

## **Keep the Covenant: Do the Work**

September 30, 2018

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

I haven't had an opportunity to go through all of the questions that have been submitted but I have to tell you, kids write a lot better questions than adults do. I probably should just use this instead of what I've prepared.

Let me thank the organizers of this conference. First of all, I appreciate the invitation and the opportunity to come and to speak but I also appreciate all of the effort, the work, and the sacrifice that goes in when someone volunteers to put together a conference because we don't have any standing fund. The people who volunteer to do conferences undertake a burden that's not just physically and emotionally demanding, it's also financially demanding. The people who put together a conference make enormous sacrifices, individually and collectively, and I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak and the work that has gone into this.

Like the other two speakers this afternoon, I want to talk to the kids who are here today, and the parents are perfectly well invited to eavesdrop. My comments are tailored to the children who are present, or who may listen to this at a later point.

I've been looking forward to talking to the youth since I first learned I was invited to speak at this conference. The future always belongs to the next generation. If the next generation is not able to learn and continue their parents' faith, every achievement can be lost.

All talent, intelligence, and skill are perishable. Unless studied, knowledge can be forfeited. It's by your effort to preserve what has been newly restored that the covenant given by God will endure. Every past covenant has been broken. There are still remnants who benefit from past covenants but today only one covenant exists intact.

Many of you are being raised apart from formal, institutional church organizations. You are being taught in your homes instead of church-owned buildings. Your experience will be very different from that of some of your friends. It helps you to understand that God can be close to you wherever you worship Him. Most of your parents, when they were children, likely experienced religion only in a formal, organized setting with officials leading and controlling everything. Now they ask you to commit to following God with much more of the responsibility resting upon you.

Institutional, formal churches invest in programs and productions to help their members believe in God. Institutions pre-package what is taught, so their members will agree with them on religious worship. God has provided you scriptures and given you the ability to read and think. You need to find God directly, and let your religion include your individual search for truth.

Joseph Smith defined "Mormonism" in this way: "One of the grand fundamental principles of 'Mormonism' is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may." (DHC, 5:499).

We all want to freely search for truth, and when we find it, we want to be free to accept it. That is Mormonism. That is us.

There is a new edition of scriptures available in paperback and online. They will soon be available in a leather-bound edition. These new scriptures are the most accurate and complete volumes of Joseph Smith's work made available. If you study them, your understanding of the restoration will exceed all others. Make them something you review daily, even if you only have a few minutes.

While Joseph Smith was alive, he taught that the restoration would fail if the saints did not have the new translation of the Bible published as part of their scriptures. Joseph said, "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." (JS Papers, Documents Vol. 2, p. 85, as in original.)

After that warning on July 17, 1840, two men were assigned to go on a mission for the purpose of raising money to publish the scriptures. These included a new edition of the Book of Mormon and the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible.

In October 1840, a letter to all the saints was published in the *Times and Seasons* asking for their full support in the effort to publish "the new translation of the Scriptures." That effort failed to put the Joseph Smith Translation in print, and Joseph died without it ever being published. Excerpts with edits done by others were published by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, but it failed to include all of Joseph's work.

The new edition of the scriptures is the first time the full work Joseph accomplished, without additions and including hundreds of punctuation changes previously omitted, has been made available in print. You are the first generation to have these scriptures available. Do not neglect them.

There are two things that will bring you closer to God than anything else. Start this in your youth. First, personal scripture study. Learn from them when you have time. Your private study will be more important than what others tell you about the scriptures. Second, personal prayer. Your private time spent in prayer will have the power to shape your life. If you study the scriptures when you are alone, and you pray in private, these two things, more than anything else, will draw you to God. They will change your destiny.

There is a great gulf separating us from the first fathers of mankind. At the very beginning, a book of remembrance was kept in the language of Adam. Enoch taught repentance and knowledge of God using that book of remembrance. Those records were passed down for generations until Abraham. He learned of the first fathers, the Patriarchs, from those records. Abraham wrote: "But the records of the Fathers, even the Patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord, my God, preserved in mine own hands." (T&C Abr. 2:4).

At the time of Abraham, Egypt was the greatest civilization on earth. Egypt was great because it imitated the original religion of the first fathers. Abraham explained:

*Now the first government of Egypt was established by Pharaoh, the eldest son of Zeptah, the daughter of Ham, and it was after the manner of the government of Ham, which was Patriarchal. Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, 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 Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood. (Abr. 2:3).*

Egypt began by imitating the pattern Adam, Seth, Enos and their direct descendants through Noah used to organize the family of the faithful. Abraham calls it a “government” but it was a family. The title “Pharaoh” originally meant “great house” or “great family” because Pharaoh was the “father” over Egypt who taught and led them. Over time, however, the title “Pharaoh” came to mean “king” or “tyrant” who controlled people.

The first Pharaohs, or founding father[s] of Egypt, imitated the first fathers of mankind. He could only imitate because he did not have the right to act as the patriarchal head of mankind. He nevertheless tried to be a shepherd who led by righteous example. Abraham knew more about the first fathers than did the Egyptians because Abraham had the original book of remembrance written by the fathers in the language of Adam.

Today, scholars are trying to understand ancient Egypt. The earlier or farther back in time you look, the closer Egypt’s imitation is to the government of Adam and the Patriarchs down to Noah.

The records of Egypt from the very earliest time are lost. But we have some records. The oldest are the Pyramid Texts. Then a few centuries later there are Coffin Texts. Then much later are the Book of the Dead Texts. Near the end we have the Book of Breathings Texts. There are thousands of years between the first Pyramid Texts and the last Book of Breathings Texts. Within those thousands of years, the religion and knowledge of Egypt became more and more corrupted.

The earliest records of the Egyptian religion carved in the Pyramid Texts date from 2,500 BC. That was before Abraham, before Joseph was sold into Egypt, before Moses, and before the Exodus from Egypt. It was long before King David, King Solomon, and Elijah. These are their earliest records.

More than two thousand years later we have the last records, The Book of Breathings Texts. These were written at about 300 years before Christ. They were written during the time when Greece and Rome controlled Egypt. After Alexander the Great subdued western Persia, Syria and Tyre, he conquered Egypt and became an Egyptian Pharaoh. When he died, one of Alexander’s generals, named Ptolemy, replaced Alexander as Pharaoh. The descendants of Ptolemy followed him as Pharaohs in what is called the Ptolemaic Dynasty of Egypt.

