

## **The Heavens are Open (And Therefore, We Have Work To Do)**

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I want to thank the committee that organized this conference. They’ve learned that adversity is one great cure for monotony as you struggled to make things happen despite all that’s gone on. There are a lot of people who are necessary right now to make this thing go out, broadcast over the Internet. They’re unseen. Some of them are here, and some are at remote locations. I wanna thank all of them for their contribution and all the volunteers who have worked to try and make this happen.

Yesterday, there was a get-together in a city park where a few of us were able to hear and partake of the sacrament, listen to Rob Adolfo talk for a bit, share some feelings with one another. I met a young lady named Mandolin. Her mom introduced her to me, and I thought, “That’s a great name. I’ve never met anyone named Mandolin.” So, I violated all of the protocols that everyone’s respecting, and I gave the little girl a hug; and I assume that’s at my peril, not at her peril [audience laughter]. So—

It’s been 200 years since the First Vision took place. John Lefgren and John Pratt (both independent of one another) were trying to fix the date on which that occurred—John Pratt using calendaring to try and find an alignment of dates, and John Lefgren investigating weather reports that would conform to the description that Joseph Smith gave of that morning on which it took place. And independent of one another, they both reached the conclusion that it was on a Sunday, March 26th of 1820. So, we’re rapidly coming up on that date.

Thousands of people, perhaps hundreds of thousands of people (maybe more) have had the opportunity to have the veil lift and be in the presence of the Lord or in the presence of the messenger who speaks in the first person in the name of the Lord. But comparatively few are ever told, as Joseph was told, that God had a work for him to do.

What distinguishes Joseph—in the First Vision—to me are two things: First, when he prayed and he was bound up by something that he called *thick darkness gathering around [him]* (Joseph Smith History 2:4 RE), he didn’t submit, he didn’t surrender, and he didn’t accept that as the message God intended for him. But calling upon God, he persisted through that.

I’ve mentioned before there was a shouting Methodist tradition that typically would acknowledge **that** as a divine message. They go out, they pray, they shout to Heaven, they get bound up. And when that happens, then they’ve got their witness from the other side, and they know they’ve come in contact with God.

Joseph, for some reason, did not accept that. He pressed through, he persisted; and calling upon God, He was delivered from that—at which point he saw what was, initially, a pillar of light that troubled him until he saw that the treetops were safe from contact with it, that he might survive contact with it, also. And it gradually descended, and he saw personages within it.

The second remarkable thing about Joseph is that God had a work for him to do, **but** he ends the description of the First Vision with: *many other things did He say unto me which I cannot [reveal] at this time* (Ibid, vs. 5). Joseph **knew** a great deal more right at the beginning than he **understood**; and Joseph gradually **understood** more than he was able to **teach**. At about the time that Joseph reached not just the height of his comprehension but the height of his capacity to be able to teach, he was taken from us. We lost him.

So, God had a work for him to do, but the work that he had to do never did get completed, which is why, then, the Restoration needs to pick up and continue.

Well, a new Restoration has begun preliminary to winding up God's great work. God is very active at present. Being chosen to do God's work does not make us godly, virtuous, or better than others. Every individual must be godly and practice virtue, and even then, we're no better than any other people. The difference consists in God's willingness to direct us **forward** as **He** completes the promises and covenants He made to the Fathers. It's **God's presence**, not **our worthiness** which distinguishes us.

In the last few weeks, a great alarm has been raised about a viral pandemic. It illustrates something about all nations and institutions. Although they may **seem** durable, they are **all** vulnerable and **easily destroyed** by very simple means. Like locusts destroying the crops of Egypt in the story of Exodus, great societies are shaken through the smallest of means. We know there will come *an overflowing scourge, for a desolating sickness shall cover the land* (T&C 31:7), for the Lord has told **us** beforehand so that when it comes, we'll not be overtaken. This **current** unrest illustrates what will happen one day soon. Being **forewarned** gives us the opportunity to prepare.

But our society suffers most from evils we inflict upon ourselves. It's estimated that in January and February of this year, the greatest cause of death in the United States has come from one of our great evils of abortion. An estimated 141,000 abortions in those two months **added** to the estimated 51,000,000 who have been slain since 1973. **Abortion** is the leading cause of death in the United States. By tolerating this mass killing, we're not unlike those who anciently killed their children, sacrificing them to the false god Molech. The Lord **repeatedly** condemned that:

*And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Again, you shall say to the children of Israel, Whoever he is, of the children of Israel or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that gives any of his seed unto Molech, he shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones...*

Stoning with stones was intended to be an expression of community condemnation to require that everyone participate, everyone know, and everyone witness the horrendous act of putting someone to death under the law for this kind of an offense. This is in the book of Leviticus.

*And I will set my face against that man and will cut him off from among his people because he has given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary and to profane my holy name. And if the people of the land do in any way hide their eyes from the man when he gives of his seed unto Molech and kill him not, then I will set my face against that man, against his family, and will cut him off and all that go whoring after him to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people. (Leviticus 9:16 RE)*

This was an act of killing children for worship of a false god. There's very little difference between that act and the idea of exercising a fundamental right enshrined as though it were a sacrament.

In the book of Kings, it's repeated: *that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech (2 Kings 7:10 RE)*. And Jeremiah: *to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech, which I commanded them not (Jeremiah 13:4 RE)*.

We've slain—as a society in the United States—over 51,000,000 children. Where is the alarm? Where is the upset? Where is the shutting down of business and the cutting off of travel in order to preserve **those** lives?

What kind of a society allows killing 51,000,000 innocent children to continue uninterrupted for over 47 years? As we've been told, *Nevertheless, when the wicked rule, the people mourn. Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men you should observe to uphold; otherwise, whatever is less than these [come] of evil (T&C 98:2)*.

It's not honest, it's not wise, and it's not good to uphold leaders who celebrate the murder of children as if it were a sacrament to be protected, sacrosanct, and constitutionally protected. It **is** something that will cause the greater society, eventually, to mourn.

We have elected and upheld men and women who have tolerated this obscenity for 47 years. The United States **will be punished** for this. By and by, you will see the *chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed has made a **full end of all nations** (T&C 85:3, emphasis added)*. That full end of nations will include the U.S. And so, we have an opportunity to prepare if we will heed the Lord's counsel.

Anciently, Enoch was shown in a vision in which he *beheld Satan, and he had a great chain in his hand, and he veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced (Genesis 4:15 RE)*. The *chain* and the *veil of darkness* over the earth at that time were lies and deceit that covered the earth. Men spoke lies

**continually** to one another and falsely accused one another. God told Enoch, *They are without affection, and they hate their own blood* (Ibid, vs. 17).

