

Podcast Episode 66: Allegory of the Olive Tree

TODAY, Denver discusses the Allegory of the Olive Tree (Jacob 3 RE).

DENVER: I mentioned that one of the criticisms of the Book of Mormon is the prevalent Christology—as a criticism, because people don't believe that Christ was so openly known, openly talked about, openly *expected* in the pre-Babylonian captivity of the people in the Bible. But in the Book of Mormon we learn that there were some prophets who had left a testimony and a record, before we get to Isaiah, who clearly influenced Isaiah and who spoke openly about the coming of Christ.

One of those prophets was named Zenos. In the Book of Mormon—I forget the total number of words—I went through and I copied and I pasted every quote of the prophet Zenos in the Book of Mormon into a single Word document one time; and I'm going from memory and my memory could be off, but it was in excess of 3,000 words—and I think it was about 3,200 words—that are from the record of Zenos quoted in the Book of Mormon.

From the vernacular within the Book of Mormon, the references there about “the prophet” appear to identify Zenos. When we talk about “the prophet” of the Old Testament, we think of Isaiah; they thought of Zenos. Zenos and Isaiah talk about the same topic. Zenos went before, and Isaiah came after. Zenos was apparently a Northern Kingdom prophet, and Isaiah was a Southern Kingdom prophet. Isaiah's record about Christ is poetic and, like most poetry, tends to be obscure—beautifully crafted language with difficult allegories to understand. Zenos, on the other hand, was pretty blunt and pretty straightforward; you could not miss the point of Zenos. Whereas it's very possible to take the Isaiah text and you can construe it, because of its vague allegories, to mean just about anything, Zenos could not be reformed to eliminate Christology. It was blatantly present in the Zenos text, therefore Zenos got dropped from the Old Testament.

Isaiah, on the other hand, could be used to obscure the Christology because—although he points forward to, in magnificent ways, the coming of the Savior and His sacrifice—the suffering-servant passages could be interpreted to not mean an individual Savior, Jesus Christ, but rather the people of God (or Israel)—who went through so much persecution because they preserved a religion that testified of the true God. And therefore, the language of Isaiah was susceptible of interpretation to construe it away from pointing to Jesus Christ. Zenos could not be so handled or interpreted. He clearly spoke about this coming Savior.

As a result, in the reconstitution of the scriptures, the references contained in Zenos were too plentiful to allow it to get into the canon of scriptures; and it got obliterated from the scriptures that were re-gathered at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. But the record of Zenos was included within what that planting of people in the Book of Mormon took with them. They didn't lose the prophecies of Zenos, and so it informed them about Christ in very specific ways.

The presence of Christology in the Book of Mormon are the inevitable result of possessing scriptures that speak candidly, openly, and frankly about the coming of this Messiah. And so, when you pick up the Book of Mormon and read it, you literally are reading a text that has not been corrupted by these other influences. And the abundant presence of a Christological theology in the Book of Mormon is not evidence that the Book of Mormon is false, but it is evidence that the traditions that surrounded the religion of the Jews—as it came to be understood when Christ came to earth—*that* was what was corrupted. *That* was what was incomplete. *That* was what failed to preserve the original religion that began all the way back with the first fathers, when they learned of a promised Messiah who would save us from the fall of Adam and death entering the world, by reversing that as the “second Adam”—as the apostle Paul described Him—the “second Adam” who would plant a restored family, brought back to life through the power of the resurrection, so that *as in Adam all die, ...so in Christ shall all be made alive* (1 Corinthians 15:22; see also 1 Corinthians 1:63 RE).

Prophecies, as I've said before, revolve around two, and primarily two events only. One being the first coming of the Lord, the other one being the coming of the Lord in judgment at the end of the world. Now there are plenty of prophecies that reckon to other events that are intermediate; however, the primary focus is the first and the second coming of the Lord. The vindication of the promise that the Father made in the beginning that He would redeem us all from the grave, and the vindication of the promise that, at some point, the world would come to an end as to its wickedness, and there would be peace again on the earth—everything revolves around those two prophetic events.

