

Podcast Episode 31: Priestcraft

QUESTION: What is priestcraft? Does it exist today? And how can we avoid it?

DENVER: Turn to 2 Nephi, chapter 10, beginning at verse 11: *“And this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles. And I will fortify this land against all other nations. And he that fighteth against Zion shall perish, saith God. For he that raiseth up a king against me shall perish, for I, the Lord, the king of heaven, will be their king, and I will be a light unto them forever, that hear my words.”*

We, if we’re gonna have Zion, must reject even the idea of a king. I know that embedded in the doctrine of the restoration is the notion that we’re going to become “Kings and Queens, Priests and Priestesses.” I want to suggest to you when Christ said, *“My kingdom is not of this world”* (John 18:36), and He girt himself with a towel, and He knelt down, and He washed the feet of those that He was ministering to, that implicit within that is the kind of conduct that the real King (and those who are His kings and priests) put on display. If He said, “My kingdom is not of this world”—here He came merely to be a servant—how much more should we, gratefully, look at the opportunity to kneel and to serve, rather than to say, “I want the chief seats,” rather than say, “I want to be upheld and sustained and lauded and praised. And if you can, would you mind throwing a big musical celebration my next birthday?”

Christ is our only King, and His kingdom is not of this world. He said: *“If I...have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example....The servant is not greater than his lord.”* That is John 13, verses 14 and 16.

The twin of kingship is priestcraft. In 2 Nephi 26:29 (by the way, the denunciation of kingship came from the same prophet who denounces priestcraft—he hit them both)—2 Nephi 26:29: *“He commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion.”*

The twin of kingship is priestcraft, and the purpose of priestcraft is to “set themselves up...that they may get gain.” It's not that they set themselves up “for a light unto the world,” but they “set themselves up for a light into the world *that they may get gain.*”

We have enough gentile leaders. We have a good enough church (or churches) already. When those churches err, they suffer the consequences of doing so. We do not need another church (or churches). We do not need a king. We do not need more priestcraft.

Institutional forms of Mormonism want to claim that God has finished His work for our day and has given His authority to a select group of professional clergy. Their jealousy and envy keep them out of the kingdom, and those under their control are prevented from entering in.

The greatness of Mormonism has not been realized in any of its past, and those who have managed to profit from organizing institutions, based on its mere beginning, are threatened by the idea that there is yet much more to be added.

Mormonism has been a dismal underachiever. Its most wealthy sect is riddled with errors, controlled by an oligarchy of priestcraft jealous of their power, wealth, and influence. It has a criminal past, an unstable present, and an insecure future. That empire is diversifying its portfolio into land development, banking, and business enterprises to replace the now diminishing tithe cash stream upon which the empire was built.

The some 100+ corporations that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints now is comprised of is no accident. When the saints moved westward from Nauvoo, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago was signed on Feb 2, 1848, which conveyed to the United States the present day states of California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, most of Arizona and Colorado, parts of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Wyoming, over which there was simply no law.

In a vacuum, which is where the Church found itself, the Church began to license timber. The Church began to give deeds. The Church began to assume authority over water. And this was a necessary civilizing step to be taken, otherwise people could not have the confidence to go forward and do anything. Therefore, the Church became the center of property; the Church became the center of government; and the Church became, by necessity, the entity through which all of the territory got organized. How thorough that organization became and was dependant upon the Church can be determined from where the Salt Lake base and meridian is located, in order to determine by metes and bounds, where all of the property of you people who live in Utah is reckoned from. It's the Salt Lake base and meridian, and if you go to Temple Square, you will find the marker there that was set by the coordinates determined by Orson Pratt, when he set it in 1855. But he did it based upon where Brigham Young set his cane down and said, "This is the place." That defined Temple Square. We have a legacy that created the legal environment that begins with the western migration.

Well, on July 10th of 2015, the Church announced that it was going to develop (on 133,000 acres in Florida) a new development that would include buildings to house 500,000 new residents. To give you an idea of how big that project will be—it would require you to take all of the populations of Salt Lake City, West Valley City, Provo, and West Jordan together, in order to come up with residential housing for 500,000 people. It's not housing alone, because these people need gas stations; these people need sewer systems. These people need everything that goes on in order to have that many communities.

