

Podcast Episode 49: Ordinances

QUESTION: What are ordinances, and why do we need them?

DENVER: Here's the problem: People do not believe Him, even though He rose from the dead. Period. Today, us—you and I—do not believe Him, even though He rose from the dead. It was not intended to be a one-off event that occurred in the meridian of time. It was intended to be a gathering. I mean, the little seed grows up into the great mustard plant into which the birds—or as Joseph put it, the angels—were intended to come and watch. It was intended to be a super structure for housing contact between the divine and the mortal. It was intended to be the moment of intersection between all that is in eternity and the life of the mortal. It was intended to be the journey into the Holy of Holies, into the presence of God.

In the ordinances as they have been restored in the temple today, everyone who enters in is expected to come to the veil possessing certain knowledge, capable of identifying themselves as having been true and faithful, and be received in an embrace and then welcomed into the presence of God. It's a normal and expected part of the ordinances as they have been restored. Those ordinances are supposed to be teaching us something. They are the Lord's way of shouting in a multimedia presentation, "Here is how I did what I did and what I would like you to do in the process of you becoming like me—a son of God, a daughter of God, a member of the household of faith, and part of the church and kingdom of the Firstborn." You have to become the firstborn. You have to become one with Him. You have to become part of that, not in an organized group-think kind of way, in an individual way in which you connect up with holiness, in which you become a vessel of holiness. You are someone to whom sacred things have been entrusted, and you become, in turn, sacred as the bearer of them.

Part of the rites in the temple are intended to communicate to you things that are most holy. They are intended to make you holy. They are intended to make you a suitable recipient for an audience. They are intended to make you a suitable companion for a walk down a dusty road with the risen Lord who is trying to get you to notice exactly who it is that speaks to you. It's intended to have you understand that He lives and that He's willing to associate with you. And that it's not, as Joseph Smith put it, relying on the words of an old book—the people who lived once long ago—that's going to save anyone. It's the dialogue that you engage in with Him now. It's the living, breathing, vital— He uses the figure of the living vine, and you have to connect to the living vine, and He's the vine, and you connect to it, and you get life through that. Words could not be more plain.

He's trying to get— I mean, what does it mean to be connected up with the vine and to derive sustenance from it? I mean, you have to be alive, which is not inert or an object that you move from there to there. If it's alive, it's going to grow, it's going to increase, it's going to improve. It's going to have connection with, it's going to have— Christ was extraordinary in His selection of the things that He wanted to use to communicate to us what He intended the gospel to be.

And we read them and say, "That's cool. I'll pay my tithing. I'm connected. I got a card; I'm connected." Well, it's intended to be more than that, and the way that it becomes more than that is an individual journey in which you receive from Him and become a part of Him, and He does His best to try and use analogies and parables and stories to make it clear to us. And the history of the events that are recorded in scripture are intended to try and make it clear to us, but at the end of the day, it's up to you to have the "a-ha moment" and realize He really is talking to and inviting you—YOU, individually, whoever you are, wherever you're at, whatever your confusion, whatever your doubts, whatever your uncertainties—He wants to talk to *you* about them.

Verse 33: *"But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me...."* This is not "They shall all know *about* me." This is "They shall know me." And it will no longer be necessary for anyone to say, "Know the Lord" because you shall know Him. It's not knowledge concerning Him; it's *Him*. And those that know Him shall be *"from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more"* (Jer 31:33-34; OC Jer 12:9).

That's who He is; that's what He does. He doesn't want to remember your sin. He would rather prefer it if you don't remember your sin. Because if you don't remember your sin and you go on in a positive way, having laid down the burden that He so willingly will accept from you and remove from you that burden of guilt, then you can go on and become healthy again. You needn't be troubled about all of those things that have bogged you down. He wants to remove that. He wants to carry them. *"I will remember their sin no more. Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever"* (Jer 31:35-36; OC Jer 12:9-10).

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

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

Well, the definition of salvation (or life eternal) given in John 17:3: *"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent"* (NC John 9:18). This is the knowledge of the Lord that he's talking about here. This is the day that Jeremiah prophesies. No one needs to say: *"Know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest"* (Jer 31:34; OC Jer 12:9). This is what the gospel was intended to restore, offer, promise, suggest to each one of us.

The ordinances that are referred to here, in the heavens— if you go to Genesis 1:14 (and for those that aren't familiar with their scriptures, Genesis is, like, page 1): *"And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so"* (OC Gen 2:6). And so He sets this up, and He sets this up in order to communicate things.