Many false spirits, false ideas, and lies are spread among us. There are too many for me to be able to respond to them all. You have the Scriptures. Study them, pray continually, and walk uprightly. Never compromise **your** virtue nor allow **your** thoughts to go unguarded. Understanding the Scriptures will fortify anyone from today's lies. Political leaders, entertainers, news reports, and even scholarly studies distort and mislead. We live in a time similar to Enoch's. The world is chained by lies.

The Jews claimed that they were Torah-observant and that that would be enough to save them. They asserted, *Good Master, we have Moses and the prophets; and whoever shall live by them, shall he not have life?* (Luke 9:10 RE). But Christ responded, *You know not Moses, neither the prophets, for if you had known them, you would've believed on me; for, to this intent they were written* (ibid, vs. 10).

They accused Christ of violating the Torah by healing on the Sabbath (see Matthew 6:10 RE). But Christ disputed their Torah teaching, saying, if an ox fell into a pit, it would be lawful to rescue the ox on the Sabbath (see Luke 9:4 RE), asking if a daughter of Abraham should not also be rescued on the Sabbath (see Luke 8:32 RE) Christ also compared healing a son of Abraham to make him whole with circumcising on the Sabbath. The Torah-observant Jews approved of Sabbath-day circumcision.

As a practical matter, it is impossible to follow the Torah without a temple and sacrifice. But Christ fulfilled the law's required sacrifice, and therefore, the Law of Moses ended. The Roman destruction of the temple made observance of that law impossible to continue.

Between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Crusades brought a stagnant Christian Europe into contact with Islamic culture. Baghdad was a cultural and literary center where great philosophical works that had been lost to Christianity were studied. The works of Aristotle and Plato were preserved and transmitted to Christians from contact with the Muslim world. Europe gained learning in mathematics, astronomy, ~~and Christianity~~, or excuse me, and chemistry from the Muslims.

Musical instruments (including the violin and guitar) are derived from Arabic instruments, the rebec and the oud. Distillation, including alcohol, along with cultivation of cotton, rice, sugar cane, the silk industry, paper, the suction pump, and the spinning wheel came to Europe through contact with Islam in the Crusades.

The 14<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance was the result of light and truth flowing into benighted Christian Europe from an enlightened Islamic civilization. Catholic Christianity had oppressed the continent and kept people in darkness. When that world was enlightened, civilization changed, and with greater light and truth, Catholicism's oppressive domination was challenged through the Protestant Reformation.

The theological, social, and educational revolution underway during this time period produced several esoteric traditions. Ideas were imported into Persia from the Far East. Hindu, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, and Taoist ideas refreshed Islamic thinkers and, in turn, filtered into Christian and Jewish European circles.

Freemasonry and the Kabbalah both were developed as a result of events in this 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century period. Other esoteric traditions were also invented. They all claimed to have much more ancient origins than when they were actually developed.

The Catholic Knights Templar Order was founded in 1096 and destroyed in 1307. Freemasonry claims some relationship to the Knights Templar and, in turn, to the temple of Solomon. Those claims are not true.

The Kabbalists claim to have learning that can be traced back to Abraham. It is more correct to say they can trace their notions to the Far East than to Abraham. Their claims are untrue and are among the superstitions Isaiah prophesied against. This is Isaiah: *You, LORD, have abandoned your people, the descendants of Jacob. They are full of superstitions from the East; they practice divination like the Philistines and embrace pagan customs* (Isaiah 2:6 NIV; see also Isaiah 1:6 RE).

Kabbalah began to be developed by the Jews in Spain after contact with the Moors. None of the Kabbalist claims about the antiquity of their beliefs' origins are true. It is another mingling of the doctrines of men with Scripture. Despite this, some thought-provoking and interesting things are taught by Kabbalists.

Today, you will hear voices trying to use Kabbalist ideas to claim the Law of Moses has always been and is still binding. They advocate the idea that there are levels of meaning to the law, and the highest meaning is where enlightenment and understanding of God is to be found. These are interesting ideas, but they are not ancient. They are Middle-Age notions derived from contact with Islam. And so, we see irony again playing out in the Jewish-Islamic relationship in which Jews, claiming superior enlightenment through the Kabbalah, owe an unrecognized debt to Islam.

Christ interpreted the Law of Moses to require charity, even if doing so appears to violate the commandments. Christ showed that God cares for those who are hurting, injured, or in need. Therefore, any commandment from God should be understood in light of that merciful objective. *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the vices of the world* (Epistle of Jacob 1:7 RE). There are two challenges to this. Caring for those in need is one, but keeping ourselves unspotted is a second.

As for the first, those who follow Christ have an obligation to care for one another. There are single mothers and children with substantial ongoing needs. They need help with food, clothing, housing, and medical care. These are basic needs calling for our help.

Vulnerable people in humble circumstances should not be asked why they are in need. It does not matter. We have no right to judge them. Our obligation is to help them. The Good Samaritan helped the man in need without judgment. His response was based **only** on the need he saw: *When he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him and bound up his wounds* (Luke 8:8 RE). This is the behavior our Lord encouraged. *Go and do likewise* (Ibid).

Religion requires us to:

*Succor those that stand in need of your succor. Ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need...ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish. Perhaps thou shalt say, The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand and will not give him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just. But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this, the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done, he perisheth for ever and hath no interest in the kingdom of God. For behold, are we not all beggars?* (Mosiah 2:4 RE)

The light of Christ is withdrawing from the world, and darkness continues to spread. If you have the Spirit, you can see clearly the steady decline of light in the world. It's obvious. The increasing darkness will eventually result in the wicked slaying the wicked as has happened in two previous civilizations on this land.

The Book of Mormon describes how this happens: *The spirit of the Lord had ceased striving with them and Satan had full power over the hearts of the people, for they were given up unto the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds, that they might be destroyed* (Ether 6:17 RE). *God will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous* (1 Nephi 7:4 RE). He has declared, *The wicked shall destroy the wicked, and I will hold the peacemakers in the palm of my hand and none can take them from me* (T&C 157:65).

But being among the peacemakers and being among those who are **not** covered in darkness requires practicing charity towards those who are in need. It enlarges your heart. It increases the light within you. It makes you **feel** better when you minister to and help those who are in need. All of that is godliness.

Now as for the second, **no one** is entitled to assume they have the right to be idle while imposing on laborers to provide for their needs. When seeking assistance from others, always consider this principle: *You shall not be idle, for he that is idle shall not eat the bread, nor wear the garment of the laborer* (T&C 26:10). No one should judge or dismiss your needs, but as the recipient of help from others, you should always evaluate **yourself** by this standard.

In keeping unspotted from the world, it involves a true principle that adultery and sign-seeking go hand in hand. Among all mankind, John the Baptist was chosen to baptize the Son of God, yet *John did no miracle* (John 6:30 RE). Signs do not produce faith but

**follow** faith. Even Christ could do no mighty works among those who lacked faith. There are signs that do follow faith, and I've witnessed many of them. But I speak little of them because sign-seeking attracts the wrong kind of follower. Even Christ would not accept loyalty from such people.