The seed that's to be preserved, and the effort that the Lord has made to try and preserve the seed that He needs to have, in order to establish a population on the earth at His coming, is a topic about which Zenos prophesied—an allegory that was picked up by Jacob, and Jacob preserves it in his testament, the book of Jacob, in chapter 5 (see also Jacob 3:7-28 RE). Nephi wrote the first books in the small plates of Nephi, and in there is his testimony, is his prophecy. What he did was he adopted the words of Isaiah in order to explain what it was that he, Nephi, had seen. But he used Isaiah's words as the means to do that. And Jacob does the same thing.

Jacob says, I want everyone to come up to the temple; I'm going to deliver to you a prophecy (Jacob 4:15; see also Jacob 3:6 RE). And when they get there and he delivers his prophecy, he reads them the allegory—was taken from Zenos—which goes on and on about the history of God's chosen people. And when he finishes reading this lengthy chapter from Zenos, he says, Here's the words of my prophecy—'cause I told ya I was gonna give it—here it is, it's coming: "What I just told you is true." And that's Jacob's testimony. Jacob adopts the words of Zenos in order to bear testimony of the things which he, Jacob, had been taught by the Lord, when the Lord spoke to him face-to-face.

Jacob didn't invent a new allegory. Jacob didn't invent a new narrative. He didn't invent a new story, and he didn't invent new scriptures. He simply took the words of prophets that went before and said, "Here they are. The words of my prophecy are: they are true." Nephi had done the same thing. Jacob does the same thing. And so, in Nephi, Jacob saw the example which he chose to follow; and he did follow. And we're going to look at this prophecy, which—delivered by Zenos—is reaffirmed, ratified, renewed; and a second witness is given to us in the form of Jacob, in the fifth chapter of Jacob. (But as I understand it, we're going to take a two minute break while you change discs, so...).

Alright, so, I want to skip to the time period that is relevant to our day—in Jacob chapter 5, beginning at verse 48—because all the rest of that stuff is past history. And what we're trying to do now is to figure out—from where we are—how we get to the spot in which we might not be burned up, root *and* branch.

Beginning at verse 48: *And it came to pass that the servant said unto his master: Is it not the loftiness of [the] vineyard—have not the branches thereof overcome the roots which are good?* That is to say, the roots—the original covenant, the original stock from which we reckon—they were good. But we've become lofty in the way in which *we* approach things, and as a consequence of that, *we* have done something that has so cumbered the construct of where we find ourselves that we've essentially destroyed the ability of the roots to do us any good.

And because the branches have overcome the roots thereof, behold they grew faster than the strength of the roots, taking strength unto themselves. That is their pride, their haughtiness. They decided that *they* were driving this, and not the covenants that were originally made in the beginning.

Behold, I say, is this not the cause that the trees of [the] vineyard have [all] become corrupted? And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant: Let

us [go down, let us] go to and hew down the trees of the vineyard and cast them into the fire, that they shall not cumber the ground of my vineyard, for I have done all. What could I have done more for my vineyard? But, behold, the servant said unto the Lord of the vineyard: Spare it a little longer. And the Lord said: [Yeah, we'll] spare it a little longer, for it grieveth me that I should lose the trees of my vineyard. (Jacob 5:48-51; see also Jacob 3:23 RE)

See, the Lord, despite the fact that He can't think of anything else that He's left undone in all of His preparations—and it is only that, it is only His preparations— Go to Doctrine & Covenants section 19 and look at what it is that the Lord did for us in the atonement. In describing what He went through, in verse 19 of section 19 of the Doctrine & Covenants, the Lord says: *Glory be to the Father, I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.* That's what He did! And He has finished that. He finished His preparations.

But [verse] 20 now is us: *Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power* (D&C 19:19-20; see also T&C 4:5-6). That's us. He's done His part. What more could He do? Well, the only other thing He could do is rob us of our agency, and He's not prepared to do that because our existence then would come to an end. Because without the freedom to choose, we don't have existence. Therefore, what more could He have done?