If you go back to the book of Abraham chapter 4—and this is the other end of the four standard works—go to Abraham chapter 4, beginning at verse 14: *"And the Gods organized the lights in the expanse of the heaven, and caused them to divide the day from the night; and organized them to be for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years; And organized them to be for lights in the expanse of the heaven to give light upon the earth; and it was so. And the Gods organized the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; with the lesser light they set the stars also; And the Gods set them in the expanse of the heavens, to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to cause to divide the light from the darkness. And the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed. And it came to pass that it was from evening until morning that it was night; and it came to pass that it was from morning until evening that it was day; and it was the fourth time"* (Abr 4:14-19; T&C Abr 7:5).

This is not a bunch of gratuitous language. This is describing something that took place with absolutely deliberate intent. Everything that is written in scripture and all of the ordinances that were ordained upon the earth, in the heavens, were reckoned from the position of the earth. It's not that the ancients were ignorant of what's going on in the heavens. It's that they viewed the heavens as being a testimony given to us on the earth. It is a geocentric—that is, from the surface of the earth—that that testimony is written.

From the surface of the earth, the sun occupies a space— Even though the sun is over 100 times larger than the earth, the space that the sun occupies in the firmament of the earth is exactly the same as the space in the firmament that is occupied by the moon, although the moon is 1/6 the size of the earth. From the surface of the earth they are identical in size. So much so, that when you put them on the ecliptic as they are located, one can block out the other entirely in an eclipse. Because all of these things were ordained by God to testify in the heavens about Him and about His work. And those things are bearing testimony, and they are telling you something.

Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 121, beginning at verse 26. These are the neglected verses, because we don't pay attention to this stuff anymore: *"God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now [not the Holy Spirit—the Holy Spirit has been revealed—it's the knowledge that is coming that has not yet been revealed] which our forefathers have awaited with anxious expectation to be revealed in the last times, which their minds were pointed to by the angels, as held in reserve for the fulness of their glory; A time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest. All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ. And also, if there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas, or to the dry land, or to the sun, moon, or stars—All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years, and all the days of their days, months, and years, and all their glories, laws, and set times, shall be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times—According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was, that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof, when every man shall enter into his eternal presence and into his immortal rest" (T&C 138:21).*

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

Well, Jeremiah knew what he was talking about when he referred to the ordinances we've long since forgotten. The only way you apostatize from that stuff is through forgetfulness, because the testimony remains, and it's in front of your eyes nightly and daily.

Because it is the purpose of the Son to bear record of the Father. It is the purpose of the Son to bring others to the Father so that there might be many sons of God. *"And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom..." (T&C 82:17).* Because you can't go where the Father is without entering into and receiving an inheritance.

You know, one of the things that we tend to think is that if you get something (this is based upon statements made in [D&C] 132)— but if you get something here and you get it by a covenant, that you are automatically entitled to take it into the next world. But what if the covenant that you are to receive in order to obtain that inheritance in the next world doesn't reckon merely from something handled by ordinance but that the ordinance is pointing you to something higher and more holy? What if the thing that secures for you the inheritance in the next life is not the ordinance but what the ordinance testifies to, that is, embracing the Lord through the veil; and then, having conversed with Him, entering into His presence; and then, having entered into His presence, being ministered to and taught? What if it means all that?

In order to know something about covenants, Joseph Smith needed to give us some material about that. And I want to refer you to section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, beginning at verse 8 where the Lord tells Joseph: "*Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion. Will I accept of an offering, saith the Lord, that is not made in my name? Or will I receive at your hands that which I have not appointed? And will I appoint unto you, saith the Lord, except it be by law, even as I and my Father ordained unto you, before the world was?*" (D&C 132:8-11). You see, everything proceeds according to law. And the government of God is not necessarily limited to an organizational structure, but it hails back to things that were committed by God in promises made to the Fathers which have to be fulfilled. And it doesn't matter if we try to capture that; God's purposes are ordained according to a law that was ordained before the world was.

"I am the Lord thy God; and I give unto you this commandment—that no man shall come unto the Father but by me or by my word, which is my law, saith the Lord" (verse 12). In other words, if you are going to come, whoever you are, unto the Father, the only way you are going to get there will be through the Son.

"And everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or principalities, or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be, that are not by me or by my word, saith the Lord, shall be thrown down, and shall not remain after men are dead, neither in nor after the resurrection, saith the Lord your God. For whatsoever things remain are by me; and whatsoever things are not by me shall be shaken and destroyed" (verse 13-14). This is another way in which we can know that *"the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel, and He employeth no servant there" (2 Nephi 6:11).* Because when it comes to this kind of material involving this kind of salvation for any of the children of men, God is hands-on. And our Redeemer is the one who not only keeps the gate, protects the way, but greets those along the way whom He is going to introduce to the Father. And it has to be *"by me or by my word...saith the Lord."* If it is not, then it shall be thrown down, and it shall not remain.