The idea that signs must be open for the world and spoken of frequently is a false idea. Sign-seekers are unable to have faith unless they repent. God is not fooled by pious pretensions.

Righteousness is required for God to gather a community into Zion. We have a law given to us:

*And now behold, I speak unto the church: you shall not kill, he that kills shall not have forgiveness, neither in this world nor in the world to come. And again, you shall not kill; he that kills shall die. You shall not steal, ...he that steals and will not repent shall be cast out. You shall not lie; he that lies and will not repent shall be cast out. You shall love your wife with all your heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else, and he that looks upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the spirit, and if he repents not he shall be cast out. You shall not commit adultery, and he that commits adultery and repents not shall be cast out; and he that commits adultery and repents with all his heart, and forsakes and does it no more, you shall forgive...but if he does it again, he shall not be forgiven, but shall be cast out. You shall not speak evil of your neighbor or do him any harm. You know my laws, they are given in my scriptures. He that sins and repents not shall be cast out. If you love me, you shall serve me and keep all my commandments. (T&C 26:6)*

These are minimal standards required of us all. They are not constraints but the only way to have freedom and enjoy a peaceful community. Commandments are a **gift**. Obedience to commandments is the only thing that allows mankind to live in harmony.

There are two opposing forces at work, and God's light still remains productive and positive. Because there is a necessary opposition, darkness and light are both growing.

There are very good things happening in the world. We are witnessing technological progress bordering on the miraculous. People around the world are rising from poverty at a faster rate than at any prior time in history. More patents are being issued at a quicker pace than at any time before. Agriculture is more productive. Medicine is finding more cures. Stem cell therapies are in their infancy and showing extraordinary promise. This could and should be a golden age for mankind. But at the same time we're witnessing extraordinary progress in material benefits, we're also seeing an increase in oppression, despair, drug dependency, violence, and suicide.

The gulf between **actual progress** and **social despair** is illustrated by the political debate involving global warming. The United States has reduced its greenhouse gas output by 12% since 2005, the largest reduction of any nation in the world. The United States is leading the

world in reducing greenhouse gases, accomplishing far more than any other nation. At the **same** time, the United States has increased oil production by 80% and natural gas production by 51%, making it energy-independent and an exporter of oil and natural gas, the world's largest producer of energy.

China is the worst polluter and produces nearly double the amount of greenhouse gases as the United States. As the U.S. continues to **decrease**, China's greenhouse gas **increase** is growing at a rate of about 2% per year. Therefore, if you care about this issue, you should advocate for moving all the commerce, manufacturing, and production that can be moved from China to the United States in order to reduce greenhouse gases.

But for political reasons, manufacturing and production in the United States is being condemned by emotional, loud, angry voices who are silent about pollution coming from China and India. Every company that moves its manufacturing to the United States is helping to reduce greenhouse gases.

Political dialogue is so angry, so emotional, and irrational that everyone should take notice. Why has political dialogue become so angry? Why is there so much despair?

Christ spoke against disputing this way:

*There shall be no disputations among you....he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the Devil, who is the father of contention; and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another, but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away. (3 Nephi 5:8 RE)*

No matter how you measure progress, material progress is growing at an astonishing rate, more than in any prior generation. Despite this, there's greater mental illness, depression, despair, and drug abuse among the most prosperous societies today.

It is in the minds and the hearts of men where darkness grows. A great fog of lies spreads over the earth again today. There's decreasing light because of false, evil, and destructive ideas. Life expectancy in the United States has declined for the first time largely due to two causes: suicide and drug abuse. There is a crisis of depression, loneliness, and mental illness underway. Pollution of our minds is a far greater threat than anything we see in the physical environment.

The Book of Mormon warns about our time. It describes pollutions of both the environment and the spirits of mankind that we now see:

*Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be heard of fires, and tempests, and vapors of smoke in foreign lands; and there shall also be heard of wars, and rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places. Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be **great pollutions upon the face of the earth**—*



So, now he's talking about pollutions which he will **illustrate** in the words that are coming up, **pollutions** that you're going to see in the last days. And these are the pollutions about which he was concerned:

*There shall be murders, and robbings, and lyings, and deceivings, and whoredoms, and all manner of abominations — when there shall be many who will say, Do this or do that, it mattereth not, for the Lord will uphold such at the last day. But woe unto such, for they are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be churches built up that shall say, Come unto me, and for your money you shall receive forgiveness of your sins. (Mormon 4:4 RE, emphasis added)*

Today's greatest pollutions are lies, deceits, and advocating all manner of abominations **as if they were good**. Abusive and wicked practices are now advocated boldly and incorporated into our entertainment media and culture—**fearlessly**. Their advocates have no shame, no fear of judgment, and no concern for godliness.

The needs of the poor are often forgotten—and their direful circumstances **used** by political leaders **only** to advance their power and control. The sick and infirm have become a political opportunity. Governments face increasing perplexities and fail to address them with common sense. The world's leaders welcome perplexities to increase public distress because they hope to ride that increasing public distress to increased political power.

Christ described our socially bleak times but told us not to be discouraged because of it. He told us to look up, for the time of redemption is promised when a generation sees these signs:

*In the generation in which the times of the gentiles shall be fulfilled, there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth, **distress of nations with perplexity, like the sea and the waves roaring**. The earth also shall be troubled, and the waters of the great deep, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of Heaven shall be shaken; ...when these things begin to come to pass, then **look up**, lift up your heads, for the day of your redemption draws near. (Luke 12:17 RE, emphasis added)*

We have a sideshow going on in this nation's capital and even worse foolishness in the governments of other nations. The people of some nations starve because their leaders believe military power matters more than their citizens' hunger. Taxes are squandered, speech is suppressed, citizens are killed, and leaders pursue foolishness and vanity rather than benevolence and kindness.

Despite the present distresses, we are expected to uphold the government for the present. As our Scriptures explain: *We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law (T&C 146:32).*

And in another place the Lord stated:

*I, the Lord, justify you and your brethren of my church in befriending that law which is the constitutional law of the land. And as pertaining to law of man, whatsoever is more or less than this comes of evil. I, the Lord make you free; therefore, you are free indeed, and the law also makes you free. Nevertheless, when the wicked rule, the people mourn. [And then He adds what I read before.] Honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, ...good men and wise men you should observe to uphold; otherwise, whatsoever is less than these comes of evil. (T&C 98:2)*

Governments and churches are both subject to corruption. *We have learned by sad experience...it's the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. Hence many are called, but few are chosen (T&C 139:5).*

The genius of the U.S. Constitution is that it **presumes** ambitious and corrupt men will rise to power. It both limits and then fragments government authority. The Constitution sets restrictions on what the government is permitted to do. Then, as a further precaution, it divides power between three branches and makes a system of checks and balances so that ambitious and corrupt men who rise to offices will have only limited means to act.

