

## Podcast Episode 63: Every Word, Part 2

**QUESTION: Some people believe that re-baptism, receiving the new Covenant, and so forth are not necessary for them because of their bloodlines, race, previous ordination or religion, affiliation with a tribe of Israel, etc. Some believe that they do not need to obey all of the ten commandments or other teachings of Christ or that some parts of the restoration, now underway, are not necessary for them to accept or live by. Are there some parts that don't apply to some people, or must every person accept every part of what is now being offered, in order to be right with God?**

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DENVER: In the case of the restoration through Joseph Smith, he started a work that had an objective. Along the way, many, many things were done that got added. You take a look at Mormonism at the time of the publication of the Book of Mormon, and it has a look and feel in one direction. A few years later, by the time you get to Kirtland, the look and the feel of Mormonism is fairly different than what it was at that incipient stage—in part because onboard to the Mormon movement had come Campbellites, with a lot of Campbellite concerns and Campbellite beliefs that needed to be dealt with. To the extent that it's possible to accept them, Joseph was willing to accept them. To the extent that they wanted something and God would indulge that something, Joseph would do whatever needed to be done.

You get a few years later in Mormonism, and you look at what it looked like in the 1838 time frame. And Mormonism is different than what it was back in the halcyon days of Kirtland, and it's beginning to have a lot of internal conflicts. And some people who had been given status, standing, office, opportunity so that they became bonafides—they became authorities within the movement—

For example, the presidency in Zion considered themselves to be just as important, just as capable of exercising authority and control, and just as endowed with blessings from on high as anyone else. In fact, jurisdictionally, at that point—arguably, whenever you came within the boundaries of an organized stake (like the presidency that sat in Zion was at that time), then *they*—not the Quorum of the Twelve—*they*—not the First Presidency—*they*—not bishops from elsewhere—*THEY* were the supreme authority at that point on the land. And what happened in 1838, among other things, was a power struggle over who gets to define what. The presidency included David Whitmer, who got excommunicated in 1838. It included Oliver and others—members of the Twelve.

The power struggle that resulted in 1838 shook the nascent Mormon movement to its core, because now you are in the middle of a struggle over power, authority, control, jurisdiction—issues that had come about as a consequence of the formal organization of a church with a hierarchy, a church with a hierarchy that was divided into separate hierarchies, all of which had equal authority with the other hierarchy; an organization in which the equality that existed was not because every person stood on the same level—the equality that existed was because one body (that is, high councils) was equal to the First Presidency. And another body (that is, the Quorum of the Twelve) was equal in authority with the high council and with the First Presidency. And another body, the Quorum of the Twelve, was equal in authority to the high councils and to the First Presidency. And another body, the Seventy, was equal to them all. None of these were preeminent. And so, the concept of this equality didn't exist because every member stood on the same ground; it is because within the body there were organizational groups that operated as a check on one another. *All* of them could look at the other and say, “You’re not the boss of me.” And so that precipitated a crisis in 1838 that resulted in internal division—members that were disaffected signing affidavits to implicate Joseph Smith in some wrongdoing; a wayward Sampson Avard engaging in gratuitous violence; a talk by Sidney Rigdon that threatened all the neighbors, the neighbors having enough of it, and they were basically frontiersmen that were refugees from arrest and the eastern states—all of which turns into this cultural stew that results in violence and the Mormon War.

So, you have the Mormon War in Missouri in 1838 and '39 with the expulsion of the Mormons, largely growing out of an internal power struggle and a lot of people trying to assert the right to have control, dominion, compulsion, power. Joseph Smith gets arrested; he spends half a year in Liberty Jail; and just before he's allowed to escape (because he was allowed to escape; that was the most politically savvy way to deal with the mess that Missouri had created for itself—just let him run away), just before he was allowed to escape, in the Liberty Jail, Joseph composed a two-part letter (that's in the new scriptures; it's not in the old one, although an excerpt of this part of the letter does appear in the LDS Doctrine and Covenants), in which Joseph Smith backtracks on the whole idea of power, authority, and control by *anyone* who's holding *any* priesthood *anywhere*. And he denounces that as men get a little authority, as they suppose, they *immediately* begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. And so while many may be called, very few wind up being chosen. And *why* are they not chosen? Because they aspire to the honors of men, and their hearts aren't right, they seek to have dominion and control. And so, the letter explains that *no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood* (T&C 139:5-6). The only way it's to be exercised is by pure knowledge, by love, by meekness, by gentleness, by persuasion.

