

Lecture 2: Faith

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Idaho Falls

It was 40 years ago today, at almost this exact moment, when I went back out into the Atlantic Ocean off the Sea Point Beach in Kittery, Maine, and I baptized a fellow named Ronald Allan Mahle. Ron had taken the missionary discussions at the same time I had, and he was more retiring than I was, and it required my baptism before he considered being baptized himself. And between the time of being baptized (18 days earlier) and this date, the 28th, George Hoger had ordained me to the Aaronic Priesthood. And so, when Ron asked if I could perform the baptism, I was able to do that. And we're here, in part, because this represents the 40th anniversary of my own baptism and conversion to Mormonism, and therefore, I'm going to take note of events along the way each time we get together.

Ron Mahle has since left the church. He's a good friend; he's remained a good friend. In fact, I spoke with him a couple of days ago. He was calling to make sure I was okay with all that's going on. He's involved in some interesting circles, and they know that he's a friend of mine, so they were keeping him up to speed on some things, and he was calling me and expressing.

There is this one thing about the process of converting, and that is that you do, in fact, make lifelong friends in the process. And it doesn't matter what comes and what goes, those friendships are enduring. Ron and I learned together that when the missionaries invite *you* to dinner that you probably ought to turn them down. The missionaries had something that they had called perpetual chili, and they were determined to at last get rid of the dregs of the perpetual chili. I swear there were some waffles in it on the occasion. But we went over, and we ate, and true enough, we all— It was rather like the stories you hear of the missionaries in Mexico when they are getting down there and acclimating to the food.

In that first ward— I was going through my head the members that were in the Portsmouth, New Hampshire ward at the time, and I remembered that there was this couple who had a house they were building. It was constantly under construction, getting adjustments made here and there. And a bank had closed down, and the bank had sold all of the doors. They were going to tear the building, and they went and they bought these enormous, solid wood doors, hardwood doors, to install. This was Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, who is a woman now— She was teaching Sunday school classes back when I converted. She is on the faculty at Harvard. She's been down to BYU and presented down there, and she is the author of the book *Well Behaved Women Don't Make History*, which is something that got turned into coffee mugs and t-shirts from an article that she wrote about funerals in the Puritan era and the behavior of women. There were some interesting people in that first ward.

I wanted to talk about the purpose behind all of this material. It's to try and discuss not **what** great things the Lord has done but **how** great things the Lord has done, which is the

terminology that you find in the Book of Mormon. Because **what** doesn't matter anything near as much as **how**. **What** is an exercise in voyeurism, essentially. **How** is an exercise in what you need to do and how you come about to linking into, and participating in, what ultimately is the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And so we're going to be covering **how** great things are done.

One of the things that I was reminded about this week by a friend (I coined it, but he suggested the idea) is that it's important that you not get the misimpression that before you wind up in the presence of the Lord, **you** have the responsibility of making yourself absolutely spick-and-span. In terms of connecting with the Lord, it is essentially a come-as-you-are party because you are never going to be able to do the heavy lifting required to be clean in His presence. He does that; you don't. He extends the invitation; you accept it. It's a come-as-you-are party.

There are two parables that the Lord told that I want to put together to help illustrate the point. One of them is in Matthew chapter 22. It's a parable about a wedding feast. And the Lord, in that parable, talks about how the folks that were invited wouldn't show up. And because the folks that were invited would not show up, an invitation was extended to, essentially, whoever was out on the streets. And the folks who were out on the streets were brought in. Begin at verse 8 of chapter 22: *Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy* (Matthew 22:8).

You know, he's telling a story, largely about a condition that persists whenever you find a religious organization functioning, because institutions have a way of having their own cares. Joseph Smith was a disastrous businessman. He created financial debacle after financial debacle. The most notorious one was the failure of the Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Group—**Anti**, because they couldn't get the bank charter. But if you file for bankruptcy in the state of Utah, one of the things that they do at the discharge hearing, in order to help people feel better about themselves, is they remind people that at the time of his death, Joseph Smith had a pending petition in bankruptcy. And that is supposed to salve the conscience of those who find themselves in that extremity.

The fact is that Joseph was not a particularly good businessman because he didn't care for business. He wound up giving away his inventory to the needy folks, rather than trying to profit off the needs of the Saints. There was some exasperation about that. Well, we fixed that. We have, managing the church and attending to the financial interests of the kingdom (as we call it now), those that are more than qualified financially. I suspect a profligate like Joseph Smith would be unsuitable for management today. But in any event, the parable starts with the Lord, who's trying to get people to come to the wedding, telling the servants the wedding's ready but those that I've asked are not worthy:

Go...into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid [them] to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways [always the servants, always angels do this work; they do the gathering], and gathered together all as many as they found, both

bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And...the king came in to see the guests, he saw there [was] a man which had not...a wedding garment...saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou...hither not having a wedding garment?...he was speechless...the king [said], Bind him hand and foot...take him away...cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping [and wailing] and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 22:9-13)

So, I want to put that on the table, because in this part of this parable you have anyone who will come being invited, because the people that were targeted for attendance simply aren't worthy to come. So anyone gets to come. And now you have among them someone who doesn't have on a wedding garment. And for that I want to refer you to Luke chapter 15, because in Luke chapter 15 we run into the Lord talking about a robe being supplied. This is the son who found himself, having been in a far-off land, filling *his belly with the husks that the swine did eat...no man gave unto him. [He comes] to himself, [says:] How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!* So when he goes back to see his father, look at what happens in verse 22 of Luke chapter 15: *But the father said to his servants [again, it's the angels that do this], Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him...put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet (Luke 15:16,17,22).*

You see, this, I think, has to be kept in mind whenever you're looking at someone who has arrived at the feast, bidden from the highway, who arrives and doesn't have on the robe. The Master is the one that wants you to wear it. The Master is the one that will furnish it. Don't think that the purpose of the Lord is to judge. The purpose of the Lord is to redeem, and for that purpose He is infinitely patient and willing, if you will respond, with forgiveness of your sins, as He does consistently throughout the Book of Mormon.

In Boise we had gotten to verse 40 of the Joseph Smith History, and we had gone through the 11th chapter of Isaiah that Moroni referred to. But according to the Joseph Smith History, Moroni *quoted also the third chapter of Acts, twenty-second and twenty-third verses, precisely as they stand in our New Testament. He said that that prophet was Christ; but the day had not yet come when "they who would not hear his voice should be cut off from among the people," but soon would come (Joseph Smith History 1:40).*

If you go back to that provision in Acts chapter 3, what it says there is *For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me*—which I find really interesting, because what Moses is saying in his prophecy is that Christ is going to come, and Christ is going to be like unto Moses. It's an interesting statement for Moses to have made, trying, I suppose, in his day and his context, to make people look forward to the coming of the Lord. In our day, in our context, I would have a very difficult time, no matter what I had been given, with saying the Lord is going to be like unto me. I would rather say, And I'm hoping to be somewhat akin unto Him.

Nevertheless, Moses said: *A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from*

among the people (Acts 3:22).

Now, you have Moses talking about the coming of Christ. You have Peter talking about Christ immediately after Him having come. Then you have Moroni talking about what Moses had said, quoting Peter, about something that was involving the Lord. And therefore, a lot of people have concluded from that, that that means the Lord is yet to come. It doesn't mean that at all. Go back and read Moroni. What Moroni says: *But the day had not yet come when "they who would not hear his voice should be cut off from among the people"* (Joseph Smith History 1:40).

That doesn't mean that Christ is coming again. What it does mean is that Christ's voice will be heard again, and in that final voicing by Christ, those who do not have the ears to hear it, they will be cut off. That cutting off is future. That voice of the Lord, both during the time He spoke in mortality, as well as the time when He spoke through the Prophet Joseph Smith, as well as the time when He speaks again to give a final warning— If His voice is not heard and is not heeded, that cutting off, and only that cutting off, remains yet in the future. And therefore, the comment here by Moroni has reference to the future cutting off by those who would not hear the voice of the Lord, which is in that day soon to come, in our day, almost upon us.

Then in verse 41, Moroni *also quoted the second chapter of Joel, from the twenty-eighth verse to the last. He also said that this was not yet fulfilled, but was soon to be. And he further stated that the fulness of the Gentiles was soon to come in. He quoted many other passages of scripture, and offered many explanations which cannot be mentioned here* (Joseph Smith History 1:41).

So let's go back to Joel, in the second chapter, and begin at the 28th verse and look at that. This is what has not yet been fulfilled but is soon to come:

And it shall come to pass afterward [beginning at verse 28 of chapter 2 of Joel], that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit...I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness...the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD...And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call. (Joel 2:28-32)

Now one of the things that we perhaps take for granted, but we have to give credit to Joseph Smith for doing, is distinguishing between all of these references to Jerusalem and these references to Zion. Until Joseph spoke, it was assumed that that was the same thing. It's not; and we know that there will be Zion, on the one hand, and we know that there will

be Jerusalem, a gathering there, on the other hand. And we know that this prophecy concerning your sons, your daughters, prophecy, dreams, visions, all of this being poured out—this is something that is yet to happen. But it is soon to come to pass. We have a great deal to look forward to that the angel Moroni, instructing Joseph Smith, covered with him on that night when he first appeared to him, promising that these things were going to come to pass. And they still have not yet come in.

Going back to Joseph Smith History 1, verse 41, when he referred to Joel, he says that the *fullness of the Gentiles was soon to come in*. The "fullness of the Gentiles" is something different than the "times of the Gentiles." The times of the Gentiles have been with us. The fullness of the Gentiles is when we turn a leaf, and their opportunity comes to an end. Notice that in addition, in verse 41, that there were many other passages of scripture and many other explanations (that he doesn't mention here) that the angel offered. How often, when an angel comes to instruct, does the angel simply open the scriptures? When you look at what happened with the Lord on the day of His resurrection—before He appeared to the twelve—and He walked the afternoon on the road to Emmaus with Cleopas and (I believe) Luke, He spent the afternoon opening to them the scriptures.