Rhetoric stirs emotions that erupt like storm waves crashing against the cliffs. Isaiah described how mankind now behaves: *Woe to the multitude of many people, who make a noise like the noise of the seas, and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters. The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters, but God shall rebuke them (Isaiah 6:13 RE). This* was the **image** that Christ used: *Upon the earth, distress of nations with perplexity, like the sea and the waves roaring (Luke 12:17 RE).*

Much of the toxic pollution spreading despair and anger is through social media. Our computers and smartphones are filled with the fog of lies. People who are lonely and isolated post pictures with false captions to inspire envy and respect. Others believe these false images and become unhappy with their own circumstances.

Lies are now political capital for **all** parties. Democracies vote liars into office, and once elected, leaders keep their supporters committed by lying to them yet more. Dictators lie to their citizens to manipulate and control them. Churches and businesses are being swept into the polarizing political fights that demand you either accept their political viewpoint or suffer boycotts, condemnation, or false accusations.

**Loud-but-small** minorities use social media to exert a wholly disproportionate influence over society and over government. Churches **foolishly** fear offending in this partisan climate and surrender to the intolerant demands of destructive agents.

Churches do not preach repentance for fear of offending. A person is more likely to receive praise for denouncing the Bible than for denouncing sin. The Bible was once the primary text used in public education in the United States. It was once common sense to do unto others as you would have them do unto you (see 3 Nephi 6:8 RE).

The fog of lies and the foolishness of society should not make you despair. Instead, now is the time for us to hope for a better world. It should make us want to help establish a better society.

Guard your children. Let them know that the primary content of social media, news (and even in education) are falsehoods. You are responsible to teach your children.

Fleeing Babylon will require us to part ways with her. Our departure will require that Babylon be paid. We will have to *render [unto] Caesar the things [that] are Caesar's* (Mark 5:41 RE) before Babylon will permit us to depart in peace.

Honoring, obeying, and sustaining the law require that land used for a Zion community must be acquired through legal purchase. People cannot just take what they want. Property needs to be acquired in the way the law will respect—and no one can challenge our right to occupy and use.

For Zion, land must be redeemed in the way the Lord has instructed:

*Let all the churches gather together all their moneys. Let these things be done in their time, lo, not in haste, and observe to have all things prepared before you. And let honorable men be appointed, even wise men, and send them to purchase the lands. And every church in the eastern countries, when they are built up, if they will hearken unto this counsel they may buy lands and gather together upon them, and in this way they may establish Zion. There is even now already in store sufficient, yea, even abundance, to redeem Zion and establish her waste places, no more to be thrown down... (T&C 101:16)*

That direction was given in 1833. The men of that generation failed. Today, women are gathering the money for this purpose. I have more confidence in today's women than yesterday's men.

There is land given to us by covenant, but no one is any more justified in taking that land without purchase than was Abraham. Abraham received a promised land by covenant from God, yet he still had to purchase it from the owners before taking possession. The account of him purchasing a burial site for himself and Sarah is in the Old Covenants, Genesis chapter 8, paragraphs 9-10 and 20. I'm not gonna read those, but they'll be in the ~~transcript~~ [paper] of the talk, as if I read it.

Like Abraham, we are commanded that we must purchase the land on which Zion will be built:

*Behold, the land of Zion; I, the Lord, hold it in my own hands. Nevertheless, I, the Lord, render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's. Wherefore, I, the Lord, will that you should purchase the lands, that you may have advantage of the world, that you may have claim on the world, that they may not be stirred up unto anger. For Satan puts it*

*into their hearts to anger against you and to the shedding of blood. Wherefore, the land of Zion shall not be obtained but by purchase or by blood; otherwise, there is no inheritance for you. And if by purchase, behold, you are blessed, and if by blood, as you are forbidden to shed blood, lo, your enemies are upon you and you shall be scourged from city to city, and from synagogue to synagogue, and but few shall stand to receive an inheritance. (T&C 50:7)*

Whenever there are people who are God's, the Lord instructs **them** to build a temple. One day soon, there will be a command to do so. When the command comes, it will need to be accomplished in an orderly way required by society.

Some have questioned why a temple should be considered when there are so many unmet needs. The answer is that the Lord expects it, the prophecies require it, and we cannot avoid building it if we are obedient.

There's so much more we need to know and do before we will see Zion. This creation was ordained through natural laws known and understood by God. He will establish Zion through natural means. Barren places, depleted of micronutrients and microorganisms, will blossom as a rose through the work of competent husbandmen. In the beginning, Adam and Eve were given the responsible *to dress it and to keep it* (Abraham 7:10 RE). To return the earth back to Eden, we will be required to likewise *dress it and to keep it*.

It will be through natural means that we will realize the promises made by covenant with us: *I will raise you up and protect you, abide with you, and gather you in due time, and this shall be a land of promise to you as your inheritance from me* (T&C 158:13-14).

We are promised the earth will yield its increase, and you will flourish upon the mountains and upon the hills, but that will not be accomplished without us acting the part of the husbandman. There will be a great work required to renew the fertility of the earth. But we can, with God's direction and blessing, accomplish that work, *that you may stand independent above all other creatures beneath the Celestial world, that you may come up unto the crown prepared for you* (T&C 70:4).

The Doctrine of Christ is simple. It has a negative and a positive declaration. First, the negative declaration: *This is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another, but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away* (3 Nephi 5:8 RE).

Second, the positive declaration:

*And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me — and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the holy ghost beareth record of the Father and me — and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men everywhere to repent and believe in me. And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved, and they are they who shall inherit the*

*kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned.*  
(Ibid, vs. 9)

This doctrine will save **anyone** who follows it. But it is a mistake to assume that Christ's gospel does not contain more. The fullness of the gospel of Christ is vast.

It includes this truth about God: *I, Nephi, am forbidden that I should write the remainder of the things which I saw. Wherefore, the things which I have written sufficeth me, and I have not written but a small part of the things which I saw* (1 Nephi 3:31 RE). That which was not written by Nephi is part of Christ's gospel. You have not yet received them, but that does not change it from being part of Christ's gospel.

Moroni wrote the prophecies of Ether and recorded: *I was about to write more, but I'm forbidden; but **great** and **marvelous** were the prophecies of Ether* (Ether 6:4 RE, emphasis added). Those prophecies of Ether are also part of Christ's gospel and are presently not restored.