You have probably heard of Cleopatra. She was a descendant of Ptolemy and was Queen of Egypt at a time when Rome controlled Egypt. Rome fell into a civil war during Cleopatra's lifetime, and Mark Anthony, one of the generals of Rome, fought against Octavian hoping to become Emperor. Cleopatra sided with Mark Anthony. Cleopatra and Mark Anthony both died by suicide when Octavian defeated the Roman-Egyptian military controlled by Mark Anthony. When Octavian won, he became the undisputed Roman Emperor and Egyptian ruler, and his name was changed to Caesar Augustus. Jesus was born while Caesar Augustus was the Roman Emperor and ruler of Egypt.

Beginning long before Abraham, and ending just before Christ was born, the records of Egypt were carved, painted or written. The religion of Egypt changed and became more elaborate in places and more vague in others over those thousands of years. The very first Pyramid Texts date from the 4th Dynasty. The next records, the Egyptian Coffin Texts, date from the 7th and 8th Dynasties. They show changes in the religion of Egypt from the earlier Pyramid Texts.

Abraham lived during the 9th or 10th Dynasty, at a time called the "1st Intermediate Period." This was a period of significant change, or apostasy, for the Egyptian religion. But even before Abraham, the order established by the first fathers, despite efforts to keep the faith, had been poorly preserved. The Pyramid Texts are the oldest records, but they were carved during the 4th and 5th Dynasties. By the time these records had been carved, six or more centuries had passed between the original and their preservation. This would be like us composing the history from the time Robert the Bruce gained Scottish independence through the death of Joan of Arc, for the first time today.

After the 1st Intermediate Period came the Middle Kingdom, during the 11th and through the 14th Dynasties. It was during the 1st Intermediate Period that Joseph was sold into Egypt. The Book of the Dead dates from the New Kingdom, or 18th Dynasty. Moses lived during the beginning of the 18th Dynasty and Josephus dates the Exodus from Egypt at that point.

Over the long time period of their history, Egyptian religion changed. It began emphasizing ascending to heaven following this life. But it later emphasized navigating the dangers of the underworld where the dead face perils, tests and judgments. It's more accurate to say Egypt had "religions" rather than a religion, because so much changed over their history.

Solomon dedicated the Temple at Jerusalem during the 20th Dynasty, a little over 1,000 years BC. An attempt to reconstruct the religions of Egypt requires the study of materials that date over nearly three thousand years. Over that time a great deal of change, uncertainty, apostasy and error crept in. Much was lost but also much was added. Some things were amplified or extended and represent uninspired efforts to improve on the original. Even the most meticulous scholar, using the most inspired approach, will never be able to reconstruct the original religion, or "that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first Patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam."

Yet God demands that our hearts turn to the fathers or we will be wasted at His return. This requirement is not to turn to them in just a figurative way, where we do genealogical work

to connect ourselves with our recently deceased forbearers. That work is a wrongheaded effort to seal people to those kept in prison. The return of our hearts will require us to have the same religion, and the same beliefs in our hearts that the original fathers had beginning with Adam. Only in that way will our hearts turn to the fathers.

God declared to Abraham that the chosen descendants, the people of God, would call Abraham their father. They would need to have that same religion belonging to the first fathers. God explained, "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 unto their Father." (Abr. 3:1, emphasis added.)

The term used by God ("this gospel") is the original holy order the first fathers, including Adam, possessed at the beginning. Our hearts must turn to the fathers because their religion – not apostate Christianity, or Judaism, or apostate Mormonism, or some remnant or relic of Adam's religion, but the order of the first fathers – must be fully restored before we have this gospel possessed by Abraham, who had the records of the fathers and therefore knew the original.

Adam still presides and still holds the keys. Joseph Smith said, "Adam holds the keys of the dispensation of the fullness of times; i.e., the dispensation of all the times have been, and will be revealed through him, from the beginning to Christ, and from Christ to the end of all the dispensations that are to be revealed." (T&C 140:3).

I'm going to interject a thought. Every single dispensation that has ever been or ever will be is always the last dispensation, until apostasy, and then it's no longer the last dispensation. You are living in the last dispensation, and hopefully it won't end as all others have ended.

In an October 1840 proclamation to the saints, Joseph and the High Council in Nauvoo hoped to see happen in 1840 what did not happen then, has not happened, and may only happen if people honor the covenant offered last year. The proclamation said:

*The work of the Lord in these last days, is one of vast magnitude and almost beyond the comprehension of mortals; its glories are past description and its grandeur insurpassable. It has been the theme which has animated the bosom of prophets and righteous men from the creation of this world down through every succeeding generation to the present time; and it is truly the dispensation of the fullness of times, which all things which are in Christ Jesus, whether in heaven or on the earth, shall be gathered together in him, and when all things shall be restored, as spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world began: for in it will take place the glorious fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers[.]* (JSP Documents Vol. 7, p. 412; also *Times and Seasons*, Oct. 1840, p. 178.)

Joseph understood that the project was reclamation and restoration of what once was and had been lost. We're not trying to create something new; we're trying to reclaim that which is the oldest of all, the original religion.

That grandeur was not achieved in Joseph's day. The restoration has never reached the magnitude God intends. All the institutions of Mormonism are drifting away, aimlessly. They are more interested in preserving power for themselves than in preserving the restoration. Taking the scriptures as your guide, you will be better prepared than any other generation to arise and fulfill the promises and the prophecies. Joseph Smith did not complete the restoration. But he laid a foundation that should not be ignored. The Community of Christ and Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are both being led down to destruction and are bound in the chains of hell because of their studied ignorance.

Apostasy means a deliberate rebellion against God. They are in apostasy because they are deliberately changing the ordinances, have broken the covenant, and are rejecting Joseph Smith's teachings and revelations. They have been deliberately walking away from the restoration and choosing to align themselves with a doomed world. This process was described by Alma:

*... 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. (NC Alma 9:3).*

Ignorance and hell go hand in hand, you see. The loss or the failure to retain the truth is the chains of hell.

Increasingly these largest branches of the restoration are abandoning Joseph's work and, like the Egyptians, are replacing their beliefs with uninspired additions and shocking deletions because they do not know what to keep or how to keep it. You can behold the growing ignorance in the meetings, conversations, conferences and spirits of these people. Online discussions by rank-and-file members of these churches are filled with corrupt ignorance and vanity. Voluntarily they "know nothing" about the mysteries of God. This erosion of knowledge has grown year-by-year until now their meetings and conferences are astonishingly superficial and banal. I do not rejoice in this, but mourn it. It does not need to continue. They can repent and return. Nothing would please me more than to see the Community of Christ and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints decide to change their downward course. Like everyone else who is lost in darkness and foolishness, I invite them to repent and return.

