

Righteousness
Salem, Utah
November 20, 2022
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So, we're ready? All right, then. I want to thank Dave and Amberli for hosting this and allowing it to take place at their home.

This is about righteousness. And keep in mind that the test of righteousness is the same in every generation—it's invariable; it doesn't change. To define righteousness, therefore, it's useful to go back and to look at the very first generations, because the criteria get established—and get established very early on.

In the Lectures on Faith, there's a series of questions at the end: *How many noted righteous men lived from Adam to Noah?* The answer is, *Nine, which includes Abel, who was slain by his brother.* And then the next question is: *What are their names? Abel, Seth, Enos Cainan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, and Lamech* (LoF 2:72-73). If you add Adam and Noah to that list, then it's not nine; it's eleven. And if you eliminate ~~Seth~~, or excuse me, Abel (because he died and was replaced by Seth), then you have ten. And there were ten of them that were there at the relevant time. And I'm reading from Teachings and Commandments 154:19:

Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah, who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity, who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-Ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing. And the Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him Michael, the Prince, the Archangel. And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam, and said unto him, I have set you to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of you, and you are a prince over them for ever.

So now we have a list of specific men who are called "righteous," but then we also have the *residue* (that is unnumbered and unnamed) who are also called *righteous*. So, the criteria for "righteousness" begins to take some shape.

I have set you to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of you, and you are a prince over them for ever.

If you go to the Book of Abraham chapter one, verse one and you look at what Abraham desired to be, his desire was to be a "father of many nations." Now, we view "nations" in the geopolitical sense of countries with boundaries. The way in which the word "nations" get used throughout the Old Testament is tribal. There's a nation of Benjamin, and a nation of Joseph, and a nation of Simon, and a nation of Reuben. These are simply divisions of the family. But when the division of the family became large enough, it ceased to be just a man or a family or a tribe; it becomes a nation. Adam was given the promise at the beginning that he would be the father of many nations, and when Abraham was seeking to restore—from apostasy—himself into the Holy Order, the one thing that he associated that with was the fatherhood and princedom in which he would reign over them for ever.

In the fullest sense, this is talking about the Holy Order, which requires both a patriarch and a matriarch, together, to be part of the organization of righteousness (which is the government of God, which is the kingdom of God). So how is the residue of unnamed and unnumbered people regarded as being *righteous*? Well, Christ explained that and defined how you include others within the status of righteousness (that those who are called to these positions were given) as equals.

This is Christ speaking:

He who receives you, receives me. And he who receives me, receives him who sent me. He that receives a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward. And he that receives a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever shall give [a] drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, truly I say unto you, he shall by no means lose his reward. (Matthew 5:8 RE)

This has been true since the beginning. It has always been the rule that when you receive and acknowledge a prophet, in the name of a prophet, you receive a prophet's reward.

When God delivers a dispensation of the gospel to the earth, the head of that dispensation is granted the right and privilege of organizing the dispensation. As the head organizes their dispensation according to righteous principles and receives God's approval of the pattern, the dispensation is established and remains in effect until apostasy necessitates another restoration. (T&C 154:1)

That's in the Teachings and Commandments 154:1.

Prior dispensations have been modeled after earlier patterns. And after Abraham, ~~all of the prior~~ all of the post-Abraham dispensations were organized after the pattern of Father Abraham (which is another interesting thing about nomenclature: We refer, invariably, to Adam as "Father Adam," and we refer to Abraham as "Father Abraham" because those two stand preeminent among all of the children of God as fathers from whom subsequent dispensations were descended or reckoned). Abraham's dispensation was patterned after ~~Abraham's~~ [Adam's] because he instituted the family order. However, because he [Abraham] had twelve sons in the third generation—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; its referred to in that manner in Scripture because God covenanted in turn with each of the three of them—and then in Joseph's generation, there were twelve sons. And so Peter, James, and John—and the First Presidency with the President and the two counselors—and the Quorum of the Twelve, both anciently and in later dispensations, all got patterned after the family of Abraham.

(There's plenty of seats...not that we really want you to join us [laughter]—but there you are.)

This is from a new volume of Scripture called the Testimony of St. John, which appears in the Teachings and Commandments as section 171.