The children of the Nephites were taught by Christ in a pillar of fire, and afterwards, these children bore testimony to their fathers:

*It came to pass on the morrow that the multitude gathered themselves together, and they both saw and heard these children; yea, even babes did open their mouths and utter marvelous things. And the things which they did utter were forbidden, that [they] should not any man write them.* (3 Nephi 12:2 RE)

Those marvelous things are part of Christ's gospel but are forbidden from public knowledge. It will require a similarly sacred space to restore **this** part of Christ's gospel.

As Christ ministered to the Nephites, He prayed to the Father. What He revealed to that audience was unspeakable, forbidden from our Scriptures.

*He went again a little way off and prayed unto the Father, and tongue cannot speak the words which he prayed, neither can be written by man the words which he prayed. And the multitude did hear, and do bear record, and their hearts were open, and they did understand in their hearts the words which he prayed. Nevertheless, so great and marvelous were the words which he prayed that they cannot be written, neither can they be uttered by man.* (3 Nephi 9:5 RE)

Those words are also part of Christ's gospel, and He has the right to teach them. But they are not part of the public revelation available to man.

When Moses asked for greater understanding of all God's works, he was told:

*And the Lord...spoke unto Moses of the heavens, saying, These are many and they cannot be numbered unto man, but they are numbered unto me for they are mine. And*

*as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof, even so shall another come. And there is no end to my works, neither my words. (Genesis 1:7 RE)*

The endless works and endless words of the Lord God are also part of Christ's gospel. It is foolish to assume even a small fraction have been recorded.

John testified concerning his own record of Christ: *In addition to this account, many other things [which] were done by Jesus, which, if they were all written, that library would fill the entire cosmos* (Testimony of St. John 12:22). All of the things done by Christ have not been written, yet they are still part of Christ's gospel.

Christ's statement of His doctrine is short, simple, and complete. But Christ's gospel has **vastly** more.

As I've said previously, you should hunger and search for understanding. This is all of Christ's doctrine. There is no more doctrine. But this is not all of Christ's teachings nor all His tenets; these are not all of Christ's precepts or His covenants. This is not all of Christ's commandments; this is not all of His principles, but it is all of His doctrine.

Christ posed this question to all of us through the Book of Mormon: *Wherefore murmur ye because ye shall receive more of my word?* (2 Nephi 12:9 RE).

He explained, *Because that I have spoken one word, ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another, for my work is not yet finished, neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and for ever* (Ibid, vs. 10).

Many great and glorious things pertaining to the Kingdom of God are reserved for God's house.

In the Glossary of Gospel Terms, the "Mysteries of God" are explained in this way:

That knowledge which is hidden from the world and only made available through revelation to the faithful. Much of such knowledge may be learned but it is not to be taught. One will have to apply the process of learning the mysteries in one's life if he or she intends to learn the mysteries themselves. The scriptures tell us how to get the "mysteries of God." Learning these mysteries is the fullness of Christ's Gospel. There is a system by which men learn the mysteries of heaven and are saved. That system is set out in Alma 9:7: first, angels are sent to prepare men and women; second, they are allowed to behold the Lord's glory; then they converse with the Lord, at which point they are taught the things that have been prepared from the foundation of the earth for their salvation. All this is driven by the man or woman's faith, repentance, and holy works. Joseph Smith said, *I advise all to go on to perfection and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of godliness.... [As for myself] it has always been my province to dig up hidden mysteries, new things, for my hearers.* This is the Book of Mormon theme. Search deeper, and find God. *Ask that*

*you may know the mysteries of God.* That is a commandment. Although given to Oliver Cowdery, it is a principle that is applicable to all of mankind (see T&C 3:3). The claim that one should stay away from the mysteries of God is false. Refusing to follow the command to *ask that you may know the mysteries of God* (JSH 13:23) denies the power of godliness and opposes the doctrine of salvation. It is anti-Christ. "We make our own mysteries; we are not meant to be kept in darkness, and the mysteries of heaven will be unfolded to us as [soon as] we make an effort to understand them." Christ said that *the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven* are understood only by those who have been initiated and given that understanding (see Matthew 7:2). Mysteries can also be defined as solemn ceremonial ordinances or rituals which take place in a special setting. "Mysteries (from the Greek, *mystērion*, μυστήριον)...[are] confided only to the initiated and not to be communicated by them to ordinary mortals.

This is the real reason why God requires that a temple be built. A temple ordained by God, built by His command and according to His pattern, will be a repository for teachings, precepts, commandments, tenets, and covenants that are not public but are all part of Christ's gospel.

Like true temples built in the past, there will be places for general assembly where everyone will be invited to come and worship. There will be other places for fewer people to assemble where not everyone will be extended an open invitation to come. There will also be some places forbidden to the public where God alone determines who will enter.

There will be no **temple recommend** to enter the innermost courts of God's house. No one will be required to pay to enter. The only requirement will be God's approval, through revelation, to identify those He will invite. I assume that as soon as any soul is prepared to receive what God freely offers, God will extend His invitation.

The house of God is a place of learning. It is *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* (T&C 123:3). God will determine how His house will be ordered.

But the Doctrine of Christ is the foundation, and without it, understanding the mysteries of God is **nothing**. Paul says: *And [although] I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing* (1 Corinthians 1:51 RE).

The Doctrine of Christ commands that whosoever believeth in Christ and is baptized, the same shall be saved, and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in Christ and is not baptized shall be damned. If followed, the Doctrine of Christ leads to that illumination of mind and spirit called *fire and the Holy Ghost*. It can purge and cleanse, enlighten and instruct. It can make you **one** with God the Father and Christ, His Son:

*I say unto you that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father. And whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also, and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the holy ghost. And thus will the Father bear record of me, and the holy ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me, for the Father and I and the holy ghost are one. And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things. (3 Nephi 5:9 RE)*

We must obey the Doctrine of Christ to qualify to build His house. Scripture confirms that not every one who would **want** to build a house of God is **allowed** by God to do so.

King David gathered everything required to build the temple of God but was forbidden from accomplishing it because he had been too violent a man to be permitted:

*David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build a house unto the name of the Lord my God; but the word of the Lord came to me, saying, You have shed blood abundantly, and have made great wars. You shall not build a house unto my name because you have shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. (1 Chronicles 10:15 RE)*

To qualify to build an acceptable house to God requires that His instructions and commands be followed. Therefore, any land for that purpose must be acquired by lawful purchase.

I know of no way to flee Babylon other than to pay her what she values. She values money above all else. Babylon believes you can buy anything in this world with money. It is by **giving** to Babylon what she values that we prove our heart is not set upon her. Hearts set upon Babylon mourn parting with her money. We should willingly give **her** her due, and redeem the land to build Zion.