The gospel is vast, and only the beginning, introductory part of the restoration was established through Joseph Smith. There is still a great deal left to recover. The task is daunting. Unto what can I liken it to help you see it clearly:

I stand beside a great ocean and I cannot convey it to you. I am but a man and all I have is a cup with which to show you. If I labor all my life using my cup I can never convey the ocean to you. Using the limited talent and means I have, and with only a cup at a time, I can never

convey enough to allow you to comprehend the ocean's sheer size. My effort mocks the great ocean because my measure is too modest, comparatively microscopic.

Using a cup, how can I ever portray the depth and pressure of the ocean? How can you ever discover its vast range of temperature in my small cup? How will you understand the relation between temperature and current, or the great power of the ocean's current? How shall I explain the effect of the moon on the ocean's tides when I have only a cup to declare it to you? How will the great diversity of both plant and animal life living in the ocean ever be understood when I have only a cup to show you?

In the top 600 feet of the ocean lives 90% of known oceanic animal life, but the ocean is over 36,000 feet deep. Mount Everest rises 29,000 feet, and the ocean plunges down more than 7,000 feet beyond Everest's height. If 90% of the animal life we know lives in less than the top 2% of the ocean, how much life is there in the oceans we know nothing about. Life we have not even a hint exists may thrive in abundance in depths completely hidden from our knowledge.

The grandeur of Christ's gospel makes my capacity to declare it pitiful. I confess my inability, and I fear I can never do enough to help this generation to awaken and arise. If I can help you grasp even a little of it, then let me point you to God who can do the rest. Men cannot utter what you need to learn. I am not capable, and it is not lawful.

*[G]reat and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his Kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpasses 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 men 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 the 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. (T&C 69:29).*

You can know. God can show it to you. I testify to you that that has and does happen. But if God deigns to show you some of His great mysteries, never think that excuses you from the labor still left undone. Rejoice in your knowledge, but do not forsake God's work.

There have been some people who have been pointed to the greatness of God's work and have been so captivated by the wonder of the ocean's shoreline that they have gone astray. They have wandered off into their own exploration, thinking they have found something greater in a starfish than what has been shown to them in my cup. They have failed to continue because they think themselves independently enlightened and self-sufficient. One of the immediate casualties of their arrogance is their loss of any part in Zion. Zion will be interdependent, cooperative and community based. Zion will not consist of a solitary spiritual sojourner wandering the vast intertidal zones of an almost infinite shoreline. No

matter how much they may discover along that journey, they will not grasp the ocean's depth they could have found in Zion.

There are many paradoxes, meaning apparent contradictions, in the gospel. Very often we must accept two truths that seem opposed to one another. The gospel is more art or music than math or science. But some kinds of art require math and science to engineer its creation. The scientist and artist may believe their skills conflict, but the gospel includes all truth and therefore unites both.

You will find paradoxes. Welcome them. Often ocean life depends on the pressure of the great deep to exist. Pressure more than a thousand times our atmosphere at sea level exists at ocean depths, yet there is life there. That life exists with 15,750 pounds of pressure on each square inch and is utterly dependent on the physical law that you cannot compress a liquid. Things that live there would explode if suddenly brought here, and if you were taken there suddenly, you would be crushed. The gospel is an ocean and includes both.

We live with conflicts, paradoxes and opposing opinions. We must be at peace with all these.

There is a poem in the Book of Job I rather like. This is taken from a modern version:

*Have you given the horse strength?  
Have you clothed his neck with thunder?  
Can you frighten him like a locust?  
His majestic snorting strikes terror.  
He paws in the valley, and rejoices in his strength;  
He gallops into the clash of arms.  
He mocks at fear, and is not frightened;  
Nor does he turn back from the sword.  
The quiver rattles against him,  
The glittering spear and javelin.  
He devours the distance with fierceness and rage;  
Nor does he come to a halt because the trumpet has sounded.  
At the blast of the trumpet he says, 'Aha!'  
He smells the battle from afar,  
The thunder of captains and shouting.  
(Job 39:19-25.)*

The culmination of the ages will require us all to face the conflicts, the unease, anxiety, or what Jesus described as "the distress of nations, with perplexity." (NC Luke 12:17). The paradoxes and perplexities will require us all to charge ahead, like Job's horse to the battle. A final conflict may still be comparatively afar, but it is coming. It can be seen in the news, media, politics and society of our day. It creeps ever closer and is even now only held at bay by the providence of heaven. This is a time to prepare. We are now in a season to reclaim and restore incomplete gospel understanding. These are precious moments and need to be well spent. We need to gallop into the clash of arms and devour the remaining distance with the fierceness and rage of a committed heart determined to defy the idolatry and foolishness of



our vain age. Stand fast in the truth. Defend yourself with knowledge. Knowledge of the truth comes from above and fortifies the soul with light and truth.

Social media makes minds weak, hearts faint, and fills a person with vanity and foolishness. It should not be embraced but relegated to the insignificance it deserves. The fabric of the electronic world consists of widespread opinions based on misinformation and lies. These are accepted as truth or proof in our day. Those who are most engaged in social media are the most prone to believe in lies. Social media can cause emotional and mental deficiencies. Turn from it.

Political leaders do not want to solve problems; they want to preserve them so they can falsely promise to find an answer one day. They need problems to support their craft. But if an actual leader labors to solve a problem, it threatens the lying craft of the political class. The politicians of our day need persistent problems to motivate voters to give them authority and uphold them in their ambition. Do not be fooled. Our deliverance will never come from Washington or any other nation's capital.

Still, in almost every measurable way, the world is in a better state today than at any other time in history. Manufacturing can produce more useful things all throughout the world. We can grow more food, transport more material, produce more energy and create more wealth than any prior generation. But there is a great threat hanging over it all that can destroy every part of it – the lies and madness of deluded mankind. The contention, anger and hatred that dominate daily conversation have stirred up the world to anger. “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.” (NC 2 Ne. 12:4).

Do not be angry with anyone, but certainly not with one another. Nearly all of the violence described in the Book of Mormon came because of anger. Christ condemned this. “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.” (NC 3 Ne. 5:8).

There will be no deliverance by any government, church or institution operated by men. The pitiful arm of man is nothing compared with the arm of God. The Lord is the creator of this world, and He gave dominion over His creation to Adam. Adam still presides, and the original order set up in the beginning will return before Christ comes to take back His creation. His kingdom is coming. Accomplishing what needs to be done before His return will make us subjects to the Divine King.

Skills are needed. Learn useful things to help preserve order and comfort. Agriculture, metallurgy, medicine, mechanics, construction, engineering, hydraulics, husbandry, and every practical skill will benefit God's kingdom. So will literature, music, art and humanities. Society needs to have fire to cook, and fire in our hearts to make life whole. Learn all the useful knowledge the world can offer and remember that knowledge of God is more valuable than it all.