Only God can, or does, ordain covenants. We do not make covenants. Covenants come as a consequence of God's will and only as a consequence of God's will. We can accept them, or we can reject them, but we cannot create them. He does. Our participation is limited to acceptance of, or rejection of, what He offers. The way in which we accept the covenants is set out in Doctrine and Covenants section 130: *"There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated"* (verses 20-21).

Therefore, what is important for you to understand and to know is whatever it is that law consists of. Because the way in which you accept the covenant that has been offered to you is by learning the principle or the law upon which the blessing you seek is predicated. And then, having learned what law that is upon which it is predicated, obeying it.

We learn all of this through the revelations given to us through Joseph Smith.

"Whenever men can find out the will of God and find an administrator legally authorized from God, there is the kingdom of God; but where these are not, the kingdom of God is not. All the ordinances, systems, and administrations on the earth are of no use to the children of men, unless they are ordained and authorized of God; for nothing will save a man but a legal administrator; for none others will be acknowledged either by God or angels" (Joseph Smith, January 22, 1843).

Dispensation heads are given the power, the sealing power, the authority, the ability to use the power to seal up, by embodying the covenant that is given to them by God, into an ordinance. And that ordinance remains in effect after the death of Moses, after the death of Lehi, after the death of Joseph Smith—so long as it remains embodied within the ordinance. This kind of ordinance, or this kind of sealing authority, then requires and gives rise to the second kind.

And the second kind is a sealing power that is embodied within authoritative ordinances. All dispensations of the gospel follow the covenant-giver's ordinances. For so long as the ordinances that were handed to you through the dispensation head are kept intact, the covenant is kept intact. And the second form of sealing power is a sealing power which is not dependent upon the persistent presence of a dispensation head. It is only dependent upon keeping faithfully the ordinance that has been established and handed down by God through covenant.

The second form of sealing authority, however, has conditions upon it because God is not bound by anything that differs one iota from His word. And that doesn't matter who it is. God is bound by His word, not by man's. Therefore, when you handle such ordinances you need to keep in mind the admonition that was given in the prophecy of Isaiah: *"The earth also is defiled under*

the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left" (Isaiah 7:1). It's talking about a future time at His coming. But it's lamenting a condition that you have to decide about it's currency.

So when you have possession of that second form of sealing authority, you have to recognize that the covenant handed down from the dispensation head can be broken. It was broken rather abruptly in the case of the covenant given to Lehi, when at the death of Lehi, his family fragmented into two groups—one of whom desired to preserve the covenant, and one of whom rejected it and walked away from it. Therefore, it was not to the ones that had rejected the covenant that the Lord would subsequently come to appear. But they, by and large, would have been destroyed. So handling the second form of the covenant after the dispensation head has established it, is a matter of fidelity to the word of God and faithfulness to the word of God and faithfulness in preserving and practicing the ordinance that has been established.

The temple is not the place that controls the word of God; the temple is the place which, most of all, ought be subject *to* the word of God. It's not a place to innovate in ordinances; it's a place to obey, to follow, to give strict heed unto, and to not vary.

Because in the ordinances, the power of God is manifest—not because of some white-shirt-wearing, dark-suit-clad institutional chap with a certificate and common consent is doing something, but because you come in faith to God, believing, and you wrestle a blessing from God through the means that He has allowed it to be bestowed, by your faith. And you have God take note of your diligence and your faith.

In large measure, your faith matters far more than you think it does. I know a great deal more than I knew at the time I went to the Jordan River Temple to perform vicarious work for deceased ancestors—an incident that I recorded in one of the little vignettes in *The Second Comforter*. I went to the temple in faith, believing, and I met 11 of my ancestors who were redeemed because of my faith. And they could use any condition in which they can find the rights, any tattered ruin left they could use, so long as there was faith upon the earth to act in their behalf.

Joseph Smith said, on page 308 of the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, "If a man gets fullness of the priesthood of God, he has to get it the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping all the commandments, and by obeying all the ordinances of the house of the Lord." I want to redefine that "house," not in terms of physical structure, but in terms of familial relationship, in which God alone establishes His house, and that, too, by acknowledging who His

sons and daughters are. That house can never be overtaken, touched, trampled, broken, forsaken, compromised, or adulterated, because man is powerless. And so when the house of God is to be set in order in the last days, don't think of that as a movement that you are waiting for someone else to accomplish. How do you not know that the "one mighty and strong" to be sent to set in order the house of God is not Jesus Christ Himself, waiting to minister to all those who will come to Him? Because receiving our Lord is, in itself, an ordinance.

If you go to Doctrine and Covenants section 84, beginning at 19, it says: *"And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest."* And I would note, as a parenthetical, that you have to have priesthood in order to have the ordinances. *"And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh"*(T&C 82:12). And Zion is a fleshly endeavour. It is to involve living, breathing people. Therefore, as you read these verses, you ought to recognize that the power of godliness being manifest to men in the flesh, through the ordinances as a component, is talking about the rudiments that's required for Zion.