*Jesus said, I am here in the world to prove who is **righteous** and who is not. Those who have been **blinded by falsehoods** I can teach them to see, and for those claiming they see clearly, I will leave them **in** their blindness. And some of the leaders who were nearby overheard him say this, and asked him, Are we blind also? Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would not have sinned. But because you claim, We see, therefore your sins remain.*

*In the name of Father Ahman I tell you, If you do not enter by the doorway into the protective sheepfold, but climb in [by] any other way, then you are only a thief and a robber. But when you enter at the door and the shepherd lets you enter, then you belong. The shepherd guards the entry, and **his sheep respond to his voice**. He calls his sheep by name and leads them up. He leads his sheep by his example and asks them to follow in his path, and they follow because they **trust his words**. His sheep will not follow another, but will flee from a stranger. They do not recognize the stranger's voice. Jesus told this parable to them, but they could not understand what he meant by the parable.*

*Then Jesus spoke to them again, In the name of Father Ahman I tell you, I am the door of the sheepfold. Every teacher now or before who has not testified of me are only thieves and robbers trying to take my sheep away, but my sheep have refused to heed them. I am the door. Any man that enters the sheepfold through me shall be saved and shall continue to progress and be supported. **The thief only intends to steal, slay, and consume the sheep**. I have come to preserve the lives of my sheep so that they might have abundant life.*

I am the good shepherd, and a good shepherd will sacrifice his own life for the lives of [the] sheep. The true shepherd does not profit from the sheep, regarding them only as property, and cares nothing for the lives of the sheep. The false shepherd runs away when he sees a wolf approaching, letting the wolf destroy and scatter the sheep. I am the good shepherd and know my sheep, and they know me. But he who profits from the sheep flees, because he is only self-interested and cares nothing about the sheep. Just as the Father laid down his life for me, he trusts me with the lives of the sheep. I will sacrifice my life for the sheep. (TSJ 7:8-11, emphasis added)

So, when Christ is explaining how His sheep are known or identified, they “respond to **his** voice,” they listen to and they “trust **his** words,” they will not respond to/they will reject the stranger’s voice. And He begins that by saying, “I’m here in the world to prove who is righteous.” And so, if you are going to define righteousness by responding to the Master’s voice and rejecting and not responding to the stranger’s voice, then you need to take considerable heed and extraordinary care in how you distinguish those who come professing to be on an errand from someone else—because almost invariably, those that follow the true Shepherd, likewise do “not profit from [His] sheep.” They likewise do not regard His sheep “as [merely] property, [caring] nothing for the lives of [His] sheep.” This is a standard or a scale to test or measure whether or not you’re hearing a voice that originates from the Master, the Good Shepherd.

Those who profit from the sheep, very often quite handsomely...

In law school, there was this saying about the two oldest professions are prostitutes and lawyers. But lawyers, back in that sense, were ministers because the canon of law was the Scriptures. And so everyone wanted, you know, a legal ruling on what the Scriptures meant. And therefore, the two oldest professions are prostitutes and the ministry, as it turns out. And ministers almost invariably make a great deal of money profiting from the sheep.

There's a great variety in both person and personality who are chosen by the Lord to be messengers—to be prophets, if you will. Some of them are likable, and some of them are quite unlikable. They come in every variety.

One of the most dramatic comparisons that happened were the closing out of one dispensation and the opening of another dispensation in the form of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. And people who were able to reject both John and Jesus had their reasons for doing so for each one of them. And Christ made an observation about that. He said,

But unto what shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their friends, and saying, We have piped unto you and you have not danced. We have mourned for you and you have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He has a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But I say unto you, Wisdom is justified of her children. (Matthew 6:4 RE)

I don't care who the messenger has been or will be, there will **always** be a reason to take offense. If even the Son of God gave offense to people, how much more will mere mortal men give to others, even if they happen to be a messenger sent by Him? But I want to remind you of a passage in the Teachings and Commandments 69:26 (which is the same thing as Doctrine and Covenants section 76):

...the glory of the Celestial is one, even as the glory of the Son is one. And the glory of the terrestrial is one, even as the glory of the moon is one. And the glory of the telestial is one, even as the glory of the stars are one, for as one star differeth from another star in glory, even so differeth one from another in glory in the telestial world. For these are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas. These are they who say they are some of one and some of another: some of Christ, ...some of John, ...some of Moses, ...some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch, but [receive] not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenants.

Now, this is followed almost immediately after by describing the people who will inherit this condition, and it says that they will be **thrust down to hell**. They are liars. They are sorcerers. They are adulterers. They are whoremongers. They are people who love and make a lie. All of that is equated to those who “[receive] not...the prophets.” So when the Lord sends a message and it is His voice that is announcing the message—it's not some mere mortal; it's not some flawed individual; it's not someone about whom it is easy to find an accusation... Because all men have fallen short of the glory of God. All men are weak. And there is no one that doesn't deserve some condemnation or judgment or basis for

rejecting them. That's not the issue. The issue is **what is said**. And what is said must reflect the Master's voice. If what is said reflects the Master's voice, then the individual is of no consequence whatever. But rejecting the voice of the Master—no matter who it is that He chooses to send—is a most serious obligation that is essentially the same thing as being a liar, a sorcerer, an adulterer.