Think of the engineering and development, think of the building and housing, think of all of the opportunities for commerce, employment, school, church—think of everything that would be required in order to establish, right now from scratch, enough development to fit in Layton, St. George, Ogden, Sandy, Orem, and West Jordan, and you have some idea of the scope of what this development in Florida is going to entail.

The youngest member of the current Quorum of the Twelve is a year older than me. He will not live—he will not live to see this project through to completion. Do not think for one moment that the development of property by an owner is simply a discharge of responsibility to architects and engineers, because there are numerous decisions that have to be made all along the program in order to turn ground into a development. I know because, as a lawyer, I've done a great deal of that.

Take, for example, just the engineering issues that are involved in sewer systems. The state of Florida is overwhelmingly below 60 foot in elevation above sea level, and it is essentially flat. If you're going to develop a sewer system for a half a million people's residences, businesses, and everything else, you're going to have to make a lot of engineering decisions along the way. There is no architect, there is no engineer that's going to assume that responsibility. They're going to require the owner to assume the responsibility and to answer all the questions, which means you're going to be babysitting a development for the next 50-65 years in order to see it through to completion.

Now as an example of how decisions made early-on occupy the attention of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, I want to read you (from some minutes in January of 1891) a meeting of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. It's held at the Guardo House, because the temple would not be completed until 1893. Between the time of it beginning and time of the temple being completed, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve met at the Guardo House.

These are minutes taken by one of the members of the Twelve, Abraham Cannon:

“January 23, 1891, 11am. At this hour I went to a special quorum meeting at the Guardo house. Present, Wilford Woodruff, George Cannon, Joseph F. Smith, Lorenzo Snow, Franklin D. Richards, Franklin M. Liven, John Henry Smith, Heber J. Grant, and myself. The question of the sugar industry was discussed and each expressed his view of the matter. Pres. Woodruff was very anxious to see it established and felt it was a matter which should interest and engage the attention of all. Joseph F. Smith felt that a success should be made of this labor because of the evil results which would follow of failure of our endeavor.”

And then they go on from there, ultimately deciding (and in light of the hour, I'll spare you those minutes)—ultimately deciding to go forward with it in part because one of the large gentiles in the valley predicted the Church would fail in it, and the Church didn't want him to be vindicated, so they decided they were going to get into the sugar industry.

Now if you go forward 40 years later, the decision to start the sugar industry comes back in minutes that I take from the diary of Heber J. Grant on December the 23rd of 1930:

“George said he thought it would be a mistake...”—(this is George Spencer)—“George said he thought it would be a mistake for Orville Adams or myself to go on the sugar board. It would create comment that it might yet be favorable to the banks. And Brother Ivans seemed to agree with him. I said that it is a church institution, and we must save it. Brother Ivins said he was opposed absolutely to the church attempting to save it, that it is not a church institution. I disagreed absolutely with him in my feelings. It is more of a church institution, almost, than the two banks. And should anything happen to it, it would affect the banks ten times more than anything else that could happen. Because the church originally called people practically on a mission to invest in it. I delivered a letter signed by the presidency of the church asking for investments. It is looked upon as a church institution. The church owns 72.5% of the preferred stock, and if we do not protect it, it will weaken the credit of the church all over the United States in my judgement.

We were jeopardizing not only a great institution but the credit of the church if anything happened to the sugar company, as it would injure the three banks in which the church is interested—Utah State National, Zions Saving Bank, and Utah Savings and Trust Company—ten times more than if they were to put up a lot of money and actually sustain a loss.”

So now in order to protect the credit of the Church and the banking institutions, the sugar enterprise that was undertaken needed to be bailed out and needed to be supported. But that's not all. The issue of sugar and the sugar industry affected even General Conference talks. Okay?

This is on April the 5th of 1932:

“Brother Lorenzo Elggren called and made an appeal to me—as he is representing a big candy company—that in my conference talk....” This is the church president’s proposed conference talk. “...that in my conference talk I do not discriminate against the candy people. He told how many carloads of beet sugar they thought they bought for candy and that McDonalds and Sweets used a lot of cane sugar. That the company he represents is four or five times as big as both of them and has never bought anything but beet sugar, thus sustaining home industry. I told him I would forget to make a strong appeal for home manufacturing, although I said, ‘You know, brother Elggren, it would really be better for the people if you could not sell any candy here because it would furnish that much more employment.’”

So he dropped out of his General Conference address anything that related to the sugar industry and home industry.

Well, if you think that the meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve involve something that you believe Jesus would want to attend...