"For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fulness of his glory" (Ibid).

"The glory of God is intelligence..." (T&C 93:11). The *"rest [of the Lord] is the fulness of His glory,"* or in other words "light and truth." Or in other words, it requires a people that are competent in the things of God, who have an understanding which will reach into heaven.

"Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also" (T&C 82:12). Thus ended Zion. Because Moses went up the mount, and Moses talked with God, and he spoke with Him face-to-face. He wanted to bring the people with him up there so that they, like he, would speak with God and be in His presence, face-to-face. That's what Moses sought after, at which point Moses' status as a leader ended. Because no one would need to say to another, "Know ye the Lord," for they all would therefore know Him—a prophecy about Zion in the last days (Jeremiah 12:9). That is an accomplishment that requires people and not individuals.

Doctrine and Covenants section 133, beginning at verse 25, is a description of the results if there is a people who get prepared. This will be the result (133, beginning at 25): *"And the Lord, even the Savior, shall stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh. And they who are*

in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord; and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves; and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence. And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep. Their enemies shall become a prey unto them, And in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water; and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land. And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants. And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence. And there shall they fall down and be crowned with glory, [in this context, it's an ordinance] even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim. And they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy. Behold, this is the blessing of the everlasting God upon the tribes of Israel, and the richer blessing upon the head of Ephraim and his fellows" (T&C 58:3).

Doctrine and Covenants section 84 has a description of events at the time of Moses. Beginning at verse 19 of Section 84: *"And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest."* And by the way, I should add as a parenthetical thought, "the ordinances thereof" is far more expansive than simply a set of rights or rituals. Because when the higher priesthood is present on the earth, everything that that higher priesthood does is done as an ordinance. Because once it has been ordained by God to take place and God's hand is behind what takes place, those events, under the direction of that priesthood, is all an ordinance, and therefore, within them you find the power of godliness. *"And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh. For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fulness of his glory" (T&C 82:12).*

I'll remind you we've talked about this before. *"The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words light and truth" (T&C 93:11).* Therefore, the "rest" is to be filled with His glory or, in other words, filled with light and truth—or to comprehend things that you do not, at present, comprehend without the benefit of the glory of God.

"Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also" (T&C 82:12). And thus, at that point, ended the expectation anciently that there might be Zion.

Go to the book of John, chapter 14 [KJV]—two verses. Chapter 14:18 the Lord says: *"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 9:8).* This is Christ talking to the apostles about

what He intends to do on the other side of His death, burial, and resurrection. He's saying, "I'm not going to leave you comfortless—I will come to you."

And then verse 23 [KJV]: *"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him"* (John 9:8). Christ is saying that's the intention! And so that we can have the definition given through Joseph, go to Doctrine and Covenants section 130, discussing this verse. D&C 130:3, *"John 14:23 [KJV]—The appearing of the Father and the Son, in that verse, is a personal appearance; and the idea that the Father and the Son dwell in a man's heart is an old sectarian notion, and is false."* The promise was designed to have this actually happen.

This is why D&C 93:1 says what it says. This is what the fulness of the gospel consists of. Those folks who go through ceremonies think that ceremonies have some powerful mojo, some compelling voodoo. But the purpose of the ceremony is to teach you a precept. The precept is what you ought to find within your heart. Rites and ordinances are intended to testify to a greater truth. It was anciently among the Jews. It is an Aaronic priesthood function to turn around and look at the ordinance as if it were an end in itself. It is not an end in itself. It is intended to be a symbol reminding you of some great truth concerning our God—capstone of the ceremonies that were restored through Joseph involving a dialogue between you and the Lord in which you're brought back into His presence, and then following that, you're taken away, and you're sealed for eternity. Those are lofty concepts. They are powerfully portrayed in the ordinances and the rites. They are intended to convey to you the reality that all of this is possible because God does, in fact, intend to preserve you and all of those associations that you prize, so long as they're worthy.

After the creation itself, marriage was the first ordinance. I want to take an opportunity to look at the way in which this unfolds, because it's a very interesting— Adam and Eve were sent down here first. Adam and Eve were introduced into the world, and they were presented these challenges initially. They were the first ones to face this stuff, and the way in which their story is told is not chronological. You have to go through Moses' record, and you have to go through Enoch's record within the book of Moses in order to put together the chronology of these things. But when you do that, a story unfolds and a scene unfolds upon us. It's really rather fascinating. So I want to take a few moments and do that.

Marriage was the first ordinance. It was introduced before the Fall. It was introduced before man was instructed on sacrifice.

