

Lecture 1: Be of Good Cheer, Be of Good Courage

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10 September 2013

Boise, Idaho

It was 40 years ago today, at about this moment, when I was baptized in the North Atlantic at a beach called Sea Point Beach in Kittery, Maine. The fellow who presided at the service was named Jim Mortensen. He had just moved into the ward. No one knew who Jim Mortensen was, and there he was on the beach. And he has become infamous for a statement that he made. We had another baptism eighteen days later, and he didn't like that there were people in the area somehow enjoying that awfully cold water. And the statement he made rather gruffly was: "Let's move it up the beach, Elders." He was an old Marine; he used to fly combat missions off of a flat top carrier in Vietnam, and he had all the demeanor of a flat top carrier pilot.

His wife was Monty. Her maiden name was Bunker. She was from the Nevada Bunkers. Bishop Bunker got in a whole lot of trouble because he did not buy the "Adam God" theory. And Bishop Bunker had a trial for excommunication because of heresy, and Bishop Bunker's bishop couldn't quite reach a conclusion on what to do. And as a consequence of that, it was tabled. Wilford Woodruff came down, they had another convening of the church court. Ultimately they decided to punt rather than to do anything. And the doctrinal exposition that Bishop Bunker made has since become the doctrine of the church, although at the time, it was dangerous heresy for the man to preach it.

Monty, she was at the time and is still today one of the loveliest women I have ever met. She texted me a little earlier today on my way here and said: "You beware of pride." Their son texted me today, too.

You know, shortly after that ceremony, I was ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood by George Hoger. George was the Elders Quorum President. Not knowing what one ought to do to be ordained, and George being the primary guy, I asked him to ordain me. So I have a priesthood line of authority that reckons through George.

George's wife was Judy. Judy was a nun who converted to Mormonism while she was living in a convent. She asked Mother Superior for permission to be baptized. And of course consent was given, but she was told, "You've got to have new premises, because you can't reside here." Judy grew up Catholic, devout, became a nun—she was, for goodness sake, "Christ's bride." And therefore, when George proposed to her, and they were going to actually have marital relations, she tells the most hilarious stories about her pre-marital schooling, when she asked about what was to be expected. I'll leave that aside.

Eighteen days after my baptism—I mentioned it already—I baptized a fellow. Eighteen days from now we will give the second of these talks, commemorating the gratitude that I hold for the doctrines that I have been taught. You know, no one should be allowed in the Missionary Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who isn't a

convert. Better still, an adult convert to the Church. Because no one joins because of some silly program. You join because of doctrine. And when you choke away the doctrine, there's no reason to stay.

And so, in gratitude for the principles which brought me aboard the Restoration, we're going to spend this next year looking at the doctrine that compels belief—that doctrine which doesn't abuse, control, compel; but invites and entices, that is delicious, that makes you hunger for more; the principles of the gospel that not only edify but enlighten and enliven. The kinds of things which, despite everything else that separates you, you find you can come together in love and appreciation. That's the gospel. That's the Restoration.

I know of no more cheerful a being in the universe than Christ. When He says, *Be of good cheer*, we ought to all accept that as the mantra. There is nothing that any of us will ever go through that He hasn't gone through, with a considerable greater degree of difficulty. He lived with a higher 'specific gravity' than any of us had to ever fight against. And He won for each of us a prize that is potentially eternal. It will be eternal, one way or the other. But if you take full measure of what He offers, it will be delightfully eternal.

Cowardice is largely predicated upon fear. Don't be cowardly. Don't be fearful. Fear is the opposite of faith. For goodness sake, you're already in the battle! You're already going to be overtaken. The fact of the matter is that no one gets out of here alive. Live this life nobly, fearlessly. When you take the wounds that come your way, you make sure that they come to your front! Don't let 'em shoot you in the back. Go about your life boldly, nobly, valiantly. Because it is only through valiance in the testimony of Jesus Christ that you can hope to secure anything—not valiance in your fidelity to anything other than Jesus Christ. The fact of the matter is that faith must be based in Him, and Him alone. We'll get to that in Idaho Falls.

Tonight I want to introduce some ideas that are essential to salvation, coming through the prophet Joseph Smith, which we really need to become reacquainted with. First, a deviation. And I have to say, I'm deviating because I like the quote. I like the quote because of the substance of what is being said. I don't like the object of the adoration, so I'm not heaping praise on the fellow who is the object of this statement. But it's good wording, and I like it. Andrew of St. Victor made the statement in 1170. He was talking about St. Jerome, who is largely responsible for the compilation of the Latin Vulgate Bible, which the Book of Mormon has absolutely no good thing to say about. It leads you into darkness. It takes away the covenants. It's part of making you blind. It's a big problem. Despite that, let's take this praise, and let's assume this praise is applicable to someone who is worthy of it—in this case, Joseph:

That learned man knew...how obscure truth is, how deep it lies buried, how far from mortal sight it is plunged into the depths, how it will admit only a few, by how much work it is reached, how practically no one ever succeeds, how it is dug out with difficulty, and then only bit by bit.

Joseph said: “Knowledge saves a man. And in the world of spirits no man can be exalted but by knowledge.” He also said in another talk:

When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step-by-step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them. It's not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave.

Now, if you go back and reread that quote, and you comprehend that it is possible to pass through the veil before you leave here—“it will be a great while after you pass through the veil before you will have learned them. It's not all to be comprehended in this world”—you begin to say, Ah, I think I understand why, after 40 years of reflection, Nephi commented about how it was his constant meditation to think upon the things which he had seen and heard. The knowledge obtained from heaven is dynamic.

In another place Joseph said:

A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power than many men who are on the earth. Hence it needs revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God.

We equate, in large measure, repentance with whatever it is you're doing with your genitals. Joseph equates redemption and repentance with whatever it is you're doing with your heart and with your mind. The problem that we have is our profound ignorance. And what the gospel offers defies ignorance, subdues it, challenges it, destroys it, leaves it in the dark. And so let's try and search into and obtain some illumination.

First, I want to read a passage from Job and misapply it, if you will. I want you to imagine that what I am reading is not merely a description of a mortal horse. What I am reading is a description of those horses which pull the chariot upon which Elijah ascended to heaven. This is the horse **you** need to ride in your quest for heaven. This is the way in which **you**, too, are to mount up:

Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting. (Job 39:19-25)

As the battle engages, ride the horse, not away, but toward the sound.

1838 was a terrible year. It was one that followed a terrible year. Late 1837, the church in Kirtland was in turmoil. Several hundred saints questioned Joseph Smith's divine calling, withdrew from the church. In July of 1837, the Kirtland Safety Society was forced to close its doors. There were a number of people who tried to take over leadership of the Church, to get Joseph voted out. They wanted to force the First Presidency from office and then oust them from Kirtland entirely. Among the people that had dissented was Warren Parrish, the one-time scribe and secretary to Joseph Smith; three of the apostles—John F. Boynton, Luke and Lyman Johnson; Seventies—Hasten Aldridge, Leonard Ridge, Sylvester Smith, John Gould, John Grayson; even Martin Harris, one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon.

In January 1838, Joseph Smith got a revelation that said (I'm reading from it), "...as soon as practical, and the door is open for them and move on to the west as fast as the way is made plain before their...hearts." They ought to depart. On the night of the day on which that revelation came, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon fled Kirtland. Fled at night. They were chased by people for 200 miles trying to kill Joseph. This is in January of 1838; this is in the beginning of this year.

Now, if we back up (you can look it up, it's Doctrine and Covenants 47:1) in Doctrine and Covenants 47:1, we run into something that is of interest to our topic. Verse one:

Behold [and this is a revelation given on March 8, 1831, Behold], it is expedient in me that my servant John [that is, John Whitmer, brother of David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book Mormon, John] should write and keep a regular history, and assist you, my servant Joseph, in transcribing all things which shall be given you, until he is called to further duties.