Well, that lesson also informed how Joseph proceeded, and by the time you get into the Nauvoo era, Mormonism has morphed, once again, into something very different than what it was in *any* of the prior periods. And Joseph Smith begins talking about other very ancient things.—things that look a lot like they could go back to Egypt or before; things that refer to Abraham and lay out a book by revelation of father Abraham. He's beginning to talk about things like pre-earth existence of personalities or spirits or intelligences and how that they were organized and gradated before the world began.

A passage (in the traditional Alma chapter 13) about this priesthood order that existed *from the first place or before the world was* begins to assume a great deal more clarity. Now Joseph is not talking about or attempting to restore New Testament organization. He's attempting to restore *very* ancient understanding about the very nature of man, the very nature of God, the very nature of why this creation came into existence. The “what God is up to in bringing us to this spot” issue is confronted squarely in the Nauvoo era by Joseph Smith. It's a new look and feel for Mormonism. It's edging its way backward to earlier periods of time.

Then you get into the last (about) year of Joseph's life, and he is, more or less, graduating from the church itself; and instead, he's talking about something *different* than the church—he's talking about the *kingdom*. The kingdom that Joseph will begin to organize just very shortly before his death is different from—and distinct altogether from—the church that had been organized with this hierarchy. Joseph Smith begins to move from Church President to *co*-Church President, with Hyrum being given the church as his problem. And Joseph moves over into the “kingdom of God” and announces that it is his ambition within the kingdom of God to begin to create what he calls “kings” and “priests.” He wants to organize kings and priests, not as part of a church organization but something separate. And that body of kings and priests are going to then have what they need to go out and establish their own kingdom. And he wants a group of *those* people to be sufficiently well-equipped with everything they need, so that they can go out into the West.

Because by 1844, now the Indians that had been concentrated through the Indian Relocation Act of 1830 and were sitting right next to Independence, Missouri in 1830 are gone, and they're somewhere in the West. They are in the Black Hills of South Dakota; they're in the Great Western Plains before you reach the Rockies; they're all over the Rocky Mountains. They've scattered all the way out to Oregon. Joseph wants to organize a group of kings and priests who can go out and live among these people and, ultimately, establish the kingdom of God in the West with these people. He's talking in these terms in the last months of his life, but it never gets far enough to be acted on.

When he leaves Nauvoo, just before the summer solstice in 1844, he crossed the river; he was heading out to the West. He was going to go attempt to implement—even if he was the only king and priest that went out there—he intended to implement the plan and program of God and to look for a group of people, natives in the West, in which he could establish the city of the New Jerusalem and, ultimately, have Zion come to exist. He gets persuaded to return to Nauvoo, and he turns back to go to Nauvoo and surrender himself, because if his life is of no value to his friends, then it's no value to himself. And with that, ultimately, the Restoration was doomed to come crashing to a halt. Because no one understood what Joseph was doing or possessed the capacity to continue that Restoration process among the people that were *still* vying for power, control, and authority inside a hierarchy, as opposed to lifting their eyes up and realizing that something more was intended.

Now, Joseph used the words “king” and “priest.” And there are those who say that that desire, that ambition, is exactly in conflict with the Book of Mormon statement that *there shall be no kings upon [this] land* (2 Nephi 7:2 RE), the Americas, and fault Joseph for defying the restriction on kings on this land and attribute the martyrdom to that. However, you'd have to understand what Joseph believed a king and a priest *was* in order to understand what he was trying to restore. The king and the priest is not the strong hand that rules over all; he's the servant that kneels to lift. Christ was the King of the Jews, but His Kingdom is not of this world. Joseph's kingdom would not have been for him to rule and reign and to be the boss; the purpose would be to teach and educate. In fact, arguably, the better word—instead of king and priest—would be **teacher**. Because if he knows more, he has an obligation to teach and, therefore, bring about God's purposes. And if you've got a kingdom, the kingdom itself belongs to God. If you want to have God acknowledge it as the Kingdom of God on earth, God has to be the one who is exclusively in control over the Kingdom. Therefore, you actually need a Revelator, in order to have the Kingdom—because it's dependant upon direction from the King, the *real* King—that is, God—in order to have the proper order exist on earth.

Well, those who say, “I want to have some religious experience, but I don't want to be part of a covenant community,” are perfectly well entitled to say that. But they have no *right*, before God, to be on the land—because a covenant is required in order to receive a land inheritance. If you reject the Covenant—in the eyes of God, in the tradition of the religion that you think you're following— If you study your Old Testament, if you study your New Testament, you're going to realize, and if you read your Book of Mormon, you're going to realize, you have no legal right to be on the land that belongs to God if you're not a Covenant-holder who honors the Covenant. Therefore, at His coming, He will evict you. That is, you will be gathered in bundles and burned (as the allegories go, as the Lord's own parable went) because you don't belong here. You're going to be evicted. Anyone who is

teaching that is saying, “I like a rather incomplete religion; I cherish something that is *part*, but I don't cherish something that is *more*.” It's like the presidency of Zion rebelling in 1838, because things had so changed in the course of events that they did not appreciate how the Restoration was a project that was in motion, and it was not completed.