Hearts of people get hard the older they get. Although, there is at least one exception, because I ran into a guy at my office who was like 85-years-old, and he's still as young and as nimble and

as open and as flexible as a child. That's why we have to become childlike, because we have to be willing to consider these things.

Well, in that Alma chapter 13 [KJV] material, beginning at 14 it says: *"Yea, humble yourselves even as the people in the days of Melchizedek, who was also a high priest after this same order which I have spoken, who also took upon him the high priesthood forever. And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes; yea, even our father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all he possessed. Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his order, or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord"* (Alma 10:1).

And what is "these ordinances" that are being talked about? That's what we looked at in the Orem talk in chapter 13, and we're not going to repeat it here. That's the material that includes everything that God does, He does by an ordinance. Everything that He does and every blessing He confers, He confers by a covenant. One of the good news about the absence of a binding covenant is that you can't damn yourself by taking upon yourself an obligation that you will never honor.

One of the good things about the Restoration is that there are covenantal examples that are given that give you an idea of the kind of behavior that God would want. I wish everyone would go to the temple. I wish everyone would go to the temple and take on them covenants, learn what they are, and then try to live them. But if you fail, unlike the stuff that comes into play with this Melchizedek character, there is no severe penalty, because it's for your good and for your practice and for your instruction. And if you honor that, there is no reason why God and the angels cannot ratify whatever it is you do, if you qualify for it.

Go to the temple, get your ordinances, and then work to have the Holy Spirit of Promise because the keeper of that gate is the Holy One of Israel, and there is no employee there. It is the Holy One of Israel, and *you* qualify to receive that directly with heaven. There's no other gatekeeper opening and closing doors. There is the Holy One of Israel; He employeth no servant there.

Any who desire to be baptized should be baptized. If you have this authority and you practice this and anyone comes to you, baptize them. Refuse no one. Freely you get from God; therefore, freely give to others. Do not charge to perform an ordinance. The ordinance is between them and God. And they need to have it performed between them and someone God has asked to do it. You become the people God asks to do it.

Before baptism, teach them the Doctrine of Christ.

If you take money from someone in order to advance your religious purpose, the mere act of doing that creates an inequality. It creates an arrogance. It removes the burden of sacrifice. It removes the humiliation of having to lose sleep and to fret and to worry about things and to face an uphill battle in everything that you do in order to please God. But you can't please God by taking advantage of your fellow man.

There have been changes to the ordinance. Isaiah 24:5 [KJV] warned that: *"The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant" (Isaiah 7:1).*

Those changes include the most single, radical change to the temple endowment in 1990. In 2005, they eliminated washings and anointings. Before the January 2005 changes, washing and anointings were literal. The change made them only symbolic thereafter. That has significance, and I leave it to people to query why it has significance.

I mean, there was a reason why Christ was anointed, preliminary to his death, by the woman that blessed and anointed him. And it was to preserve Him into the resurrection. Now we don't do that.

Remember that in Nauvoo the Lord offered to reconnect the saints, but clearly defined the condition for that to happen was necessarily an acceptable temple where He could come and restore the connection. The reconnection is ordinance-based and will require an acceptable temple before it goes beyond the single representative.

You see, individual salvation and promises of eternal life are just that—they are individual. A restoration of the family of Israel requires more, including cooperation and inter-relationships that will be formed by God himself. Promises made to individuals give the individual hope.

If you take the vision of the redemption of the dead that we find in D&C 138—he saw a vision where: *"...there were gathered together in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality, and who had offered sacrifice in the similitude of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, and had suffered tribulation in the Redeemer's name. All these had departed the mortal life firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection through the grace of God the Father and His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ" (D&C 138:12-14).* All of them. These were the righteous. They were in paradise, and all of them were worthy; they had hope, and not only did the Savior give them hope before death, He visited with them in the spirit world during the time between His death and His resurrection. But that did not get them reconnected to the Fathers in heaven. Nor did it even get them

resurrected, because it goes on to say in the same vision: *"...from among the righteous, he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men; and thus was the gospel preached to the dead"* (verse 30). So the righteous who departed this life firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection, who had offered sacrifice in the similitude—many of whom had seen Him in the flesh, who witnessed Him and were ministered to by Him and given authority by Him in the spirit world—remained in the world of the dead to preach to the dead.

Only the organization through a temple and associated rites results in finishing the family of God in the house of order, allowing the results achieved by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which are described in D&C 132:37: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—they *"...did none other things than that which they were commanded; and because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods."*

In D&C 138:41, Abraham (the father of the faithful), Isaac, and Jacob were also there. In verses 41 and 42 of D&C 138, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were there, but in the revelation given in 1843 they're sitting on thrones. They're not in the spirit world proselytizing; they are sitting on thrones. The difference between these two categories are the differences between individual salvation—which can come—and reorganizing the family of God—which must occur by an ordinance in a temple to be acceptable to God.