There is a lot of opposition to even the preparatory work. There are many false spirits distracting and hindering the efforts. Accusers and opponents rail against this effort. They're like the ancient dissidents who complained:

*And the whole multitude of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots and when we did eat bread to the full; for you have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill the whole assembly with hunger. (Exodus 10:2 RE)*

If the invitation to build a house of God by a kindly Lord is not attractive to you, then don't contribute. Do not give this work a second thought. But when the time comes, do not gather together with those who are delighted to answer the invitation to prepare... [long pause]

...because that preparation for the Lord's return in glory must take place.



In the wisdom of the Lord, unfair and harsh condemnation of this work is permitted to expose for our view those who will always be disruptive to a community. They need to be identified so they are not gathered. Accusations, condemnation, and lies are welcomed at present. They not only tell us who acts the part of Satan but also capture those who are easily taken by the adversary. Accomplishing what the Lord invites people to do is hard enough with the humble and meek. It becomes impossible when the hard-hearted are whispering accusations and insults (as Wormtongue), hindering the work.

Those who oppose the effort often do so while quoting Scripture as if they occupy a higher ground. If they do occupy a higher ground with better understanding, then they ought to leave, establish their model of a city on a hill, so we can all learn from their example. They do not undertake such an effort because they know they only quote Scripture to condemn, judge, and dismiss—never to govern their own accomplishments. They're darkened in their minds and in their hearts, and therefore, like everyone's common enemy, they use Scripture as a weapon to cut, criticize, and condemn. They are Satan, an accuser of the brethren. As we've been warned, that spirit should be cast away from our conversations, our meetings, our gatherings.

There is an example in the Old Covenants of a lying spirit permitted to influence Israel as testified of by Micaiah:

*He said, Hear therefore the word of the Lord. I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the hosts of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.*

If you read *The Second Comforter*, you know what's going on in a vision like that of the heavens.

*And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up, and fall, at Ramoth-Gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, With what? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, You shall persuade him, and prevail also; go forth and do so. Now therefore behold, the Lord [hath] put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets, and the Lord has spoken evil concerning you. (1 Kings 5:7-8 RE)*

This is Micaiah telling the king what's going on, that all the prophets that are telling him, "Go, go. Go do it. It's gonna turn out just fine" are being misled by a lying spirit. The king rejected Micaiah's prophecy, followed the lies told him by the deceived prophets, and was slain in battle.

Lying spirits are not confined to events and times of the Old and New Covenants. They are active any time the work of God is underway.

We are promised that eventually we will have revealed the contents of a sealed book:

*The book shall be sealed, and in the book shall be a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof. Wherefore, because of the things which are sealed up, the things which are sealed shall not be delivered in the day of the wickedness and abominations of the people; wherefore, the book shall be kept from them. But the book shall be delivered unto a man, ...he shall deliver the words of the book, which are the words of those [that] have slumbered in the dust, ...he shall deliver these words unto another. But the words which are sealed he shall not deliver, neither shall he deliver the book, for the book shall be sealed by the power of God, and the revelation which was sealed shall be kept in the book until the own due time of the Lord, that they may come forth; for behold, they reveal all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof. (2 Nephi 11:19 RE)*

This promise has been used repeatedly to impose lies on believers. False spirits led Christopher Nemelka to claim he had the sealed plates. Then later, another deceived party produced the Mentinah Archives. And now, Mauricio Berger has claimed that he can provide the promised text.

Here is what the sealed record will reveal:

*And it came to pass that the Lord said unto the brother of Jared, Behold, thou shalt not suffer **these things which ye have seen and heard** to go forth unto the world until the time cometh that I shall glorify my name in the flesh. Wherefore, ye shall treasure up the things which ye have seen and heard, and shew it to no man. And behold, when ye shall come unto me, ye shall write them and shall seal them up that no one can interpret them, for ye shall write them in a language that they cannot...read. And behold, these two stones [which] I give unto thee, and ye shall seal them up also with the things which ye...write. For behold, the language which ye shall write I have confounded. Wherefore, I will cause, in mine own due time, that these stones [which] shall magnify to the eyes of men these things which ye shall write. And when the Lord had said these words, **he shewed unto the brother of Jared all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also...that would be. And the Lord withheld them not from his sight, even unto the ends of the earth.** For the Lord had said unto him in times before that if he would believe in him, that he could shew unto him all things, it should be shewn unto him. Therefore, the Lord could not withhold anything from him, for he knew that the Lord could shew him all things. (Ether 1:15 RE, emphasis added)*

That's **what** it's gonna contain. Here is **when** they will be revealed:

*They shall not go forth unto the gentiles **until** the day that they shall **repent of their iniquity and become clean** before the Lord. And **in that day that they shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith***

*Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father of the heavens, and of...earth, and all things that in them are.* (Ibid, vs. 17, emphasis added)

So, ask yourself:

- Do the Gentiles now qualify?
- Have they met this standard?
- Have the Gentiles repented of their iniquity and become clean before the Lord?
- Do the Gentiles now exercise faith in the Lord even as the brother of Jared did?
- Have the Gentiles now become sanctified in Christ? or
- Do the foolish Gentiles still fall victim to lying spirits that interfere with and compromise the work of preparing to establish Zion?

Economic realities and legal obligations must be dealt with. The path to Zion does not go **through** consecration. Consecration comes **after** there is a Zion. Even Father Abraham did not live the law of consecration. He was sanctified and qualified to receive all the blessings of the Fathers and now sits on a throne, but he paid **tithes** to Melchizedek.

When Joseph Smith restored Enoch's record (now found in Genesis), Joseph learned about the last days' Zion. It revealed, *And the Lord called his people Zion because they were of one heart, and...one mind, and [dwelt] in righteousness, and there [was] no poor among them* (Genesis 4:14 RE).

I do not believe this was their ancient goal, but it was a byproduct. Such a society cannot be organized but can be gathered. Individuals rarely are able to persuade one another through arguing to expose the other man's error.

Even among people who keep their eyes on the Lord and pay no heed to their neighbor's failure still must grow to become:

- People who refuse to judge and belittle others;
- Those who are humbled by the opportunity to build a house of God;
- Those who refuse to become an accuser.

Even among humble people the Lord can use to restore His house, there will be many things on which to disagree. Therefore, we should ask ourselves:

- What if I don't need to always be right?
- What if you don't need to be wrong?
- What if we don't need to debate?
- Can people with different backgrounds be of one heart?
- Can we have different ideas, value one another, and be of one mind?
- Is it possible to disagree with one another about meanings of Scriptures and still dwell in righteousness?
- Can we explore, consider, and respectfully discuss incomplete or inaccurate ideas?
- What if *no poor among us* includes sharing the wealth of diverse and interesting ideas?