Well, the Restoration was a process in motion while Joseph was alive. It never reached the finish point. It was always intended to be a work in motion. It has resumed forward motion now. It has not acquired its final developmental stage, nor will it, until the Restoration reaches its culmination. Those who want to fight against it, reject it, depart from it, accept only part of it, not move forward as the thing moves forward are like the people that rebelled when Moses was here. They're like the people that wouldn't accept what Christ was doing. They're like those that said, “I'll go thus far, but no further in the Restoration.” They're saying they want a static religion. They want to know that they've got their hands around it all. And the truth is: *no one* has their hands around it *all*. Because it *all* has not yet been returned.

If we're not willing to accept every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God, then we're not willing to accept the religion that Jesus Christ was advocating. Because *that* religion has never been completed, and it isn't complete now. And if we harden our hearts and if we darken our minds and say, “We will go thus far and no further,” you can have a religion; you can have *something*; in fact, you may have something really, really good, but that doesn't mean you are on board with the religion of Jesus Christ—because *it* is seeking for the completion of the entire return, back to the beginning—a great chiasm, returning back to the starting point—the religion that was here once at the time of Adam.

When someone comes along and advocates in a fellowship that you can do some, but not all, of what the Restoration now includes, what they are really saying is: they want to have their religion reach a dead end. They want a dead religion—and one that makes them feel rather good and become self-satisfied—but they don't want what God would urge them to accept. They don't want to have the prophecies fulfilled. They don't want to have the Covenant that will ensure that they will be around at the Lord's return. They don't want what God offers.

There is a statement in the Book of Mormon—it is a remarkable statement because it's spoken from God's vantage point. But it's a harrowing—it's a pathetic—comment. It instills pathos in the person that hears it. I think Nephi wrote it: “God loveth all who will have him to be their God.” Because anytime you draw a line—anytime you set a mark and say, “I will go thus far and no further” with a God who wants to walk with you from Jerusalem to Emmaus and spend the day conversing with you and opening to your mind how in Moses

(and all the prophets) everything testified of Him, and you say, “No, I'm not willing to go to Emmaus; you got 300 yards, and at the end of 300 yards I'm turning back, because I will go thus far and no further”—they will *never* have the opportunity to break bread and have their eyes opened and realize that they are walking alongside the Savior as they go on this journey.

You don't interrupt it. The religion of Christ is *living*. A living God has a living religion. And a living religion makes us all insecure, 'cause we don't know what's coming next. We have to be humble enough *and* nimble enough to respond to whatever it is that comes next. That makes every one of us uncomfortable. That's who God is; that's what His religion is; that's what we're expected to accept. So, when a false spirit comes along and preaches, “thus far and no further”—or you have to take a detour because the religion is not attempting to accumulate in a restoration fully of all things that go back to the beginning—

We have to become “Jewish Mormons,” or we have to become “Christian Mormons,” or we have to become “Evangelical Mormons,” or we have to become “Buddhist Mormons.” Well, Mormonism includes all of those things, but it isn't *that*. We should believe in a Restoration that is going to culminate in a return of *everything*, including things that we right now don't know about (and will never know about if we don't stay on task with God, welcoming every word that “proceedeth forth from the mouth of God”).

Once the Restoration is set in motion, everyone has to come and enter through the same door. It doesn't happen any other way. All of the men that were called into Jesus's initial quorum had to be baptized. They were already Jews; they had to be baptized. They were already Jews; they had to be commissioned by Him. They were already Jews. I mean, Matthew was a Levite—why did Matthew need Jesus to ordain him? For goodness sake, he already had what he needed to have. All of the brethren who were called within the Nephite group had been practicing baptism, and Jesus comes and says, “Ok, I give you authority to baptize,” and now the people who have been baptized now have to go be baptized. Every time there is a new beginning, it's mandatory that everyone submit to the new beginning, and it doesn't matter who you are: Jew or Gentile, bond or free, black or white, male or female—you have to submit. If you don't, then you're rejecting—you're refusing—to allow Him to be your God. You're saying, “My God is an idol, and that idol is my ancestry.”

There was a time when, had the order been respected, descendance from Hyrum Smith mattered a lot. At this point, it doesn't matter one whit. It's just a historical nicety. It died. Actually, it didn't die—it was killed. The act of apostasy requires deliberate activity, and it was deliberate. The activity resulted in the killing off of what might have been, and

therefore, God has to start anew; and He has, and what started anew stands on it's own and requires that we respond to it on it's own.

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