President Woodruff—this is on April the 3rd of 1899. These are minutes from the secretary of the First Presidency, L. John Nuttall:

“President Woodruff called up the misunderstanding between Brother Moses Thatcher and George Q. Cannon on the Bullion Beck and Champion Mining Company matters which he wished to have settled. I read all the correspondence between the parties and Pres. Woodruff since this affair was brought up by Brother Moses Thatcher on December 3 of 1888, after which the brethren spoke, Brother Cannon having submitted a very fair proposition for settlement. Brother Thatcher was very persist in his views. The matter was left over to give Brother Thatcher time to examine Brother Cannon’s position. Each of them expressed themselves as not having any feeling against each other so strong but what they can attend to the general business before the council.”

Well, as you go through the minutes of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, what you learn is that that corporate enterprise that the Church has found itself owning, owns the Church. You can’t have a multi-billion dollar business enterprise and neglect it. Those 105+ corporations demand attention, and they receive attention.

This is a Thursday meeting in the temple on December 28 of 1893:

“In the afternoon was at the temple until 5 o’clock. There were present at the meeting all of the presidency and Brothers Lorenzo Snow, Franklin D. Richards, Francis M. Lyman, Heber J. Grant, and myself. George Gibbs was clerk. The matter of purchasing the coal mine in Iron County and the constructing of the railroad to the pacific coast was next considered. Father made a statement of his labors in the East recently and said it was proposed by the manufacturers of the rails and so on that the church endorsed the bonds of the proposed road, in which case they will bring 30% more in their sale than if they were placed on the market unendorsed. The proposed coal mine purchase is a mine owned by Wooden Jensen near Cedar City, in which contains an inexhaustible quantity of coal. The price proposed is \$32,000 for a section of coal, but it is believed that a little reduction can be got on this figure. The whole matter was fully discussed, but it was becoming late. We adjourned until tomorrow. The next day, all were in attendance today who were here yesterday. It was decided that the presidency be authorized to take all necessary steps to carry the project through to successful completion, whether this means the using of church funds for this purpose or the endorsing of the bonds so as to place them on the market and obtain the highest price for them.”

The business of the Church is business. The ownership of the kingdom requires that the kingdom be maintained. And if your kingdom is of this world, then the worldly concerns related to your kingdom necessarily require your attention.

At the end of the day, one of the product lines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which is owned by the Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—one of the product lines is the religion called Mormonism. That religion can underperform and not produce the revenue stream in tithing that you would like it to see. That’s a good revenue stream, because from it all revenue is untaxed. The way to stimulate that revenue stream is to get out in general conference and to talk about the necessity for increase in the performance of the part of the product line. But if it underperforms consistently you can always diversify by investing in and improving, well for example, a mega-mall and a condo project, an office and retail space in Salt Lake City in City Creek or in Philadelphia, as they decided to do, or a massive project like the one that is currently done in Florida. But when you undertake those projects, it’s going to require the continual babysitting by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. It’s going to occupy, as it has for nearly two centuries, the meetings that are held in the Thursday get-together of the Brethren.

You could get a group together, and you could unanimously vote out all of the leadership of the Church, and Thomas S. Monson could lock all of the chapel buildings and lock all of the temples and say, “Okay, go ahead. But I own it all.” He would own everything. There would be nothing

that Mormons would take ownership of themselves—but they couldn't even use the name “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” because it is a mark that is owned by the Corporation of the President. There is one owner, there is one member, and he owns everything. And it is always the senior most member of the Quorum of the Twelve, and he owns everything. And it's not subject—the words are up there, you put them on the board—it's not subject to a vote or approval by anyone. If he's mentally unable to serve, then it moves on to the next who is senior most. They never dispossess him because of the ability to keep going. There's only one Mormon.

In the early Church everything was done through conferences. At every conference that was held, someone was elected by common consent to preside at the conference. Usually, if Joseph Smith was there, they elected him, but they could have elected anyone. If a conference invited everyone, it was called a general conference. If, instead of inviting everyone, it was for a specific area, then it was some kind of local conference. They'd elect someone, then that someone would conduct the business. It would all be done by common consent, and anyone that had any business could bring it up, and anyone that had any complaints or suggestions could bring it up, and if anyone needed to be disciplined they could bring it up. And the purpose of the conference was to take care of the business, to make sure that the community was cohesive, and that issues were dealt with.