This was why the command was given to build the temple in Nauvoo and why God offered to restore to them the fullness that they did not achieve. We need to let God take the lead, and then we need to patiently await each step along the way. This is the stuff of which the prophecies speak. And it is the stuff that will be fulfilled. But the rites and the ordinances necessary to accomplish that— People in this generation don't even have a clue how that necessarily has to roll forth. But rest assured, it will. It will.

In public, Joseph declared, "Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world, in the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on the same principles." 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 principal that they "are not to be altered or changed." The original Mormonism may have added, but it respected what was previously revealed. All later forms of corporate Mormonism have been deductive.

The RLDS Church made even greater deductions. They abandoned baptisms for the dead, washings, anointings, eternal marriage, and the temple rites altogether. Subtraction from the ordinances is one clear way to confirm the original form of Mormonism no longer exists. If there is to be an original, it will require adding back what has been lost.

At the end of the whole thing—when you get all the way to the end, you can take Mormonism and go all the way back to James 1:5 [KJV] and say, "All Joseph is doing is saying that James 1:5 is true, and it works. And therefore you ought to attempt it." Take all of the ordinances, take all of the promises—take everything that has been delivered and realize that all of that is simply God cheerleading you to reconnect with Him and have an authentic experience. And when that happens, then the religion is alive. Then it matters. But it's living in you—it's not living in some chapel; it's not living in some temple. It's living in you. That's the objective of the original.

I was lying at home in my bed when the Lord spoke to me, calling me by name. When it ended, I was commanded to write an account. As I wrote, the words were given to me, and I recorded the following:

On the 13th of February 2003 I saw the Lord coming in His glory. At first a sign appeared in the heavens; a light emanating from a single point and turning first this way and that. All the world saw it. And men debated over its meaning. At length the light turned upon us, and within it was the Lord, showing His glory, with concourses of angels and the hosts of heaven following in His wake.

And when we saw that it was the Lord, we rejoiced and were filled with joy. I turned to my wife and said, "Look, it is Christ!" And she said, "Yes, it is!" And we were filled with joy and peace of mind, for the long-awaited day of the Lord had come.

But others were filled with dread. They feared and lamented and wanted the mountains to cover them and hide them from His presence, for He was clothed in red and came in

judgment. And Christian ministers knew they had taught falsely and that their faith could not save—and they begged for relief from the Saints.

This caused me to marvel at how this could be. It was given unto me to understand that without the ordinances of salvation through the authorized ministers of the gospel, it was not possible for men to shed their sins. And they could not look upon a just and Holy Being without being racked with torment and guilt for their sins. And they pled with the Saints to minister to them, but we could not, for we were constrained by the Spirit and were forbidden to do so. For this was the day of judgment which the Lord had in His heart, and He was now come to preach His own sermon, clothed in red, and to deliver those who waited on Him and to convict and condemn those who had not.

I write this with my own hand, and bear solemn testimony that it is true, Amen.

In the tenth talk given in Phoenix two years ago, you were warned about false spirits as happened in Kirtland, which you were warned would come among us. That warning has proven true. False spirits have misled some into foolish errors. I am astonished at vain, foolish, and prideful ideas that are anti-Christ, degrading, and dark but have been welcomed by some. Remember, Pharaoh's magicians also enchanted their rods to become snakes and conjured frogs to mimic the sign given by God through Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh's heart was hardened by these imitations. Do not let yours become so likewise.

For two years I have watched, attended some of your meetings, gathered reports, and tried to let you stand and display your strength and understanding. Even God left Adam and Eve in the Garden and allowed Lucifer, the common enemy, to tempt and try them, promising to return again to visit them. They transgressed His commandment, and He provided the means to cover their shame, repent, and return. He also promised to later send messengers. But God did not "babysit" Adam and Eve, informing them that it was given unto them to choose, even when He forbids something. God is the same now as in the beginning. We are all required to display our strength, obedience, and prove our understanding.

People have come among you preaching falsehoods and inviting others to follow false spirits—adulterers and adulteresses who justify sins and mock the commandment, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery*" (*Exodus 20:14 [KJV]*). False claimants are pretending to seal others up to eternal life, changing the ordinances, and introducing foolish and vain ideas borrowed from pagans and heathen who do not know Christ nor His righteousness. I do not oppose them directly by debate or counter-argument. I declare the truth and leave it for everyone to decide between clearly opposing teachings. If people cannot discern, then they will need to learn from sad

experience to choose between good and evil, perhaps only coming to understand after their destruction in this world.