But it does grieve Him that He's going to lose the trees of His vineyard. *Wherefore [the Lord says], let us take of the branches of these which I have planted in the nethermost parts of my vineyard [that's where we find ourselves], and let us graft them into the tree from whence they came [that is, let's restore the covenant, or at least make it possible for it to be so]; and let us pluck from the tree those branches whose fruit is most bitter [that's coming], and graft in the natural branches of the tree in the stead thereof. And this will I do that the tree may not perish, that, perhaps [perhaps, on the off chance that—that without the ability to control the outcome, that depending upon what you decide to do—perhaps], [the Lord] may preserve unto [Himself] the roots thereof for mine own purpose* (Jacob 5:52-53; see also Jacob 3:23 RE). That is some of the promises that were made back to the fathers, that their seed would not be utterly destroyed, might be fulfilled—perhaps.

How great a number is required in order for the Lord to vindicate His promise? It's not numerosity; it's never been about a big volume. It's the quality of the salvation. Because if you can save but one, what you have saved is infinite and eternal. And therefore it continues on forever.

Behold, the roots of the natural branches of the tree which I planted whithersoever I would are yet alive. Those promises remain. They are still in play. What the Father promised, what

the covenants that were established did, remain in play. It is yet possible for the Lord to vindicate everything that has been given. *Wherefore, that I may preserve them also for mine own purpose, I will take of the branches of this tree, and I will graft them in unto them.* This is the process by which the house of Israel is restored—not in the way that you mass-produce, but in the way in which some rise up and lay hold upon that original religion that belonged to the fathers, that came down from the beginning, that existed one time, that is to exist again. *Yea, I will graft [into] them the branches of their mother tree, that I may preserve the roots also unto mine own self.* Notice the word “mother” appears in there, too—the mother tree. *When they may be sufficiently strong perhaps they may bring forth good fruit unto me that I may yet have glory in the fruit of my vineyard.*

And then they go through things. Verse 61: *Call servants, that we may labor diligently with our might in the vineyard, that we may prepare the way, that I may bring forth again the natural fruit.* That's the whole purpose of the endeavor. And when they call servants in order to help them, the labor of the servants is confined to trying to make the vineyard finally produce fruit again. Verse 62:

Let us go to and labor with our might this last time, for behold the end draweth nigh, and this is for the last time that I shall prune my vineyard. [He tells them again in verse 64:] *...the last time, for the end draweth nigh. And if it be so that these last grafts shall grow, and [shall] bring forth natural fruit, then [ye shall] prepare the way for them, that they may grow.* [Again in verse 71:] *For behold, this is the last time that I shall nourish my vineyard; for the end is nigh...the season speedily cometh...if ye labor with your might with me ye shall have joy in the fruit which I shall lay up unto myself against the time which will soon come. And it came to pass...the servants did go and labor with their might; and the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them.*

Because the Lord, in the last effort, is not going to leave the servants that he sends unattended to by *His* ministrations. This is why in the verses we've been reading, and every location we've been at, we find the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ direct, immediate, and involved. He continues to remain personally in charge of what is going to happen. But as it begins to happen, they have to sit back and watch. Because the question isn't “Is the labor any less, any (less) well prepared, any less capable, any less complete?” The question is: “What are the branches going to do?”

You can minister all you want to the tree, but the tree has to respond—sometimes to what they view as offensive pruning, offensive digging, offensive conduct of cutting, and moving, and grafting, and saying, “What you have here is error; what you have here is a bundle of false traditions that will damn you.”

You can plant the doctrine; you can restore the truth; you can have the Prophet Joseph Smith declare to you that he wants to be held to account for every word of the testimony that he delivers to you in a canonized set of scripture. But if you decide that you're going to throw that away, and you will not allow it to graft in and inform you about the nature of God, and the nature of the religion that God is seeking to deliver to you; then the ministration, and the pruning, and the care does not result in fruit. It simply results in a rather damaged vineyard continuing to produce precious little, other than what is suitable to be gathered in bundles and burned—the loftiness of the people.