Angels instruct using the scriptures. The Lord, on the day of His resurrection, spent the afternoon talking about the scriptures. Joseph Smith, when he was trying to figure out which church he should join, labored over the scriptures. And yet, we think we needn't perform that same labor or become familiar with that same canon of scripture. And I'm telling you that the more you have inside you in familiarity with the words of scripture, the more able you are to comprehend the doings of God in your own life, and in the lives of all those around you, and in the time in which you live. So don't let it be lost on you that what the angel Moroni spent the night doing with Joseph was discussing scripture. And don't let it be lost on you that he returned again, to deliver another time, a message involving expounding the scriptures.

Prophecy is essentially focused... All of prophecy is essentially focused on two events. You can always find an exception to this because there are all kinds of intermediate events that get covered, but essentially, the burden of prophecy focuses upon two, and only two, events. The first one is the looking forward to the coming of the Lord in the flesh in His mortal ministry, and the second one is looking forward to the coming of the Lord in glory to judge the world. Those are the two primary events that are the burden of prophecy—the burden of scripture—and you are living on the cusp of the fulfillment of the second of those two events. And therefore, you would be well served to learn as much as you can about those two events.

I want to turn back to Jeremiah chapter 31, because in Jeremiah, he's talking about the second of those events, the one that's about to be upon us. Beginning in Jeremiah chapter 31, verse 31 (should be easy to remember—31-31—it's like a 30-30 for you hunters, except it's got yet another caliber), so:

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 31:31-32)

As a reminder, you know, He's telling about something that He did, and then how they broke it, and how He was faithful to it as a husband unto them. Just as a reminder, as we get ready to talk about the coming covenant... Because if you break the next one when it's restored, if you break that one, you cannot stand in the day that He comes. Because in the day that He comes to judge the world, there will be a judgment which is either passed or failed. And if failed, then they who come will burn them up by the brightness of their glory. So, He's not giving you just this gratuitous, interlineation thought in the middle of the prophecy by Jeremiah. He's trying to cue you in to the fact that this stuff is taken very seriously by Him, and therefore, ought be taken very seriously by us. So: *But this shall be the covenant* (verse 33)—

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me. (Jeremiah 31:33-34)

This is not they shall all know *about* Me. This is they shall *know* Me. And it will no longer be necessary for anyone to say know the Lord, because you shall *know* Him. It's not knowledge concerning Him; it's Him. And those that know Him shall be *from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more* (Jeremiah 31:34). That's who He is. That's what He does. He doesn't want to remember your sin. He would rather prefer it if **you** don't remember your sin. Because if you don't remember your sin and you go on in a positive way, having laid down the burden that He so willingly will accept from you, and remove from you that burden of guilt, then you can go on and become healthy again. You needn't be troubled about all of those things that have bogged you down. He wants to remove that. He wants to carry them.

I will remember their sin no more. Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever. (Jeremiah 31:34-36)

If you look up in the morning sky, right now you can see Orion on the Eastern horizon. And that's been true, twice a year, since the beginning. It's been true that all of the ordinances ordained by God in the heavens above have remained true from the day that He set them there until today. They are so well established, they are so regular, they are so permanent,

and they are so far beyond the ability of man to touch, alter, or destroy, that the only way to have an apostasy from those ordinances—from our perspective—is for you to forget what knowledge there is that are written in the heavens. But the Lord wrote it there; it remains there. And it's still yet part of what is to be restored.

Well, the definition of salvation or life eternal, given in John 17, verse 3: *This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent* (John 17:3). This is the knowledge of the Lord that he's talking about here. This is the day that Jeremiah prophesies. No one needs to say, *Know the Lord—for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest*. This is what the Gospel was intended to restore, offer, promise, suggest to each one of us.

The ordinances that are referred to here in the heavens... If you go to Genesis chapter 1, verse 14 (and for those that aren't familiar with their scriptures, Genesis is like page one): *And God said [this is verse 14]: And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and [for] years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so* (Genesis 1:14-15). And so, He sets this up, and He sets this up in order to communicate things.

If you go back to the book of Abraham chapter 4 (and this is the other end of the four standard works), go to Abraham chapter 4, beginning at verse 14:

And the Gods organized the lights in the expanse of the heaven, and caused them to divide the day from the night; and organized them to be for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years; And organized them to be for lights in the expanse of the heaven to give light upon the earth; and it was so. And the Gods organized the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day...the lesser light to rule the night; with the lesser light they set the stars also; And the Gods set them in the expanse of the heavens, to give light upon the earth...to rule over the day and over the night...to cause to divide the light from the darkness. And the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed. And it came to pass that it was from evening until morning [and] it was night; and it came to pass that it was from morning until evening [and] it was day; and it was the fourth time. (Abraham 4:19)

This is not a bunch of gratuitous language. This is describing something that took place with absolutely deliberate intent. Everything that is written in scripture and all of the ordinances that were ordained upon the earth—in the heavens—were reckoned from the position of the earth. It's not that the ancients were ignorant of what's going on in the heavens. It's that they viewed the heavens as being a testimony given to us on the earth. It is a geocentric; that it is from the surface of the earth that that testimony is written. From the surface of the earth, the sun occupies a space... Even though the sun is over 100 times larger than the earth, the space that the sun occupies in the firmament of the earth is exactly the same as the space in the firmament that is occupied by the moon—although the

moon is 1/6 the size of the earth. From the surface of the earth they are identical in size. So much so, that when you put them on the ecliptic, as they are located, one can block out the other entirely in an eclipse. Because all of these things were ordained by God to testify in the heavens about Him and about His work. And those things **are** bearing testimony, and they are telling you something. And who knows if we will ever get to that. But they are designed to be.

Well, I'm going to go ahead. We won't get to this for weeks. Well—weeks—we won't get to this for some time. Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 121. Beginning at verse 26 (these are the neglected verses because we don't pay attention to this stuff anymore):

God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy [Spirit], that has not been revealed since the world was until now [not the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit has been revealed. It's the knowledge that is coming that has not yet been revealed]. Which our forefathers have awaited with anxious expectation to be revealed in the last times, which their minds were pointed to by the angels, as held in reserve for the fulness of their glory; A time to come in the which nothing [should] be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they [should] be manifest. All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, [should] be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ. [As] also, if there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas, or to the dry land, or to the sun, moon, or stars—All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years, and all the days of their days, months, and years, and all their glories, laws, and set times, [should] be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times—According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before [the] world was, that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof, when every man shall enter into his eternal presence and into his immortal rest. (D&C 121:26-32)

There is an agenda. That agenda is to be completed. It's to be completed before the coming of the Lord. And it includes a restoration of things that we have hardly yet thought about.

Well, Jeremiah knew what he was talking about when he referred to the ordinances. We've long since forgotten the only way you apostatize from that stuff is through forgetfulness, because the testimony remains. And it's in front of your eyes nightly and daily. Everything begins with faith. You don't skip to knowledge. You begin with faith, and you progress. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* on page 348 says, "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."

The principles of the gospel are not supposed to be comprehended in one bite. You progress. And the ladder that he's talking about climbing is, in fact, the ladder that is ordered and that Jacob referred to. Jacob's ladder is something that we refer to, and it's an ordered process. But whenever you begin that climb, you begin it at the bottom. And so, you find yourselves here. Notwithstanding finding yourselves here, there are absolutely,

invariably (and we'll get to this eventually) seven rungs on Jacob's ladder. And we find ourselves, at present, at the bottom of it.

Belief leads to faith. Faith has to surrender, ultimately, to knowledge. And it was the purpose of the Prophet Joseph Smith to try and expound upon the principle of faith in a set of scriptures that he put forth. **That** got canonized. **That** we're going to spend our time on this evening. I was reading the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. You can find that in the *Joseph Smith Papers*. They have a photostatic copy of the actual 1835 edition, and you can read it in the type. And, I mean, it's an exact reproduction. It's a photograph of that edition.

I loathe to waste time. And I'm captured each Sunday for a three-hour block, and so I spent a lot of time reading scriptures during church each Sunday. And I made sacrament meetings with the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants for a period of weeks in order to get through that. I was absolutely thunderstruck. Because if you've never read the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, it is as audacious a scriptural document as anyone has ever seen. It is like a thunderbolt out of the blue. It is an amazing text. And it begins... The first 70 some pages are the Lectures on Faith. Then the revelations are organized, not in the way in which they're presently organized in our Doctrine and Covenants; they are organized topically and thematically.

And when you pick up the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, and you look at that document, to me it was abundantly clear that there is something new taking place on the earth. The Prophet Joseph Smith was what he said he was. In fact, if anything, he understated who and what he was. The Prophet Joseph Smith was an agent, sent by God, to restore lost knowledge for whoever is willing to receive it. And the form that it takes in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants is a religious classic. It is a greater document than the New Testament. It is an amazing piece of work.

Before its publication, Joseph Smith; Assistant President of the Church, Oliver Cowdery; First Counselor in the First Presidency, Sidney Rigdon; and Second Counselor in the First Presidency, Frederick G. Williams jointly signed a preface written by Joseph Smith. In his journals, leading up to the publication of the Lectures on Faith, Joseph Smith recorded that he spent **days** editing the Lectures that had been given before their publication as scripture.

There's a debate: since they've been removed from the scriptures, there are a lot of people who are trying to vindicate the decision that was made to remove them from scripture. And one of the arguments that's made in furtherance of removing them from the scripture was that it was primarily a product of Sidney Rigdon's pen. And it was primarily a product of Sidney Rigdon's pen because they've done word typing and computer analysis, and they've come up with probability of authorship. It doesn't matter if Sidney Rigdon had a hand in the document, because Joseph Smith edited it. And Joseph Smith corrected it. And Joseph Smith vouched for it. And in the preface to the Lectures on Faith in the 1835 edition—which you

can read in the *Joseph Smith Papers*, Volume 2 of the “Revelations and Translations”—Volume 2, and it’s, I don’t know, some 400-500 pages into that document, you can read the preface. And I’m reading you this over Joseph Smith's name:

We deem it to be unnecessary to entertain you with a lengthy preface to the following volume, but merely to say that it contains, in short, the leading items of the religion which we have professed to believe. The first part of the book will be found to contain a series of lectures as delivered before a theological class in this place, and in consequence of their embracing the important doctrines of salvation, we have arranged them into the following work. We do not present this little volume with any other expectation than that we are to be called to answer to every principle advanced.