They even used conferences to get revelation. One of the brethren early-on wanted to know whether or not he should go on a mission, moving to Missouri. And so the conference was called to address the issue, and everyone discussed it, and then they took a vote by common consent, and they unanimously decided on whether to go or not go or send him on a mission.

When Brigham Young was in control, all equality was destroyed, and the Church became an oligarchy run by the Twelve. This continues from Young until today. Now, the senior apostle automatically becomes the Church president—an unscriptural and unwise system for consolidating power. Equality among many has been replaced with the dictatorship of one.

Joseph cautioned the saints about violating God's trust. As he put it: “His word will go forth, in these last days, in purity; for if Zion will not purify herself, so as to be approved in all things, in His sight, He will seek another people; for His work will go on until Israel is gathered, and they who will not hear His voice, must expect to feel His wrath.” That's in “*Teachings [of the Prophet Joseph Smith]*”, page 18.

To the same effect, during the Mormon reformation, Heber C. Kimball said: “We receive this priesthood and power and authority—if we make a bad use of the priesthood do you not see that

the day will come that God will reckon with us, and he will take it from us and give it to those who will make better use of it.” That’s in the *Journal of Discourses*, Volume 6, page 125.

George Albert Smith said essentially the same thing; Brigham Young said essentially the same thing.

We should expect God’s house to be ordered around only one principle: repentance. When the pride of a great organization replaces repentance, the heavens withdraw, and when they do, amen to that portion of God’s house.

The restoration through Joseph Smith will always remain, even if God chooses to order it differently before His return. It is His to do with as He determines best. He’s now sent me as a witness.

The passing of Eldred Smith was a moment in time that reflects the cumulative effect of a lot of decisions—including and beginning with the initial overthrow of the government of the Church by the Twelve at the passing of Joseph and Hyrum, culminating in the final overthrow of the priesthood itself by the death of the discarded Eldred Smith, and the discontinuation of the authority that was supposed to have been kept in honorable remembrance from generation to generation. God will bestow that authority again, and it will go forward. But it will go forward without these organizational pretenders that amass wealth and practice priestcraft.

The Savior is extraordinarily positive. And when He speaks negatively, it’s at those moments that I want to pay particular attention and give some careful consideration. One of the spots in which—in 3 Nephi in His visit with the Nephites at Bountiful—He spoke quite negatively, He attributed the content of His pessimistic prophecy to the Father and noted that the reason why He was stating it was because the Father had told Him to.

This is in 3 Nephi 16:10, “*And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you...*” is how He prefaces His direful assessment of the latter-day gentiles. “*At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts...*” And then He goes on from there: “*...and shall reject, Behold, saith the Father...*” This is Christ attributing what the Father has told Him as the source for His message, “*...I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them.*”

In that list we all can make a self-assessment about a variety of things. But the fact that He included within the list of the defects of the last-day gentiles the word “priestcrafts” ought to

alarm every one of us. Because priestcraft, when it gets defined in the *Book of Mormon*, is something that I think all are tempted to engage in.

Peter was equally concerned, and in his First Epistle [5, verses 2-3] he wrote: *“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over the Lord's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”*

It is not appropriate that someone should collect money from the flock, nor “lord it over the flock.” Priestcraft is one of those toxic failures of the last-day gentiles that we have to guard against it appearing among us, as well.

Nephi wrote: *“For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up to get gain, and all those who are built up to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world, and to do all manner of iniquity; yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake; they are those who must be brought low in the dust; they are those who must be consumed as stubble; and this is according to the words of the prophet” (1 Nephi 22:23).*

Nephi supplies us with the definition of priestcraft: *“He commandeth that there shall be no priestcraft, for behold priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world that they may get gain and praise of the world, but they seek not the welfare of Zion” (2 Nephi 26:29).*

There is something so toxic about the practice of priestcraft that I want to flip the normal approach to this topic and not focus upon how we see it being practiced by others, but to use it rather as a check on what *we* do and how *we* approach the gospel of Christ. It is so toxic that if you engage in the practice of priestcraft—of setting yourself up to be the light, seeking yourself to become popular, seeking yourself to get gain and praise—that it interferes fundamentally with your ability to even be of service to the Lord.