Grafting is to restore, to reconnect, to return; or in other words, to *plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers. And the hearts of the children shall turn to [the] fathers*. That's what Moroni said. That's why Moroni reworked the language of Malachi in verse 39 of the Joseph Smith History: *He shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers* (see also T&C JSH 3:4). The work has been for one purpose. Joseph Smith began it; and he laid out all the information necessary for you to be able to identify who the fathers are. And he laid out all the information necessary for you to be able to identify what the covenants were.

And now, the question is, are we able at this point to preserve the roots—which is the Lord's purpose—by producing fruit in our day. The vineyard, that the Lord began the restoration in, was cumbered with all sorts of strange fruit. I mean, I've spent a lifetime referring to it as the Jacob chapter 5. In the new Book of Mormon layouts, it's one of the very few chapters that I can actually point you to from memory. It's Jacob chapter 3 in the new layout. So, I'm becoming familiar with it.

Talking about the condition of this vineyard, and it's cumbered with all sorts of strange fruit—none of it worth harvesting; none of it worth keeping; none of it worth laying up and preserving against the harvest—the allegory says:

This is the last time that I shall nourish my vineyard; for the end is nigh at hand, and the season speedily cometh; and if ye labor with your [mights] with me ye shall have joy in the fruit [with] which I shall lay up unto myself against the time which will soon come. And it came to pass that the servants did go and labor with their mights; and the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them; and they did obey the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard in all things. (Jacob 5:71-72; see also Jacob 3:26-27 RE)

Well, that's fairly critical! The Lord's going to labor with you, but He's going to expect you to obey His commandments in all things. Have you recently read the Answer to the Prayer

for Covenant? Are you determined to obey the Master of the vineyard and His commandments in all things? Maybe we ought to read that *twice* before we berate one another, belittle one another, argue with one another, dismiss one another. Otherwise, we're really not laboring with the Lord of the vineyard to help for the coming harvest. Instead, we're embracing a false spirit, and we're dividing one another, and we're trying—Our ambition, whether we're willing to acknowledge it or not, our ambition is to set this into the same sort of divisive factions as the Lord condemned to Joseph in 1820. They have *a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof. They teach for commandments the doctrines of men. They're **all** corrupt* (see JSH 1:19; see also T&C JSH 2:5).

And there began to be the natural fruit again in the vineyard; and the natural branches began to grow and thrive exceedingly; and the wild branches began to be plucked off and to be cast away (Jacob 5:73; see also Jacob 3:27 RE). Some of the plucking and some of the casting away is voluntarily done by those who submit to false spirits that stir them up to anger against one another, and they depart from fellowship thinking themselves justified before God—when, in fact, all they're doing is being plucked and cast away.

And they did keep the root and the top thereof equal, according to the strength thereof. We are seeking to keep it equal. Every one of us is on the same plain. No one's getting supported by tithing money. If they are, that's done by a local fellowship that has voluntarily determined that they have one among them in need, because the tithes are gathered and used to help the poor. There's no general fund being accumulated, and there's no one who does anything that they get compensated for.

This is the only group of people whose religion requires, *incessantly*, sacrifice. No one gets paid. No one gets remunerated. Everything that's done is done at a price of sacrifice. If you're a person in need among a fellowship, the tithes are appropriately used because that's what they're for. They're for the poor. They're not for a leader.

You have to keep the root and you have to keep the top equal. If you allow inequality to creep in at the beginning, the end result is lavish palaces—in which some fare sumptuously. And others ask to eat the crumbs that fall from the table because they're treated so unequally; and their despair, and their poverty, and their need goes ignored. Among us, it can't go ignored because the money is gathered at a fellowship level. And if there is someone in need among you, and you don't minister to their needs, **you're cruel**.