The Apostle Paul is credited with being the Father of the Protestant Reformation. His words about “grace” were used to re-conceive man’s salvation. Martin Luther saw in Paul’s words the possibility of salvation by grace, separate from institutional authority and control.

At the time when Jesus Christ had living officials administering rites of the gospel, Paul was able to wrestle from heaven a dispensation. Using that dispensation, Paul became a dispensation head who did more, worked harder, and labored more abundantly in ministering to Christ’s sheep and spreading the gospel than any other man we know of. Paul was not jealous of the others who knew Christ and had been called by Him to the ministry. But there is some evidence of fear and jealousy towards Paul for his success in obtaining an independent dispensation of the gospel.

Paul explained his diligence in spreading the gospel:

*[I]n labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft; of the Jews, five times received I forty save one; three times was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; three times I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep; journeyings often, perils of waters, perils of robbers, perils by countrymen, perils by the heathen, perils in the city, perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, perils among false brethren; in weariness and labor, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness; beside those things that are outside, that which comes upon me daily, the care of all the churches. (NC 2 Cor. 1:39).*

Despite the opposition Paul experienced among believers and non-believers alike, he remained of a cheery disposition. “... I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content.” (NC Phil. 1:6).

It is this kind of contentment that should be seen among people today. When God’s people are stirred to anger with each other, then even God is against them. After the spot for a temple in Missouri was revealed, the people who went there polluted it by their jealousies and fighting. The unbelieving Missourians were used by God to expel them from the place they had hoped to build a temple. They were surprised the holy spot could be taken from them. After it was taken God explained why:

*Verily I say unto you, concerning your brethren who have been afflicted and persecuted and cast out from the land of their inheritances, I the Lord have suffered the affliction to come upon them wherewith they have been afflicted, in consequence of their transgressions, yet I will own them, and they shall be mine in that day when I shall come to make up my jewels. Therefore, they must needs be chastened and tried even as Abraham, who was commanded to offer up his only son, 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. In the day of their peace*

*they esteemed lightly my counsel, but in the day of their trouble, of necessity, they feel after me. (NC T&C 101:1-2.)*

If the covenant with God is kept, then He will allow His house to be built. The covenant cannot be kept if there is jarring, contention, envy, strife, lustful and covetous desires. If we do the same as those who went before, we would pollute the ground again. I am thankful we do not yet have a place to pollute. It would be better to never gain a promised place for God's house than to take possession and pollute it.

The content Apostle Paul taught the believers of his day, "Let your consecrations be without covetousness, and be content with giving such things as you have; for he has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you, so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (NC Heb. 1:58).

Alma taught a lesson that we accepted by covenant as a statement of our faith:

*And now my beloved brethren, I have said these things unto you that I might awaken you to a sense of your duty to God, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after the holy order of God after which ye have been received. And now I would that ye should be humble and be submissive and gentle, easy to be entreated, full of patience and longsuffering, being temperate in all things, being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times, asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal, always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive. (NC Alma 5:6).*

The greatness of a soul is defined by how easily they are entreated to follow the truth. The greatest of those who have ever lived have been submissive and gentle souls. In a day when Satan accuses and rages in the hearts of men, it requires extraordinary will and steely determination to remain easily entreated by truth.

I have pondered how much more ought to have been accomplished during Joseph Smith's lifetime? Joseph was only able to accomplish a fraction of what needs to be restored. Joseph faced continuing troubles because of the ambition of the believers. Too many of the saints aspired to lead. They wanted control over others. It hindered the work. Joseph was not able to finish the restoration. Our hearts must turn to the fathers in heaven, and we cannot ignore that duty because of any other vain ambition here and now. We should be less astonished by the earlier failure and far more astonished at how little we have learned from their failure.

In a letter written in July 1840 Joseph explained:

In order to conduct the affairs of the kingdom in righteousness it is all important, that the most perfect harmony kind feeling, good understanding and confidence should exist in the hearts of all the brethren. And that true Charity—love one towards one another, should characterize all their proceedings. If there are any uncharitable feelings, any lack of confidence, then pride and arrogancy and envy will soon be manifested and confusion must inevitably prevail... (JSP Documents Vol. 7, p. 362, as in original.)

In that same letter Joseph said he wished the people would progress, but did not see that possible until a different spirit led them:

It would be gratifying to my mind to see the saints in Kirtland flourish, but think the time has not yet come and I assure you it never will until a different order of things be established and a different spirit be manifested. (JSP Documents Vol. 7, p. 363.)

It is in consequence of aspiring men that Kirtland has been forsaken. (JSP Documents Vol. 7, p. 364.)

After nearly a half-year of imprisonment, Joseph described the importance of a calm mind in order to hear the still small voice of God. His mind was afire with all the distractions of being in prison, and his family and friends expelled from Missouri at gunpoint. Friends had been killed. Church members had betrayed him. God spoke to Joseph when he freed his mind of these concerns and quietly pondered, opening himself up to inspiration.

Learn from these words Joseph wrote while in Liberty Jail about how to set aside all that distracts us to hear God's voice:

*We received some letters last evening: one from Emma, one from Don C[arlos] Smith, and one from bishop Partridge, all breathing a kind and consoling spirit. We were much gratified with their contents. We had been a long time without information, and when we read those letters, they were to our souls as the gentle air is refreshing. But our joy was mingled with grief because of the suffering of the poor and much injured saints, and we need not say to you that the floodgates of our hearts were hoisted, and our eyes were a fountain of tears. But those who have not been enclosed in the walls of a prison without cause or provocation can have but a 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 a vivacity of lightning. It grasps after the future with the fierceness of a tiger. It retrogrades from one thing to another, until finally all enmity, malice, and hatred, and past differences, misunderstandings, and mismanagements, lie slain victims at the feet of hope. And when the heart is sufficiently contrite, then the Voice of inspiration steals along and whispers, My son, peace be unto your soul, your adversity and your afflictions shall be but a small moment, and then, if you endure it well, God shall exalt you on high[.] (T&C 138:11).*

This world is a place of trial and testing. Before creation it was planned that when we came here, we would be "proven" by what we experience. That happens now. Prove yourself by listening to God, hearing His voice, and obeying. Sometimes we are like Alma and want to do greater things to help God's work, but the greatest work of all is to respond to God's voice and prove you are willing to listen and obey Him.

I want to show you the depths of truth that spreads through the ocean, distances and directions that are infinite. But I must be content to use only a cup to give what little a man can measure and convey. Only God can show it because it is too great, too far above man's poor ability. It is not lawful for man, neither is man capable to make it known, for it is only to be seen and understood by those who purify themselves before God; to whom He grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves, while in the flesh.

