

## Episode 97: God in Our Day, Part 1

**This is the first part of a special series on what God is doing in our day.**

DENVER: 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[that is, their pride, their haughtiness; they decided that they were driving this and not the covenants that were originally made in the beginning], Behold, I say, is not this the cause that the trees of thy vineyard have [all] become corrupted? And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant: 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: Yea, I will 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 3:22-23 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 and 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 and Covenants—the Lord says: *Glory be to the Father, I partook and finished **my preparations** unto the children of men* (emphasis added; see also T&C 4:5). That's what He did! And He has finished that. He finished His preparations. But 20, now, is us: *Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power* (ibid, para. 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 [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]. (Jacob 5:52-53, see also Jacob 3:23 RE)*

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... (ibid, vs. 54).* 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 (ibid).* 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 (ibid).*

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...*(see also *ibid*, para. 25). 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* (*ibid*).

He tells them again in verse 64: *...the last time, for the end draweth nigh. And if it [so be] that these last grafts shall grow, and [shall] bring forth...natural fruit, then [ye shall] prepare the way for them, that they may grow* (*ibid*).

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.* (See also *Jacob 3:26 RE*)

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 in 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 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, moving, and grafting, and saying, 'What you have here is error. What you have here is a bundle of false tradition 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 colonized 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 ministrations 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 into bundles and burned

Okay, let's go back to that 11th chapter of Isaiah (Isaiah 5:3 RE), because man, have we made a mess of that. Okay, this is about to be fulfilled. *There shall come forth*—this is chapter 11 of Isaiah—*There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse*. The Rod is a servant who is a descendent of Jesse—who is a Levite—and Ephraim, unto whom is rightly belonging the priesthood. Keep your finger there on that chapter 11 of Isaiah, and turn back to Doctrine and Covenants section 113, and you'll see where these words are explained. Who is the Stem...spoken of...

*Verily thus saith the Lord: It is Christ. Verse 3: What is the rod spoken of in the fifth verse of the 11th chapter of Isaiah, that should come of the Stem of Jesse? Behold... saith the Lord: It is a servant [a servant!] in the hands of Christ, who is partly a descendant of Jesse... as well as of Ephraim, or of the house of Joseph, on whom there is laid much power. (See also T&C 129: 1-2)*

Well, look. Until you succeed, you've failed. I don't care who comes along, claiming whatever they want to claim. Until the work is done, you can't take credit for it—period. There's all kinds of nonsense that circulates about 'Who has the keys? Button, button, who's got the button?' Look, someone's going to do a work. When the work is done, you will know. Until the work is done, no one can be identified with the role—period. It is arrogance; it is pretentiousness; it is foolishness for anyone to step forward and say: 'I, I, I am that man!' Do the work. Finish the course. Fulfill the covenant. You do that, you can take the name. Until you do the work, it's just noise.

So there's gonna come forth:

*A rod out of the stem of Jesse...a Branch shall grow out of his roots:...the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. [Oh, thank God! Someone will finally fear the Lord more than they fear man! I look forward to that moment.] And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth:...he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth. [In this context it is the word of God.] And with the breath of his lips [he] shall...slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins,...faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf...shall dwell with the lamb,...the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. [These things are shortly to come to pass.] And the cow and the bear shall feed; and their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The sucking*

*child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. [You see, it's knowledge, full of knowledge of the Lord. That's what you have to lay hold on.] And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left. (Isaiah 11:1-11; see also Isaiah 5:3-4 RE)*

Well, this shall shortly come to pass. Not then, not that day, but by and by.

You know, when a branch is spoken of, if you look at John 15:1-6 (I'm not going to do that because our time is far spent; see also John 9:10 RE), but Christ gives a sermon about Him being the "true vine," about how you cannot bear fruit unless you are connected to the true vine. Once again, that is a genealogical term; that is a "family of God" term; that is a "son of God" term, and He intends to make many sons of God.