And thus they labored, with all diligence, according to the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard, even until the bad had been cast away (Jacob 5:74; see also Jacob 3:27 RE). If you can't tolerate equality; if you can't tolerate the top and the root being equal; if you can't

tolerate peace among brethren; then go ahead and be bad and cast yourself away. If you feel moved upon to do that, well that's the Lord of the vineyard getting rid of you.

Even until the bad had been cast away out of the vineyard, and the Lord had preserved unto himself that the trees had become again the natural fruit; and they became like unto one body; and the [fruit] were equal. That word "equal" shows up so often in the labor that the Lord of the vineyard is trying to accomplish with the people, that you ought to take note. We ought to probably typeset it **EQUAL**—in double-sized font. We're not going to do that, so you have to underline the word, or circle the word, or pay attention to it. The purpose is to go and become equal with one another. As soon as you set out to create rank, and position, and hierarchy— Admittedly, within the parable there is a top and there is a root, admittedly, but the objective is to achieve equality. If you start out saying the one is greater or better than the other, you're never going to arrive at the point that is the purpose of the parable. The purpose of the labor of the Lord of the vineyard and the fruit were equal.

The greatest instruction (that I know of) given by God—at any time to any generation—is a rule of community found in the Sermon on the Mount and in the Sermon at Bountiful. *Now* we have the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant, that not only resonates with the message of those two sermons, but applies it directly to us in our peculiar circumstances—to fix our peculiar defects and urge us to become more like Him.

The Lord revealed His plan for our day approximately 3,000 years ago. We now begin fulfilling that ancient prophecy. Our current struggles were foreseen and foretold. The Lord of the whole earth considered destroying all the wicked, but His servant pled for him to grant more time (see Jacob 5:49-50; see also Jacob 3:23 RE). The Lord of the whole earth hearkened to His servant and decreed that He would spare it, and would labor within His vineyard a final time in our day (verse 51).

The Lord determined long ago He would use a covenant to graft back people who had become wild and bitter, and connect them to the original roots of the Tree of Life; or in other words, restore people in our day to His covenant. The covenant offered today is from God, and is the first step required to restore the family of God, or Tree of Life, on the earth. It will change the lost, wild, and bitter fruit, and begin to recover them and turn their hearts to the fathers. This will connect those who are living today with the natural roots, or those fathers who still hold rights under the original covenant (verses 52-54).

Work for this grafting began years ago, and it took a great leap forward approximately two years ago with the effort to recover, as near as possible, the text of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith revelations. The initial graft happens today.

Although the Book of Mormon has remained in print continuously since its first publication in 1830, Latter-day Saints did not respect it as scripture until the 1950s. The book has been a test and not the fulsome revelation of all God's dealings, even with the Nephites. *And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith, and if it so be that they shall believe these things then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them* (3 Nephi 26:9; see also 3 Nephi 12:1 RE).

From its founding until 1937, Brigham Young University did not offer a single course on the Book of Mormon. Only in 1961 did it become mandatory for incoming BYU freshmen to take a class on the Book of Mormon.

Hugh Nibley defended the Book of Mormon in a debate with Sterling McMurrin in 1955. Nibley offended nearly all those who were in attendance because of his serious defense, some of whom declared flatly that the Book of Mormon needed to be abandoned because it was driving the best minds out of the church (Peterson, Boyd Jay, *Hugh Nibley: A Consecrated Life*. SLC: Greg Kofford Books, 2002, p.160). Although Hugh Nibley advocated taking the Book of Mormon seriously in the 1950s, the Saints only began to take it seriously after Ezra Taft Benson's General Conference talk in 1986.

The church was underwhelmed with the Book of Mormon until late in the 20th century. Noel B. Reynolds wrote about this Church-wide neglect in his article *The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon in the Twentieth Century*, found at BYU Studies, Volume 38. He wrote, "Book of Mormon was largely overlooked throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A handful of Church leaders appealed for more serious attention to the book, however the Church as a whole did not respond in any dramatic way to any of these urgent messages until after President Benson's emphatic messages in 1986."