The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote, "John...wrested the keys, the kingdom, the power, [and] the glory from the Jews, by the holy anointing and decree of heaven..." That's from the *Teachings of the Prophet [Joseph Smith]*, page 276. In the Teachings and Commandments 82:14, it points out that John *was ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old unto this power: to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews, and to make straight the way of the Lord before the face of his people, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord, in whose hand is given all power*. John was sent forth in part to be rejected by the Jews so that he could wrest the keys, the kingdom, and the power and the glory from the Jews, and this by the holy anointing and decree of heaven. Because an angel had established it and because the powers of heaven were behind it, the rejection of John was a necessary step to permit one dispensation to close and another to begin. God follows patterns in every age.

Now, we read the New Testament account—which is written from an insider's viewpoint, contemporaneous with the people that were accomplishing these things—and to us, John's mission/ministry/authority/legitimacy is unquestionable—because we're on the inside, and we see it. But if you were there living in that day, *What went ye [forth in] the wilderness...to see? A reed shak[ing in] the wind?* (Luke 7:24 LE). What would you go out there with your expectations? He wore camel's hair. This was not a man who would fit in well in any of the cities of Galilee or Judea.

Very few of that generation even noticed. I mean, the Scriptures make it sound like he was a big splash—and there probably were those who were devout, believing Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians who went out to be baptized perfunctorily as kind of a, "Hey, let's get in on this. I mean, they're practicing baptism anyway. Let's go get ours from him too," but whose heart was not in it. Well,

The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain king who made a marriage for his son. And when the marriage was ready, he sent forth his servants to call them that were bid to the wedding; and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them that are bid, Behold, I have prepared my oxen, ...my fatlings have been killed, ...my dinner is ready, and all things are prepared; therefore, come unto the marriage. But they made light of the servants and went their ways — one to his farm, ...another to his merchandise. And the remnant took his servants, and treated them spitefully, [who] slew them. But when the king heard that his servants were dead, he was angry. And he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

*Then said he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they who were bid were not worthy. Go therefore into the highways, and as many as you shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all, as many as they found, **both [good and bad]**, and the wedding was furnished with guests.*

But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment. And he said unto him, Friend, how did you come in here not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then [the king said] unto his servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take and cast him away into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for many are called, but few [are] chosen; wherefore, all do not have on the wedding garment. (Matthew 10:17-19 RE, emphasis added)

See, the invitation is always extended. And the opportunity always exists to accept the invitation and to say, *Lord, I believe*, but falling short of saying, *Help thou mine unbelief* (Mark 9:24 LE), they aren't helped, and they don't put on the wedding garment. Well, what (in this sense) is the wedding garment? It's not just to *hear* and to *say*, but it's also to *do*, because it's easy to give some lip-service to any noble idea, but it's difficult to then follow through, commit to, and take the steps required if you do believe.

So, going back to the beginning, that first generation,

*And in that day the holy ghost fell upon Adam, which bore record of the Father and the Son, saying, I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and for ever, that as you have fallen, you may be redeemed — and all mankind, even as many as choose. And in that day, Adam blessed God, and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying, Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again, in my flesh I shall see God. And Eve his wife heard all these things and was glad, saying, Were it not for our transgression, we should never [have] had seed, and should never ha[ve] known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God gives unto all the obedient. And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they [this is Adam **and** Eve; this is not merely the man Adam—**they** (she too)...] made all things known unto their sons and...daughters.*

They (Eve too) preached righteousness.

And Satan came among them, saying, I am also a Son of God. And he commanded them, saying, Believe not. And they believed not, and loved Satan more than God. And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual, and devilish. And the Lord God called upon men by the holy ghost everywhere and commanded them that they should repent. And as many as believed in the Son...repented of their sins should be saved. And as many as believed not and repented not should be damned. And the words went forth out of the mouth of God in a firm decree, wherefore they must be fulfilled. And Adam ceased not to call upon God, and Eve also his wife. (Genesis 3:4-5 RE, emphasis added)

So, she too—**she too**—ceased not to call upon God.