It was a year ago that a renewed covenant was given to all willing to accept it by God. New covenant people sprang into existence when a few accepted that gift. Until that moment, there were only lost and scattered remnants who, although the object of God's earlier covenants, lived in ignorance of God's renewed labor in His vineyard. Now, in addition to other remnants, there is a new covenant remnant aware of God's renewed labor, a remnant who has been asked to labor alongside the Master of the Vineyard as He sends His final invitation to come to His wedding feast. Christ spoke of this very thing when He taught the Nephites. He foretold that the barren gentiles would eventually produce more children for His Kingdom than the remnants on this land and at Jerusalem. Christ said:

*And then shall that which is written come to pass: Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child, for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes, for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the gentiles and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. Fear not for thou shalt not be ashamed, neither be thou confounded for thou shalt not be put to shame, for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy maker, thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: the God of the whole earth shall he be called. (NC 3 Ne. 10:2).*

We can see a new and different meaning in Christ's Book of Mormon prophecy to the Nephites. Before Christ's words seemed to foretell that the lost and scattered remnants would build the Lord's House and the New Jerusalem, now it appears that there are covenant receiving gentiles who are included. Gentiles who repent and hearken to Christ's words, and do not harden their hearts, will be brought into covenant as His people.

Christ mentions three distinct bodies. First, those who have accepted the covenant and are numbered among the remnant of Jacob to whom Christ gave this land for their inheritance. Second, the lost descendants of the remnant of Jacob on this land who will repent and return. Third, as many from the House of Israel who will repent and return. These three will build a city that shall be called the New Jerusalem. All three of those will come to know God in gathering and laboring to build the New Jerusalem. Then they will go out to assist all of God's people in their lost and forgotten state to be awakened to the work of God and gathered as if one body of believers. Then all who have any of the blood of Abraham, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, will come to be taught in the New Jerusalem. There the Power of Heaven will come down to be among them, the angels and Enoch with his ten thousands

will come down, the Ancient of Days or Adam our first father, and Christ also will be in the midst of His people.

The spirit of God is withdrawing from the world. Men are increasingly angry without good cause. The hearts of men are waxing cold. The scriptures describe events now underway and call it the end of the times of the gentiles. This process of 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 the light of Christ or spirit of truth is eclipsed, men's cold hearts will result in a constant scene of violence and bloodshed. The wicked will destroy the wicked. The covenant established a year ago, if it is kept, will prevent the loss of light and warmth of heart as the spirit now steadily recedes from the world. Be charitable and be patient and labor to reach others. Even if they should judge you harshly because of their traditions, you should nevertheless be kind to them. They are going to grow to fear you, but that's only part of how darkness responds to light. Give them no reason to fear you. The time will come for us to gather, but between now and then, be leaven. Preserve the world. Be salt. Preserve the world, even if it hates you. The soul of every person is equally precious to God as is yours. If your kindness and example should awaken another soul, you will rejoice with the angels over them.

There is a need "to set in order the House of God," which can only be accomplished through a temple where that work can be performed. The temple is not the "House of God" needing to be set in order. But a temple is required to accomplish the work for God's House, or family, to be set in order. As once described by God:

*"Organize yourselves, prepare every needful thing, and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a House of God, that your incomings may be in the name of the Lord, that your outgoings may be in the name of the Lord, that all your salutations may be in the name of the Lord with uplifted hands unto the Most High." (T&C 86:29).*

Let me end with a few concluding words of wise counsel:

First, just because you young folks have thought about something, that does not necessarily mean you know enough to form a reasonable opinion about it. Likewise, holding an opinion does not mean you know the truth yet. Always be open to learning more and the possibility that more information may well change your thinking, change your opinion, and bring you closer to the truth.

Second, and I hope you remember this, words only have the control over you that you allow them to have. Some people use coarse language because they do not know any better. Coarse language alone does not necessarily reveal the worth of the individual or the thought underlying the words. As Joseph Smith once said, "I love that man better who swears a stream as long as my arm. And administ(er)ing to the poor & dividi(n)g his substance. than the long smoothed faced hypo(c)rites."

Many of my childhood friends and most of their fathers could conjugate obscenities into nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs and conjunctions. That reflected little on their inner character. An afternoon I spent with my father and a few of his friends, all of whom were veterans of World War II, reminded me of the heroic deeds and selflessness for others matters a greater deal more than coarse language. That afternoon humbled me. I was a law student at the time, and thought myself better educated than all those men, my father included. A few hours in their company, however, brought the sober realization that they had done great deeds, laying their lives on the line, and through their valiance I had inherited privileges they secured. Do not give a handful of coarse words power they do not deserve to have.

God's great power does not require an earthquake, a fire, or a whirlwind. Sometimes God's mighty power comes in a still small voice, or in a dream warning a family to flee to safety. God uses "small means" and "simple things" to accomplish His greatest influence. If you will allow Him to guide you with small means He will save you from destruction here and in the hereafter.

Finally, virtue matters, morality matters, chastity matters. One of the greatest sources of joy and misery is our ability to produce children. The union of man and woman inside a marriage, where children can be born to parents who want them, and are prepared to love and care for them, is how the power of procreation was intended to be enjoyed. Separate from that, it has produced a great deal of misery in this world. Be moral. Be chaste. Guard your virtue.

I teach these things in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

-----

### **Questions & Answers**

Now, there are a couple of things before I start answering these questions. There have been several people who have asked me about large print editions of the scriptures and the first large print volume that is now currently available is the Book of Mormon. It can be purchased through Amazon and it is available. I brought one with me that was given to me by the folks at the Scriptures Committee. There were multiple people who have asked me about large print edition set of scriptures. I don't know who asked first. The people who asked were elderly, so it's really ungracious of me to say this but whoever is first up here to pick this up, it's yours. Some of you may want to stay seated and be entertained by what could be a potential rush between the elderly.

One other thought. I know that there are those who have reasons that have inhibited them after they had been rebaptized. They did not want to submit their name to the Recorder's Clearinghouse. There are some people who have what I consider to be legitimate reasons for that. But precautions are taken. Any incoming information to the Recorder's Clearinghouse is recorded in handwriting in a book. There is no database. There is nothing that can be looked up electronically. No one can hack and retrieve a site. The only thing that gets

recorded is the name, in handwriting, with archival ink on archival paper, a single copy, the purpose of which is to go into the library at the Temple to keep the record. Whatever reason you may have to inhibit you from submitting the name, the process is not completed until after you have submitted the name for recording at the Recorder's Clearinghouse. Rest assured that the confidences will be kept and there is nothing to be hacked.

With that, I have got a bunch of questions. These are from the kids, as you will presently see.

Question: I and many other teens would like to get to know you better, so what is your favorite color? It's the only question I could think of.