Within 18 months of the restoration through Joseph Smith, the Saints were condemned for unbelief. By January 1841, the Saints were warned they would be rejected, with their dead, if they failed to repent and keep God's commandments (see D&C 84:54-57; see also T&C 82:20). They did not repent, and so, the restoration has been in a pause for four and five generations, waiting for God to begin it anew. 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; see also Jacob 3:23 RE). 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 (that's verse 53).

A few descendants of the covenant fathers have the natural gift of faith. That gift belongs to the natural branches (that's verse 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 (verses 56 and 57). Today, only the "most bitter" who refuse to be grafted in will be trimmed away (verse 57).

We look forward to more "nourishing"—or restoring of truths, light, and commandments—which will bless those who receive. But for those who will not, the continuing restoration will prune them away (verse 58). These bitter and wild branches must still be cut off and cast away. These steps are necessary to preserve the opportunity for the natural fruit to fully return (verse 59). The *good* must overcome the evil. This takes time, and it means that the Lord's patience is extended to give time to develop and further improve.

We are not expected, and cannot become natural fruit in a single step. But we are expected to accept the initial graft today. The Lord is taking these steps so that "perhaps"—and that's a deliberate word—perhaps we may become natural fruit worthy to be preserved in the coming harvest (that's verse 60). "Perhaps" is the right word. Some who were grafted will still be plucked away and burned. But others will bear natural fruit and be preserved.

Accepting the covenant is not the final step. Our choices will determine whether we are bitter or natural fruit—*that* will decide our fate. Just as the ancient allegory foretold, the covenant makes us servants and laborers in the vineyard (verse 61). We are required to—this is from the covenant—*Seek to recover the lost sheep remnant of this land and of Israel and no longer forsake them. Bring them unto [the Lord] and teach them of [His] ways, to walk in them* (T&C 158:11). If we fail to labor to recover them, we break the covenant.

We must labor for this last time in the Lord's vineyard. There is an approaching, final pruning of the vineyard (verse 62). The first to be grafted in are gentiles, so that the last may be first. The lost sheep remnant next, and then Israelites, so that the first may be last (verse 63). But grafting is required for all, even the remnants, because God works with His people through covenant making.

There will be more grafting and further pruning. As more is revealed, and therefore more is required, some will find the “digging” and “dunging” too much to bear and will fall away; or in other words will be pruned despite the covenant (that’s verse 64). The covenant makes it possible for natural fruit to return. The bad fruit will still continue, even among the covenant people, until there is enough strength in the healthy branches for further pruning.

It requires natural fruit to appear before the final pruning takes place (verse 65). The good and bad will co-exist. It will damage the tree to remove the bad at once; therefore the Lord's patience will continue for some time yet. The rate of removing the bad is dependent wholly upon the rate of the development of the good.

It is the Lord's purpose to create *equality* in His vineyard. In the allegory, equality in the vineyard appears three times—in verses 66, 72, and 74. We cannot be greater and lesser, nor divide ourselves into an hierarchy to achieve the equality required for Zion. When a group is determined to remain equal (and I am personally determined to be no greater than any other), then it faces challenges that never confront unequal people. A religion of bosses and minions never deals with any of the challenges of being equals. Critics claim we will never succeed—because of our determined desire for equality. None of our critics can envision what the Lord has said in verses 66, 72, and 74 about His people. But equality among us is the only way prophesied for us to succeed. That does not mean we won't have a mess as we learn how to establish equality.

Similarly, Zion cannot be established by isolated and solitary figures proclaiming a “testimony of Jesus” from their home keyboard. The challenge of building a community must be part of a process. Zion is a community, and therefore, God is a God of community; and His people must learn to live together with one heart, one mind, with no poor among us. Isolated keyboardists proclaiming their resentment of community can hardly speak temperately of others. How could they ever live peacefully in a community of equals? *We must become precious to each other.*

Although the laborers in this final effort are “few,” you will be the means used by the Lord to complete His work in His vineyard (verse 70). You're required to labor with your might to finish the Lord's work in His vineyard (verse 72). But *He* will labor alongside you. *He*, not a man or a committee, will call *you* to do work. When He calls, do not fear—but do not run faster than you have strength. We must find His people in the highways and byways; invite them to join in. Zion will include people from every part of the world. This conference is broadcast worldwide as part of the prophecy to Enoch that God would send:

Righteousness and truth will [He] cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. (Moses 7:62; see also Genesis 4:22 RE)

We must proclaim this to the world.