This path of sober, thoughtful, open welcoming of differences is the only way first steps can be taken. We cannot jump into Zion. We must crawl there on bended knee, asking the Lord to bring us there. He's given us a blueprint in the Answer and Covenant. His word to us is:

*You think Satan will be bound a thousand years, and it will be so, but you do not understand your own duty to bind that spirit within you so that you give no heed to accuse others. It is not enough to say you love God; you must also love your fellow man. Nor is it enough to say you love your fellow man while you, as Satan, divide, contend, and dispute against any person who labors on an errand seeking to do my will. How you proceed must be as noble as the cause you seek. You have become your own adversaries, and you cannot be Satan and also be mine. Repent, therefore, like Peter and end your unkind and untrue accusations against one another, and make peace. How shall there ever come a thousand years of peace if the people who are mine do not love one another?...*

*I speak of you who have hindered my work, that claim to see plainly the beams in others' eyes. You have claimed to see plainly the error of those who have abused my words, and neglect the poor, and who have cast you out — to discern **their** errors, and you say you seek a better way. Yet among you are those who continue to scheme, backbite, contend, accuse, and forsake my words to do them, even while you seek to recover them. Can you not see that your works fall short of the beliefs you profess?...*

*Be of one heart, and regard one another with charity. Measure your words before giving voice to them, and consider the hearts of others. Although a man may err in understanding concerning many things, yet he can view his brother with charity and come unto me, and through me he can with patience overcome the world. I can bring him to understanding and knowledge. Therefore, if you regard one another with charity, then your brother's error in understanding will not divide you. (T&C 157:10,18,53, emphasis added)*

Joseph Smith inquired about consecration, and he received an answer. But the answer did not produce a community dwelling in righteousness, of one heart, one mind, with no poor among them. They failed, and all subsequent attempts have likewise failed to produce Zion.

The early attempts at consecration ended, and the Lord rescinded the law of consecration. In a council meeting on March 6, 1840 in Montrose, Iowa Territory, Joseph Smith announced to the Church, the Lord rescinded the law of consecration:

He said that the Law of consecration could not be kept here, & that it was the will of the Lord that we should desist from trying to keep it, & if persisted...it would produce a perfect abortion, & that he assumed the whole responsibility of not keeping it until proposed by himself. (*JS Papers, Documents Vol. 7, p. 215*)

It had to end because consecration is **never** the starting point. Consecration is the **result** of a society's evolution. And no society is prepared at present to evolve quickly into that state

of harmony. It is inevitable when people live in righteousness. But, even then, it is distant and will follow time, experience, careful and solemn thoughts, and love unfeigned.

The Lord has explained this principle: *Nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal in all things, and this not grudgingly; otherwise, the abundance of the manifestations of the spirit shall be withheld* (T&C 61:4). This important principle is to be followed by those who gather. Between now and that day, there is **a lot** of preparation needed.

Like Abraham paying tithes, we can also rise up to be God's chosen people before living consecration. Consecration is a byproduct, never a goal. The fact that Abraham paid tithes and did not live consecration should make clear that there is a long way to go before consecration will be attempted. Having all things in common should be understood as the byproduct of a different culture. We cannot live it and should not attempt it until we are **in a different culture**. Those who raise up to restore the Order of Heaven will find that they have enough concern for their fellow-citizens to have no poor among them.

Because tithing funds are used to help one another, no one gains power through tithes. The well-off **lose** power, and the poor **benefit**. As it is put in one revelation, *the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low, for the earth is full and there is enough...to spare* (T&C 105:5).

When tithes support ministers, wealth accumulates, and the condition foretold by Mormon happens: *Leaders of churches and teachers, in the pride of their hearts, even to the envying of them who belong to their churches* (Mormon 4:4 RE). This is happening in all of Christian **and** Restoration churches, faiths, and systems. Because we have no structure that allows this to happen, it cannot take place among us. This brings me to the conflict between **order** and **variety**.

The idea of **order** suggests ideas and some words that come to mind when we think of order:

- uniformity,
- disciplined,
- standardization,
- coercion,
- authority,
- subordination,
- force,
- regimentation,
- restraint, and
- equality.

All these ideas can be negative, particularly when they suppress the souls of men and inhibit independent connection to God even if some can be positive. Yet we do need order, and without it, we descend into conflict. The idea of order is important, but it must come from within the hearts and minds of an ordered people.

Externally imposed order will crush the souls of men. The *Holy Order* to be restored is *after the Order of the Son of God*—meaning that it will be based upon service to others, meekness and humility toward God, and intelligence based on the light of truth.

Many corrupt societies impose order. But those societies who use external means to achieve order are the most repressive and abusive on earth.

Freedom and individuality produces great variety. Variety suggests ideas, and some words come to mind when we think of variety, including:

- creativity,
- variation,
- divergence,
- inventiveness,
- originality,
- separate,
- inequality,
- dissimilar, and
- conflict.

In many ways, some of these ideas can also be equally negative. Variety can conflict with order. But the souls of men crave variety, and nature testifies that variety is part of the glory of God. God promotes variety. Zion will have to allow the freedom for individuals to bring their unique gifts and develop the beauty within their souls.

The necessity for order and the freedom to have variety can produce endless conflict, but both are required for Zion.

There's a great work that at this moment is still undone, a project that remains for a faithful people. It will require revelation from heaven to be able to accomplish, and therefore, it will require people willing to receive new revelation.

Although we may understand some few things about the Lord's plans, what we know at present is relatively small in comparison with the fullness of the revelations yet to be restored.

Incomplete understanding has never prevented mankind from obeying God. From the beginning, righteous men and women have pleased God by doing what He asks of them even though they did not yet comprehend the reasons behind the commandment:

*And after many days, an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, [asking], Why do you offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him, I know not but the Lord commanded me. ...the angel [spake], saying, This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father who is full of grace and truth. Wherefore, you shall do all that you do in the name of the Son. ...you shall repent...call upon...the name of the*

*Son for ever more. And in that day the holy ghost fell upon Adam, which [bears] record of the Father and the Son... (Genesis 3:3-4 RE)*

Ignorant obedience (perhaps decades or centuries) in the absence of the Holy Ghost falling upon him was the prelude that led Adam to receiving the gift. Even those taught by Christ could not understand His message. The accounts of Christ's life in the four Gospel books mention frequently that His followers did not understand what He told them. Here's one example:

*Then he took the twelve and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished, for he shall be delivered unto the gentiles, ...shall be mocked, and spitefully treated, and spit on; and they shall scourge and put him to death, and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things, and this saying was hidden from them, neither remembered they the things which were spoken. (Luke 11:1 RE)*

Adam was the first Patriarch over humanity and stands at the head of his posterity, governing in the Family of God beneath only Christ and God the Father. Yet, when he lived and obeyed God, there were commandments he was given that he did not understand. He was puzzled, but he obeyed.

Christ called twelve disciples and kept them as His closest pupils during His ministry. Yet despite walking continually with Him, there were things He taught them they could not understand. Righteous men and women have followed and pleased God despite their ignorance.