And so, beginning on March the 8th of 1831 and going on thereafter, the history of the Church was maintained by John Whitmer—John Whitmer, the church historian. The Saints had been expelled from Jackson County in 1833. In 1834, then Zion's camp. In 1837, then the Kirtland Safety Society collapsed, the rebellion, the loss of Kirtland, the night-time flight, and the departure to Missouri.

Beginning early in 1838, there were rumors of immoral conduct that were levied against Joseph Smith. There was a Church court by April the 12th of 1838. The Far West High Council brought nine charges against Oliver Cowdery, the Assistant President to the Church. One of the charges was (and I'm reading a quote), "For seeking to destroy the character of President Joseph Smith, Jr., by falsely insinuating that he was guilty of adultery, etc."

The court in that proceeding ultimately excommunicated Oliver Cowdery. David Whitmer left the church—was excommunicated. John Whitmer, the church historian, was excommunicated. Hiram Page, W.W. Phelps. Sidney Rigdon in June of 1838 delivered the "Salt Sermon," where he talked about how dissenters were worthy of being trodden, like

salt that was contaminated, under the feet of the Saints. That ignited the anti-Mormons. It caused some of the disaffected people to go over, to encourage the further rebellion.

There were affidavits that year from Thomas Marsh, who was the President of the Quorum of the Twelve, testifying against Joseph and the Church. Orson Hyde also signed an affidavit implicating Joseph Smith. There was a Mormon War in 1838. The battle of Crooked River was fought on October 24th of 1838. The extermination order was issued on October 27th of 1838. Haun's Mill Massacre occurred on October 30th, and Joseph Smith surrendered at Far West while it was under siege. And on November the 1st, he was sentenced to death "at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning in a public square at Far West."

Well, this is the year in which Joseph Smith, because there was no history, set about to compose a replacement history. This is the year and these are the circumstances in which the Joseph Smith History in the Pearl of Great Price got composed. Joseph Smith—against all of the odds, against all of the opposition, against all of the treachery, against all of the betrayal by his brethren who ought to know better, against all of those who should have known the man's heart instead turned on him—composed what is as an act of faith and kindness, a testimony that seeks to reclaim those who misapprehend the work of God.

Now, you can say that Joseph Smith wrote various versions of the First Vision, and what we have in the 1838 version is an innovation, an invention. The fact of the matter is that Nephi did not compose what he composed until about 40 years after the event—because it was time and distance and reflection that gave him the ability to put into words the truth of what it was he experienced. In the terrible circumstances of 1838, when Joseph Smith set about to compose his testimony of his history, this statement was itself an audacious, faith-filled act of revelation to defend what had gone on and to explain what had gone on.

We don't have Joseph Smith's 1838 history anymore. It's been lost; it's not been recovered. When you look at the history, the *Joseph Smith Papers*, what you find is that there is an 1839 copy that was prepared by Mulholland. And it is the Mulholland version that appears in the Joseph Smith History in the Pearl of Great Price. But we reckon it is a copy of what Joseph wrote in 1838 because of the internal dating of the document. He says that *...being now the eighth year since the organization of the said Church*. That's in verse 2 of the Joseph Smith History. In brackets they've inserted the year 1838. That was the year in which Joseph wrote, and that's apparently Mulholland copying Joseph's writing the previous year.

So when you start out with the Joseph Smith History and you read the words, *Owing to the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil-disposed and designing persons, in relation to the rise and progress of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints...* (Joseph Smith History 1:1), recognize that what he's talking about are the statements that are made by people of his own faith about him. This is Joseph Smith describing the problems that are circulating, as a result of members of the Quorum of the Twelve aligned against him, members of the Seventy that are aligned against him. And as prophets often do, they have the way to put it back into context and into clarity with inspired words as we read here.

In this history [he says in verse 2], I shall present the various events in relation to this Church, in truth and righteousness, as they have transpired, or as they at present exist, being now the eighth year since the organization of the said Church.

Therefore, as he begins to defend the Church, he starts with what is essential about the Church: *I was born in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and five, on the twenty-third day of December* (Joseph Smith History 1:3), because if you want to know the truth about the Church, you must know the truth about its founding prophet. To the extent that there is anything desirable that exists within it, it exists within it as a consequence of the ministry of this prophet. Therefore, if you want to find the truth, you have to look at Joseph.

Born on the 23rd day of December—the day after the winter solstice; the day in which the sunlight won its triumph over the darkness; the first day in which the hours of light and the hours of darkness begin to switch, and light begins to prevail; a moment that is reckoned anciently as one of the four corners of the earth. Joseph's coming into the world at that moment was no accident.

Well, in verse 5 he starts talking about how there is *no small stir and division amongst the people, some crying "Lo, here!" and others, "Lo, there!" Some were contending for the Methodist, some for the Presbyterian, some for the Baptists.* Religion divides in 1838, in 1820, in 2013, and it ought not.

Joseph, in verse 6, commends to us something. One of the litmus tests he's suggesting that ought to be applied—perhaps those who are in the state of rebellion, those who are in a state of rejection, those who are fighting against the Word of the Lord that comes through him, perhaps they will take a step back and look at what Joseph has to say. Because *it was seen that the seemingly good feelings of both the priests and the converts were more pretended than real; for a scene of great confusion and bad feeling ensued—priest contending against priest, and convert against convert; so that all their good feelings one for another, if they ever had any, were entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions.* You know, at the time Joseph inserts the clause, *if they ever had any*, you can't help but think that he was lamenting the potential false feelings that had been demonstrated by those of his own faith who had pretended to have affection for him.

Well, verse 8 once again: *so great were the confusion and strife among the different denominations, that it was impossible for a person young as I was, and so unacquainted with men and things, to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong.* See, that's the way it is.

In verse 10: There's always this war of ~~worlds~~... war of words. ("War of Worlds," that's what your kids play.) War of words and tumult of opinions. And so Joseph is confused. How do you resolve this?

Verse 11: *While I was laboring...* While I was laboring—

Folks, in general, have your skulls so junked up with the crap of the Internet that you don't even have the capacity to labor the way it needs to be labored, to solve the questions that need to be solved. It is labor; it is labor over the scriptures. It is labor. *Under the extreme difficulties caused by... these parties of religionists [he] was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

Let him ask of God. God gives to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. I can ask God. God will give to me. God will give to me liberally. God will not tell me, There are lines here you mustn't cross; there are things about which you must not inquire; there are things your heart is not yet prepared to receive; you don't have standing! He gives liberally. He can let *you* know what you need to know from your study and inquiry into the truth. And no man can stop that! Because this is a matter between you and God. It has always been a matter between you and God. There is no friar with a brown frock that you need to bend the knee to in order to please God. If Joseph had known that (the friar with the frock) he would never have achieved the revolution that he achieved.

Well, when you're laboring, as verse 11 suggests, and when you hit the right verse, as verse 11 recites, then verse 12 confirms how you get answers to these kinds of inquires. *Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force.*

Turn back to Doctrine and Covenants 76, and look at verse 18. This is the vision of the redemption of the dead that gave us the three degrees of glory. They're reading in John (and he gives you the verse in John that they were reading, in verses 16 and 17), and look at 18: *Now this caused us to marvel, for it was given unto us of the Spirit.*

The Spirit cannot lean upon you and cannot focus your mind upon the revelation that you are entitled to receive unless you use the scriptures as they were intended to be used—as a Urim and Thummim; as the basis from which you draw out the truths of God. And the best version of that is, of course, the Book of Mormon.

You can look at D&C 138, and you'll find that Joseph F. Smith sat in his room pondering over the scriptures. He's near death—it's about eight weeks before the death of Joseph F. Smith. The Church had a lot of challenges going on at that time. Fortuitously for us, the man who sat at home—infirm and worried about death—happened to happily be the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And so when he got an answer (not to his inquiry about leading the Church), when he got an answer to an inquiry that had nothing to do with his position or budgets or anything else that manages an organization—it had to do with his own concern, about his own deepest apprehensions, his impending death, which would follow about eight weeks after this—the scriptures opened like a Urim and Thummim to his view, and we get a vision of the redemption of the dead, which we've now canonized.