Do not despair when further pruning takes place, it must be done. Only through pruning can the Lord keep His Tree of Life *equal*, without those who are lofty overcoming the body (verse 73). The lofty branches have always destroyed equality to prevent Zion. The final result of the Lord's labor in His vineyard is declared by the ancient prophet in unmistakable clarity: *The trees have become again the natural fruit; and they became like unto one body; and the fruits were equal; and the Lord of the vineyard had preserved unto himself the natural fruit, which was most precious unto him from the beginning.* Mark those words (that's verse 74).

When the Lord explained this to me I realized how foolish it was to expect “natural fruit” worthy of preservation in an instant. The Lord works patiently, methodically, and does not require any to run faster than they have strength (see Mosiah 4:27; see also Mosiah 2:6 RE).

We cannot allow ourselves to be drawn in to inequality when the result of this labor is to make us one body, equal with one another. We cannot imitate the failures of the past by establishing an hierarchy—elevating one above another and forgetting that we must be of one heart, one mind, and no poor among us.

The restoration was never intended to just restore an ancient Christian church. That is only a halfway point. It must go back further. In the words of the ancient prophet, God intends to do *...according to [His] will; and [to] preserve the natural fruit, that it is good, even like as it was in the beginning* (verse 75). This means the beginning, as in the days of Adam, with the return of the original religion and original authority. Everything must be returned as it was in the beginning.

Civilization began with the temple as the center of learning, law, and culture. The temple was the original university because it taught of man's place with God in the universe. God will return the right of dominion, once held by Adam, to man on earth—to make us humble, servant-gardeners laboring to return the world to a peaceful Paradise. The covenant received today restores part of that right. There is a land inheritance given to us as part of

the covenant; and therefore, if we keep the covenant, we have the right to remain when others will be swept away.

Ultimately, all rights given to us must be turned back to the fathers who went before; who will likewise return them to Adam; who will surrender them to Christ. When Christ returns, He will come with the right to exercise complete dominion over the earth, and exercise judgment over the ungodly. Things set into motion today are part of preparing the way for the Lord's return in glory.

The foregoing are excerpts taken from:

- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #5 given in Sandy, Utah, on September 7, 2018;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #4 entitled "Covenants" given in Centerville, Utah, on October 6, 2013;
- Denver's lecture entitled "Signs Follow Faith" given in Centerville, Utah, on March 3, 2019; and
- His "Opening Remarks", given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, Idaho, on September 3rd, 2017.

In addition, Denver has written extensively about this topic. If you are interested in learning more, please review the following blog posts:

<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/03/nephis-brother-jacob-conclusion/>

<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/03/jacob-chapter-5/>

<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/03/jacob-5-3-6/>

<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/03/jacob-5-7-9/>

<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/03/jacob-5-10-13/>

<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/03/jacob-5-14-18/>

<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/03/jacob-5-19-26/>

<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/04/jacob-5-27-33/>

<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/04/jacob-5-34-37/>

<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/04/jacob-5-38-41/>

<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/04/jacob-5-42-47/>

<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/04/jacob-5-48-51/>

<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/04/jacob-5-52/>

<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/04/jacob-5-53-56/>
<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/04/jacob-5-57-59/>
<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/04/jacob-5-60-63/>
<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/04/jacob-5-64-65/>
<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/04/jacob-5-66-70/>
<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/04/jacob-5-71-73/>
<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/04/jacob-5-74-75/>
<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/04/jacob-5-76-77/>
<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/04/themes-from-jacob-5/>
<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/04/themes-from-jacob-5-part-2/>
<https://denversnuffer.com/2012/04/themes-from-jacob-part-3/>