Denver: Blue. It's the color of my eyes. It's also the... well, enough said.

Question: What do we need to do individually to prepare for the end times?

Denver: Don't suck.

There are people who are so alarmed about the idea of the end times that they want guns and ammo, they want food storage, they want all kinds of precautions to be taken, when if you are young, what you should be doing is prepare for a full life, gaining skills, gaining the ability to help in a community.

There are a lot of skills that simply do not exist anymore. My guess is, if I asked for a show of hands, and I went through the particular skills necessary to take and preserve, first of all to grow and then to preserve, the kinds of things that you would need for gardening and preserving food over winter, that among us there probably isn't anyone under the age of 15 that has a clue about how to do that. Learning how to cultivate and how to preserve food is a kind of skill set that is vanishing from the world. Everything is being mechanized. Everything is being automated, and we are relying upon distant sources for everyday items. When in fact, if there's a disruption in the supply transportation system, you may find yourself in a position where it would be nice if you knew, not just how to grow food but how to preserve food.

Beyond that, carpentry skills. Blacksmithing. There are a number of fundamental skills. Learn something useful. Mechanics. Architecture. Engineering. A community is barren if there aren't people. Cowboy poetry may be the greatest thing that people enjoy to take their minds off the fact that every batch of stored tomatoes has now fermented and no one likes tomato wine. So, cowboy poetry, get some of it.

The best way to prepare is to prepare for a full life, and then bring the fullness of that with you to a community and make everyone who gets in your presence richer by your presence. The songs that were sung, the talent that was exhibited, the mandolin that was played, the guitar that was played, the singing that went on here, those are important parts of rounding out a community. Prepare for life, and if you do, prepare to bless others' lives.



Question: Why did Jacob never write about his experience of seeing Jesus and why did he never talk about it with Sherem? Nephi says Jacob beheld Christ's glory in his youth, and later Nephi says that Jacob is a witness.

Denver: The only way in which Nephi could have said that Jacob beheld Christ's glory is if Jacob did in fact talk about it. The only way that Nephi could know that Jacob was also a witness is because Jacob explained, declared, [and] testified concerning it. I don't know what was going through the heads of those who maintained custody of the small plates of Nephi. But the small plates of Nephi appear to have been created one hundred percent by Nephi, and then they were handed down.

Nephi wrote 85-90% of the small plates of Nephi material in First and Second Nephi and then he handed that record, with blank pages, to Jacob. Now, implied in that is, here is a record, it includes blank pages, you can add more. Apparently, no one took any thought for generations to add more. If you read what happened to the plates in the handing down in the small books that follow after, some of the people made their carving on the very day that the plates were delivered to them. They said, "I've got the plates and now I'm turning the plates over to this guy. Tag, you're it." That's their entry into the record of the small plates of Nephi. No one appears to have looked at it and said, well, why don't we add yet more?

Nephi left explicit instructions. Early on when they arrived in the Americas he made the large plates, and on that there was history carved. It was approximately 30 years after that, it was 40 years from the time of the first experiences they had in the wilderness, so it was decades after the first experience, it was three decades after the large plates were made that the small plates were made, and the purpose for that was very specialized. Its purpose was not to record history. He says, the more history part of our people are on these other plates, so if you want to know everything that went on you need to go to the other plates because that is the location of which the history of the Nephites. He wanted only those points of sermons and teachings which were the high points, to lead the posterity, in order to come to Christ. That was the purpose of the small plates.

Apparently, whatever it was that Nephi learned about Jacob's experience in coming to Christ, he learned directly from Jacob, and in all probability it got recorded on the more history part, the large record, but Jacob's record – which he ends twice, he actually completes his record and then he writes a supplement or an addendum to his record – it's a well-conceived, well executed, and well thought-out record that ends before he winds up with another episode that he thought really needed to go into the record. Then he adds onto that and his record ends a second time.

He had a very specific purpose in mind. He was following the example of Nephi, who gave a record, adopted the testimony or language of Isaiah in order for Nephi to testify to the things he had seen and he had heard, because he was forbidden from writing his own record about them, so he adopted the words of Isaiah to bear his own testimony, and then he ends, as our young Brother O'Rullian talked about in that 2 Nephi chapter 27-28 area. He even quotes a verse, (I'm using the LDS chapter and versification) 2 Nephi 28:14. The very first book I wrote, *The Second Comforter*, has a dedication in it that dedicates the book to the few who

are the humble followers of Christ and cites 2 Nephi 28:14. Embedded within that verse is the reality that there are only a few who are the humble followers of Christ. Nevertheless, they are led, but in many instances they do err. So, Nephi explains why he used the Isaiah text.

Jacob followed the example of his older brother and he does the same thing for the same purpose. He takes a lengthy, prophetic description of the house of Israel down to the end of the history of the world and into the millennium, which he turns into what's traditionally called Jacob chapter 5, to bear testimony of what God had shown him. He begins, or prefaces, the Jacob chapter 5 material with saying, "I told all of the people to come up to hear me deliver a sermon on the morrow, and if you'll come up to the temple and hear me I will deliver to you a prophecy." The people come up and he says, here are the words of my prophecy, and then he quotes Zenos, because it is his prophecy, his – Jacob's – prophecy. It is his – Jacob's – vision. It is something he can testify to because he had seen it. It's unnecessary for Jacob to say, "I'm going to rewrite the entire allegory of the history of God's people into a new story. I'm going to drop vineyard and olive trees. I'm going to use apricots or strawberries or pomegranates or pineapple. I'm going to use pineapple. That way Rob Adolpho will identify and resonate with this when the final day comes. Aloha!"

I think that the testimony of Jacob and what Christ showed him is in Jacob chapter 5, and I think he was working on a text to try and duplicate the work that his elder brother had set, in the pattern that existed in the Book of Mormon before that.

Question: In your...they started to write "opinion" and then they crossed that out and wrote, "view," and then, parenthetically, "hopefully informed by scripture". (Kids are more candid than adults.) Would Zion and its temple be established before or after judgments are poured out on the world? And then he or she gives some examples: EMP, nuclear, ground war, et cetera.

Denver: It's really clear that you can use the scriptures to only figure out timing in a macro setting. Their purpose is not to permit you to figure it out in a micro setting and to be able to know when to buy and when to sell General Motors stock. If you knew that then you could frustrate God's work. But let me give an example:

There was a series of events that occurred during the creation of the world. At one point there is a council, and in the council, there is a selection that gets made. Two critical roles that were necessary to fulfill in this world was the role of the first father, or Adam, and the role of the Redeemer, or the Messiah. The first role to be filled was the Messiah, because the Messiah needed to redeem the whole of creation. In fact, it was as a result of the appointment and the identity of the Messiah that the creation itself could then proceed, because He then says, let us go down. The creation, in order for the Redeemer to redeem it, needed to be the Redeemer's creation. It needed to be infused with His ownership, possession, control, legal right, His inheritance. He had to choose him at the very beginning, before the creation itself could even commence.