It entered... [this is back—verse 12 of the Joseph Smith History], It entered [into his heart] with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again. Now that's an interesting statement, because it doesn't appear that this “labor” was a one-off event, but it occurred over and over as he sought more understanding, searching deeper and deeper into trying to understand what it was he ought to do and how it is he ought to accomplish it.

... again and again knowing... if any person needed wisdom from God, I did. You should be asking God so that you can understand scripture. You shouldn't be trusting the expositions of anyone, myself included. These scriptures have a message for you. God has a message for you. God would like to talk to **you**, not through me or any other man. God would like to talk with **you**. You'll be saved by knowledge, and the things you need to know are uniquely situated; the things you have the right to get from God are uniquely situated.

I got an answer from God. That's why 40 years ago today, I went in, and I got baptized. Elder Brian Black baptized me. During the baptismal service, because it was approaching twilight, the sun was beginning to set, the moon had emerged, and the first stars began to shine. And Brian Black commented in the talk that was given by him before laying on hands that all the signs of heaven—the sun, the moon and the stars—had been visible during my baptismal ceremony. I have felt the presence of God with me from that moment through today. Just this morning I checked into my office before coming here, and when I arrived at my office, there was a dove on the lawn to meet me, and she stayed there as I went by. Now it's a small thing, but if you're acquainted with the scriptures, you understand what such a symbol can mean, and to me, did mean.

Your lives should be filled with wonder. Be not faithless, but be believing. And be of good cheer. He knows you better than you know yourself. I was belly-aching about an idiot friend, and as I am wont to do, it was prayerful.

The Stake President asked me a few weeks ago about whether I was praying at the time that I had one of the encounters he and I discussed, and I said: “It's not a fair question. I wake up in the morning, and I start to pray. Throughout the day, I will take care of a thousand things. And whenever I am free, my mind will revert back to the prayer, and we'll continue the dialogue.” And it goes on all day. There's not a moment in my life in which I am not being prayerful. And so the answer to the question is, I suppose, Yes, I was praying. Because there's hardly a moment when I'm idle when I am not praying.

Well, God intends to speak to each of us about us and about what matters to us and about what matters to you. He, unlike us, is not bounded by the linear existence that we have. All things past, present, and future are continually before the Lord.

In fact, it's really sort of an interesting study. If you take and you look at what the Lord does in 3 Nephi, He has this agenda that He's been assigned by the Lord (or by the Father), and Christ discharges the agenda. And He goes through, and as you read the chapters in 3 Nephi, it's really structured, and it's really orderly. And then He announces: “Now I have

finished what the Father has told me to deliver to you”, and He just begins to talk; and as He begins to talk, what unfolds is non-chronological. It's topical, but it's past, present, and future. His thoughts are not like our thoughts. They aren't. They're nonlinear. And sometimes that's not easy.

At length, he says in verse 13: *I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God.* And so it is for all of us. You wanna know the truth of a proposition? You ask God. And don't be fearful! If you ask, He'll answer. But you better be prepared for the answer. Because the battle that is already upon us is going to require valiance. Cowardly, effeminate, hen-like behavior can never, never obtain the promises of God. Christ asked: *What went you [forth] to see? A reed [shaking in] the wind?* (Matthew 11:7). That's what you want? I don't think John the Baptist cried on demand. And Zion isn't a bank.

So, [it is] in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally. After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed... finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction. (Joseph Smith History 1:14-15)

You know, we have Orson Hyde's account of this thick darkness, and I want to read it to you. This is Orson Hyde writing about the incident we just looked at:

He, therefore, retired to a secret place, in a grove, but a short distance from his father's house, and knelt down and began to call upon the Lord. At first, he was severely tempted by the powers of darkness, which endeavored to overcome him. The adversary benighted his mind with doubts, and brought to his soul all kinds of improper pictures and tried to hinder him in his efforts and the accomplishment of his goal. However, the overflowing mercy of God came to buoy him up.

You know, if salvation consists in obtaining knowledge, you can't afford to clutter your mind with the kinds of things which can readily summon up improper images, improper thoughts, improper ambitions. In fact, it doesn't matter what you **want**. There's only one thing that matters. And that is: What is the Lord's will for you, with you. And that will is always the same—to bring about your happiness; ultimately, to bring about your joy. He tells you that His burden is light, because however it may seem in the direful circumstances of 1838 in the life of Joseph Smith, **this** statement of faith, **this** testimony of truth was worth the price that Joseph was called upon to pay to obtain it.

The things of God are infinitely preferable to anything that can be offered to you here in this world. You may indeed be able to buy anything in this world for money, but don't let that ever be the case with your heart or your soul. Zion will not have an economy, because they have all things in common.

So Joseph, in verse 16, tells you that it is some marvelous power from the unseen world. Let me take you back to that statement: "A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power." Well, apply that quote in the context of what Joseph is experiencing there and realize this is not merely something that will happen after you depart this world. It's something that, in fact, does happen here. I mean, being blinded here is part of being captured by the captivity of the adversary of your soul.

Awake and arise! Shake off the scales that blind you (scales which, like contact lenses, on the one hand; but scales like judging wrongly, on the other hand). You have to judge a matter aright. And if the judgment that you judge is not just, then the scales of your eyes are darkness indeed.

And so he called upon God to escape this being from the unseen world, and he saw *a pillar of light exactly over [his] head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages* (vs. 17). We'll get into this more in Idaho Falls. He saw two "Personages." Note the word. Joseph knows what he's talking about. He was in the presence of these Beings. He will later describe them—as a doctrinal exposition which the Church accepted as doctrine, and which was, for a season, in your scriptures. That's why you need to bring your ~~Articles of~~ [Lectures on] Faith to Idaho Falls.

One of them spake unto me, calling me by name... I've mentioned this on a number of occasions, and I want to mention it again here. When God calls a person by name, it is not your full legal name. "Joseph Smith, Jr." I mean, that's my Cecil B. Demille version of *The Ten Commandments* voice of God—"Moses." The casual friendship... I don't know what Joseph was called at this point in his life. I don't know if it was "Joey." I don't know if it was "Junior." I don't know what the name was that he went by. Whoever his most intimate companion was, that was what the Lord called him. If it was "Joey," it was "Joey." God doesn't call you by whatever your Driver's License says. So, He called him by name.

Do you know how comforting it is to have God call you by a familiar name? Instead of recoiling in horror, He is drawing you in. Instead of stiff-arming you like, "I am the Great and Powerful," He wants you comfortable in His presence, so much so that when you enter into His presence, it is a matter of course that God invariably forgives your sins.

Isaiah, in the temple, saw God high and lifted up, and his first reaction is, *Woe is me! ... I am undone! ... I am a man of unclean lips. I dwell [among] a people of unclean lips* (Isaiah 6:5).

And a Seraphim, one of the “fiery ones” (we ought to know more about that), improvises an ordinance where they take a coal with tongs off the altar and touch his lips to purify them. And the Lord says: *[Who] shall I send?* And Isaiah says: *Here am I; send me* (vs. 8). The same man that is cowering, *Woe is me*, is now *Here am I; send me*. And what accounts for the difference? The compassion, the forgiveness, the integrity of the Lord. *I know thou art a God of truth, and [cannot] lie* (Ether 3:12). When He testifies to you that your sins are forgiven, only a fool will thereafter charge you with sin. The world is stocked with fools, though.

Well, here now we have this peculiar scene, where a young lad—put at ease by the Almighty calling him by an intimate name, putting him in the position where he's been drawn into intimacy with Almighty Himself—is then given a pause. You see, They're not quick to speak. In that respect, They remind me a lot of Enoch: “slow of speech.” You see, They'll wait. And They waited.

And so now you have the lad: *My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood before me* (Joseph Smith History 1:18). We don't know how long this took. We don't know how long it takes a lad to get himself composed. To God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, it didn't matter. God is in no hurry. And He's in no hurry to fix you. He will wait on whatever it is you need to be allowed to dispose of to come along. And He will wait.