What is more important? To be a person of great understanding or a person of diligent obedience?

Building Zion is daunting. Take a moment and ask yourself what it would take to build a functioning community. Any community for any people will require **a lot** of the same things to be addressed. For example: housing, streets, water supply, waste disposal, and some form of energy. No matter how rudimentary an infrastructure a community may have, there must **always** be one.

Without a clean water supply, people get sick or die. But a water source for a community does not mean they have clean, potable water that can be consumed. Clean water requires filtering or processing to remove contaminants and unwanted organisms.

If one person drills a well and recovers clean ground water for his residence, that does not mean there is a water supply for a community. If every resident requires their own well, then the costs for a water supply will multiply far beyond the cost for a community water supply that shares costs among many residents. Communities almost always pool resources to develop a city water system.

Wastewater needs to be handled in a sanitary way to prevent outbreaks of diphtheria, cholera, and typhoid. One solution for a sanitary wastewater system is for an individual residence to have a septic tank. In a community that lacks a sewer system, septic tanks are required for every building that has a bathroom. But that increases costs for each house far above the cost required to build a shared sanitary wastewater system. This is why communities almost always pool resources to develop a city-wide wastewater system.

Roads are also generally maintained by a community in which shared resources allow the cost of a road system to be borne by all members of the community.

A community's energy needs are not always met by gas or electric power. There was a time when many houses were heated by coal or wood. Although rare now, these sources can still heat homes and provide heat to cook.

A community that is not planned and carefully developed can quickly become unlivable, unhealthy, and unsustainable. Planning and thus implementing the plan should not involve haste and hurry.

It seems to be common sense that if a community is to include people with widely varying resources and abilities, the first steps should be taken by those with both the resources and the ability to accomplish the first preparation to benefit others who will come later.

If that's common sense, then it is not discrimination or unfair for those with the means and inclination to sacrifice their resources to be the first who labor to make a land ready for others who will be invited later. Staging in an orderly way is the only method any community is or can be built. It is the only practical way to carefully build what must be built.

*And now behold, this is the will of the Lord your God concerning his saints — that they should assemble themselves together unto the land of Zion, not in haste, lest there should be confusion, which brings pestilence (T&C 50:6).* If land is not prepared beforehand, confusion and pestilence go hand in hand. Cholera, diphtheria, and typhoid all can and **have** returned today in this nation.

Forbes Magazine reported:

Los Angeles has a growing problem with diseases borne by both flea and feces. An LAPD officer was just diagnosed with typhoid fever along with two more from the same workplace displaying symptoms. Meanwhile, cases of typhus, caused by a different bacterium, have soared in California from 13 in 2008 to 167 in 2018. In addition, there have been outbreaks of hepatitis A, tuberculosis, and staph in L.A. and other West Coast cities. (Chuck DeVore, Typhoid Fever, Typhus & Tuberculosis: Are L.S.'s Medieval Diseases Coming to Your City? June 4, 2019)



We need to be wiser than the society in which we presently live. We can build a new society that will eventually have people who are at peace with one another, living in righteousness, and having all things in common, but that is still years ahead.

As mentioned earlier, the Lord has taught this principle: *Nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal in all things, and this not grudgingly; otherwise, the abundance of the manifestations of the spirit shall be withheld* (T&C 61:4). This begins with preparing a place for gathering. And there will be required:

- a water supply;
- a wastewater system;
- roads;
- some form of energy;
- a temple for meetings, instruction, and conferences.

These things are necessary to come first and will make water commonly and equally available, hygiene commonly and equally available, movement through open roads and trails commonly and equally available, and access to heat and light commonly and equally available.

We take much of these things for granted, but these things currently tie us to Babylon. There are great calamities soon to befall the world. God's people are to escape *the tribulation which shall descend upon you, that you may stand independent above all other creatures beneath the Celestial world* (T&C 70:4) by the work they have accomplished beforehand. God will instruct, but we must do the work.

There will be many skills needed. Blacksmiths, carpenters, farmers, ranchers, electricians, plumbers, roofers, and every practical skill will be needed. Many skills are lost to urban dwellers. We need to recover those lost skills.

The route to equality is forged through united effort to accomplish the instructions we are given. Unity will lead to equality.

Anyone uninterested in helping prepare a community of equals will naturally and inevitably not have prepared a place for them to gather. As Amulek put it, *Ye cannot say when ye are brought to that awful crisis that I will repent, [and] that I will return to my God* (Alma 16:37 RE) because it'll then be too late. So, we have work to do, and it will need to be done in an orderly way.

I know of no people who are trying to bring Zion today. There have been and are utopians who band together to share resources. Utopian societies are usually missing a religious foundation. Their groups, more often than not, result in aberrant sexual sin, drug use, and disobedient conduct offensive to God. However hopeful a beginning these communities may have, wickedness cannot be peaceful for long.

We are asked to prepare so we can begin to found Zion. But preparing or even beginning is not the same thing as accomplishing. Whether anything can or will be accomplished must be **proven**. It cannot just be claimed. Braggarts do not impress heaven and have no claim to any title or status they have not first lived.

The Lord is offering an opportunity. He's promised to labor alongside to help us reach the prophesied Zion. With His help, Zion is possible. But we can fail—and Zion be left for another people in another time.

The greatest false spirit of all is the one that inspires you to accuse your brethren, condemn your sisters, and judge others unfairly. This is Satan. We cannot be Satan and also be the Lord's.

I believe we will see Zion established. Sadly, I do not think all can be gathered. Those who find fault now will surely find fault when people start to sacrifice and hard work is expected. It makes little sense to assemble the discontent, angry, and bitter souls into a community seeking to find peace. Zion *shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another* (T&C 31:15). That promise of the Lord's cannot be fulfilled by people fighting a *war of words and [a] tumult of opinions* (Joseph Smith History 2:3 RE). It was such fighting about religious differences that inspired Joseph Smith to ask God for answers. His inquiry led to the Restoration. But Joseph's Restoration has now lapsed into infighting and dividing into separate sects. Our modest return to restoring is not yet free from a tumult of conflicting opinions.

Preparing people to welcome God remains the Restoration's great objective. That will require all of us to humble ourselves before God and eagerly respond to the opportunity He offers us. Prayerfully choose a needed skill and learn it. Spinning thread, weaving fabric, producing paper, making cheese, drying fruit and vegetables, beekeeping, and egg production are all useful for an isolated community, particularly if the larger, more complex society falls into disarray and is unable to provide goods and services.

We have a daunting challenge before us. It will require minds, hearts, hands, and backs to accomplish it. Preparation needs to begin now. It will be followed by an orderly gathering, not in haste but with guidance from above.

I close these remarks in the name of Jesus Christ.