Now, this may sound like a curious matter, where God has access to mankind, and Satan also has access to mankind. And the narrative reads as if Adam and Eve and their descendants stand in the presence of and have access to God and angels openly and Satan openly, and Satan appears and says, "Don't believe it," and he preaches (in their disbelief) things that will make them gratified, carnal, sensual, and devilish.

Well, there was a different order of things long ago and far away, in which the veil that exists predominantly now was easily traversed. It is for the protection of mankind that a veil was installed, so that apparently powerful, spiritual, great beings who are malevolent and evil and corrupting and who urge you to carnality and sensuality, and devilishness don't get access to you—because there has to be an **equal** opposition in all things. If your mind ascends to the highest heights (as Joseph put it in his letter from Liberty Jail), your mind also must descend into the darkest abyss—because you cannot ascend without exposing yourself to a larger spectrum of opposition, so that you are left in the balance to choose. It is for mankind's protection and potential salvation that limits are placed upon the adversary and his access to you. And yet there are so many people who are willingly captured by carnality/sensuality/power-over-their-fellow-man that mankind is easily corrupted into seeking for things that titillate the mind, gratify the senses, and suggest overindulgence in any of the bodily weaknesses that we all possess because we're here in a body of dust [and] are vulnerable to.

And so, "believe [it] not," and they believed not. So what was the requirement? Believe in the Son and repent of your sins. It's one thing to say you believe in the Son; it's another to repent of your sins.

Well, this is the Lord observing the state of affairs when He was here ministering among mankind. It's something that could have been said equally by Joseph Smith when he was here ministering among us.

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. And blessed are you because these things have come unto you that you might understand them. And truly I say [to] you, many righteous prophets have desired to see these days which you see, and have not seen them, and to hear that which you hear, and have not heard. (Matthew 7:3 RE)

In Galatians, the apostle Paul wrote,

Even as Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness, know therefore that they who are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture[s], foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In you shall all nations be blessed. So then they who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. (Galatians 1:7 RE)

Abraham is the father of the righteous and the prototype of the saved man in his generation because he was able to claw back out of a state of apostasy into a state of faithfulness, communing with God and renewing an order that had fallen into disuse everywhere except for a tiny enclave headed by someone who had been an antediluvian and who had the right (because the right continued right up into the flood) to be translated into Heaven, but he stayed behind to fulfill a mission. But having fulfilled the mission (that is, handing it off to Abraham), Melchizedek then likewise ascended and, with him, his city.

I'm a lawyer, and I've tried a number of cases. And there's a case I tried in Washington, D.C. against members of the (or opposing counsel from) the U.S. Justice Department. And they—not just the Justice Department but opposing lawyers, generally—when they're

trying to prove a point, they always look for the “least likely witness to be able to handle the cross-examination,” because what they’re interested in is an answer that they can use, and if the answer is in error, it’s all the more good because they’re seeking a certain outcome. And so, they generally press people who are not in charge of something to give them observations that they can use. And there was a moment when there was a witness on the stand who was working with my client (he was a vice president in their company), and the Justice Department attorney was asking him about something that had gone on during the phase of the job when it was being bid and trying to get him to ~~say some~~ make some observations about the “early on.” And the witness said, “I don’t know.” And he was pressed and pressed and harassed. He was an old Marine who had fought on Iwo Jima. And after he had been pressed a number of times, he responded by saying, in effect (it’s a pretty close paraphrase, really), “When I landed on the beach, I had five yards that were mine. Those five yards were mine to the center of the island. I didn’t give a damn about what was going on ten yards away; I owned five yards. And I fought to the middle of the island. You’re asking me shit about stuff that’s 50 yards down the beach, and I wasn’t there.”

Well, the judge was actually, at the time, he was the Chief Judge of the United States Claims Court. But I’m telling you, no one, including the Chief Judge of the U.S. Claims Court, was going to take umbrage at a Iwo Jima veteran using colorful language under oath in the U.S. Claims Court. The fellow’s name was Jim Vallett. He’s been dead a number of years now. But you always knew where you stood with Jim Vallett.

A lot of times messengers that are sent by the Lord are just like a marine landing on Iwo Jima given five yards and told, “Take it to the center of the island!” And they just can’t deal with stuff outside of their purview without losing fact of the assignment that they’ve been given. And so, you read about them and you see what their ministries are like, and you wonder at them. Elijah did some remarkable things. And yet, as Christ observed, there were many widows who lost children. There was only one that Elijah restored the son for.