Joseph Smith’s saying, This is a document that I intend to vouch for. His official history, January of 1835, he says: “During the month of January,” in his records, “I was engaged in the school of the elders and in preparing the Lectures on Theology for publication in the book of Doctrine and Covenants.” You find that in the *History of the Church* Volume 2, beginning at page 180.

He defended every principle that was advanced. It was brought before a Council of the Church. And I’m reading from the *Joseph Smith Papers*. This is on page 307 of Volume 2 of the “Revelations and Translations”: “[On 17 August 1835, a general assembly of the] Church...[met] for the purpose of Examining a book of commandments and covenants...[that had] been compiled and written by the...[publications] committee.” Joseph Smith headed the publications committee. “This Committee having finished said Book according to the instructions given them”—the minutes read—“it was deemed necessary to call the general assembly of the Church to see whether the book be approved or not by the Authoroties [sic] of the Church, that it may, if approved, become a law. unto the church, and a rule of faith and practice [of] the same.”

Though the assembly was convened by the Presidency of the Church, several of them were absent at the time that the vote took. The responsibility of presenting the book to the conference fell to Oliver Cowdery, a member of both the Presidency and the four man Publication Committee; and Assistant President of the Church at the moment that this took place. Sidney Rigdon, the other Presidency member and Committee member present, stood and explained the matter by which they intended to obtain the voice of the assembly, for or against said book. Voting on the book proceeded by quorums and groups, with the leader of each group bearing witness of the truth of the volume before his group voted to accept the book of Doctrine and Covenants for their faith. And then they proceeded to vote. And they voted by quorum. And they voted by quorum from the least to the greatest. And then after all the quorums of the church had accepted the Doctrine and Covenants—the first 70-some pages of which were the Lectures on Faith—then the General Assembly voted, including everyone who was present. Children, women, everyone voted. And they all sustained *this* as the Doctrine of the Church.

In 1921, the Lectures on Faith were dropped from the scriptures by a committee that was comprised of George F. Richards, Anthony W. Ivins, Melvin J. Ballard, James E. Talmage, John A. Widstoe, and Joseph Fielding Smith. That committee dropped the Lectures on Faith from the scriptures because, they said: "Certain lessons, entitled Lectures on Faith, which [was] bound with Doctrine and Covenants in some of its former issues, are not included in this edition. Those lessons were prepared for use in the School of Elders...but they were never presented nor accepted by the Church as other than theological lessons or lectures" (D&C, Introductory Explanation, 1921 Edition).

That's a lie. And the *Joseph Smith Papers*, if you will read them today, tell you that that's not at all the truth. And part of what I hope to get to tonight, and if not tonight then in Logan, is the reasons why it is. Joseph Smith called this "doctrine—important doctrine." "Leading items of the religion." And that "he would answer to every principle that's advanced in the document." Now to his credit, Joseph Fielding Smith, who was on that, said (this was in 1966)—He said, "I suppose that the rising generation knows little about the Lectures... In my own judgment these Lectures are of great value and should be studied... I consider them to be of extreme value in the study of the gospel of Jesus Christ" ("The School of the Prophets," BYU Leadership Week, June 18, 1956).

And in a talk given by Elder Bruce R. McConkie at Brigham Young University (the son-in-law to the one of the committee members, whose words I just read), in January the 4th of 1972 (that would have been before I was there), Elder McConkie said—

Every time I read Bruce R. McConkie [impersonating Bruce R. McConkie's voice] 'I am tempted to read it in the voice of Elder McConkie, which echoes still in my skull.' I won't do that. And I'm reading him now:

In my judgment, it is the most comprehensive, intelligent, inspired utterance that now exists in the English language—that exists in one place defining, interpreting, expounding, announcing, and testifying what kind of being God is. It was written by the power of the Holy Ghost, by the Spirit of inspiration...it is, in effect, eternal scripture, [it is] true. (BYU Speeches, 4 January 1972)

And yet... And yet, it's not in our scriptures. The School of the Prophets was organized based upon a commandment. Doctrine and Covenants section 88—verse 127 of section 88: *And again, the order of the house prepared for the presidency of the school of the prophets, established for their instruction in all things that are expedient for them, even for all the officers of the church, or in other words, those who are called to the ministry in the church, beginning at the high priests, even down to the deacons* (D&C 88:127).

This is referring to the School of the Prophets. This was the forum established by revelation, in which the Lectures on Faith were developed. Then after having been delivered there, edited by Joseph, prepared for publication... And it became scripture. It

was approved in a subsequent revelation. If you turn a few pages to D&C 97, in verse 3 to 6:

Behold, I say unto you, concerning the school in Zion, I, the Lord, am well pleased that there should be a school in Zion, and also with my servant Parley P. Pratt, for he abideth in me. And inasmuch as he continueth to abide in me he shall continue to preside over the school in the land of Zion until I shall give unto him other commandments...I will bless him with a multiplicity of blessings, in expounding all scriptures and mysteries to the edification of the school, and of the church in Zion. (D&C 97:3-6)

The school, the school, the school! They wanted one established then. The purpose of that was to bring the Lectures in. The purpose of the Lectures was to teach people so that you would understand what the doctrines are, because the doctrine was the Lectures on Faith. The covenants were the balance of the book. And by the way, if you get out the 1835 edition, you will find that the typeface for the Lectures on Faith are actually larger type than the subsequent commandments which are in the revelations that we have left over in the Doctrine and Covenants. They came in first. They were vouched for by Joseph. They were the "leading items." He considered them so important that they came first in the doctrine, the first 74 pages of the 1835 edition.

So having now explained why, I want to turn attention to them. And hoping that you brought your own copy of the Lectures on Faith, I want to turn to the Lectures on Faith. The edition that you will find in the *Joseph Smith Papers* is not plagued with a bunch of footnotes, interlineating. If you buy a copy today from Deseret Book, you're going to find footnotes that explain a bunch of stuff—and in essence contradict the content of the Lectures on Faith—and then explain why they know more than Joseph did, and they're fixing his doctrinal errors.

The First Lecture on Faith is essentially asserting the primacy of faith as an operative principle of power, that exists with God and with all of us. Okay, you've left home, and you've come here. While you're here, your home exists only as a matter of faith to you. You believe it exists. You intend to drive back there; and your family that's there, and your dog that's there, and that infernal parrot that now can mimic the low battery signal on the fire alarm—she's there too. And so, it's a matter of faith, that despite the fact that I am here and out of her presence, my bird is waiting for me when I get home. You act as if these things that you no longer see... See, in the development of a child, what you find in really young children is that they don't have the capacity to entertain the fact that it still exists. When it's gone, it's gone forever. And the child... It takes a while before the child has confidence that what gets removed from their sight continues to exist outside of the presence of their actual observation. It's one of those childhood development things.

Well, God's beyond that. Everything that exists—*faith, and faith only*— And I'm using a compilation that was published—I don't know, it's from the Brigham Young University archive. I just printed it out. In mine it's verse 11, excuse me, it's verse 10 of Lecture 1:

It is faith, and faith only, which is the moving cause of all action in them [that is in all men, but is also the principle by which everything is moved into action. Verse 12:] Faith is the moving cause of all action in temporal concerns, so it is in spiritual; for the Saviour has said, that truly, that He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. Through faith— [In Verse 14:] Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. ...all things in heaven [in Verse 15:] [or] earth, or under...earth, exist by reason of faith as it existed in Him [Him being God. 17:] Who cannot see, that if God framed the worlds by faith, that it is by faith that he exercises power over them, and that faith is the principle of power? And if the principle of power, it must be so in man as well as in the Deity? This is the testimony of all the sacred writers and the lesson which they have been endeavouring to teach to man.

You are acting... Everything that you are doing—the education that you got, the employment that you have, the plans that you undertake, the things that you design to do—are all a product of your faith. You are a being filled with, animated by, and continually upholding everything in your life by your faith! And yet you don't have the faith to see it. You are a creature of faith. All of you are. And you always have been, and you always will be. Do not be doubtful, but be believing. You are here by reason of God's faith. And you have faith to do the things that you do, continually. Every movement you undertake, every plan you make, is based upon the faith that you have.

Well, we don't have time to pause on the first one because I'm hoping to get far enough along in this process. But I'd like you to value the Lectures on Faith. I'd like you to study the Lectures on Faith. I'd like you to take a lot more time with them than we're going to have the time to take tonight. Let's skip to the Second Lecture. This is the second verse:

We here observe that God is the only supreme governor and independent being in whom all fullness and perfection dwell; who is omnipotent, omnipresent,...omniscient; without beginning of days or end of life; and that in him every good gift and every good principle dwell;...that he is the Father of lights; in him the principle of faith dwells independently,...he is the object in whom the faith of all other rational and accountable beings center for life and salvation.

Did you get that?! It's not me; it's not your bishop; it's not Hugh Nibley; it's not your stake president; it's not the Catholic priest down the street, the Pope in Rome, or the President of the Church in Salt Lake. It's no man! The principle of faith must be grounded **in God**, the Supreme Governor. Because if your faith is grounded in anyone or anything else, you cannot have the faith necessary to attain to salvation. All of these Lectures are concerned with your salvation.

Look at verse 12. And it's been a discussion of what went on at the beginning: man in the Garden of Eden, God talking to him. Verse 12:

From the foregoing we learn man's situation at his first creation, the knowledge [of] which he was endowed, and the high and exalted station in which he was placed—lord or governor of all things on [the] earth, and at the same time enjoying communion and intercourse with his Maker, without a veil to separate between.