There was one who stood up and said, "Hey, I want to be that role," and he was rejected. He resented the fact that he had not been chosen. In the new scriptures, the Old Covenants, the Book of Genesis, you get a description of those events, and in the Teachings and Commandments, where the Book of Abraham is preserved, you get another description there. You can find it in the Book of Revelation. You can find it in Isaiah. The best descriptions are in the Moses account in Genesis now, and Abraham's account. They get a conflict. One is disappointed with the conflict, and one is appointed, and then the creation proceeds.

The creation goes on for several indeterminate periods of time, during which certain milestones have to be achieved. They go down. They do a labor, and the labor is given the demarcation or identifying term of "day". You learn in the Book of Abraham that as they commence the labor of the first day that they go down to achieve this discrete part of the work. While they are doing that, it occupies perhaps some lengthy period while they watched and they waited, in order for certain things to come together. How long that lasted we don't know, because the labor is called "a day" but the labor took so long as the labor took. Time had not yet been appointed and so it could have been, in our temporal well that we live in, it could have been millennia. It could have lasted a long time, but it's called a day. And they watched. This period of creation we have no way of knowing and I'm not going to conjecture, but it's a long period of time.

When it's all done you get, in two places, this really clearly put. One is just in a side comment by Christ. Christ says, "I saw Satan fall as lightening to the earth." Another place is in the Book of Revelation where John records that there was not "place found for him" any further in heaven and he was cast down to the earth. From that, we know that Lucifer's disappointment and consequently his invidious rebellion lasted from before the time when the first was chosen and the creation began, until finally the earth was finished. It had to be completed because he was cast down to the earth, and he can't be cast down to the earth if the earth does not exist.

You know from reading the scriptures and taking them all as one and putting them together, that information leaks out. There must be a people in a city of righteousness in which the tabernacle of God has been erected, looking up when the Lord returns. There must be a period of destruction of the wicked that precedes the Lord's coming. How much those events may overlap...

Sometimes I get in trouble.

It's apparent to me that some skills exist that the Lord is going to require in order to complete the House of God. It cannot be completed if, as a result of warfare and disruption, there is no ability to get those skills employed in the work of fashioning and fabricating the appointments that are necessary for the House of God. I don't know how much of an overlap there is going to be but there certainly has to be some very specific things done to make the House of God suitable and appropriate for the restoration of the original religion. I think that the New Jerusalem has to be in existence, the House of God has to be in existence, it has to be accepted by Him, and there has to be a righteous group of people that are gathered and looking forward to His return. Sometimes God is a minimalist, and the way in which prophecy

gets fulfilled is so modest that it can escape the notice of all the great ones of that age, as in the coming of Christ when He was born in Bethlehem. Sometimes He does rather dramatic things like the cleansing that occurred on this land before He visited the people in Bountiful.

Question: What is your best method for interpreting scriptures?

Denver: Number one, I assume that all the scriptures are trying to tell me the same thing and they are not trying to contradict one another. There are simply different facets triangulating in onto the same subject matter. I have learned through a legal career that it is possible for multiple witnesses to all be telling the truth, yet giving very different accounts of exactly the same event, and it's because of the vantage point of the observer. I don't think that you can take many of the prophets and divorce them from their day and have them be sensitive and focused on a distant audience in another language, at another time, with another culture. One of the very best at doing that was Nephi. Isaiah did that but his focus was on the house of Israel and the remnants of the house of Israel. As Nephi said, it must necessarily be so that he speaks concerning the gentiles, because you can't get this far down in history without the mingling of the blood between the one and the other. Nephi wrote, but he had a very particular audience in mind. He had the gentiles to whom the Book of Mormon would come in the last days, and he talks as if that's his audience. He wants to speak to us. He wants us to be informed about how it all fits together.

I got into a lot of trouble with the powers that be in the LDS Church because I took what Nephi wrote and the prophecies that came through Joseph Smith, and I said, let's assume that Nephi knew what he was talking about concerning our day, and let's assume that Joseph's prophecies are addressed to our day. What would our history look like if we wrote it from the humbled standpoint of people who had incurred God's ire because of the way in which we had failed to measure up to what had been asked of us? The Book of Mormon rather looks like the gentiles are going to get it and fail with it. Christ's prophecy, in the LDS version in chapter 16 of 3<sup>rd</sup> Nephi, talks candidly about when the gentiles shall reject the fullness. If we take Christ at His word, then we only have two choices. One choice is that the glorious gentiles have not yet rejected God's word and, therefore, everything is intact, and all is well in Zion, but we're going to. The second option is, the gentiles managed to reject the fullness of the gospel right then upon the death of Joseph. If you read what the Lord said in January 1841, he described how you could know whether or not the gentiles, to whom the restoration came, were going to be rejected.

If they were not moved out of their place, and they were blessed and God defended them, then they've done what God asked. But if they were driven out of their place, and they suffered scourging and sore trials after being run out of their place in Nauvoo, then you could know that they didn't measure up. I accepted the premise that prophecy ought to control the themes of history instead of our theoretical reconstruction of history like historians and scholars do. If we're humble enough to say, we're not going to try and write a historian's account, we're going to try and write what the prophets told us would happen, well then, it looks rather like *Passing the Heavenly Gift*.

My method of interpreting scripture is to try to take them all as one, to take them literally, to try and understand them. In particular, if they're condemning me, if they're warning me, if they're telling me to repent, to take it personally and to assume that I'm not great, I'm not right, I'm not all that, and that like so many who have gone before, I can fail. I can fail miserably, and that only through the humble acceptance of every word that comes out of God's mouth can I have any hope for salvation.

Question: In the Covenants and Commandments Section 33 it says, "And I, John, saw that He received not the fullness at first... and in this way He qualified (different from D&C 93) to be called to become the Son of God[.]" Could you elaborate on "qualified" and "become"?

Denver: There is actually another place in Alma where Alma is talking about how, in the first place, they were all on the same level and that it was through heed and diligence that some rose above, and so they qualified to become called to the Holy Order.