Tithes ought not be used to support a man. Tithes ought be used to help the poor, and the weak, and the infirm. There is “enough and to spare,” according to the revelation given to Joseph Smith (D&C 104:17), but only if the purpose for which the tithes are paid are satisfied first—not to enrich men. I would dare not participate in a ministry in which service and sacrifice wasn't compelled. I wouldn't dare do that. There is a hardness associated with taking pay for what you do. There is an arrogance that sets you above the flock. It is better to pay than to receive tithes and offerings. It is better to give than to take.

We got an extensive warning—Moroni reflecting upon what the predicament of the gentiles would be in the last days, in Mormon chapter 8 (and this is Moroni who's talking), beginning at verse 32:

“Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be churches built up that shall say: Come unto me, and for your money you shall be forgiven of your sins. O ye wicked and perverse and stiffnecked people, why have ye built up churches unto yourselves to get gain? Why have ye transfigured the holy word of God, that ye might bring damnation upon your souls? Behold, look ye unto the revelations of God; for behold, the time cometh at that day when all these things must be fulfilled. Behold, the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you. Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing. And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts. For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted” (verses 32-37).

He makes no exception for some latter-day church. He makes no exception for some latter-day organization. There may be those who are the “humble followers of Christ” that are mentioned with some frequency in the *Book of Mormon*, but they're never mentioned in a congregational setting. They're never mentioned in an institutional setting. Nor is the gathering that is to take place in the last days ever an institutional gathering. Christ Himself said it would be “one of a city, two of a family.” He did not say “one of an institution.” There is no such thing, and the *Book of Mormon* preaches against it. And we are just as vulnerable to that misapprehension as are any other group of people.

It is our relationship to, and our connection with, God that matters. And you form that not through me or through some other man and not through the groups to which you belong. The groups to which you belong are a place to render service. They're a place where you can sacrifice to help others. And I don't care if that group is Methodist, Presbyterian, Latter-day Saint, or one of the fellowships that have been organized. That is of little consequence. You can be a Christian soul wherever you are, serving whoever you happen to be in contact with.

I'm going to talk about Zion. And Zion is going to be gathered. But the gathering of that group will not necessarily come exclusively from any party, group, denomination, or lineage.

Priestcraft damages the practitioner, I think more so than those on whom he practices. I don't see how you can destroy equality and injure and grieve the Spirit by holding yourself up as a light and interfering with the work of the Lord in bringing about Zion and not suffer the greater loss.

The things of heaven were never intended to be given into the hands of men so that they might profit from them. We are expected to sacrifice for God. A religion that does not require sacrifice is a religion that will not produce faith. And if there is one thing that is going to be necessary for the establishment of Zion, it is going to necessarily be faith. You obtain it through sacrifice. You do not obtain it through adoration. You do not obtain it through the praise of men. You do not obtain it by sitting in chief seats. You don't obtain it by faring sumptuously and administering the wealth that is surrendered to you as if you were God. It belongs to God; it is His. You should go get a job to support yourself if you're going to administer the tithes, and leave the tithes alone.

I know there are verses that suggest that the laborer is worthy of his hire. I know that. I'm telling you it's toxic. I'm telling you that there are—in the history of mankind, I can think of maybe five men who have lived that would be worthy and beyond corruption in occupying that role, and one of those five was the Lord Himself. Don't look upon a passing verse as a basis upon which to revoke and to cast aside all of the other many verses and warnings and cautions and prophecies about the abuse of the last-days gentiles, which largely emanate from the corruption of our religion because of priestcraft.

Priestcraft is toxic, not just to the listeners but to the practitioners. If what you're saying, if what you're preaching, is greeted with wild enthusiasm, and it doesn't get you shunned, then you're probably not saying anything that God would agree with. God's purpose is to bring us to repentance. I mean, the Lord is exceptionally positive, but He is positive in stating affirmatively the standard that is acceptable to Him. *"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my name sake"* (Matthew 5:11). He expected us to be misunderstood, misapprehended, assessed very narrowly—just as He was, cast out—not to be handed money and to be given a chief seat, to be adored, and to be respected.

Our challenge among ourselves, however diminutive we may seem to be, priestcraft can invade our little fellowships every bit as much as it can invade multi-billion dollar institutions. There's no limit on where you can run amiss.