That's where man began. And that's why knowledge of God existed in the first place. Because in the beginning, God talked to man. And if you think, Well, yeah that was then, what about now? We will get to now. Verse 18, about halfway down:

God conversed with him face to face. In his presence he was permitted to stand, and from his own mouth he was permitted to receive instruction. He heard his voice, walked before him...gazed upon his glory, while intelligence burst upon his understanding, and enabled him to give names to the vast assemblage of his Maker's works.

This was man's original condition—a condition, to which, the gospel is designed to return man. And in fact, at the Second Coming, all who remain will be in that condition once again. The earth is going to be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory, and it's going to do so because God will come and dwell here again. And man will be able to converse Him. Look at verse 19: *Though man did transgress, his transgression did not deprive him of the previous knowledge with which he was endowed.* This is really interesting, because in verse 21 Joseph Smith says: *We next proceed to present the account of the direct revelation which man received after he was cast out of Eden, and further copy from the new translation:...*

The Lectures on Faith, throughout, use only what we call the Inspired Version of Scriptures. The only Bible references that they permit into the Lectures on Faith: the Inspired Version of the Bible. Even though the Inspired Version of the Bible was never made public during Joseph Smith's lifetime, he still uses it in order to get the Lectures on Faith right. Which tells you something about the priority. He did not give that for general release, general consumption, but it was so important that the Lectures on Faith be done correctly that they are what get quoted in here. In fact, in the Second Lecture, this verse, verse 23, is so important that it's been incorporated into the temple endowment itself:

And after many days, an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying, Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord?...Adam said...I know not, save the Lord commanded me. And..the angel spake, saying, This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth...thou shalt do all that thou doest, in the name of the Son...thou shalt repent...call upon God, in the name of the Son for evermore.

So important that it appears in the temple. So important it appears in the Lectures on Faith. So important that it was put into the Lectures on Faith even though the Inspired Version was not made generally available. **And**—the Lectures on Faith are so important that they

have been deleted from your scriptures, because in 1921 a committee said, Nah, don't worry about that. Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.

Verse 25: Though our first parents were driven out of the garden of Eden, and were even separated from the presence of God by a veil, they still retained a knowledge of his existence. And then it goes through what happened with Cain, and Cain's gross transgression. But look at verse 30: God continued, after man's transgression, to manifest himself to him and to his posterity; and, notwithstanding they were separated from his immediate presence that they could not see his face, they continued to hear his voice. And look at verse 32: God condescended to talk with Cain after his great transgression in slaying his brother.

And you don't think God will talk to **you**?! And you think God is so quiet that He's not speaking to you?! At one point God says, My works never cease and my words never cease (see Moses 1:4). The silence that is caused to reign in the heavens are the angels—but not God. The angels withdraw; God does not. And if God would talk to Cain after his transgression in slaying his brother, He'll talk with you.

You ought to ask yourself why the chronology in the Second Lecture is given, because the chronology that's given there, and we don't have time to go through it, but the chronology matters, and the life spans matter. And maybe by the time we get to Provo—I guess the Spanish Fork area—we'll revisit that.

Okay, verse 55 of Second Lecture: *The extent of their knowledge respecting his character and glory will depend upon their diligence and faithfulness in seeking after him.*

Every person's knowledge is dependent upon the diligence and the faithfulness of the individual, and if your diligence and faithfulness in seeking after Him... And by the way, we have one brave soul who's just tired. I hate these chairs. You know, they designed these chairs to stack, and the human being has to simply conform to the stackability. I mean, it's like the engineer that says, What's your list of priorities? Well, it's not humanity. I mean we want these damn things to be **stackable**. Okay, what if it's rather like sitting on a jackhammer, and having your ass "slain" after the first 45 minutes? And the engineer responds, You don't get it; **they stack. They will stack.** I can take a whole room and I can put them in a corner, and it's like— Chairs? Seating. Seating? Chairs. And it's a wonder of engineering. Therefore, since this brave soul got up and cushioned his tush with a coat, I would commend anyone anytime to stand up, to stretch your legs, and give everyone behind you a good look at your backside.

And so, the extent of any man's knowledge concerning the character and glory of God depends upon the diligence and the faithfulness of the individual:

Until, like Enoch, the brother of Jared, and Moses, they shall obtain faith in God, and power with him to behold him face to face. We have now clearly set forth how it is, and how it was, that God became an object of faith for rational beings; and also, upon what

foundation the testimony was based which excited the inquiry and diligent search of the ancient saints to seek after and obtain a knowledge of the glory of God; and we have seen that it was human testimony, and human testimony only, that excited this inquiry, in the first instance, in their minds. It was the credence they gave to the testimony of their fathers, this testimony having aroused their minds to inquire after the knowledge of God; the inquiry frequently terminated, indeed always terminated when rightly pursued, in the most glorious discoveries and eternal certainty. (Lectures on Faith 2:55-56)

And what is "the most glorious discovery?" It is the person of God. And what is the "eternal certainty" that you want? It is your own salvation. Because no man can give that to you, but God can. But it is testimony, and it is testimony alone, upon which that faith can be grounded. Therefore, let me testify to you that when I became a Mormon, I assumed you people were like Joseph Smith. I assumed that you people went out and prayed in groves and God visited with you. I assumed you were awakened during the course of the night and that Moroni, or Peter, or James, or whomever—whoever was vagrant in the halls of heaven would be sent down to occupy the night in teaching you Mormons, because this was a regular event.

And so it was my expectation that that was possible. And I thought it possible because Joseph did it, and because there were missionaries saying, "I know" this stuff is true. I didn't have a lexicon of Mormonese before me that allowed me to say, "I know" equals "I really, really, really, believe this stuff." In fact, it was confusing to me when I got a testimony, and I said, Yeah, God actually answered my prayer, and damn it, I'm going to get baptized. Because I did not think I'd be a particularly **good** Mormon. And maybe I ought to explain why I wouldn't be a very good Mormon.

Ron Mahle and I were on one of our regular... (I've elicited a groan from my wife.) We were on one of our regular enlisted-in-the-Air-Force weekend events when he, in his Ford Gran Torino, was caught on the radar gun doing 120 miles an hour in Portsmouth city limits, and we were pulled over. And back in those days, DUI did not mean that you were immediately ushered off to jail, but it meant you had the potential for that someday. So Ron, who had blown the breathalyzer problem, was removed from the driver's seat, and I was put into it. He didn't ask me for my breathing test, and so I drove him back to the base. And with time the day of reckoning came, and the arrest warrant was issued, and Ron was carted off to jail. And on the day that I got the call that I needed to go down to jail and bail him out, we had new Elders transferred into the area, and they needed a ride. And Ron being locked up and me having access to his Torino, I went and I picked up the Elders. And, you know, they were going to ultimately missionary me into the baptismal font, but I had another golden contact I wanted them to meet. And so they went with me to where Ron was locked up, and they met at the release at the jail.

In any event, back in those days I thought all you people had these things. And then there was the patriarchal blessing that I got which said (and this is a quote) that, "you will again be in the presence of your Father in Heaven while in the Second Estate." That's in my

patriarchal blessing. And I thought, well, of course; it belongs there. That's what we do, isn't it? We're Mormons. I mean, we're on God's team; God likes us. He's paying really close attention to us. And when we do stuff wrong, we can look up and feel guilty. Actually, we can look... I'm disoriented here. I could point you to the spot if I were back home, but I'm not sure where those coordinates are at this spot.

In any event, I thought we were related to God in an intimate way because, well, the heavens were open. And therefore, it was not to me **shocking** when I encountered an angel. And I have encountered many of them, and all of them leave a vivid and permanent impression. I can tell you that it's been nearly 40 years since the first time I met with an angel, and I can still close my eyes and see the scene this minute. **This stuff happens.** My experiences matter **only** because I can testify that it happens. The content is nothing but voyeurism for you. **You** need to have a connection with heaven. The scriptures are the authorized accounts given to us that testify to these things. The Lectures on Faith are trying to set it forth in a comprehensive way, so that we can all get it. But the Gospel is supposed to be a living, breathing, miraculous thing in **your** life. Whether I'm saved or not doesn't matter. What matters is whether **you** are saved or not. And the way in which you become saved is by coming to know "eternal certainty," the last words in verse 56. And eternal certainty is about your salvation, so that you're not dependent upon someone else for your knowledge of God, but so that you can say in your own right, "I know."

Well, which brings us then to the Third Lecture on Faith. Now we're starting really to get into some important stuff. So I hope your chair is painful enough to keep you awake. Personally, I'd rather stand up here than sit in one of those things. That's it, you could get this over with a lot quicker if you put me in one of those chairs and said, Talk until you're sick of that.

Verse 2 of Lecture 3: *Let us here observe, that three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God— [Faith in God] unto life and salvation (Lectures on Faith 3:2). Faith in **God**, not in man, not in men, not in an institution, not in some magic talisman—faith in God. To the extent that anyone is trying to displace your faith in God and attract attention to themselves, **myself included**, that is a perversion. It will not save you. It is a distraction. It is evil. It is wrong. It is damnable. Anyone that tries to attract your worship, myself included, ought to be sent to hell. It's why I continually remind you, talking about me is a waste of time. Talking about the things that I'm saying, talking about the content of these scriptures, talking about the doctrines that will save you, that's *very* important. But you can leave me out of that. You don't ever need to mention my name again in your life. But pay attention to the **doctrine** that we're talking about. Pay attention to the message that comes to us through scripture. You will never be saved because you relied upon some guy to elevate you. The only way in which that will happen is when you connect with God. You have to exercise faith in God unto life and salvation.*

There are three things:

- *First, the idea that he actually exists.* You can get that from someone else.

- *Secondly, a **correct** idea of His character, perfections and attributes.* Any error in that prevents you from having faith. Therefore, in order to get that right, it's going to require something of you in the way of study and effort. Because if you're making—look at the word, they italicized it—a *correct* idea of His character, perfections, and attributes, that's what you need to study to show what it is you're going to have faith in.
- *Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will* (Lectures on Faith 3:3-5).