Joseph is receiving, in this first interview with the angel Moroni, an announcement about the first indications of the restoration of God's intent to restore a holy family. God is telling us what He wants. He—God—wants to have upon the earth again His family. But we must respond—we. This is your dispensation; this is your time. You came down here with the intent of living and finding the things that will bring you back. This is your opportunity. Don't let some other group claim that it doesn't belong to you. These scriptures are only going to be fulfilled when enough people awake and arise to realize that it is devolving upon you the obligation to find, to heed, to seek, to search, to pray, to obey, and to form what is necessary in order to fulfill the promises and the covenants that were made to the fathers.

Another statement from Joseph makes it clear the Restoration was intended to reintroduce the original religion of the Bible, not the diluted Christianity of his day. The original Faith, in the first dispensations, had more understanding than what we find preserved in the Bible. Joseph was searching back into these beginnings. His heart was *turned to the fathers* of the first generations. He wanted a return of their original as part of the end. It was to be nothing less. Consider this declaration:

*[H]as the day of miracles ceased? Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he do so, so long as time lasts, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. For it is by faith that miracles are*

*wrought. It is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men. Wherefore, if these things have ceased, woe be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain. For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith on his name. Wherefore, if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also, and awful is the state of man, for they are as though there had been no redemption made. (Moroni 7:35-38; see also Moroni 7:7 RE)*

If the heavens open to us, we have faith. If the heavens are brass, we are faithless. Without faith, it is as if Christ provided us no redemption. These words are as inspiring as they are sobering.

At the conclusion of the vision of the three-heavens, Joseph wrote the following. It clarifies that we are supposed to access heaven, and see for ourselves the glory to be found there:

*But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of His Kingdom which He showed unto us, which surpasses all understanding, in glory, and in might, and in dominion, which He commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for men to utter, neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Ghost, which God bestows on those who love him and purify themselves before Him, to whom He grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves that through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear His presence in the world of glory. (D&C 76:114-118; see also T&C 69:29)*

This privilege of seeing and knowing for ourselves is available to us *while in the flesh*. The Restoration aimed to reconnect us to Heaven in a literal way. This is the same that transpired with Enoch and others in earlier Dispensations.

The Book of Mormon is filled with ascension lessons and examples. There is one verse that captures Joseph Smith's ascent theology. That verse compresses it into a single sentence. It explains why the Book of Mormon contains the *fullness of the gospel*. And it's perhaps Joseph's most inspired declaration:

*Verily thus says the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsakes their sins, and comes unto me, and calls on my name, and obeys my voice, and keeps my commandments, shall see my face and know that I Am, and that I am the true light that lights every man who comes into the world[.] (D&C 93:1-2; see also T&C 93:1)*

*Every soul* includes you and me. Every one of us has equal access to the Lord. The conditions are the same for all. Forsake sins; come to Christ; call on His name; obey His voice; keep His commandments. This is far more challenging than obedience to a handful of “thou shalt nots” because so much is required to be done, so much required to be known. A great deal of study and prayer is required to stand in the presence of the Lord. Once done, we shall see His face and know that He is the true light that enlightens every one. He is the God of the whole world.

Immediately after His resurrection, Christ did not minister to gentiles. But after the Book of Mormon came forth, Gentiles are also eligible for Christ’s ministry in very deed:

*And it shall come to pass that if the Gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day that He shall manifest himself unto them in word and also in power, and in very deed, unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks[.]* (1 Nephi 14:1; see also 1Ne 3:25 RE)

His promise to us is predicated on hearkening to the Lamb. Gentiles failed to do so, and upon Joseph’s death, a great dearth set upon the Restoration. Until there is Gentile repenting and returning, it will continue to unwind. Since June 27, 1844 we have a Restoration slow moving car wreck. The pace of that decay is accelerating.

We must rage against the fading of that light, *and seek the face of the Lord always, that in patience we may possess our souls, and...have Eternal life* (D&C 101:38; see also T&C 101:6).

Evidence of Christ is everywhere. Joseph used cosmological terms in a passage describing the importance of light coming from Christ and His Father:

*He is in the sun and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. ...He is in the moon and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made, as also the light of the stars and the power thereof by which they were made, and the earth also....* (D&C 88:7-10; see also T&C 86:1)

If you are alive, you are connected to Christ. If you detect the light of the sun, you detect a testimony of Christ. If you behold the moon moving in her cycles overhead, you behold a testimony of Christ.