Rest assured that God intends to establish in the last-days a Zion in which we will see the return of exactly what was here at the beginning. There will be a return. I mean the reason why they're coming to the children of Ephraim in the everlasting mountains is because there will be a New Jerusalem. They will bring rich treasures when they come because they have records that they themselves are going to need to have translated. And they're going to be crowned because the

family of God consists of people who are, in fact, kings and priests. All of that infrastructure has to be put in place by the Lord before His return. And therefore, He intends to accomplish this work. And when He accomplishes this work, you're not going to find at the top of it, a king like the gentiles expect. You're going to find something or someone or some group who are meek and lowly, who are rather more like our Savior than the kings who ruled during our Savior's day. You won't find a Caesar, and you won't find a local potentate. You'll find a servant.

Men have to extend the invitation for God to return, so that men who extend that invitation are worthy of His return, and the Lord can safely come without utterly destroying all who are upon the earth. Therefore you need Zion, among other reasons, in order for there to be a place and a people to whom the Lord can safely return without utterly destroying the earth at His coming. However small, however diminutive it may be, there needs to be a Zion that extends the invitation for the Lord to return.

Now the good news is that Zion will be preserved. And the even better news is that all of those good people of the earth who live in ignorance but who would have accepted the truth if it were brought to them, they will be preserved, also. There will be a mission field into the millenium.

But the really really bad news is, in the laundry list of those whom the Lord intends to destroy at His coming, that is the description of those who are telestial and therefore cannot endure His presence when He shall come—all of the liars, all of the whoremongers, all of the people who have taken our Lord's name in vain *having not authority*, all of those who have preached for hire and practiced priestcraft. One of the reasons it needs to be eradicated before you get to Zion is so you're not ignited like a torch head to the amusement of everyone else that is in Zion. There has to be an end of all that nonsense.

We were never supposed to see Zion before the witnessed gentile failure and apostasy. Christ declared to the Nephites a warning to the gentiles: *"And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you, At that day when the gentiles shall sin against my gospel and shall reject the fullness of my gospel and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings and of deceits and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy and murders and priestcrafts and whoredoms and of secret abominations, and if they shall do all those things and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, Behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fullness of my gospel from among them"* (3 Nephi 16:10).

This is not phrased as a possibility but as an inevitability. It was never a question of "if" the gentiles would reject the fullness. It has always been only a matter of "when" it would take place. The various institutions quarrel over whether it has happened. Some of them deny it can or

will happen. The soothing mantra “we will never lead you astray” defies the message Christ was commanded by the Father to declare to us. Generations have been cursed for this error.

We have been led astray. All of us in every branch of Mormonism err. We stumble, and we have fallen down. We have discarded the expansive theology of Joseph Smith. The earliest dispensations had truth from heaven as their guide. Joseph began re-assembling what was lost but was slain before it was completed. We are the offspring of heaven and are capable of reuniting with heaven while mortal. We also have the opportunity, through eons of progression, to become as our Parents, the Gods.

Now is the time to awaken, arise, and shake off the dust. Some will awaken, arise, shake off the dust, and push forward to recover the restoration. God will set His hand a second time to accomplish His covenants. We are promised there will be a last-days’ Zion established on this, the American continent. We know that when it is here: “...every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety, and there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under Heaven, and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be said among the wicked, Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible, wherefore we cannot stand. And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion singing with songs of everlasting joy” (D&C 45:68-71).

The restoration has indeed squandered many opportunities by those who went before. Most of those who accept Joseph Smith as a founder of their religion are still squandering the opportunity to see the work continue. But God’s purposes do not fail, and we have the option to proceed now. Some generation, at some point, still has a glorious, promised completion to anticipate. As long as some, even a very few, are willing to walk in God’s path, they will see the completion of this glorious, final work. “*This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?*” (2 Nephi 24:26-27).

Why not now? Why not us? All that’s required is to repent and return. The promise we have in exchange for our returning to the path is the stuff all the prophets and righteous from the days of Adam have eagerly anticipated.

The foregoing are excerpts taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #6 entitled "Zion," given in Grand Junction, CO on April 12, 2014;
- His talk entitled "Other Sheep Indeed," given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on July 29, 2017;
- His comments made during a panel discussion held at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on August 1, 2015;
- A Q&A session entitled "A Visit with Denver Snuffer," held on May 13, 2015;
- His talk entitled "Zion Will Come," given near Moab, UT on April 10, 2016; and
- The presentation of Denver's paper entitled "The Restoration's Shattered Promises and Great Hope," given at the Sunstone Symposium on July 28, 2018.