You must know this. And you cannot cover the gap by lying to yourself. You can't lie to yourself, pretending that you are on God's course, and then have **actual** knowledge that the course of life you're pursuing is according to His will. Nor can you depend entirely upon what other people are telling you. You're supposed to be asking and getting answers from God. And the answers from God are going to tell you what you need to do. And the sacrifices that He will require of you are unique to you, because the contribution that you can make for the salvation of yourself and others is unique to you. There are things that you and only you can do. And if you will sign up with God, He will have you do them. You may find yourself doing things you would rather prefer not doing. It doesn't matter. If you have faith in Him and you do what He asks, you'll **know** that the course you are pursuing is according to His will. And doing things He asks of you, according to **His** will, invariably produce faith. And they produce faith unto salvation. Because it always grows. Light grows or dims; it never stays static. Therefore, when you set on this course, you never turn back. If you turn back, you lose everything that you've gained up to that point. Look at verse 5 (this is third):

*An actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will. For without an acquaintance with these three important facts, the faith of every rational being must be imperfect and unproductive; but **with** this understanding it can become perfect and fruitful, abounding in righteousness, unto the praise and glory of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* (Lectures on Faith 3:5, emphasis added)

Therefore, these three things you need to know. God exists. You need to study until you have a correct understanding of His character, perfections, and attributes. And then you have to live your life so that you actually know that the course you're leading in your life conforms to what He would have. Turn to verse 23:

But it is also necessary that men should have an idea that he is no respecter of persons, for with the idea of all the other excellencies in his character, and this one wanting, men could not exercise faith in him; because if he were a respecter of persons, they could not tell what their privileges were, nor how far they were authorized to exercise faith in him, or whether they were authorized to do it at all, but all must be confusion; but no sooner are the minds of men made acquainted with the truth on this point, that he is no respecter of persons, than they see that they have authority by faith to lay hold on eternal life, the richest boon of heaven, because God is no respecter of persons, and that every man in every nation has an equal privilege. (Lectures on Faith 3:23)

That's you, **that's you**. God has done nothing for Joseph Smith He will not do for you. I understand all of the doctrinal arguments. I can make them all. I **have** made them all. And I've made them to the Lord. I've argued with Him on every point of doctrine that any of you... I've quoted to Him every scripture that any of you have advanced, and many more besides. And the Lord has always borne testimony back, consistently. This stuff is true. You're hedging up the way of your own salvation and of the salvation of others when you say, No one has the privilege in our day, yet, to lay hold on salvation. You're hedging up the way, you are damning yourself, and you are damning those who will listen to you when you say people in our time are not yet authorized to exercise faith in God unto salvation, because you **are** authorized.

I have done so. I have spoken with Him as a man speaks to another. He speaks in plain humility, reasoning as one man does with another. He will reason with you. The first night I got a testimony, I was in the middle of an argument with God—I thought with myself—until when I got down to the final question in my mind, which was, “How do I even know there is a God?” To which the response came, “Who do you think you've been talking to the last two hours?” I didn't realize that that still small voice, which will talk with any and all of you, was God. When you exercise the required faith to permit Him to step out from behind the veil, like the brother of Jared, He'll do that, too. He's no respecter of persons. You should not question what your privileges are, nor how far you are authorized to exercise faith in Him, or whether you're authorized to do it at all. Don't have doubts about your privileges.

And then verse 24, twice: *He is love...he is love*. *He is love*. Now in my copy, beginning on page 40, "The following excerpt is not part of the Lectures on Faith." Therefore, we pass over that without comment. And I'll try and not have a sneer.

Now we get to the Fifth Lecture, which is what I was hoping to get to. Yes, we have time. This is where we run into some problems. This is when, by 1921... You see, we have a problem with the nature of God advanced by the Christian world. At one time in the temple endowment, there was a player whose role was to be the Christian minister who would, in his effort to convert Adam and Eve, say, “Do you believe in a God who sits on the top of a topless throne? Whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere? Do you believe in this great being, who is surrounded by a myriad of beings who have been saved, not for any act of theirs, but by his good pleasure?” And Adam responds, “I do not. I cannot comprehend such a being.” And the minister says, “Oh, that is the beauty of it!” And then he goes on to describe the devil. But I attended the temple so often before they made the changes in 1990 that I have the temple ceremony memorized, and I still recite all the missing parts. Actually, I guess in my condition, they're all missing at this point. Well, you can take away everything, except what's inside.

In any event, the Christian naysayers point at Mormons and say, Ahh, you believe in an anthropomorphic God. We have anthropomorphized God. Instead of deipomorphizing man—which is, We are made in His image—they're trying to say that we've turned God

into our image. It's one of those doctrinal points. Well, not content merely with the Personages given to us by Joseph Smith in the First Vision and elaborated upon in the Fifth Lecture, our enthusiasm has anthropomorphized—has created a being out of—the Holy Spirit. And we're going to deconstruct that. And we're going to look at the scriptures that are the basis upon which the committee in 1921 got high-centered on this. Because we are now at the point where—

Okay, remember in Lecture 3 paragraph 4, in order for you to exercise faith you must have a correct idea of God's character, perfections, and attributes. You've got to have that. And if you don't have that, then you are missing something that prevents you from having the right kind of faith. Okay, so Lecture Fifth, verse 1:

We shall, in this lecture, speak of the Godhead—we mean the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There are two personages who constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things, by whom all things were created and made, that are created and made, whether visible or invisible, whether in heaven, on earth, or in the earth, under the earth, or throughout the immensity of space. They are the Father and the Son—the Father being a personage of spirit, glory, and power, possessing all perfection and fullness, the Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle, made or fashioned like unto man...

And then, you go down to the bottom of that verse:

He being the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth... having overcome, received a fullness of...glory of the Father, possessing the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit, that bears record of the Father and the Son, and these three are one; or, in other words, these three constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme power over all things; by whom all things were created and made that were created and made, and these three constitute the Godhead, and are one; the Father and the Son possessing the same mind, the same wisdom, glory, power, and fullness—filling all in all; the Son being filled with the fullness of the mind, glory, and power; or, in other words, the spirit, glory, and power, of the Father, possessing all [the] knowledge and glory, and the same kingdom, sitting [on] the right hand of power, in the express image and likeness of the Father...

And it goes on to say: *...the Spirit of the Father, which Spirit is shed forth upon all who believe [in] his name...keep his commandments...all those who keep his commandments shall grow...from grace to grace...[possess] the same mind...(Lectures on Faith 5:1-2) and so on.*

Well, the committee in 1921 concluded that this Lecture was wrong about God the Father because it says He is a personage of spirit, glory, and power. And the Son was a personage of tabernacle. And they believe that the Father is a personage of tabernacle as well. That was the first mistake that Joseph Smith—who vouched for the doctrine in these Lectures, who stood in the presence of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ—made, in the

estimation of the committee, who had not stood in God's presence. Because “Joseph erred in doctrine,” you see. They concluded that Joseph Smith was wrong about his description of the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit is one of the Godhead, and that the Holy Spirit is the mind of the Father.

Therefore, either Joseph Smith had an incorrect idea of God's character, perfections, and attributes, or alternatively, George F. Richards, Anthony Ivins, Melvin J. Ballard, James E. Talmage, John A. Widstoe, and Joseph Fielding Smith had an incorrect idea of God's character, perfections, and attributes, because they disagree on this Lecture—the one saying it is so vile and so error ridden that it must be taken out of the scriptures; and the other saying this is a true statement of our doctrine, and therefore, needs to be in our scriptures.

Consequently and correspondingly, either Joseph Smith did not, indeed could not, have faith, or George F. Richards, Anthony Ivins, Melvin J. Ballard, James E. Talmage, John A. Widstoe, Joseph Fielding Smith did not, indeed could not, have faith. One or the other is true because they disagree on the definition of God. **And** you must have a correct idea of His character, perfections, and attributes in order to exercise faith in Him.

And so now, we find ourselves having to choose. And that's a healthy thing. You ought to have to choose. You ought to have to choose, and you ought to have your salvation at peril on how you choose. You ought to have to decide between whether you believe a man who stood in the presence of God—and bore testimony of what he saw, and what he felt, and what he heard—and others who constitute a committee that disagree with him. You should have to choose. And your eternal peril should hang in the balance as you make that choice. That is a perfect conundrum, in my view. Grow up! Accept the burden! Find out! Learn about God! Or be damned by your carelessness, by your indifference, by your refusal to go forward. It ought to be so. And it ought to be put to you plainly. And you ought to have to choose. And you ought to have to choose every time you hear someone get up and offer something to you and conclude in the name of Jesus Christ. Because they're either offering you something from Him that will save you, or they're offering something that they hope will damn you, because they're signing you up on the wrong team. It ought to be so. Everlastingly, it ought to be so.

Notice that in the definition of the Father and the Son—both, according to Joseph Smith—**both** are *personages*. But the Father is a personage who is described as consisting of spirit, glory, and power. The Son, on the other hand, is described as a personage of tabernacle. What is the difference between a personage of spirit, glory, and power, and a personage of tabernacle? What's the difference between the two? What is a tabernacle? I mean, if you're looking at the Tabernacle in the days of Moses, it is something that got set up temporarily and got taken down. And Christ is a personage of tabernacle, came as you have come, to temporarily occupy **this** [spoken as Denver touched his own body]. And when Christ was resurrected, **this** could enter the upper level of a locked room without tearing a hole in the ceiling in order to access the room in which the apostles were meeting. He could come, and He could go, inside a locked upper room, where cowering disciples

feared for their own safety in the aftermath of the martyrdom of their Lord. He may have been a personage who could say, "Handle me and see," and they may have been able to actually make contact with. But that tabernacle was no longer confined here. Read the description of what He did when He appeared to the Nephites. And it's not like **your** tabernacle. You hope to inherit a better one.