And so when he finally recomposes himself and he poses the question: “Which should I join?”—verse 19, *I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.”* This is a mixture of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Paul all woven together—the words of scripture into a brief commentary, on the sweep from the Old to the New Testament, in language of prophets we all recognize, condemning the entirety of the Christian world.

Now, Joseph is composing this in 1838. He's putting into words of scripture the concepts that flowed into his mind from the Lord. Sometimes the Lord leaves it to you to put words to it, and sometimes the Lord gives you the words. Section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants: the words were given. I don't know which verse 19 is, whether these are the exact words that were given Joseph or if this was, instead, the concept that Joseph was left with the challenge of putting into words. Either way, it is light; it is truth; and it is true because it reflects the intention of God in the communication given to Joseph Smith.

What do you suppose it means: *having a form of godliness... deny[ing] the power?* How do you deny the power of godliness? How do you obtain the power of godliness? What does it mean to have possession of the power of godliness?

Let's go back to that section 76 again; it's got some nice stuff in it. I want to go to the very

end because we're going to run into this same notion in the First Vision and in section 76. And 76 is a transcript that is given to Joseph that was dictated, transcribed, read back, approved, then the dictation continued until we reach the end. But look, at beginning at verse 113:

*This is the end of the vision which we saw, which we were commanded to write while we were yet in the Spirit. But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion; Which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter; Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Ghost, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him; To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves; That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, **while in the flesh**, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory. (emphasis added)*

Is this related to not denying the power of godliness? I mean, to have the ability to *bear his presence in the world of glory*, as we get farther along in our discussion about the topic of Zion, it becomes critical that you become able to bear His presence. For those who are unable to bear His presence will be destroyed at His coming. Therefore, whatever this power of godliness is, I think we need to get some.

If you turn in Joseph Smith History to the next verse—verse 20—he says: *He again forbade me to join with any of them; and many other things did he say unto me, which I cannot write at this time.* That is always the case. Those the Lord ministers to invariably know more than they say. There are reasons for that. There are laws that involve that. And section 76 suggested that man is not even capable of making some things known. It's really hard to convey into this linear world things that don't relate well here.

Turn back to Mormon—in the Book of Mormon—Mormon chapter 9. I wanna begin in verse 2 of chapter 9. And this stuff really sounds ominous, so I'm gonna read it with an ominous voice, because I just want to make you feel. *Behold.* You know, this is Mormon; this is late in the gig. He's lived an NC-17 life. Between the rape, followed by the cannibalism of the women that had been raped, and the murder and the mayhem and the torture, I mean, this is the guy who abridged the Book of Mormon, okay? That's the life that he was subjected to. So look at these words:

Behold, will ye believe in the day of your visitation—behold, when the Lord shall come, yea, even that great day when the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, yea, in that great day when ye shall be brought to stand before the Lamb of God—then will ye say that there is no God? Then will ye longer deny the Christ, or can ye behold the Lamb of God? Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with him under a consciousness of your [own] guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws? Behold, I say unto you that ye

would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell. For behold, when ye shall be brought to see your nakedness before God, and... the glory of God, and the holiness of Jesus Christ, it will kindle a flame of unquenchable fire upon you. (Mormon 9:2-5)

Now, I want you to read those verses and ask yourself, “Exactly what is it that God is doing?” The only thing that God is doing is **being**. He simply exists. This is you. God **is**. And He’s simply revealing Himself to you. And this is your reaction. And why is this your reaction? Because you don’t have the power of godliness. And why don’t you have that? Because you need to repent. And what is it that you must repent of? The absence of knowledge about God. You don’t know enough yet to be saved.

The plan of salvation is the plan of education—the plan of knowledge about God and the principles of godliness and the basis upon which all of you can live together and be of one heart and one mind. And it doesn’t matter that some of you have strange political beliefs. And it doesn’t matter that some of you would like to see every gun in the universe recalled and melted down, so we could all, I don’t know, attack one another with the remaining butts of the guns that weren’t melted down, ‘cause they’re wood? I don’t know; I mean... And others of you would like every child issued their own concealed-carry permit and to be armed in kindergarten. None of that stuff separates you from being able to love one another and be one. Because much of what you think matters, doesn’t matter one whit to the Lord. And you know what? When you’re anxiously engaged in the right cause, you’ll be surprised how much of our deepest concerns are merely trivial. The things of the heart are what matters. The things upon which we are capable of becoming one, in love toward one another, are infinitely greater.

That’s why we really need to keep you distracted in this Telestial kingdom about all the crap that goes on down here. You’re worried about the Kardashians—it doesn’t matter. (I suppose at a certain level, it’s possible that the Red Sox don’t even matter. But we’re eight and a half games ahead in the A. L. [American League] East right now; and I’m telling you, it’s looking good.)

In any event, you mark that page—484 in your Book of Mormon—and you go back and re-read that, and you ask yourself: “What is God doing, other than merely being?” The only thing He does is “be,” and then you react. Because you are running around hysterically, doing a “pee-pee dance,” because you’re all concerned that your presence is unacceptable; you’re unclean; you’re unworthy—that’s what He came to fix. And when He fixes it, part of the fix consists of telling you: “Set it aside. Set it aside; be my child. Accept love.” And then, in turn, you love. Because what “fixes” is love.

Joseph Smith said (and this goes hand-in-hand with that Mormon 9:2-5), “A man is his own tormentor and his own condemner. The torment of disappointment in the mind of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone.” Inflict that upon yourself. The quickest way to achieve that is to act in this life like the coward who is unwilling to be

valiant in the testimony of Christ. And to stand up when opposed by those who tell you it ought not to be so. Valiance is the only way by which you secure the blessings of God.

When Uriah was killed, he was killed with a message sent by King David, delivered by the hand of Uriah himself to Joab. In the integrity of his heart, King David knew Uriah could be trusted with the order condemning him to die. And Uriah, faithful to his King, carried the message to Joab. There are accounts—not the one we have in our Old Testament version—but there are accounts that suggest that when Joab opened the message and read it, that he read it to Uriah, and Uriah knew he was sent to his death. And in those accounts, the men who died with Uriah, died with him wittingly. It's one of the few places in scripture where the word “valiant” appears. Those men went where the valiant men were. And the unworthy King forfeited something in his cowardice.

Don't be cowards. Stand and be valiant no matter what it is. In the day of judgment you will find yourself wanting, and in this life you will find you lack the power of godliness, unless you obey the law upon which all blessings are predicated. You make sacrifices. You obey **Him**. And to obey Him is to find yourself oddly incongruent with everything about you. Not about **you—about** you, meaning the external world in which you find yourself moving about within.

Well, why are they **all corrupt**? You know there's a line— I happen to like Luke; try and quote him when he fits. I gave a talk one time: *On the Road to Emmaus*. It's drawn out of the book of Luke. I think Luke was the other character that was walking. He names Cleopas; he doesn't name himself. Well, Luke chapter 11, this is verse 52 (oh, I love this! We ought to carve this on the Utah Bar Office exterior and lobby on the interior, require lawyers to put it on their business cards): *Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering... ye hindered.* False teachers prevent others from obtaining salvation, period. And happily, they will be accountable for that. You've *taken away the key of knowledge: [you enter] not in yourselves ... them that were entering in ye hindered.*

Well, there is another verse in D&C 121 (this would be one written in the year following the Joseph Smith testimony). This one is written... Joseph was sentenced to die on November 1st of 1838. The general who was supposed to carry out the execution rebelled and wouldn't do that. Joseph ultimately wound up being kept in prison in Liberty Jail. While he was in Liberty Jail he writes a letter. We've taken out three excerpts from the letter, and we've canonized them, and section 121 is one of those three sections. I want you to look at verse 45; ask yourself whether this has something to do also with the *power of godliness*:

Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever

and ever.

Oh, that I had the ability to declare it. This is in the middle of one of the three great principles by which God governs and shapes the universe itself—it is not through compulsory means. The only way in which God works is by inviting and enticing. You break yourself against the laws that have been ordained. You condemn yourself by the things that you bring upon yourself. God just **is**. And He **is** to give you opportunity. And He opens opportunity to allow you to enter in **if** you are willing to enter in. But whether you are willing to enter in or not is predicated upon your own conduct, your own desires. And the best way to determine what your desires are are based upon what it is you do.

