished. It needs some corrections. I hope the proposed scriptures are prayerfully considered by people who are going to consider it. It was a privilege to be involved.

Chris Hamill is exactly right, this is not my project. I came late to it and I helped unite the two separate groups into one whole, and I acted as moderator on a couple of occasions as it came to this point of completion. But the labor has been done by volunteers acting on their desire to collect the most accurate restatement of the restoration scriptures.

One of the interesting things about the gathering of Zion is that apparently, even though there may be more revelations and commandments for us, apparently, it will only be in Zion where the “rich treasures” or the records of other scattered tribes are to be added. D&C 133:30-33. These records will allow a great deal of lost information to be recovered. If the revelations and prophecies are correct, the records of the Jews and the records of the Nephites, will be gathered first. 2 Ne. 29:13. But eventually there will be many others that get added as well.

The prophecy of returning Israelites bringing the rich treasures to the children of Ephraim in the everlasting mountains refers to the place that will be built by a covenant people who have the legal right to the land. But we must take care to only do as the Lord leads.

I believe we could choose as a people, a place to build a temple and we would get exactly the same response we see in the Doctrine and Covenants given to Joseph when the Nauvoo Temple began, “ye shall build it on the place where you have contemplated building it...” D&C 124:43. Then we probably would reach exactly the same conclusion and fail to have Zion. I will therefore not choose a site. If God doesn't choose the site, it will remain unchosen. If God chooses the site it's His and then He has the responsibility to defend it.

If you read about the approval for a temple in Nauvoo, the Lord said it was acceptable and He would approve it,

“If ye labor with all your might...” v. 44. “And if my people will hearken unto my voice...” v. 45. “But if they will not hearken to my voice...” v. 46. “[P]rove yourselves unto me that ye are faithful in all things whatsoever I command you...” v. 55. Instead of volunteering and asking for God's permission, we should wait for Him to choose the place of His choosing. Then it is His, not ours. And if it is His there is no condition on His ownership and therefore His protection of His house. It's His land, it's His to defend. It's His choice. It's His house. It's His Zion. It will be His New Jerusalem, and therefore, no man is going to ask, “is this acceptable to you Lord?” It must be His, and if it is His, it carries the weight of God having chosen it. He's known where it is for millennia and He has had prophets describe it. It will be in the everlasting mountains, not on the plains of Missouri. And the people that are going to go there will say, 'let us go up to the mountain where the Lord has an ensign erected.' Isa. 2:2-3. That will be His house. He must come and accept it, or we won't have Zion.

Let me end by bearing testimony to you that however improbable, however unlikely, however even unpleasant it may seem to you that this work by God is happening now, and among this people, and in the way it is happening, it is nevertheless true that God is behind this work. However, off-putting that may seem to you, the test for you is exactly the same test that has been taken from the beginning of time until now. You would not have liked Moses if you do not like this work. You would not have wanted to be with the people of Enoch if you do not like the people whose hearts are softened and who resonate with the message here.

I'm pretty sure in the many mansions to be built for people in the afterlife, there will be plenty of places for folks who hurl groundless invectives at one another, attributing the worst motives to one another. Where they enjoy the company of one another and retire each night saying, "I made a great argument today and I look forward to getting up and bitching up a storm again tomorrow."

The work of God really is of deep import. We must respect it as a serious matter to contemplate. "Light-mindedness" doesn't have a single thing to do with a sense of humor or laughter. Light-mindedness has to do with treating lightly things that are really important. Light-mindedness means that you do not assign the correct value to something that comes from God because you treat it lightly. I don't care how much you laugh, and yes God has a sense of humor. When I'm all dour, and desperate, and pleading, very often the first response of the Lord is a quip about how inappropriately I'm behaving. The first message in the first talk of the 'ten talks' was to be of good cheer because our Lord is of good cheer. He takes seriously the things that will save us, but he really does enjoy our company and wishes that we likewise enjoyed one another's company as we ought to do.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.