

Podcast Episode 4: Contradicting Joseph

QUESTION: Can the words of a modern or current Prophet or Church President supersede or contradict the words of a previous prophet, in particular Joseph Smith?

DENVER: Joseph's doctrines, teachings, revelations and council was supposed to be kept and hearkened to by the church. In the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, section 41 [actually 14], it says *"Ye have received a commandment for a law unto my church, through him whom I have appointed unto you, to receive commandments and revelations from my hand,"* [D&C 14:1, 1835 ed.] making it clear that when we get something from Joseph we, as a church, were directed by the Lord, to respect what it was that came through him.

In section 32:2 [actually 32:3, 1835 ed.] it says, *"I have entrusted unto you, my servant Joseph, for a wise purpose in me, and it shall be made known unto future generations; but this generation shall have my word through you."* Don't read the word "generation" in that context narrowly, because the word "generation" has sometimes varying meanings. And the safe meaning in that context of that statement to Joseph, includes all those who live after the day that Joseph came and Joseph bore testimony. Therefore, it would include you.

In section 46:1-3 [1835 ed.] it says, *"Behold there shall be a record kept among you, and in it thou,"* (meaning Joseph), *"thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, and elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ..."* [46:1] *Wherefore, meaning the church, thou* (the church, you folks), *"shall give heed unto all his"* (singular, personal pronoun "his", meaning "Joseph") *"words, and commandments, which he"* (singular, personal pronoun) *"shall give unto you, as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before Him [me]: For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, and all patience and faith; for by doing these things, the gates of hell shall not prevail against you"* [46:2]. "Shall not prevail against you" provided you give heed to *his* words. Not mine, not another man's. The bastian established by the Lord that is the rock upon which the winds and the rains can beat without causing any harm to the foundation, is the rock of revelation given to us, in this generation, through the prophet Joseph Smith. Everything else turns to sand.

"For thus saith the Lord God, him" (singular, personal pronoun, referring to the individual man, the prophet Joseph Smith-- "Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah," indeed-- him) *"have I inspired to move the cause of Zion in mighty power for good; And his diligence I know, and his prayers I have heard: yea, his weeping for Zion I have seen, and I will cause that he shall mourn for her no longer, for his days of rejoicing are come unto the remission of his sins,*

and the manifestations of my blessings upon his works” [46:2]. It doesn’t promise Joseph Zion. It doesn’t promise him anything of the sort. It promises him rejoicing because his sins are remitted. His sins, not ours. Because at this point-- this is 1835. By 1832 the church was already under condemnation. But Joseph was not. His sins are remitted and that will cause Joseph to rejoice. “They shall believe on his words, which are given him through me, by the Comforter, which manifesteth that Jesus was crucified by sinful men for the sins of the world” [46:3].

So as I read the edition of the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, sections 14, 32, 46 of that volume, it becomes abundantly apparent that to the extent that the church was a true and living church, it was a true and living church because God owned the words that came through Joseph. And God vouched for the words that came through Joseph. And God cautioned them, and us, about ignoring the words that come through the prophet Joseph Smith.

Section 51:2 [1835 ed.], *“No one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church, excepting my servant Joseph Smith, jr. for he receiveth them as Moses; and thou shalt be obedient unto the things which I shall give unto him” [sic].*

Section 84 (again this is the 1835 edition), section 84:2-- this is a revelation given in March of 1833 in which Joseph Smith was called by the Lord, and the words quoting “my son.” *“Verily I say unto you”* (again, personal, individual pronoun identifying an individual by the name of Joseph Smith), *“Verily I say unto you, the keys of this kingdom shall never be taken from you, while thou art in the world, neither in the world to come: nevertheless through you shall the oracles be given to another; yea, even unto the church. And all they who receive the oracles of God, let them beware how they hold them, lest they are accounted as a light thing, and are brought under condemnation thereby, and stumble and fall.”*

What is the definition of oracles? Is the definition of oracles a transient, changing with every whim program that can shift from day to day and person to person, or are the oracles the documents, the commandments, the revelations, the words that are contained in what Joseph Smith handed to us in the *Book of Mormon*, in the revelations given through him?

Be careful about how you interpret the scriptures. Be careful about how flexible you think an unchanging God will be. Be careful about that God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever being so whimsically different that on one day one thing can be asked of you and on another something altogether different can be asked of you. And to the extent that you detect a varying, shifting sand beneath your feet, ask yourself why that is so. And ask yourself, “Where might I go to find the rock upon which to establish my feet that the winds and the rains might not mow me down?” Because God vouched for Joseph Smith. And God vouched for those things committed to you, through him.