We are so situated that we have the inability to do two things at once. No matter who you are, you are only doing one thing at a time. Your entire life you are either focusing on one thing or on something else. And whatever it is upon which you dwell, that's what you've chosen. Hence the saying: *Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God* (D&C 121:45). Is the power of godliness related to that? Is the power of godliness related to the presence of God? Well, the Book of Mormon continually declares that to be the case. And anyone that suggests otherwise is flatly contradicting the message of the Book of Mormon. It is all about the ascent back to the presence of God. Testimony after testimony, experience after experience, that's what the Book of Mormon stands for. That is the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You encounter it almost immediately in the first chapter when Lehi rises up. And you encounter it in Nephi. And you encounter it in Jacob. And you encounter it in Enos and in Alma and in Mosiah. You just continually get the same message.

Joseph Smith said: "I advise all to go on to perfection and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of godliness." Turn to Doctrine and Covenants section 8. This is one of those interesting little notes. Oliver wanted to translate... This was in April of 1829; he had arrived to become the scribe to Joseph shortly before this, and he tried to translate. It didn't work out so well. He told him in verse 2: *I will tell you in your mind and your heart by the Holy Ghost* and so on. He talks about a gift that he has, *the gift of Aaron*—that's the rod; he was able to use a divining rod. (We're kind of embarrassed about that now, and we don't really preserve that much anymore, because we think gifts like that are kind of wacky, and yet, here it is in scripture.)

And some of you probably have gifts that you find a little odd. And yet, you all have gifts. And not everyone has the same gift. And if it gives you access to information from a divine source, you ought to trust it. And it doesn't matter that the way in which you do it and the way in which someone else does it is differently situated. No one had ever thought about a seer stone until Joseph Smith encountered it and then found it ratified in the Book of Mormon in the Book of Mosiah.

Well, in any event, I'm interested in verses 10 and 11 in the revelation given to Joseph in April of 1829 where it says: *Remember that without faith you can do nothing; therefore ask in faith. Trifle not with these things; do not ask for that which you ought not.* So okay, you've

got to be careful—don't you ask for something that you ought not be asking for! For goodness sake! Das es prohibido! Okay?—Followed immediately by this statement: *Ask that you may know the mysteries of God.* That's a commandment. And anyone that tells you, You ought not be searching deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God, well, I think we just read about them in Luke, didn't we? "You don't enter in yourself, and you don't suffer those that *are* entering in to be permitted to go," because you do not understand the power of godliness! You deny the power of godliness!

I declare to you in the words of scripture: Ask that **you** may know the mysteries of God! That's a commandment, given to us by revelation, enshrined in the scriptures that you folks claim to believe in. Stop denying the power of godliness. And stop falling for the sophists and lawyers who would deceive you by suggesting that you should not inquire into the mysteries of God. **They** are anti-Christ. **They** are opposed to the doctrine of salvation. **They** deny the power of godliness. And I do not.

Well, we've now gotten 20 verses into the history of Joseph Smith, and we've learned a bunch of stuff. And he's told that there's some things he can't write. I want to know at this point: How do you know if Joseph is telling the truth? How do you know if what you are seeing here is a true testimony or not? How are you to fix that? How are you to know that? Doctrine and Covenants section 63—this is a reminder of the stakes involved in preaching falsely. This is Doctrine and Covenants section 63. Look at verses—beginning at verse 60 and going to verse 62: *Behold, I am Alpha and Omega, even Jesus Christ. Wherefore, let all men beware how they take my name in their lips—For behold, verily I say, that many there be who are under this condemnation, who use the name of the Lord, and use it in vain, having not authority.*

And how do you know if someone speaks with authority? How do you know that Joseph is writing a testimony that is authoritative? How do we know if anyone opens their mouth and they speak, and God has approved the message that they are delivering? How are we to know that?

Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 5. This is March of 1829. Oliver Cowdery wouldn't arrive until April 5th, the month following this. Oh, this is interesting; look at verse 3: *And I have caused you [this is a revelation to Joseph] that you should enter into a covenant with me, that you should not show them except to those persons to whom I commanded you; and you have no power over them except I grant it unto you.* At this moment in 1829, Joseph Smith is perhaps the only man alive who had a covenant with the Lord. "You have entered into a covenant with me." Now, we are all the beneficiaries of covenants that existed from the beginning, but in terms of someone with whom the Lord has struck a bargain and made a covenant, at this moment in 1829... Our Lord is a Man of covenant making. Our Lord enters into covenants on a regular basis. To know Him is to covenant with Him. And Joseph, at this point... at this point has one.

And you have a gift to translate the plates; and this is the first gift that I bestowed upon you; and I have commanded that you should pretend to no other gift until my purpose is fulfilled in

this. Okay now, I want you to mark that. I want you to notice that Joseph is being told by God: “Don't pretend to any other gift than this translation.” Why?

Go back to that verse 20 of the Joseph Smith History, which happened in 1820, in which Joseph had been tutored, and he had been tutored by the Lord with *many other things did he say unto me at this time which I cannot write*. Joseph already knew—he had already seen, he had already been endowed with—a certain understanding that reckons from the other side of the veil, as a consequence of which, Joseph knew a great deal more than what he was saying. But he had an assignment. And the assignment consisted of the obligation to translate the Book of Mormon. And Joseph was authorized to accomplish that work. Therefore, if Joseph stepped outside of the bounds of the assignment entrusted to him at the moment that he was doing this work, Joseph would be entertaining a pretense, because the errand given to him at the moment was confined to the Book of Mormon. Did he know more? Absolutely. Did he have more at his disposal that he could've entertained people with? Without any question. But he was asked to do a work. And in the fidelity of his heart, he confined himself to that work until it was first accomplished. And to do more than that would've been a pretense.

So, then we get to the answer to the question about how you know whether Joseph is telling us the truth:

Verily I say unto you [verse 5], ... woe shall come unto the inhabitants of the earth if they will not hearken unto my words. [This is Christ owning the words. It's not Joseph.] For hereafter you shall be ordained and go forth and deliver my words unto the children of men. Behold, if they will not believe my words, they would not believe you, my servant Joseph, if it were possible that you should show all these things which I have committed unto you. (D&C 5:5-7)

God owns the words. You wouldn't believe the rest of it if you won't believe what's authorized to be spoken. Joseph confined himself to delivering what Christ wanted delivered, and it was up to those who heard to choose. And if they recognize the Master's voice, then they've received a message from Him.

Behold, verily I say unto you... Oh, wait—I left out 8:

Oh, this unbelieving and stiffnecked generation—mine anger is kindled against them. Behold, verily I say unto you, I have reserved those things which I have entrusted unto you, my servant Joseph, for a wise purpose in me, and it shall be made known unto future generations; But this generation shall have my word through you. Well, in another place—

Heck, we may as well get that out. This is also the letter from Liberty Jail, section 122 verse 2: *The pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand*. This is the Lord's word to Joseph Smith about those who are wise, those who are noble, those who are virtuous—those are the ones who are going to seek counsel and authority and blessings under the hand of

Joseph. And that is as true at this moment as it was then.

How then do we today receive blessings *under the hand of Joseph*? Well, if you look at the use of the word “hand,” almost invariably, it is associated with the words we find in scriptures. The Book of Abraham: under the hand of Abraham. The Book of Mormon: under the hand of Mormon. The hand of Joseph is still the hand we ought to be looking at if we want to know what God's word was for our generation. You have no clue. **You have no clue** how thoroughly we have supplanted the words given at the hand of Joseph Smith and what it is you entertain yourselves with each Sabbath day.

Well, verse 14: *And to none else will I grant this power, to receive this same testimony among this generation, in this the beginning of the rising up and the coming forth of my church out of the wilderness—clear as the moon, ... fair as the sun, ... terrible as an army with banners* (D&C 5:14). Clear as the moon.

WOMAN: What chapter... I mean, what section are you...?