Well, let's take a few scriptures because we ought to pay attention to them on this point as well. Doctrine and Covenants section 131. Doctrine and Covenants section 131, verse 7: *There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes* [therefore, if the Father, according to verse 2 of Lecture 5, is a personage of spirit, that does not mean that He is not also made of material matter. Spirit is matter, more fine, pure, can only be discerned by purer eyes]. *We cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter* (D&C 131:7-8).

The Father is made—as a personage of spirit, glory, and power—of something that is more refined and pure but is absolutely comprised of something which is matter. Though in the equation of things—energy and matter, glory and power—these are things about which, when you get far enough down the road, you find out that there's some equivalencies in all of that. The Son, on the other hand, was made to be *tabernacled* here. The biggest problem, if you turn back to 130, the biggest problem becomes this, verse 22 of section 130: *The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us* (D&C 130:22).

What exactly is it that dwells inside of you and is a personage of spirit? What exactly is it that you hope to become, if not another member of the Godhead? What exactly is it that Joseph Smith is saying in this Lecture on Faith about the mind of God? And understand, he had in front of him, because he was in the process of actually doing it during this time frame, the Inspired Version of the Scriptures.

Get out Moses chapter 6, and if I'm not mistaken it's going to be verse 61. Yes, Moses chapter 6, verse 61. This is the definition of the Holy Ghost. And by the way, this definition of the Holy Ghost will read exactly like what we are encountering in the Lectures on Faith. Moses 6:61: *Therefore it is given to abide in you; the record of heaven; the Comforter* [that's another name for the Holy Ghost. He gets to dwell in you, the record of heaven]— *The Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things.*

Joseph Smith said in one of his talks in Nauvoo: "I... know more than all the world...[or] The Holy Ghost does, anyhow, and... I will associate myself with Him." I'm not going to look that quote up, I'll probably put it into this in a reference, when I edit the ~~transcript~~ [paper] (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 350).

Joseph Smith is talking about this, the record of heaven, the peaceable things: *...that which*

knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment (Moses 6:61).

The fact of the matter is that when Joseph vouched for this Lecture as being true, he knew what he was talking about. And I don't care what is said by those who argue otherwise. You'll never prove, off of a page, something that is superior to the knowledge that was obtained by Joseph Smith standing in the presence of God. It's impossible to convey. It is impossible to convey adequately all of the information, which is obtained in the presence of God, using the vocabulary and the methodologies that we have here. We stumble upon so many things because we simply haven't adequate information with which to make it be known.

Joseph Smith, in the Fifth Lecture on Faith—Joseph Smith, in the translation of Genesis and Moses 6:61... Joseph Smith understood what he was talking about. And the Father is, in fact, a personage of spirit, glory, and power. And the Son became the Son as a result of descending into the tabernacle that He occupied. And the Father and the Son are one. So also, you can be one with Them if you obtain the same mind with Him. Because that is the intent that They have, to share that mind with you.

You need to have a correct idea of God's character, perfections, and attributes. Therefore, since these Lectures were designed to try and give you an acquaintance with what those were, I would commend them to you. Go to Mosiah chapter 3, verse 5. Mosiah chapter 3, verse 5:

For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from...eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases. (Mosiah 3:5)

Did you notice the description there, like the Lectures on Faith, refers to the Lord Omnipotent coming down to occupy a tabernacle? And the tabernacle is made, as it is made, of clay. Look at Alma chapter 7, verse 8:

Behold, I do not say...he will come among us [among us] at the time of his dwelling in his mortal tabernacle; for behold, the Spirit hath not said unto me that this should be the case. Now as to this thing I do not know; but this much I do know, that the Lord God hath power to do all things which are according to his word. (Alma 7:8)

Again, he's talking about coming and dwelling in a mortal tabernacle. That is what the Lectures on Faith are talking about as well. Look at Doctrine and Covenants section 93. This is verse 4 of Doctrine and Covenants section 93: *The Father because he gave me of his fulness, and the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt*

among the sons of men. Christ came into the world to take upon Himself a mortal tabernacle made of clay. And that's what that Lecture is referring to. Look in that same section at verse 35: *The elements are the tabernacle of God; yea, man is the tabernacle of God, even temples; and whatsoever temple is defiled, God shall destroy that temple.* That's a coming day.

Well, in order to get out of here, the tabernacle is going to be destroyed. So we're all going to lose this tabernacle we temporarily occupy. But the tabernacle that is referred to in this description, in the Lectures on Faith, Joseph Smith understood what he was talking about. Joseph Smith understood the correct doctrine. And he's trying to give you the character, the nature, the attributes of God, because until you get that correct, you're not going to have the power to exercise faith in Him. Which is why you're going to encounter some amount of resistance between what it is that you need to believe in and what it is that everyone else in your generation may believe in. It doesn't matter. The responsibility is placed upon *you* to understand what is truth and what is not. And you have to choose. And you have to sort it out. And you have to come to the correct conclusion. Because it is only by exercising faith in the correct conclusion that you manage to align yourself with that narrow window through which the heavens are opened, and up which Jacob's ladder is found to be scaled.

Well, now we get to the Sixth Lecture, which is where I think we will probably... I want to remind you that in that prior one, Lecture 5, that second paragraph or second verse says that all of us can possess the same mind, and in the third paragraph or verse it says that we all can become one. It is impossible for me to become one with you and you to become one with me, unless you obtain the mind of God and I obtain the mind of God. And then we find that all the differences that separate us melt away into insignificance. Because we're one—not with each other—we're one with God. And that intelligence, that light which animates us, that which is inside of us, leads us to the position in which we become of one mind.

The Sixth Lecture, verse 1: *Having treated...the preceding lecture...of...ideas, of the character, perfections, and attributes of God, we next proceed to treat...the knowledge which persons must have, that the course of life which they pursue is according to the will of God, in order that they may be enabled to exercise faith in him unto life and salvation* (Lectures on Faith 6:1).

You see, the course in life that you pursue, you have to know is according to the will of God. I remember shortly after being baptized, and news of that getting back to my parents... My father was very broad-minded, but my mom was a Baptist with all that that implied. And, you know, she was sincerely convinced that this was a horrible mistake. But my father joined with her in letting me know of their disapproval of my becoming a Latter-day Saint, telling me, among other things, that he would not want 10% of everything he'd worked for in life to go to the Mormon Church, as a consequence of which I could expect to receive nothing as an inheritance from him. I had a lot of friends that I grew up with; and although Mormons are in Idaho, and there was, in fact, an infestation in Mountain Home where I grew up... The Mormons in Mountain Home were so tentative about their position that they didn't even have a baptismal font in the Mountain Home chapel. Now, they've since

expanded it into a Stake Center, and I'm told that there is now an actual font in the Mountain Home Stake Center. But when I was a kid there wasn't one, and for good reason, because conversions were just unheard of.

My future father-in-law, my wife's dad, was a missionary in Mountain Home, Idaho, while I was a kid growing up. And he undoubtedly was one of the many guys that tracked into our house and got verbally abused by my mom and sent off the porch, 'cause they only lived around the other side of the block. That's where the missionary house was back then. But as I counted the cost of becoming a Mormon, in effect, I was giving up all I ever knew, all the friends I ever had, my own family. I counted the cost, and I became a Latter-day Saint, in any event.

What is really strange about the Lord's way of reckoning these things is that I've recently had to count the cost again. And then, all of those friends that I had now are plagued with yet another dilemma. And yet the Lord always accounts those trades for His purposes because He's trying to save the individual. He's trying to save each one of us as individuals. And I don't care what the cost is that you count up. Knowledge of God is worth whatever price you pay, no matter when, no matter what, no matter how often. If He takes away your family and He gives you a new family, and then He takes that family away again, it is a small price to pay. God will ask of you whatever He will ask of you. The only thing I can say is no price you pay, while tabernacled here, is so great that you should withhold it from the altar. Give what He asks. Because it's only by giving what He asks of you that you can have faith in Him unto life and salvation.

You have to know—this is verse 2 of Lecture 6—you have to have *An actual knowledge...that the course of life which he pursues is according to the will of God, is essentially necessary to enable him to have that confidence in God without which no person can obtain eternal life* (Lectures on Faith 6:2).

You simply can't do it. Because the place in which you find God will always be, as to this world, lonely. You are necessarily going to become a stranger and a sojourner *here*. But you take up residency somewhere else, and you're not left without comfort. It's just that that comfort consists in something that is more refined and more pure. And you're left here, muddling through with people who will not understand you and who will think you are eccentric. They'll misjudge your motives. They'll misjudge your heart. They'll misjudge your ambition. They'll misjudge everything there is about you. And Christ said, Rejoice and be exceedingly happy, for so persecuted they the prophets before you (see Matthew 5:12).

If you're hoping to be understood in this world... It really helps if you are a trial attorney because everything I say in court is opposed. Everything I write has an opposition. Every proposition that I advance, someone else is saying, "No, no, no! He's wrong, he's wrong, he's wrong!" And so I live in that world, and I frankly don't care what people want to offer as an argument against anything I advance. The only thing that is necessary for me to do is to declare in plainness the things that I believe and the things that I know to be true. And then

the burden shifts to you. You judge the matter. You decide it. And if you decide it right, and it doesn't... Forget about me. Decide **the matter** right. You will be saved. And if you decide the matter wrong, you will be damned. It's **the matter** and not me. So, you have to arise. In verse 3 it talks about:

Having the assurance that they were pursuing a course which was agreeable to the will of God, they were enabled to take, not only the spoiling of their goods, and the wasting of their substance, joyfully, but also to suffer death in its most horrid forms; knowing (not merely believing) that when this earthly house of their tabernacle was dissolved, they had a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (Lectures on Faith 6:3)

That's why Joseph could say, as he did, that he left with a conscience void of offense against God or any man—going as a sheep to the slaughter (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 379). But he was okay with it. He was okay with it: *Such was, and always will be, the situation of the saints of God, that unless they have an actual knowledge that the course they are pursuing is according to the will of God, they will grow weary in their minds, and faint (Lectures on Faith 6:4).*

That's the problem with many of us. We grow weary in our minds and faint because we don't know that the course we're pursuing is according to God. Don't grow weary. Stay on that course. I have the absolute conviction that much of the stuff that we plague ourselves with, and think is such a heavy burden of sin, is because our minds are occupied with the wrong stuff. Study the things of God and fill yourself with light—and how quickly it is that all the rest of that stuff will simply dissolve away and evaporate. President Boyd Packer said you can fix behavior a lot more quickly by studying doctrine than you can by studying behavior (see 'Little Children,' *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 17).