The third spirit that is to return is that spirit which was in the beginning. It is the spirit of Messiah—this time the Messiah, Himself. This time He will come to His house. He will dwell there. Everything must be prepared in order for Messiah to return. And so in the end, as it was in the beginning, Adam being a type who represents dwelling in the presence of God, or the Spirit of Messiah—in the end it will be Messiah, Himself, who returns to dwell among a people who are prepared. This is a chiasm. It is returning to the beginning as the work of the last days walks backward in time to the point where it all began.

Elias goes before to prepare for a greater work that is coming after, just as the Aaronic ordinances go before. Joseph Smith said the Spirit of Elias was revealed to him, but "the Spirit of Elijah holds something more. It holds the revelations, ordinances, endowments, and sealings necessary to accomplish turning the hearts of the Fathers to the children by securing an unbroken thread between the living and the Fathers in heaven. This can only be done in a temple prepared for that purpose." I'm reading Joseph. Without sealing of living children to the Fathers in heaven (who dwell in glory and who sit upon thrones), the return of the Lord with Enoch and the other thousands who will accompany him would result in none escaping the judgments to come.

We are all equal. We all accept the Book of Mormon as a covenant for us to be numbered among the Lord's covenant people. This land, in particular, is a land of promise to those who serve the God of this land who is Jesus Christ. The time is coming when those who are not the Lord's people will be swept off the land.

I have been given authority from God to deliver this covenant, this day. Every formality required from the days of Adam until now for establishing a covenant has been kept and met. Once the covenant is established, those sustained by seven women—or a man inside his own family—who receive it also have authority to administer the ordinance to others who want to be numbered among God's people. To administer to others, repeat the ordinance, read aloud the Lord's Answer and the words of the Covenant. Ask them to stand and say "yes," and they will become one of the Lord's covenant people. Do not change the words of the covenant, for to change an ordinance is to break it.

All our ancestors have failed to follow the Lord's path. Generations now dead anxiously wait and hope for us to be faithful. They have part in this through you. If they have a righteous living descendent, they are blessed vicariously through that relationship. We are all part of one family, and your role in that family can bless the living and the dead.

Today marks a moment when the stirrings that have been underway for years result in God's offering to establish His people on earth, by a covenant He ordains. The few ready to receive the Lord's offer today are scattered to the nethermost parts of His vineyard (Jacob 5:52 [LE]). Despite this, a live broadcast on the internet allows them to be grafted in at the same moment this is happening in Boise, Idaho. Correspondingly, those who utterly refuse to accept the offered covenant are plucked from the Restoration's tree of life because they are bitter fruit, unable to meet the Lord's requirements. The Lord is taking this step to preserve part of humanity, not to destroy it (v. 53). A few descendants of the covenant Fathers have the natural gift of faith; that gift belongs to the natural branches (v. 54). When grafted, we are connected to the natural roots or covenant Fathers as heirs of the promises made to them. Even after the covenant, there will still be those who are bitter and wild, who will be unable to produce natural fruit despite the covenant. These will remain for a time, despite their bitterness (v. 56-57). Today only the most bitter who refuse to be grafted in will be trimmed away.

If you cannot reconstruct the family through an adoption ordinance process, the work cannot be accomplished. There just isn't time. We're in the process of walking back to how it was in the beginning. A lot of people think that by getting a New Testament church put on the ground that Joseph Smith accomplished the fulsome Restoration. It was never intended to stop there; it's supposed to go all the way back to the beginning. It's a giant chiasm, and it's a giant mirror. And today we do not live 900 years, and so the way in which it will be rebuilt at the end is going to be by ordinance in the house of the Lord in a place that He has accepted. The only kinds of places that are legitimately the house of God are houses that God has come to, to dwell in, in order for those who seek His face to find Him.

In an October 1840 proclamation to the saints, Joseph and the High Council in Nauvoo hoped to see happen in 1840 what did not happen then, has not happened, and may only happen if people honor the covenant offered last year. The proclamation said:

The work of the Lord in these last days, is one of vast magnitude and almost beyond the comprehension of mortals; its glories are past description and its grandeur unsurpassable. It has been the theme which has animated the bosom of prophets and righteous men from the creation of this world down through every succeeding generation to the present time; and it is truly the dispensation of the fullness of times, which all things which are in Christ Jesus, whether in heaven or on the earth, shall be gathered together in him, and when all things shall be restored, as spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world began: for in it will take place the glorious fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers. (*JSP Documents* Vol. 7, p. 412; also *Times and Seasons*, Oct. 1840, p. 178)

Joseph understood that the project was reclamation and restoration of what once was and had been lost. We're not trying to create something new; we're trying to reclaim that which is the oldest of all, the original religion.