DENVER: Oh, I'm still in section 5 of the Doctrine and Covenants. I'm now at verse 14. This description will show up another time in the dedicatory prayer to the Kirtland Temple (in section 109). It is a description of the Lord's Church. The Lord's Church is *clear as the moon, fair as the sun*. “Clear as the moon” means that those who rise up and attain to the status of being acknowledged by Him as His church, they meet the description that is given in Doctrine and Covenants section 76 describing those who have the glory of the moon as their inheritance. “Fair as the sun” is described in Doctrine and Covenants section 76, describing those who will inherit the celestial glory. That's His Church. And they will be the only ones who are able to stand at his coming.

The minister for those in the terrestrial glory is the Son, meaning the Son of God—who intends to make many sons of God. And in the celestial glory, the fullness of the Father dwells. And so the Church—which He owns, which He calls “mine,” that He intends to bring out of the wilderness of darkness and confusion and into the light by which they can understand things of God—is necessarily composed of those who have sufficient knowledge to be *clear as the moon, fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners*, because—when we get to Grand Junction and we're talking about the condition of Zion, we're going to be looking at how very, very perilous it is to encounter this kind of glory when you are unprepared to be there.

Well, Luke chapter 9, let's go there. This is my man. Luke 9:25-26: *What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come [to] his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.* You see, if Joseph is speaking the words of the Son, and if you are ashamed to own the words that come to us by the hand of Joseph, your shame is not toward Joseph. Your shame is towards Him who taught Joseph the words to speak. *Of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed.*

Well, Joseph's credential was his possession of Christ's words. Did he come with authority? Did he speak Christ's words? Had Christ entrusted him with a ministry and a message? If the answer to that is, Yes, then he came with authority. If the answer to that is, Well, no, but he had some quotable moments, you know? I liked him... a lot. You know? Just kinda "groovin up slowly, got the mojo filter." I mean, it's all vain; it's all vanity; it's all nonsense if he doesn't have a message from God. And if he does, then his credential is that: His message. And how do you know that?

Oh, didn't we stumble across that just a few minutes ago, James 1:5? Everything that is going on in the restoration comes back to James 1:5. Why don't you *ask God who giveth to all men liberally*? And he would like you to know a great deal more than you presently do. He doesn't upbraid; He doesn't scold you; He doesn't say the mysteries are off-limits. He says instead come and learn of me. He says, I command you to ask and inquire into the mysteries of God. He says, Salvation itself is dependent upon knowledge. *And this is life eternal that [you may] know...Christ* (John 17:3, emphasis added). How can you serve the Master you don't know?

Well, let's skip ahead to verse—this is Joseph Smith History verse 26. Well, I don't know... I gotta look at 25, too.

So it was with me. I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, ...they did in reality speak to me; ...though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, ...speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth?

That will always be the case if you know Christ. It will always be the case, because those who know him not disbelieve that **you** know Him. There are laws ordained before the foundation of the world; they must serve their father. And you must serve yours. There is no other choice. There are only two teams; there are only two churches; there are only two ways. And it doesn't matter if the particular whore you choose to follow is comely, tidy, well-mannered, and wearing a white wedding dress. There are only two churches. And one is Christ's.

So verse 26: *I had now got my mind satisfied so far as the sectarian world was concerned—that it was not my duty to join with any of them, but to continue as I was until further directed.* Now, isn't that interesting? Here you've got Joseph; he has now been given instruction, and he's simply assuming that he goes his way until he get some further direction. And this will go on for years, mind you—**years**.

In the Joseph Smith translation of Matthew chapter 3 (we won't look at that), he talks about the difference between what happened in the incident at the temple when Christ was 12 years old and then what happens when He begins His ministry. And it talks about *many years* pass while he labored as a carpenter—the *hour of His ministry drew nigh* (vs. 26).

Well, so Joseph is waiting until he finds out what else he ought to do. Verse 27—oh, look at that: *twenty-first of September, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-three*—this is another one of the corners of the earth. This is the autumnal equinox, when everything is in balance—the light and the dark; the moment that will soon be upon us, this being September 10th.

And he reflects in verse 28. He says (about halfway down, there's this dash about the middle):

I was left to all kinds of temptations; and, mingling with all kinds of society, I frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness[es] of youth, and the foibles of human nature; which, I am sorry to say, led me into divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God. In making this confession, no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins. A disposition to commit such was never in my nature. But I was guilty of levity, and sometimes associated with jovial company, etc., not consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been. But this will not seem very strange to anyone who recollects my youth, and is acquainted with my native cheery temperament.

(As an aside, Christ has a cheery temperament. Joseph has a cheery temperament. Be of good cheer.)

You see, reading this testimony of Joseph Smith given in 1838, following the trial in April of 1838, at which the allegations of adultery were leveled against him by Oliver Cowdery. And the minutes of the High Council talking about—said they dealt with “the girl business” (the allegations about the girl business)—and Joseph was exonerated.

You know, we entertain a lot of false notions about Joseph Smith and the practice of plural marriage. Hales has been doing—and completed and is now out with a three volume set—in there he gathers together every single one of the existing source materials involving Fanny Alger. In the account dealing with Fanny Alger and the incident in the barn (that some people have blown up into Emma Smith catching Joseph Smith in the very act of intercourse in the barn with Fanny Alger), when you track it down and you read the account, what you find out is that Emma Smith witnessed “the transaction.” The “transaction” consists of Levi Hancock performing a wedding ceremony in the barn; Joseph Smith telling Levi the words to use; Levi performing the ceremony; Emma at the door listening in—and this is the “transaction” which has become subsequently embellished into all sorts of libido-driven license for those who would like a less virtuous prophet than the one we have.

No one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins. A disposition to commit such was never in my nature. It wasn't in Joseph's nature. And those who claim otherwise are looking for a license that Joseph didn't think himself entitled.

Well, so *on the above mentioned night of 21 September* [this is verse 29 on the next page] *I*

*had retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies. So he had waited, but he had waited until he got to the point in which he had some apprehension about his standing before God, because it had been a long time. But notice that it's Joseph who is driving the events that will occur now on the autumnal equinox, when he makes an inquiry involving his sins. And he's asking—he's supplicating—for forgiveness of his sins. And he also wants to know of his state and standing before Him, saying at the end of verse 29: *I had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation, as I previously had one.**

If Joseph Smith can go get a divine manifestation respecting his standing before God, so can you. If Joseph Smith can go out and inquire to know of God what Church to join, so can you. Moroni 10:4-5, particularly 10:5, tells you that *by the power of the Holy Ghost you may know the truth of all things*. The truth of **all** things. There is nothing off limits. There's nothing about which you are going to be upbraided and told: "Don't ask. Don't inquire. I won't tell." Now, you may ask for something that you are unprepared to hear the answer for because there is some preparation yet left. But if you ask, you set in motion—on the other side—permission to fix what's wrong with you.

Have you read the Tenth Parable? If you've read the Tenth Parable, you know there is a time lag in which a missing virtue gets supplied as a consequence of real world experience. The answer gets set in motion as a consequence of the laws of God, upon which all blessings are predicated—which mandate (as we're seeing here in this verse) that you must **ask!** And by the way, the answer to the question that you ask from God will always be "Yes." However, if you're not ready for the "yes," then you're going to go through a period of renovation and repair. How long you need to be renovated and repaired depends upon just how much of the toxic nonsense you've drunk in and how much of it you continue to drink in that opposes the ability of God to speak to you. So soon as you will lay down that nonsense and in faith be believing, so soon will God be able to plug the leaks, repair the hinge, fix the broken window. He really does have a house of order—or better put, a temple that is holy, which temple ye are. It's not built by human hands. It was built by God in the womb of your mother. And you were endowed with it when you took your first breath. **That**—you're wearing it now—is His temple. The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple. But it must not be defiled. Clean yourselves up. If you want to know what your state and standing is, 'cause you're uncertain...