If I had a board, I would draw a line and I'd say, in the beginning when the souls of men are created, we all stand on exactly the same plane, there's none greater and there's none less. Everyone stayed on the same plane. There was God the Father, and God the Mother. These were exalted beings whose glory surpasses all description. But we, their children, are not like them. They are something altogether much greater. Jesus Christ was the one who – the words are "heed and diligence" in Alma – gave heed and diligence to what the Father commanded. And so Christ began to rise in glory, in knowledge, in intelligence. The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth. He became a greater light. He became a possessor of greater truth. Christ rose above. In fact, I think the argument can be made from scripture that we collectively, and perhaps every one of us individually, could not have faith that we could be like God the Father until Jesus Christ proved, that by His heed and diligence, it was possible to become like God the Father. We gained faith through Christ in the Father, because Christ proved the word of God, so much so that Christ came to be known as the Word of God. Whatever the word of the Father was, that did Christ. When we saw Christ's ability to rise up as a consequence of that, we had faith in the Father through Christ. And so Christ's example as the Word of God led us to have faith that if we were to do the same thing, that is, give heed and diligence to the words, that we might likewise rise up.

Christ qualified to be the Son of God by giving "heed and diligence" to the word of the Father. And we, in turn, gained faith in the plan, in the word of the Father, by witnessing what it was that Christ exemplified. As a consequence of that we had the faith to come here, to place ourselves in peril, knowing that the only way you get out of this world is through death, and that the grave can forever take possession of and imprison the dead unless someone rescues you from death and hell. We had the confidence to come here knowing that when we arrived these tabernacles are not going to last. Sometimes they wear out before we get a chance to exit here, but if you work them hard they work better, so exercise. Take your vitamins.

Christ qualified, not because he was created uniquely, individually, and differently, or occupied a different level than did we at the beginning. Christ qualified because he gave heed and diligence in a way that exemplified the plan of the Father and the possibility that all of us can likewise do the same thing.

Some of these questions are so good that I'm going to keep them, and I'll probably talk about this in the future. I like that one a lot.

Question: Are there any signs in the heavens we should be watching for?

Denver: Yes.

I'm pretty sure you're getting tired of hearing me talk, and I know that there are other things that people want to take care of before they leave here today. I'm going to hold onto these and try and fashion another talk at some point in the future. Here is one I'll mention.

Question: How often should we be getting rebaptized?

Denver: There was a time when baptism was done as a sign of commitment or recommitment. For example, in the Kirtland temple they had an ordinance that they initiated involving the washing of feet. When that was first done, several of the people who wrote about it in their journals mentioned that they would like to do that every year on that same date; they would like to come back and go through the same experience. You go one year later and there was a little of that, but as you get further down the road on the annual, they wound up with a mess on their hands in Kirtland and it was discontinued. That was a similar kind of ordinance practice, the purpose of which was designed to turn over a new leaf, put sins behind, rededicate yourself, and be more committed.

Joseph once commented that daily repentance and daily returning to God is not pleasing to God because He expects you, when you repent, to stay committed, but if at any time a person feels the desire to be rebaptized as a sign of renewed commitment to God, I don't think there is anything wrong in it. If you're rebaptized one time as someone who is accepting God's work as part of a new dispensation, that is the only one you ever need to report to the Recorder's Clearinghouse. All other baptisms are for your own personal edification.

When they had a wooden font in the basement of the incomplete Nauvoo temple, they instituted an ordinance of baptizing seven times for healing, akin to the captain of the Syrian host coming to Ahab to be healed of leprosy and the king sending the captain of the Syrian host to Elijah, and Elijah telling him to go be baptized seven times in the Jordan River. Elijah did not even come out to meet him, he just sent word. The captain was indignant and left, and his cohort said, "Well, if he'd asked you to do some great thing, you'd have done that. This is a trivial thing. Why aren't you willing to do the trivial thing?" It persuaded him. He went back, he dipped himself seven times in the Jordan River, and he was healed of his leprosy. That's when the story really gets interesting because it involves graft incorruption of the priesthood, but we won't go there.

When Emma Smith was ill, she had been blessed, but things hadn't gotten better for her. Joseph had Emma in the wooden font of the Nauvoo temple baptized seven times for the healing of the sick. It wasn't baptism for renewal or recommitment, it was baptism for healing, which is a completely different purpose.

There was a time in pioneer Utah when baptisteries in the temples were used for baptisms for healing, being baptized seven times for healing. That was accepted but it's been long since discontinued. In fact, that practice is little known and rarely practiced. I think I've only seen it done one time. But I was there when it was done once among us, and I see nothing wrong with that. Rebaptism as a dedication I think ought to be when you feel the need to rededicate yourself. I don't think anyone should be forbidden from being rebaptized. But report it for recording at the Recorder's Clearinghouse only one time.

I have said before and I'll say it again: Anyone who wants to be rebaptized – a Catholic priest or a Mormon mission president – anyone who wants to be rebaptized is welcome to be rebaptized. We don't exercise control over anyone. We're interested in studying, knowing, and obeying the gospel of Christ. If you feel some denominational loyalty, I don't care if you want to be a Mason, or you want to be a Knights of Columbus, if you want to be a Baptist, or you want to have fellowship with Presbyterians. Rebaptism is a sign that you have accepted the restoration that began through Joseph Smith and has recently been renewed again with God willing to extend a covenant to the gentiles. We're not trying to organize anyone into a group in which some preside over another.

I only come here and talk because I'm invited. I don't presume I have the right to be here. If I'm not invited, I won't speak. I may come but I won't speak. Everyone, in my view, occupies the equal and exact position as do I. There is no one greater and there's certainly no one lesser. Among the people that I have come to know, some of you are great individuals who have lived more commendable lives than have I. I mentioned that I grew up in Mountain Home, Idaho. If it wasn't criminal, it wasn't entertaining when we were kids. Heavens, the Supreme Court Justice who has been accused of inappropriate conduct would have been a paragon of virtue in my high school.

I admire and look up to many of you. I think that in some respects, God wants to make sure that no one haughty, proud, and who thinks themselves better than another, will ever be permitted to speak on His behalf. I think God wants the weak things of the world, I think He wants the broken things, the things that have no doubt about their admiration for God because they see nothing about themselves that's worthy of admiration. Someone who only wants to be as accurate [and] as truthful as they can be, and to trust God as the author and the finisher of His work. To get themselves out of the way and let God be the one who is the mover.

I bear testimony of the things that God has said to me. I communicate them as honestly and as forthrightly as I'm able to do, but I take no credit for it. I don't pretend that I deserve to be anything. I think many of you are greater people than you hardly comprehend.

You young people, early in your life, having an opportunity to grow up without many of the regrets and foolishness and stupidity that others... I did not seriously cross the restoration's path until I was 19 years old. You are growing up exposed to it so early in life that you can become an encyclopedia of truth if you'll dedicate yourself to it. The gospel is vast and it is

glorious. It is edifying. Don't waste your time with science fiction. The gospel is far more interesting. It has so much more reach.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Hey, that Book of Mormon is up here. Someone with bad eyesight, hobble up here and grab it.