Would to God we all took that more seriously and recognize that if there is a prophet whose words we need to give heed to, it begins with the primacy of Joseph Smith, and that all other things, all other revelations, all of your attitudes, all of your notions-- everything ought to be measured against what we receive through him. God vouched for his words. I vouch for his words. I know he was a prophet of God. The extent to which my knowledge of Joseph runs, allows me to say, I know that man has stood in the presence of God. And I know that God has and does vouch for him, still, today.

And if no one else will say it, I'll declare it to you. If you ignore Joseph's words, you ignore it at your peril. And if you allow any man, or men, if you allow any committee, any institution or organization to claim that they have the right to alter, neglect or discard the words of revelation given by God through the prophet Joseph Smith, they will damn you if you listen to them. And they will surely be damned for doing so, because no one has the right to do that.

God's work is the same yesterday, today and forever. And those who would like to throw you about by every whim of doctrine are teaching you merely the commandments of men as if they were doctrine. And they aren't.

When God speaks through Joseph and we forget him, then we have no right to expect, collectively, that he's going to move anything forward for us. The first order of repentance is to remember what God gave to us through Joseph. You do that and then you'll find God's perfectly willing to pick it up and move it forward. You don't do that, and God will simply wait for you to get around to discharge the duty that's devolving upon you.

God vouched for Joseph Smith. God spoke through him. And I don't have the right to move one of his words. But I do have the right to listen to him, to follow what came through him, and to lay hold upon the blessings that were promised as a consequence of remembering him. Because to remember the words of Joseph is to remember your Lord. Remember Him. And don't let anyone tell you that they hold some authority that allows them to neglect, change, discard, veto, forget, or contradict what God told you through the voice of a prophet.

Joseph declared, "Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world and the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on the same principles" [TPJS, p. 308]. The first question this raises is whether Joseph contradicted himself by changing things. The only way to reconcile the many changes he instituted is to take note that he made only additive expansions, finishing and recovering the ordinances instituted in the heavens. He was transmitting what came from above to believers, and it came incrementally. Joseph's changes never took away from the ordinances, but frequently expanded on what was here before.

Joseph never did anything with the ordinances instituted in the heavens, like the LDS church has done. The elimination of the christian minister from the endowment in 1990, along with the abandonment of the penalties from the ceremony at the same time, were purely deductive. Joseph never did anything like that. Likewise, LDS washings and anointings were changed in 2011 to eliminate actual washing and actual anointing, replacing them with simply symbolic references. That was yet another deductive deviation from the ordinances instituted in the heavens. It violated Joseph's principle that they are not to be altered or changed. The original mormonism may have added, but it respected what was previously revealed.

“Behold, I am Alpha and Omega, even Jesus Christ. Wherefore, let all men beware how they take my name in their lips-- for behold, verily I say, that many there be who are under this condemnation, who use the name of the Lord, and use it in vain, having not authority” [D&C 63: 60-62]. And how do you know if someone speaks with authority? How do you know that Joseph is writing a testimony that is authoritative? How do we know if anyone opens their mouth and they speak and God has approved the message that they are delivering?

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

So then we get to the answer to the question about how you know whether Joseph is telling us the truth. *“Verily, I say unto you,”* (verse 5) *“woe shall come unto the inhabitants of the earth if they will not hearken unto my words.”* This is Christ owning the words. It's not Joseph. *“For hereafter you shall be ordained to go forth and deliver my words unto the children of men. Behold, if they will not believe my words, they would not believe you, my servant Joseph, if it were possible that you should show all these things which I have committed unto you”* [D&C 5:5-7]. God owns the words. You wouldn't believe the rest of it if you won't believe what's authorized to be spoken. Joseph confined himself to delivering what Christ wanted delivered and

it was up to those who heard to choose. And if they recognized the Master's voice then they received the message from Him.

“Behold verily I say unto you,” -- oh wait, I left out 8: *“Oh, this unbelieving and stiffnecked generation—mine anger is kindled against them. Behold, verily I say unto you, I have reserved those things which I entrusted unto you, my servant Joseph, for a wise purpose in me, and it shall be made known unto future generations; But this generation shall have my word through you”* [D&C 5:8-9]. Well, in another place, oh heck we might as well get that out...

This is also the letter from Liberty Jail. Section 122:2 *“The pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand.”* This is the Lord's word to Joseph Smith about those who are wise, those who are noble, those who are virtuous. Those are the ones who are going to seek council and authority and blessings under the hand of Joseph. And that is as true at this moment as it was then.

How, then, do we, today, receive blessings under the hand of Joseph? Well if you look at the use of the word “hand,” almost invariably it is associated with the words we find in scriptures-- the book of Abraham (“under the hand of Abraham”), the book of Mormon (“under the hand of Mormon”). The hand of Joseph is still the hand we ought to be looking at, if we want to know what God's word was for our generation.

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