We're reading in the Joseph Smith ~~T~~estimony [History], look at the next verse: *While I was thus in the act of calling upon God... In the act* of calling upon God! If you are in the right way, with the right faith, looking for the right answers, you don't even get to finish the sentence. God knows what ye have need of even before you ask. It's in the Sermon on the Mount. Christ tells you that. That horrible aching, that longing, that hollowness, that emptiness within you is what Christ was designed to fill. That's His purpose in coming to His temple.

So while he was in the act of calling upon God, [he] discovered a light appearing in [his] room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a

personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the [ground] (Joseph Smith History 1:30). As an interesting aside, I want to ask the question: Why? Why did Moroni stand in the air with his feet not touching the ground? It's an interesting topic we're not going to talk about here. It's off subject; it won't get us Zion anyway, but there's "stuff" here.

Oh, and look at this:

He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen; nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant. His hands were naked, ...his arms also, a little above the wrist; so, also, were his feet naked, as were his legs, a little above the ankles. His head and neck were also bare. I could discover that he had no other clothing on but this robe, ...it was open, so that I could see into his bosom. (Joseph Smith History 1:31)

Notice this. This is not ceremonial garb, as a consequence of which I can tell you that it's okay to be buried without temple regalia, because you're not going to be wearing that stuff in the resurrection anyway (if you inherit what the angels of God, including Moroni—who is certainly exalted—wear).

You can read about the description of what Christ wears in the scriptures, as well. Ceremonial garb is just that—it is ceremonial garb. It is designed to teach you about the creation, to endow you with certain knowledge about the process of being exalted. But it is not the attire that you'll see on the streets of heaven. I actually think... I think they look Egyptian. I think their attire looks Egyptian, but that's neither here nor there.

This is a guy who was wearing only a robe. It's not ceremonial. He doesn't have shoes on his feet. He doesn't have a bonnet on. He doesn't have a variety of things that we would associate with ceremonial dress. You can read a description of Christ's attire in 3 Nephi 11:8, and the description there is very much like the description that we have here—Christ and Moroni wearing the same kind of thing. And then, hey, just for the fun of it, let's go back to Exodus 28.

Exodus 28. I want to revert back to my Cecil B. DeMille-esque stuff:

And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a brodered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. And they shall take gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen... (vs. 4-5)

...and yellow and green and purple and orange and mauve and... I'm sorry. You can read it; it's in here. Ooh, the *ouches of gold* and the *chains of pure gold* (vs. 13-14). I mean, he dresses you in funny attire, okay? God goes through the ceremonial attire, and he dresses you up, and the purpose of the dress is ceremonial to communicate to you, **through**

symbolism, knowledge about certain things. But they are not an end; they are a symbol. Six days of creation: six articles of clothing, each one of which can be associated with one of the days of creation. Therefore, as you enter through the veil, it is as if the entirety of all creation is redeemed in your person. You represent salvation for the entirety of creation, because in you, should you be able to be rescued, creation itself continues. These are symbols. They communicate to the mind ideas—ideas that are eternal. They are not ends in themselves.

Well, keep that in mind, because you're here to be trained. You're here to learn something. You're here to learn about the power of godliness. And by "here," I don't mean this room tonight, although I think that is certainly true. I'm talking about this lifetime in which you find yourself—this place, this terrible fallen world, this glorious opportunity in which sacrifice is actually possible. You don't avoid it, and you don't necessarily seek it out. But when it comes upon you, you face it down bravely. And you stand where God places you. And you don't let any **man** move you from where it is that God would have you be, because therein lies salvation. You're obeying a law ordained before the foundation of the world. You can't lay hold upon such blessings, unless you obey the law upon which it is predicated. There will always be, in absolute numbers, only a few who will find that straight and narrow path. There will be an overflowing abundance of those who will fight against it. Because **they** serve **their** master. You don't have time to worry about them. You serve yours. And that Master needs to be Christ.

Well, we're now just about getting to (oh, shoot) tonight's topic. Once again, Joseph is called by name. This is verse 33. He was afraid. The fear soon left him. The reason he was afraid was because he was seeking forgiveness of his sins. A perfectly white, bright, lit individual appeared, who represents the cleanliness of heaven itself. Joseph, in contrast to that, he's inquiring to know about his sins. Now a visibly cleansed being stands before him; he's afraid. And why is he afraid? Because, once again, you see the remarkable contrast. I know what lies in my heart. I know what failings I have had, and I know this being can see through me. Therefore, I need something that will remove from me my fear. *He called me by name*. It's the same thing. Moroni dispels it by letting him know, We have a brotherhood; we have a relationship. *Fear soon left me* (vs. 32). *He called me by name* (vs. 33).

Well, this is what we want to talk about. He tells him about the stuff, the accoutrements that he's gonna be handed in verse 34 and 35. But then he gets, in verse 36, and this is where—ooh, this is where we've got something now. This is Moroni delivering a message. But his message is not like what we find in the King James version of the Bible. He says:

Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, ...all that do wickedly shall burn as stubble; for they [they] that come shall burn them, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. (vs. 37)

Root... branch. Genealogical words. *They that come*. Who are they?

Again, he quoted the fifth verse: "Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the

hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." He quoted the next verse differently, [he said]: "... he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming." (vs. 38-39)

Oh, we'll probably get this parsed about Spanish Fork in the coming year. Everything about this is telling you something that is remarkably different from where we find ourselves:

- *The day is coming that will burn them. When?*
- *They that come. Who?*
- *Neither root nor branch. This is genealogical. Elijah and the priesthood—we'll talk about that in another day.*
- *Children get planted in their hearts.*
- *Promises made to the fathers.*
- *Children's hearts turned to their fathers.*

There is so much in that that we need to pick apart. We need to understand. And we're going to go there, because understanding this is understanding the foundation of Zion.

The foundation of Zion consists largely in reconnecting the children—as a consequence of the promises that were made to the fathers—back to the fathers, so that there might be a welding link that connects the children who are on the earth with the fathers who are in heaven—not your kindred dead that are in the Spirit world; they are in desperate need of your ministration to save them. Connecting yourself to them is to connect yourself with the, essentially, the damned, the dead, the disembodied. The fathers who are in heaven are the ones to whom you need to form the link. And I've written that paper on it which I assume some of you have read. And if you haven't, just send a note to the blog, and I'll email it to you. It's *The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered*. But see, the whole purpose behind this is to fix this problem. Because if it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted—utterly wasted at His coming.

Then he says:

He quoted the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, saying that it was about to be fulfilled. (vs. 40)

Okay, let's go back to that 11th chapter of Isaiah, because man, have we made a mess of that. Okay, this is "about to be fulfilled."

There shall come forth... [this is chapter 11 of Isaiah]. *There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse* (Isaiah 11:1). The Rod is a servant who is a descendent of Jesse—who is a Levite—and Ephraim, unto whom is rightly belonging the priesthood. Keep your finger there on that chapter 11 of Isaiah, and turn back to Doctrine and Covenants section 113, and you'll see where these words are explained.

Who is the Stem...spoken of... Verily thus saith the Lord: It is Christ... [Verse 3:]What is the rod spoken of in the fifth verse of the 11th chapter of Isaiah, that should come of the Stem of Jesse? Behold...saith the Lord: It is a servant [a servant!] in the hands of Christ, who is partly a descendant of Jesse as well as of Ephraim, or of the house of Joseph, on whom there is laid much power. (D&C 113:1-4)

Well, look. Until you succeed, you've failed. I don't care who comes along, claiming whatever they want to claim. Until the work is done, you can't take credit for it—period. There's all kinds of nonsense that circulates about who has the keys. "Button, button who's got the button?" Look, someone's going to do a work. When the work is done, you will know. Until the work is done, no one can be identified with the role—period. It is arrogance; it is pretentiousness; it is foolishness for anyone to step forward and say: "I, I, I am that man!" Do the work. Finish the course. Fulfill the covenant. You do that, you can take the name. Until you do the work, it's just noise.