We tend to want to see signs and wonders and miracles without ever appreciating the fact that it is a wicked and an adulterous generation that seeks after a sign. I mean, these signs follow them that believe. But broadcasting them in order to attract attention is not the way in which signs are supposed to be used. I’ve witnessed miracles; there are people in this room that have, likewise, with me. But that does not mean that any of us should talk about it. The signs follow. And if you have a sign that is given unto you, that’s for your own edification and use. Because if we broadcast those things, do you know who we attract?

[Answer from audience member]

Yeah—they’re shallow. And they grow up in a day, and then the heat comes and burns them up because they have no depth.

But what do you think? A man had two sons. And he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. [And] he answered and said, I will not. But afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, I will serve, and went not. Which of those two did the will of [the] father? They [said] unto him, The first. Jesus said unto them, Truly I say unto you that the publicans

and the harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before you; for John came unto you in the way of righteousness and bore record of me and you believed him not, but the publicans and the harlots believed him. And you, afterward, when you had seen me, repented not, that you might believe him; for he that believed not John concerning me cannot believe me, except he first repent. And except you repent, the preaching of John shall condemn you in the day of judgment. (Matthew 10:11 RE)

You know, it's just like that continuously. The words that John spoke need to be separated from the demeanor that John presented and the physical attributes of the man. It always should be limited to an evaluation of whether or not it leads to repentance, belief in God, and righteousness; whether or not it convicts you in your heart that there's something amiss with you—because all of us have things that are amiss within us. And that (and repenting of that) is where we come in contact with the Almighty. It's in the struggle to leave behind the weight of those things that Christ explains, "Take upon ~~me~~ [you] my yoke, because the burden is easy, and the work is light." Laying down your sins may seem like an impossible achievement and difficult to be routed out, but on the other side of repentance, what you find is the load has been lightened, and your life is better, and things are seen more clearly, and you can distinguish between truth and error in an increasingly obvious way—because as light increases, darkness becomes discernible. The "light that shone in the darkness and the darkness comprehended it not" **is the Son of God**. And so, accept the light, receive the light, let it cleanse what's amiss within you, and see if climbing on that upward journey doesn't improve the distance that you can see and the vistas that you behold because light illuminates and comprehension increases.

Oh, I'm gonna go ahead and say (on this initial part) that I'm gonna conclude.

I told them before we began that I would be willing to answer some questions—but not from people that I recognize that I've seen before [laughter] (because you're gonna ask questions about things that are off this topic or esoteric or less meaningful for the real people that we wanted to do this for this evening). So, did you gather some questions?

Todd Cella (Question 1): Yeah, we had one come in earlier, just regarding the hierarchy of the faith/the group?

DS: Yeah, if I had a board I would draw you the hierarchy. There is a... There's an absolute hierarchy...

[Amberli gets up to get a whiteboard] Oh, we don't need one. I can do this.

There's an absolute hierarchy. And you... I'll try and make it simple so you can commit it to memory. There is God the Father and Jesus Christ [at the top of the hierarchy]. Then there's **everyone** else [on the next rung down]. And then I'm below them, doing my best to try and elevate others—and accountable for how poor a job I'm doing. But that's the hierarchy.

Yeah, is that it? So we're done with questions?

TC: You're done with questions? Are you done?

DS: No, do not have any more questions?

TC (Question 2): There is a question regarding righteousness, if you could discuss: Is it possible... For example, Jonah was righteous but disobedient to a personal commandment he received from the Lord, and we all have personal commandments we're receiving from the Lord, and is it possible you can be numbered amongst the people of Christ while disobeying whether it's a commandment to forgive a sibling or keep a journal?

DS: Keep a journal... [chuckling]. Yeah, I'm fairly certain there will be enormous numbers of people who are kept out of the kingdom of Heaven for the want of a journal. [laughter]

You know, you can give tithe of mint and anise but leave out the weightier matters of law. And look: We've got nine kids, and sibling tensions come and go, rise and fall, and are inevitable. We have two granddaughters that are old enough now to occupy space and do things. And if the younger of the two infringes upon a toy that the older of the two feels possessive about, she'll go knock her down and take it away and go her way happily. And of course, they're beneath the age of accountability. And so, I mean, yeah—Jesus suffered for that too. And they seem to be aggressive about pouring it on our poor Lord.

Look, there's an inevitability in our own shortcomings—all of us, continuously. And there were, actually, four talks... There were two get-togethers called "Understanding Your Soul," where both my wife and I spoke about, you know, what comprises you. You are captured, and you are inside a body of dust that will be unoccupied at death, but it's being occupied by you right now. This body—this physical body—has its own agenda. It wants to eat; it wants to sleep; it wants to reproduce—because the body senses its own inevitable decline and death. There are natural appetites that attach to this. And then there's a spirit inside of you that seeks to do good and would like to be holy. But we get preoccupied with the desires, appetites, and passions of the flesh.