That grandeur was not achieved in Joseph's day. The Restoration has never reached the magnitude God intends. All the institutions of Mormonism are drifting away, aimlessly. They're more interested in preserving power for themselves than in preserving the Restoration. Taking the scriptures as your guide, you'll be better prepared than any other generation to arise and fulfill the promises and the prophecies. Joseph Smith did not complete the Restoration, but he laid a foundation that should not be ignored. The Community of Christ and Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are both being led down to destruction and are bound in the chains of hell because of their studied ignorance.

"Apostasy" means a deliberate rebellion against God. They are in apostasy because they are deliberately changing the ordinances, have broken the covenant, and are rejecting Joseph Smith's teachings and revelations. They have been deliberately walking away from the Restoration and choosing to align themselves with a doomed world.

But I do think that the ceremony is useful even though I don't think that the transmission of it has been altogether correct. I think it is merciful by God that the way in which it came down was altered, because we can enter into the covenants of the temple and take them very seriously, but if we wind up violating them we have not violated an authentically empowered ordinance, so we're really not offending God by violating something.

Ordinances that were ordained by God cannot be changed. If they're changed, they're broken; if they're broken, they're ineffective. Therefore, an altered ordinance can be informational, and if you take it sincerely and if you adhere to the covenants and if you obey, God can work with that because God can work with any soul. And you can ultimately realize every blessing and every promise of the temple. You're just going to get it as a one-off from heaven, as God, by the Holy Spirit of Promise, works with you to confer upon you blessings that are intended for you. So there's no downside, but there's a considerable upside if you're true and faithful to the things that you obligate yourself to do.

And the temple tells you that: "Brothers and sisters, if you're true and faithful the time will come when you will be called up and anointed kings and queens, priests and priestesses, whereas now you're only anointed to become such. The realization of these blessings depends upon your faithfulness." I mean, they dial it right back in the introduction to the ceremony itself, almost as if they're making an admission against interest.

The purpose of a temple is to allow the communication of great knowledge and greater knowledge, to restore what has been lost since the time of Adam, in order for people to rise up and receive the Holy Order. Because you don't get saved in ignorance, and there are so many gaps in what was going on.

The Lord, whose own heart was broken, ultimately requires a great deal to happen to create a broken heart and a contrite spirit willing to endure—however uncomfortable it may make you feel—all that God requires of you to do in order to be a son of God. And that's not accomplished in an instant, suddenly; it's accomplished carefully and over trial after trial, test after test, temptation after temptation. But ultimately, it will be required before the return of the Lord. It will be mandatory, before the return of the Lord, for the original Holy Order to exist in all of its components. It has to. And there has to be established on the earth all of the rites that originally belonged in the days of Adam, because that has to be surrendered back. And it has to go back through those that had possessed it in order for God to have the right to come and claim this world as His own and to exercise dominion over it. Because if the dominion over the world belongs to someone other than Him, His word cannot be broken, and He cannot come and interfere with the right of dominion that exists on the Earth. It has to exist. It has to be fully restored, and it has to be in the possession of those who will not covet it—those who will not, like Cain, attempt to influence the conditions of salvation for the souls of men, those who look upon it merely as a burden to be held, under the authority of God, belonging to Him, to be returned to Him so that He can come and fix this broken world and bring wickedness to an end.

The foregoing excerpts were taken from:

- Denver's talk entitled "Christ's Discourse on the Road to Emmaus," given in Fairview, UT on April 14, 2007;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #2 entitled "Faith," given in Idaho Falls, ID on September 28, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #3 entitled "Repentance," given in Logan, UT on September 29, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #4 entitled "Covenants," given in Centerville, UT on October 6, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #5 entitled "Priesthood," given in Orem, UT on November 2, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #6 entitled "Zion," given in Grand Junction, CO on April 12, 2014;

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #8 entitled "A Broken Heart," given in Las Vegas, NV on July 25, 2014;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #9 entitled "Marriage and Family," given in St. George, UT on July 26, 2014;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #10 entitled "Preserving the Restoration," given in Mesa, AZ on September 9, 2014;
- A Q&A session entitled "A Visit with Denver Snuffer" held on May 13, 2015;
- The presentation of Denver's paper entitled "Was There an Original," given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on July 29, 2016;
- His conference talk entitled "The Doctrine of Christ," given in Boise, ID on September 11, 2016;
- Denver's conference talk entitled "Things to Keep Us Awake at Night," given in St. George, UT on March 19, 2017;
- His Opening Remarks given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, ID on September 3, 2017;
- A fireside talk entitled "Cursed, Denied Priesthood," given in Sandy, UT on January 7, 2018;
- Denver's remarks entitled "Keep the Covenant: Do the Work," given at the Remembering the Covenants Conference in Layton, UT on August 4, 2018; and
- A fireside talk entitled "The Holy Order," given in Bountiful, UT on October 29, 2017.