So there's gonna come forth:

...a rod out of the stem of Jesse...a Branch shall grow out of his roots: ...the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD [Oh, thank God! Someone will finally fear the Lord more than they fear man! I look forward to that moment]; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: ...he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth [in this context it is the word of God], and with the breath of his lips [he shall] slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, ...faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf...shall dwell with the lamb, ...the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. [These things are shortly to come to pass.] And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. [You see, it's knowledge, full of knowledge of the Lord. That's what you have to lay hold on.] And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left. (Isaiah 11:1-11)

Well, this shall shortly come to pass. Not then, not that day, but by and by.

You know, when a branch is spoken of, if you look at John 15:1-6 (I'm not going to do that because our time is far spent), but Christ gives a sermon about Him being the "true vine,"

about how you cannot bear fruit unless you are connected to the true vine. Once again, that is a genealogical term. That is a “family of God” term. That is a “son of God” term. And He intends to make many sons of God.

Joseph is receiving, in this first interview with the angel Moroni, an announcement about the first indications of the restoration of God's intent to restore a holy family. God is telling us what **He** wants. He—God—wants to have upon the earth again His family. But we must respond—**we**. This is your dispensation; this is your time. You came down here with the intent of living and finding the things that will bring you back. This is your opportunity. Don't let some other group claim that it doesn't belong to you. These scriptures are only going to be fulfilled when enough people awake and arise to realize that it is devolving upon you the obligation to find, to heed, to seek, to search, to pray, to obey, and to form what is necessary in order to fulfill the promises and the covenants that were made to the fathers.

Throughout the coming year, we're going to try and lay that out. 2 Nephi chapter 3—Oh, boy—now, we could spend a day talking about this chapter 3. We don't have that time. And tonight's time is far spent. But what I want to do is to just look at some specific words for a moment. Because I'm telling you, the muddle that has been made of the Book of Mormon by the nonsense that we believe about its words is worse than a Gordian knot. And how you sort that out at this point... It's a challenge that you ought to rise to by making it the subject of prayer and getting revelation. Because there's a story being told here; there's a covenant being described here. And there are things in play here that, until you awake and arise and realize what the duties are that are devolving upon you, you don't have any chance of figuring out exactly what a mess we've made of the restoration of the Gospel.

Alright, verse 23. We're just going to do a couple of verses: *Wherefore, because of this covenant...* [the covenant being described here is a covenant that was made by God with Joseph of Egypt. That guy, Joseph of Egypt] *because of this covenant thou...* [Joseph, the son of Lehi] *thou art blessed; for thy seed...* [Joseph, Lehi's son] *thy seed shall not be destroyed, for they shall hearken unto the words of the book* [that is, the descendants of Joseph, Lehi's son]. *And there shall rise up one mighty among them* (2 Nephi 3:23-24)

Ask yourself if “among” is genealogical or merely associational. It doesn't say one “from” them, which would be genealogical. It says “among” them. Someone's going to arise who's going to do *much good, both in word and in deed, being an instrument in the hands of God, with exceeding faith, to work mighty wonders, and do that thing which is great in the sight of God, unto the bringing to pass [of] much restoration unto the house of Israel, and unto the seed of thy brethren... blessed art thou Joseph* (vs. 24-25).

In all that goes on in chapter 3 of 2 Nephi, dealing with the covenant about the Joseph of Egypt individual, the next chapter, which (thanks be to E. B. Grandin and then Orson because of the division of this into chapters—this was all one narrative at one point; don't let the punctuation and chapter divisions fool you)... Continuation of the statement. Verse 2: *For behold, he...* [that is, not just Lehi, but Joseph of Egypt]. *He...prophesied concerning all*

his [Joseph of Egypt's] *seed* (2 Nephi 4:2), which includes some of you.

Look, our time is spent. Our agenda is not. There was another prophecy that's made by Moroni that's repeated in Acts that has this, just, real complicated structure, because the past, present, future time and how it all fits together. We'll pick it up there in Idaho Falls on the 28th.

About this time 40 years ago today, I was at a post-baptismal party at the Mortenson's house—it would be breaking up probably another 10 minutes from now—in which Jim asked me to give the opening prayer. Jim, being the man of the house, don't ya know, and Monty being the faithful wife and the descendent of the Bunkers, deferred to her husband in making that call. And I was rather giddy from, you know—I had never been baptized before. My mom wished me to be a Baptist, and she was worried that I was going to hell because I never joined any church. Then I got baptized a Mormon and removed all doubt, for her anyway.

And I was a little too jocular in my native, cheery temperament, being what it is. So Jim asked someone else who is a little more Mormon and reverent to give the damn prayer. And so someone else gave the prayer. And I felt a little chided, and I thought, "Man these Mormons are uptight."

Anyway, as the evening ensued, there was a little more of my jocular and a little less of the reverent. And some folks took offense. There was some jarring, there was some contention, and literally the Spirit fled from the meeting that we were having. And all these wonderful people, and all the stuff that they had put themselves to because I had been baptized... It was turning out to be a rather tragic evening.

And so I interrupted, and I insisted on the floor, and I made people listen. And I went around, person by person, and I talked to them. And I talked to them by the power of the Spirit, with the gift of prophecy. And I touched the hearts of everyone who was in that room. And I didn't understand it at all that night. But when we get a little farther into the testimony of Joseph Smith, you find that on the occasion when Joseph and Oliver were baptized, they immediately were given the gift of prophecy. I could no more have given you the name for what happened. All that evening I understood was that I, by the influence outside and greater than me, was able to calm the disunity and reunite the hearts of the people that were with me. I can tell you now that I recognize what that was. But I was a few-hours-old-initiate into this restoration process.

It's been 40 years. This is going to be a year in which I put on display my gratitude for the opportunity afforded to me to be baptized for the remission of my sins, and to testify about those things which I know to be true, and about the work remaining undone that is devolving upon *you* to accomplish. This restoration merely got its toe in the door in the day of Joseph Smith—and hardly even that. The prophecies and the promises and the time and the opportunity are upon us. The question is: Is this generation gonna be just as careless, just as indifferent as the one when last a real prophet's voice was heard among us? When

Joseph Smith could tell you, "I know He lives, because I've seen Him." When Joseph Smith could say, "God commanded me that I should bear record of Him, because I have seen Him." It has been too long—too long—between that moment and today. And it's time now that we stop running away from the conflict. It's time for us to be valiant once again. Do not be fearful. Cowardice and fear are the opposite of faith.

If Joseph Smith, in the ruins of 1838, can write the testimony that we find in the history of Joseph Smith as an act of audacious courage and faith and confidence in the work of God that he was pursuing, despite the ruin that he saw the church existed in at that moment, if Joseph could do that, why can't you?

I don't care what a tattered ruin is that you see around you today. Zion can come. We're still a few sessions away from encountering parts of that religion Joseph was attempting to restore that are really most interesting. But I'm telling you that if you'll stay with this over the course of the next year, you're going to realize just how much of the restoration is left undone.

There is nothing more delightful, there is nothing more delicious, there is nothing more exciting than the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We deliberately started this without an opening prayer. We're not going to have an opening prayer on any of these talks until Sundays, and there'll be a few of these on Sunday. One of these is going to be on Sunday in Logan. Another one's going to be on Sunday in Centerville. It will be on October 6th. I haven't announced that yet, but on October 6th, we're going to have another one of these. For those that are on Sunday, we will have an opening and a closing prayer. For those that are not on a Sabbath, I'm simply going to talk.

But I'll tell you that I know what I'm talking about. If you will ask of God and listen to the Spirit, you'll be able to determine whether or not I speak His words. I don't think it matters if I could reveal to you all things. If you won't believe the things I *can* tell you, you certainly wouldn't believe things I'm not telling you.

But I wouldn't blame you if you don't believe me. I really wouldn't. It is so hard to be believing. This world is so acidic. This environment is so toxic. It's very hard to believe. I think that's one of the reasons why Christ's account said it is a greater righteousness to believe when you hear than it is to know and to say. But I know what I talk about. And I bear testimony to you that Jesus Christ lives. He matters. I don't. He can save you. I can't. I can report on the glory of this Lord of ours, but only He can dispense it.

Of that I bear testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.