You know, I have this... It's that, it's really that first parable where the busy young man who was on his way winds up braiding rope and doing that for years on end; braiding rope, occupying his hands. And then tying the net with the Master. And during the course of that apprenticeship, he came to know who the Master was. So that when, finally, the Master asks him if he knows who He is—and he did—and the Master asks him, "What would you want of Me?" The response comes, "Well, there was a time when I would've asked a lot. But now, I'm just content." Because it's enough. Well, it's enough and to spare (see *Ten Parables*, Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.). Having an actual knowledge that the course that you are pursuing is according to the will of God is enough and to spare.

[Paragraph] 4 (towards the bottom of that):

...nothing short of an actual knowledge of their being the favorites of heaven, and of their having embraced [the] order of things which God has established for the redemption of man, will enable them to exercise that confidence in him, necessary for them to overcome the world, and obtain that crown of glory which is laid up for them that fear God. (Lectures on Faith 6:4)

Because we ought to fear God more than we fear man. We ought to fear God more than we fear the loss of **anything** that is down here. We ought to fear God more than we fear the approval or disapproval, the criticism, the ostracism. We ought to love God and fear Him because it's our relationship to Him, and Him alone, that matters. This requires more than mere belief or supposition that he's doing the will of God, but actual knowledge. Realizing that when these sufferings are ended, he will enter into eternal rest and be a partaker of the glory of God. It does require more than mere belief or supposition. But it's obtained in accordance with this set of principles. And it is purchased by the same price, paid by each of us in turn, on the same conditions. And no one gets it on any other condition.

Your life may be uniquely situated. You may be inside an environment, a group of friends, a family, a neighborhood, an association that is completely unique to you, and has nothing in common with anyone else in this room. Inside of that, whatever the sacrifices are that are required, it will be exactly the same as it was for Moses—who gave up everything, and then gave up everything again. It will be the same as for Abraham—who gave up everything, and then gave up everything again. It will be the same. And you'll be called upon to make a sacrifice, because knowing God requires obedience to Him and sacrifice to Him—and not to some man; certainly not to me, but not to a pope, not to a president, not to a priest—to Him. You're not trying to get to know me. Or if you are, you're a damn fool. You're supposed to be getting to know the Lord. You're not supposed to be getting to know some local presiding authority. Although, I've really gotten to know local presiding authorities pretty well. I present copies of these to my Stake President. So: "Hey, President Hunt, you got mentioned tonight!" He's going to listen to this. And I think it's interest; I don't think it's assignment. I mean, what assignment can he have at this point? So, paragraph 6:

*For unless a person does know that he is walking according to the will of God, it would be offering an insult to the dignity of the Creator were he to say that he would be a partaker of [the] glory when he should be done with the things of this life. But when he has this knowledge, and most assuredly knows that he is doing the will of God, his confidence can be equally strong that he **will** be a partaker of the glory of God. Let us here observe, that a religion [not an institution, not an organization, not a club, not a fraternity—a religion] that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of **all** earthly things. It was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men **do** actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice because he seeks to do his will, he does know, most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not, nor will not seek his face in vain. [But I'll tell you what is vain:] It is in vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life,*

unless they, in like manner, offer unto him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him. (Lectures on Faith 6:6-8)

The authenticity of God's message is not proven by the means of delivery. Even if an angel comes, an angel can come and mislead you. The only way to distinguish between what is and what is not of God is through the medium of sacrifice, because when you do this, the vessel is clean. And when the vessel is clean before God, then even an angel of light cannot mislead you. Because what they offer is darkness, and you can tell it, because they have not the power to mislead. Everyone can be misled unless the course in life that they pursue is according to God's will. All gifts can be compromised. Look at Mormon chapter 9. I want to go to verse 27 of Mormon chapter 9:

O then despise not, and wonder not, but hearken unto the words of the Lord, and ask the Father in the name of Jesus for what things soever ye...stand in need [of]. Doubt not, but be believing, and begin as in times of old, and come unto the Lord with all your heart, and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling before him. Be wise in the days of your probation; strip yourselves of all uncleanness; ask not, that ye may consume it on your lusts, but ask with a firmness unshaken, that ye will yield to no temptation, but that ye will serve the true and living God. (Mormon 9:27-28)

You don't acquire favor with God in order to consume what He gives to you on your lusts—to satisfy your ambition, to become someone great in the eyes of everyone else. It doesn't happen that way. And if you try to turn it in that way, you'll meet the same kind of unfortunate end that we see happening time and time again by the ambitious, and the unscrupulous, the knavish, and the foolish. Be wise in the days of your probation. Strip yourselves of all uncleanness. Check your thoughts. Focus them on something that is light and true and pure. Because in the end, none of us have anything to be proud of. In the end, the only thing that matters is if God will vouch for us in the day of judgment. And if He will, and if He does, then it's a gift.

I honestly believe, and I'm not saying this for rhetorical purposes, I honestly believe... I have lived my life; I know the mistakes I've made. In the book *The Second Comforter*, the little vignettes in there that are taken out of my life illustrate how to make a mistake, how to do something wrong, how to fail. And then what follows in the chapter is a description of how to do it right. I have learned all that I've learned as a consequence of my own failing, as a consequence of my own errors.

I genuinely believe that almost every person in this room—I say almost because I know there's a Marine here—almost every person in this room has lived a life that has been better, more pure, more decent, more honorable, more noble than my own. I am unworthy of anything other than your pity. But I can bear testimony of Someone who **is** pure, who **is** true, who **can** save you. My belief is that every one of you, with a couple of exceptions, every one of you have lived lives so much more worthy of the Lord's recognition than my own. That for the life of me, I can't understand why you don't have the faith and confidence

to realize that He loves **you**. And **you** are more lovable than am I. He probably finds it a lot easier to love you than me. I feel like I'm the idiot that's writing graffiti on the walls of heaven, and they really wish the guy would leave, and wonder what **he's** doing here. I mean, I get that you're into forgiving the sinner, but you've got to be kidding me. I think if **you** were to arrive there, there would be a lot more propriety to that. Have faith. Be believing. Trust in Him.

Oh, I want to do this one, too. Go to Moses chapter 1. Moses chapter 1, look at verse 8: *It came to pass that Moses looked, and [he] beheld the world upon which he was created* (Moses 1:8). Moses beheld the world. Boy, this is to me... This is very interesting because he's describing a view that is very often in scripture referred to as "being caught up to an exceedingly high mountain." This is a view up, and looking down.

In any event, move to verse 18: *And again Moses said... Now he's talking, because Satan has come during this interlude, appearing as an angel of light, tempting him. Verse 18: Moses said: I will not cease to call upon God, I have other things to inquire of him: for his glory has been upon me, wherefore I can judge between him and thee. Depart hence, Satan* (Moses 1:18).

The defect that Moses perceived in what Lucifer was saying, tempting him, did not consist merely in the presence or the... I mean this is an angel. If you go to Section 76 and read the description, an angel in a position of authority in the presence of God was cast down (see D&C 76:25). That is not a being who, to look upon, would appear to be a vile creature. That would be someone, who to look upon, would appear to be a being of light, a being of glory, an angel of light. The reason Moses could discern between them had nothing to do with the appearance. It had to do with the content. It had to do with the Spirit. It had to do with what he radiated. And what Moses was able to discern was that this was not the source of something which he, Moses, chose to take in—as a consequence of which, he could judge between him and say, You—you I disprefer.

When you look at the Joseph Smith History, the thick darkness—I talked about this the last time—the Orson Hyde account of that talks about the thick darkness that gathered around him. It consisted of the adversary benighting his mind with doubts; brought to his soul all sorts of improper pictures. The reason why it is possible to do that, and more easily so with many of us, is because we have ingested into ourselves all kinds of improper images which can then be summoned back up. Look at 2 Nephi 9. This is one of the early sermons given by Jacob. Chapter 9 of 2 Nephi, and we're going to look at verse 9:

And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out [of] the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents, who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness. (2 Nephi 9:9)

It's not the physical appearance, nor the transformation that takes place. It is the content. Which is why you need to know that the course that you are pursuing is in accordance with the will of God. Because once you have made the required sacrifice, you acquire the required knowledge. Look at Alma chapter 30. This is an explanation given at the bad end of Korihor, as judgments were upon him, and he was writing his final confession before his death. Verse 53 of Alma chapter 30:

But behold, the devil hath deceived me; for he appeared unto me in the form of an angel, and said unto me: Go and reclaim this people, for they have all gone astray after an unknown God. And he said unto me: There is no God; yea...he taught me that which I should say. And I have taught his words; and I taught them because they were pleasing unto the carnal mind; and I taught them, even until I had much success, insomuch that I verily believed that they were true; and for this cause I withstood the truth, even until I have brought this great curse upon me. (Alma 30:53)

You see, he was convinced by the devil, who appeared unto him in the form of an angel. It's not... It's not always that the adversary comes to you with murderous intent. Sometimes he comes to appeal to your vanity, to your pride, to your... Well, pride is such a sinkhole he can get most people there. Oh, you can have acclaim; you can have wealth. No, you acquire what you need to acquire as a consequence of sacrificing for God. And in that process you will endure criticism, rejection, opposition, the world's hatred... You may even be cast out. But you obtain what you obtain from God *by sacrifice*. In 12—verse 12 or paragraph 12—of this Lecture Sixth:

But those who have not made this sacrifice to God do not know that the course which they pursue is well pleasing in his sight; for whatever may be their belief or their opinion, it is a matter of doubt and uncertainty in their mind; and where doubt and uncertainty are, there faith is not, nor can it be. For doubt and faith do not exist in the same person at the same time; so that persons whose minds are under doubts and fears cannot have unshaken confidence; and where unshaken confidence is not, their faith is weak; and where faith is weak, the [person] will not be able to contend against all the opposition, tribulations, and afflictions which they will have to encounter in order to be heirs of God, and joint heirs with [Jesus Christ]; and they will grow weary in their minds, and the adversary will have power over them and destroy them. (Lectures on Faith 6:12)

Well, he'll darken the minds, and after having darkened the minds, leave them in a position in which they are simply unable to have faith—at least in the right things, in order to understand the things of God. Verse 10:

Those, then, who make the sacrifice, will have the testimony that their course is pleasing in the sight of God; and those who have this testimony will have faith to lay hold on eternal life, and will be enabled, through faith, to endure unto the end, and receive the crown that is laid up for them that love the appearing of our Lord Jesus

Christ. (Lectures on Faith 6:10)

“Them that love the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ” is talking about not just the Second Coming, that is talking about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ—whenever He should come, to whomever He should choose to come to, when He chooses to do that. And it is supposed to be an ongoing event.