Well, what that means is that inside you, there is a lot of "junk thought" that goes on. But that's what the body is doing. You're never going to overcome those fits of anger, those lapses. What you need to do is to recognize that that's not you and that you are eternal, you're better than that, and that you're here experiencing this temporarily, but that eventually, if you live long enough, all those passions are gonna fade, all those physical abilities are going to wear down. And it doesn't matter if you're an Olympic athlete, eventually...

(Boy, I just have to... I have a sense of humor that gets me in trouble more often than not.)

What I was gonna say: You could be a decathlon winner on a Wheaties box, but that doesn't mean you're not gonna wind up wearing heels and a dress later [laughter].

Yeah, look: Edit that out, whoever's...

TC: Does anyone else have any questions? If not, we will...

Amberli Peterson (Question 3): This is... Just to go to the heart of this, so really, at the end of the day, what you're saying is righteousness can be defined in the most simple terms as hearing the voice of the Shepherd, the voice of the Son, hearing that voice, heeding it, and repenting.

DS: Yeah, no matter where that voice comes from. The Lord can choose any number of ways to get His message across. And even if the *messenger* appears not to be ideal... I can almost guarantee you, however, that the only ones who are going to occupy the chief seats (once the chief seats become enviable) are going to be the publicans and the sinners. Because if the chief seats don't confer upon you wealth and power and status and recognition, if instead what the chief seats give to you is sacrifice and difficulty and derision and insults, then the chief seats are only gonna have gravitating to them the people who are in it for themselves.

I remember when the LDS Church was insulted and mocked and ridiculed (and it really wasn't that long ago). And the LDS Church has become increasingly more socially-acceptable/recognized as a good institution; they've become more popular! But the increase in their popularity has corresponded with a decrease in the spiritual power and the authenticity of their teachings in almost a one-for-one comparison.

If you go back to the moment when I listened to the LDS missionaries, my initial contact with a Mormon missionary outreach—he was in the military with me, at the time—came as a result of a night-school visiting professor attacking—gratuitously—the Mormon Church in Salt Lake City. It just came right out of the blue. It sounded weird. I mean, I had lived in Idaho, so I knew what the Mormon Church in Salt Lake City was, but to me, the attack just seemed like, “Where did *that* come from?” And Steve Claproth raised his hand and took on Cal Colby (the professor) and defended the church and stood up for it. And I made the mistake of telling Steve afterwards that I thought he was effective, and he got the better of the professor, and “Good on ya!” It didn't mean I was interested in his Mormon heresy, but he mistook that because it was such slim pickings in New Hampshire that I became the golden contact. So the pamphleteers and the flannel board presentations ensued.

Yeah? Yeah?

Justin Griffin (Question 4): So how many people would you say in the world today would be considered righteous? If that's impossible to answer, how many people would you say you know personally that you would consider righteous?

DS: Fortunately, I don't really have to assume the responsibility of determining the one from the other. And I really can't say. But I believe that there are those who are true and faithful to the traditions that they're raised in that are good, and that (as the Book of Mormon puts it) God has given to all nations, of their own tongue, such truth as He, in His wisdom—actually, it's not the masculine pronoun; that's missing; it's “in wisdom”—that is appropriate for the respective groups.

I have been reflecting on the Buddhist tradition, where one of the very first Buddhist principles is that “suffering is inevitable,” and that fighting or resisting suffering leads only to misery, and that the best way to escape the misery of suffering is simply to accept it as

inevitable and to live accordingly. It's like the dog that my son had who got cancer and had to have a leg amputated. And after the amputation, you could not tell the difference between the attitude of his dog on three legs versus the attitude of his dog before cancer required the removal of her leg. She accepted it, and it was of no consequence. She moved on and lived life with such joy as she was able to live with in that circumstance.

Contrariwise, unlike the founder of Buddhism, the founder of Christianity was a miracle worker who healed and who relieved the suffering and cured the blindness and took care of people. And in that legacy, Christians are never satisfied with suffering. They plead; they beg; they implore; they do not accept. They want the miracle worker to work a miracle. But not every leper was healed by the Lord. And there were whole communities that He visited in which He could do no miracle because none of them believed. There were still blind people in Judea after the crucifixion of the Lord. There were still lepers within eyesight of the boundary of the city. Not everyone got healed. But everyone who believed and who repented was saved.