False traditions are as destructive for us as outright disobedience. The result is the same. The difference is that when we know we disobey we feel guilt, but false traditions fool us into thinking we’re obedient when we are merely misled.

Joseph also provided us with Christ's personal explanation of what He endured in order to atone for our sins. It is a profound statement, more so I think than anything found in the Four Gospels about the suffering that Christ had. [I'm looking at the time. I'll put this paper up on my website for you to read.]

There are hundreds of potential quotes that could be added to this paper. One final quote will end this part of the paper: *[W]hen ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God* (Mosiah 2:17; see also Mosiah 1:8 RE).

This was how Christ lived His life. He showed forth the glory of God by serving and elevating others. We, too, can serve God by giving comfort to our fellow men and women. There is no end to the opportunities to help others. This life is abundant in opportunity to reflect God's grace, kindness, and help by service to others. If you act that part, you are in God's service. Think Sub-for-Santa and consider joining Sub-for-God. It will add 364 days of opportunity.

The angel who visited Joseph in 1823 said his name would be had for good and evil among all people. A similar message was repeated 16 years later in March 1839 when the voice of the Lord spoke to Joseph in Liberty Jail. God said to Joseph,

*The ends of the earth shall inquire after your name, and fools shall have you in derision, and Hell shall rage against you, while the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under your hand. And your people shall never be turned against you by the testimony of traitors, and although their influence shall cast you into trouble, and into bars and walls, you shall be had in honor.* (D&C 122:1-4; see also T&C 139:9)

Although these two are similar, there is a profound difference between the angel's statement in 1823 and the voice of God in 1839. The angel only said people would speak good and evil of Joseph. But God added a description of those who would speak evil, and those who would speak good of Joseph.

That voice of God said, *fools shall have [Joseph] in derision*. Because I accept this statement as God's, I am led to conclude all who have spoken derisively of Joseph have done so foolishly. We ought to stop our foolishness. We need to end the derision of Joseph.

God also condemned the *testimony of traitors* against Joseph. While alive, Joseph identified some of his contemporary traitors and named them: George Hinkle, John Corril, Reed Peck,



David Whitmer, W. W. Phelps, Sampson Avard, William McLellin, John Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, Thomas Marsh, and Orson Hyde. These had been prominent leaders, trusted friends, and one-time believers in Mormonism. It was false testimony from those from within the flock that led to imprisonment of Joseph and other leaders.

The traitors of 1838 were joined by yet more traitors between 1842 and '44. In Missouri, Joseph was accused of treason and inciting violence. In 1842-44, Joseph's traitors accused him of adultery, polygamy and lying. John C. Bennett was a sexual predator who claimed, amidst his secret seductions, that Joseph Smith authorized him to engage in his promiscuity.

When his misconduct came to light, Bennett admitted Joseph authorized no such wickedness. He swore under oath,

“that he never was taught any thing in the least contrary to the strictest principles of the Gospel, or of virtue, or of the laws of God, or man, under any circumstances, or upon any occasion either directly or indirectly, in word or deed, by Joseph Smith: and that he never knew the said Smith to countenance any improper conduct whatever, either in public or private; and that he never did teach me in private that an illicit, illegal intercourse with the females was, under any circumstances, justifiable; and that I never knew him so to teach others.” (“To the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and to all the honorable part of Community.” *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 3 (July 1, 1842) pp. 840-41.)

William Law was also involved in secret adultery, and Joseph Smith refused to seal Law's marriage. A conspiracy of traitors in 1844 included William Law, Charles Ivins, Francis Higbee, Chauncey Higbee, Robert Foster and Charles Foster, who published the *Nauvoo Expositor* accusing Joseph Smith of the very evil Joseph had been hunting down and eradicating through high council proceedings since the Bennett affair had become public two years earlier.

Joseph was unequivocal in his opposition to adultery and plural wife taking. About the time Bennett's misconduct was beginning to come to light, Joseph Smith organized the Female Relief Society to encourage moral and chaste conduct in Nauvoo. In addition to the steps he took privately to discipline those involved directly, he made many public declarations against plural wives and in favor of chastity and moral purity. These included, among others, among many others:

“Inasmuch as the public mind has been unjustly abused through the fallacy of Dr. Bennett’s letters, we make an extract on the subject of marriage, showing the rule of the church on this important matter. The extract is from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and is the only rule allowed by the Church. *‘Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy; we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and [that] one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.’* (“Notice.” *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 3 [September 1, 1842], p. 909; “Marriage.” *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section C1, 1835, p. 251.)