I understand that we got off on rather a ragged foot at the beginning of the restoration of the Gospel. How fully we got off on that ragged foot is really not well enough appreciated by Latter-day Saints, who choose to see a sort of uniform continuity of progression from that moment until today, in a rather uninterrupted course of forward momentum. When in fact, Joseph Smith had to fight against terrible opposition inside of the Church to get the doctrine that he was trying to establish, established. Ezekiel chapter 14 was a topic that he raised early. And he raised it again at the time of the Relief Society organization in Nauvoo. Go read Ezekiel chapter 14. Go look at what Joseph Smith was concerned about. And he's talking to people who accepted him as a prophet. And yet, they were more interested in getting from him what *they* wanted, instead of receiving from him what the Lord wanted to give.

Well, look in verse 9 of this Sixth Lecture. About halfway through, there's a sentence that begins: *And in the last days, before the Lord comes* [so this is before the Second Coming of the Lord, but it's in the last days], *he is to gather together his saints who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice* (Lectures on Faith 6:9).

Not a covenant **to** sacrifice. You can go make a covenant **to** sacrifice every day the temple's open. Making a covenant **to** sacrifice is not at all the same thing as making a covenant **by** sacrifice. It's only through actually sacrificing that it is possible for the Lord to make a covenant with you.

Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. (Lectures on Faith 6:9)

That gathering will be made—not by man or men or institutions. That gathering will be made by the angels of heaven who hold the keys of responsibility for that, that you can read in D&C 77:11. I'll probably insert it in the ~~transcript~~ [paper] here; I'm not going to read it—'cause you folks look like you've been sitting on metal chairs for two and a half hours, and I'm moved with compassion. I say that tongue in cheek.

Well, let me read one more thing and comment. This is the last half of that paragraph 10:

But those who do not make the sacrifice cannot enjoy this faith, because men are dependent upon this sacrifice in order to obtain this faith: therefore, they cannot lay

hold upon eternal life, because the revelations of God do not guarantee unto them the authority [to do so], and without this guarantee, faith could not exist. (Lectures on Faith 6:10)

It is a cause and effect. These things are inextricably linked together. If you make the sacrifice, you can enjoy the faith. But all of us, every one of us, were and are dependent upon making the sacrifice. If we don't do that, we are simply unable to lay hold upon eternal life. And the revelations of God don't guarantee you eternal life on any other condition.

The good news is that we have the Lectures on Faith, and they make these things clear. The good thing is that every one of you, I suppose, has been baptized. The good thing is, I suppose, that every one of you believe in the Prophet Joseph Smith, the restoration of the Gospel, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants; therefore, you have an enormous leg up. The only question is will you allow it to become a living, breathing faith? Will you allow it to lay hold upon **you**? Will you allow it to become alive, animated, a fire, again burning, upon the earth today? The closest thing there is to life itself (that isn't life) is a fire.

On the cover of the book, *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, there is a candle that's shown, and it's smoldering. If you can read Hebrew, and you pay attention to the smoke coming off of that, you'll find something hidden there. There's a lot of things hidden in the covers of my books, except for the ones that are just plain. And those were done to make them as cheap as possible. But the smoldering candle... How many of you have ever had a candle that was still smoldering with a spark, and you wanted it to reignite, but you didn't have a match. And what did you do? You blew on it. You blew the breath of life upon it. To reignite the flame, all it takes is the breath of the Spirit speaking to you. That's all it takes. And the breath of the Spirit is contingent in what it says **to you**, depending upon the faith that you have in God to hear what it is He is saying. But He is, surely, saying things to you. He doesn't just talk to me.

Ron and I were talking. He had a fellow who's head of some former-Mormon, ex-Mormon, we-got-a-chip-on-our-shoulder group of Mormons. And apparently, in one of the many newspaper articles, there was something about me saying, "Jesus spoke to me!" Man, if that doesn't sound weird enough in a newspaper—yeah. So Ron wanted to clarify. And rather than answer him with some—and Ron's probably going to read this—with some elaborate explanation, I said, "Ron! Dude! Why'd you become Mormon? Why does anyone become Mormon? Because God speaks to you!" The only reason anyone becomes a Mormon is because God speaks to them. The missionaries come out; they say a bunch of stuff; they put on their sales hat; they do their schmoo thing. They interrupt you as you bring your groceries out of the parking lot of the store. And they harass you endlessly. They pamphleteer you. In my day it was... It was the flannel board story stuff, you know, homely, kind of.

When they finally convince you to pray and ask God, no one becomes a Mormon unless they get an answer from God. That's why Ron converted and asked me to baptize him 40 years

ago today. That's why Ron subsequently went on a mission for the LDS Church. That's why Ron subsequently got married in the temple, even though he is now a disaffected Latter-day Saint. And that's why Ron and I, even today, share a brotherhood, share a friendship, share a conviction that God once spoke to both of us. He still talks with me on occasion. No matter how much I may prefer to be somewhere else, doing something else, I oftentimes find myself doing what I've been asked to do.

I don't know if it's important that anyone from Idaho Falls comes here. I don't know if it's important if anybody from Idaho Falls ever hears one word. But I do know that a testimony needs to be spoken on this ground, in this place. And I know that everyone will be accountable for that, not just those who happen to stumble upon this. I know that the Lord knows a great deal more than do I, and that very often I only figure out later what He has had in mind all along. And God is moving systematically. He is taking the measure of the Latter-day Saints. And His hand is about to move again in the affairs of men. We have a window. This is **your** dispensation. **You** are accountable.

Those prophecies spoken to Joseph Smith by the angel Moroni in his room aren't going to fulfill themselves. There has to be **someone** who has faith. There has to be someone who rises up. And when he sets His hand and He invites you to join in, and He wants **you** to know **Him**... When He sets that in motion, then you need to respond. Not to me, not to any man. You need to respond to Him. This is His work. He and only He will organize it. He and only He will roll it forth. But as one of the verses we read tonight recited, there has to be a people prepared. And that requires that faith return to the earth again. And if what has happened with the Lectures on Faith in 1921 prevented people from acquiring faith, because they misapprehend the character, nature, and attributes of God from that day until today, then it's time for you to shake that off. Rise up, lay hold upon, and obtain faith again.

Joseph saw the Father and the Son, and he testified about them, and he described them. I've seen the Father, and I've seen the Son, and they've both spoken with me. The only reason I mention that is to give you confidence that it can happen. It should happen to **you**. You should be talking with Them. They can tell you what you need to know. And don't be at all surprised if the subject, about which you need to converse with the Lord, consists almost entirely of a discussion about the scriptures. Don't be surprised if an angel comes to minister to you, if the topic about which the angel would like to converse involves the scriptures. And don't be surprised if the Lord authorizes someone to deliver a message, and the message consists in expounding the scriptures. Because on the road to Emmaus, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, what Christ did was open up to them how all things testified of Him.

Well, all things testify of what is currently getting, at last, underway. And make no mistake about it, it is getting underway. And I don't care where you look; I don't care what society you look at; I don't care what economy you observe, what culture you observe—the earth and all of the people on her are waxing old like a garment. And do you know what they do with garments that are old? They are burned. The way to preserve yourself consists in

having faith in God. And the conditions upon which faith in God is obtained are exactly the same for you as they were for Moses, and Abraham, and all of those who have ever had faith; Joseph Smith being the latest, great example of that.

Well, it would be incomplete, and I would be remiss if I didn't close in the name of Jesus Christ because I intend always to be accountable to Christ for the words that I deliver. I don't set the agenda. I don't choose the topic. I do what I'm **asked** to do. I say what I've been told to say. I hope you understand how **little** I matter and how **much** your relationship to Christ and the Father **do** matter. I hope you understand that **His** words should be clear and distinct when you hear them spoken. And you should be able to judge, and you should be able to judge the matter correctly.

I testify of Him because I've seen Him. I have faith in Him because I know that every word He has spoken has been vindicated in His Gospel. And the only reason why we are unable to lay hold upon those blessings is because we simply do not have the faith required to do so. Hence, at the beginning of this process this year, it's necessary to spend a night in Idaho Falls on the subject of faith, using the Lectures on Faith, which I regard as binding scripture vouched for by the Prophet Joseph Smith—every bit as, if not more, important than the revelations that follow in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

We can't spend all the time necessary, and you can't endure those chairs another five minutes, but pick up the Lectures on Faith. They don't take long to read. Forget all those footnotes that have been interlineated by folks after 1921. Forget all the articles that have been put in there in order to prop up a different definition of what the Holy Ghost is. Forget about all the drivel. In fact, go photocopy the edition that you find in the *Joseph Smith Papers*, "Revelations and Translations" Volume 2, in 1835, and read it there. It is an astonishingly wonderful, light-filled document. As Bruce R. McConkie said, "It is scripture; it is true."

Thank you. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.