And so, I don't know what turmoil has gone on in the lives of people who hear a message of salvation and who seek to repent. And I don't know what internal struggles they have to face—because all of us have individual challenges and difficulties. We might be amazed at what some people have overcome as a consequence of their faith in Christ, but we may look upon their outward appearance and their lives and say, "That's still a sinful man," because we don't behold the struggle. But the Lord does. And He knows who He numbers as His sheep. And I can tell you that if you hear His voice when it originates from Him, that you are getting close to the kingdom of God.

In a very real sense, the salvation of mankind is not going to reach the same kind of fullness as we had on the earth during those first ten generations until after the Restoration itself has been completed. And for some of what has to take place, the only way to accomplish it is outside of the view of the world, inside of a sacred precinct that has been consecrated to and accepted by the Lord, where He can come and visit and restore again that which was lost. That was attempted and failed in the 1841-1844 timeframe. And we're still awaiting a command to build a house for the Lord in this generation. But I believe the command is going to come. And if it does, then we'll act accordingly. The Lord is the only one in charge, and none of us are. So...

Yeah?

Question 5: Yeah, so I understand the purpose of someone like Joseph Smith, the servant of the Bridegroom, who had a very specific calling to help restore the gospel and invite the Savior back in. But the rest of us, it seems like, perhaps we don't need to go around looking for someone to tell us what to do or trying to hear the voice of the Lord. Maybe we should just go directly to the Lord. Should we have/would it be better to have a personal relationship with the Lord than try to find someone to speak for the Lord?

DS: It would be better. It always would be better. The problem that you have, though, is that Jesus told Mary one thing, and Jesus told Martha another thing, and Jesus told Brianna another thing, and Jesus told Brooke another thing, and Jesus told... And so it's almost

always the pattern that the Lord will focus attention—in bringing about His work—into some trusted and proven and reliable hands in order to accomplish what He has in mind.

The road to finishing up the work of the Restoration is going to require a remarkable number of things to be accomplished: from constructing a house to fabricating implements to laying out (in ceremonial form) authorized covenant-making, in which the redemption of mankind and the revelation of all things from before the world was until the end of His work in this cycle of creation have to be put together in an ordered fashion.

For such things, no committee can be assembled. For such things, no voting is even appropriate. For accomplishing the things that God commands, it requires something more than just a tuned ear. It requires people willing to endure all of the false accusations and nonsense and all of the unwanted and foolish praise and all of the suggestions of ambition that aren't there and all of the misunderstanding and cloud of nonsense that attends every step of the way! It requires something that *rarely* appears on this earth—and when it does, it comes encumbered with so much that is undesirable that only a fool would stand up and say, “I, I! Me, me!” For the life of me, even after the angel had purged the lips of Isaiah, I don't understand why Isaiah said, “Here I am, Lord. Send me,” unless, of course, he was just as naive as I once was when I thought I could take on anything. I've learned better since then. I don't know if I'd say the same thing or give the same answer today. But that's of no consequence.

I think it would be better if everyone were to go to God and to be a prophet. But God appeared to Saul and renamed him Paul on the road to Damascus. And the Lord commissioned Peter as the chief apostle. And the two of them butted heads. And Paul talked about how he “withstood Peter to his face” in one of his letters. (I mean, the audience to whom Paul was writing probably thought that was a real plus!) But again, they went their separate ways, and the Pauline church and the Petrine church were markedly different because of different emphasis that they put upon their view of the Lord.

But if you're trying to reel it back in and bring it back into a singularity, look: In that first beginning, Adam presided until Adam died. And he *was* the presiding patriarch—and Eve, too, the presiding matriarch—until they were taken. And it went down through that lineage. And so, yeah, it would be better. It hasn't happened. I don't expect that it will happen. I expect everyone can pray to God and get answers. And I expect everyone to be able to hear the voice of God. And I expect everyone who repents of their sins and who comes unto the Lord will know that He is with them and that He will not leave you comfortless. I expect everyone has access to the Lord.

But in terms of accomplishing the things that need to be done, if it's not accomplished in an orderly fashion—the same kind of pattern that has always been followed by the Lord, dispensation after dispensation—then I don't think that we're ever gonna arrive where we need to arrive.

Yeah?

AP (Question 6): One more question. Just, again, pulling all this together with... What advice would you give to all here as we see things around us in this world of the stranger's

voice (you talked about the Shepherd's voice and then the stranger's voice)? What are ways, as you've seen things out there, are ways to decipher these strangers' voices? They sound so good; they sound so popular—however you want to say that. How do you... What's a good way to really discern?

DS: I think that people who are trying to make themselves the center of attention—not because they have something substantive to say but because they're eager to get out there and to accomplish something on their own errand... I mean, I got invited here; I got asked to talk, and I'm happy to respond to the invitation. I've spoken at conferences, but I've never organized a conference. I gave a series of ten talks in which I rented the places; after I'd given a few, there were others who rented them as a courtesy to me, but no one paid me to go there. No one... We spend a lot of money ~~to~~ renting venues and going out and giving talks.

People who sacrifice are a little different than people who are trying to earn a living or earn their keep. King Benjamin gave a talk, and then afterwards, he returned to his labors because one of the points he made in his talk was that he didn't suffer the people to labor on his behalf to support him. I think there are a lot of people who are trying to profit off of ministry. And I would wonder about that.

Let me clarify one thing that kind of irritates me, though. If anyone has ever written a book and gotten a book into print, I can tell you that *writing* a book is about 30% of the effort. After a book is written, the process that's involved in order to get the book into print is about 70% of the effort. And make no mistake about it: It is work! The first books that I wrote, I had a list of demands:

- I wouldn't do any public signings.
- I didn't want them advertised.
- I would not appear anywhere to promote them.

And they were willing to do that. I had to pay for the editing; I had to pay for the cover art; I had to pay for everything that went into getting it into print. And so, to get a book into print, I went into debt—well, I spent my own money; I didn't borrow money to do it—thousands and thousands of dollars in order to get books into print. And it took *years* to recoup the money that was spent getting the book into print. But by the time I'd recouped enough money to pay for the book that got into print, I'd already gotten another book out and another book out and another book out. And so, it's really...

And by the way, the audience for Mormon books (doctrinal)... The universe market for that is tiny. And if you're an excommunicated writer, the universe gets even smaller. And if you've got other people out there who are denouncing you on the Internet (because they are high and holy and "spiritual," and they got their own view of how things ought to be), the market becomes sliver-thin. But charging to publish a book, I don't care who you are, if you write a book and you get it into print, you're entitled to recoup something for your effort. I think that's one criteria.

Another would be: How much attention is drawn to the Lord and what the Lord is up to and to fulfilling and doing the work that was always on His mind to be accomplished in the final

generation, and how much of it is just interesting, plowing the same field with nothing new to be added? If there's nothing new to be added, it's just insight based upon another man's work. And it's not... As Joseph said, he was "always bringing some new thing to the attention of the saints."

One of the markers would be: Does light and truth emanate? And does it emanate in a fashion in which something is **self-evident** as soon as you hear it, **demonstrably true** the instant that you get ahold of it but had never yet entered into the heart of man beforehand?

You know, the purpose of the ten talks was to say, "Look at what the Restoration was originally designed to include." And there's things in the ten talks that you could read a hundred times, and you would still be surprised at what's there. And that was the Lord's doing, not mine. And I didn't feel comfortable in that process, and I learned of my excommunication on the drive to Boise to give the first talk. And I paid a price.

When I became a member of the LDS Church, I lost all my childhood friends who, in a polarized, southern Idaho community, Mormons weren't well thought of, and the friends I had retained from back then thought it was crazy. When I got excommunicated, my universe of friends was essentially the LDS community in which I was then serving.

Do they pay a price for what they believe? Normally, people are unwilling to sacrifice things that matter to them, particularly things that matter greatly to them. And yet the Lord requires someone to sacrifice and be willing to sacrifice all things if they're really going to be on His errand.

Even now, today, I hate when my children go on the Internet and search my name. I hate the things that are out there. And I don't respond to them. And I don't defend myself. But my children know who I am. The problem is that my children pay a price because their friends search their father's name.

Anyway, there are a lot of poignant stories I could tell you about that sort of thing. But generally, one of the hallmarks of representing the Lord genuinely is the need for sacrifice.

Okay, the time is far spent, and Todd needs to go shave! [laughter] So we're gonna go ahead and wrap...

Audience Member: Thank you for coming tonight.

DS: Yeah, we're gonna go ahead and wrap it up. And I think Jeremy Hoop's interpretation of Wilford Woodruff in "The Great Apostasy" (showing now on lds.org) is a worthwhile view; touched my heart to see that. I texted him after I watched that video today, and I said, "Did you really go get baptized in ice water?" He said, "Yes, I did, but I was wearing a wetsuit." So his level of sacrifice was diminished considerably by the... [laughter].

Anyway, let me end by bearing testimony to you that God is actually up to something right now, and the Restoration is actually continuing, and it will continue until it has been consummated in the restoration of all things that God anticipated doing from the very beginning and that Adam himself prophesied would take place before the end.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.