That was published in the *Times and Seasons*. And then a letter that was also published in the *Times and Seasons*:

“As we have lately been credibly informed, that an Elder of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter-day Saints, by the name of Hiram Brown, has been preaching Polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines, in the county of Lapeer, state of Michigan. This is to notify him and the Church in general, that he has been cut off from the church, for his iniquity; and he is further notified to appear at the Special Conference, on the 6th of April next, to make answer to these charges.” (“Notice.” *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 5 [February 1, 1844], p. 423.)

And then in a talk that he gave:

“What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers.” (*History of the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 411.)

He also encouraged the Relief Society to adopt a declaration titled “A Voice of Innocence.” It was read publicly by W. W. Phelps on March 7, 1844, then edited by Emma Smith, adopted by the Relief Society, and published in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* on March 20, 1844.

Because of the testimony of traitors, Joseph Smith has been held in derision from 1842 to the present. He is accused of being a sexual predator, liar, and adulterer. Fools have repeated the accusations originally made by the confessed adulterer John C. Bennett, though Bennett testified under oath that Joseph was not responsible and never behaved in any improper way toward women.

In the derision of Joseph today we now have a chorus that includes the LDS Church, which claims him as their founder. It comes from Brian Hales, who claims to be an accurate biographer. It comes from anti-Mormons, and Christian ministers, and fundamentalists who have created a caricature they claim to be Joseph. There is little difference between these people and William Law, Charles Ivins, Francis Higbee, Chauncey Higbee, Robert Foster, and Charles Foster, who published the *Nauvoo Expositor*. There is an immense chorus of fools holding Joseph in derision, even among those who claim to be devout followers of the faith he restored.

I think the voice Joseph heard in Liberty Jail was God's. If I am right, then God's advice to *the pure in heart, wise, noble, and virtuous* is to *seek counsel, authority and blessing* from Joseph. God's advice leads me to adopt a view of Joseph that is consistent with nobility and virtue. I do not believe you can regard Joseph as a sexual predator, liar, and adulterer without holding him in derision. The chief and unavoidable result of thinking of Joseph in those terms has been a legacy of excusing institutional lying, and promoting adulterous thoughts, and inappropriately entertaining the concept of women as mere breeding stock for the use of men.

It is not possible to harbor lustful, deceitful and adulterous thoughts in your heart and claim to be pure in heart. I do not believe you can conspire to commit bigamy and adultery and claim to be virtuous. I do not believe you can decide to trust the words of traitors and villains who contradict Joseph's account of his marital fidelity to Emma and to claim to seek counsel from Joseph. In short, those who claim to accept the restoration, but believe Joseph was a sexual predator, do not qualify as noble, wise, virtuous, or pure in thought.

All the restorationist groups that descend from the Brighamites are religious polygamists. Whether they think it right to practice that abomination at present, or only think it a true part of their religion, they are polygamists. Their faith descends from a great whore, and her daughters are likewise whores. It's time for those involved to awaken to their awful situation and admit their mother is a whore.

Joseph said and wrote a great deal publicly to condemn plural marriage. He said nothing in public to defend or justify it. Ok? We have an enormous record of Joseph opposing and condemning. We have no public declaration from Joseph Smith advocating or defending it. Clearly he did not want to be known as its advocate. He wanted to be understood as a staunch opponent of it.

It's important to realize the restoration was hijacked by polygamy and has never regained the momentum Joseph envisioned. That abomination has darkened men's hearts and

broken women's hearts. It is used to justify looking upon women with lust in men's hearts, contrary to the Lord's command in the sermon on the mount.

I hold Joseph in some considerable esteem. On the lightning-rod issue of plural wives, I've decided the historical record does not convict Joseph of polygamy, lying, deception, sexual improprieties, or exploitation of women. If I thought of Joseph Smith as a man capable of such things I would join his traitors in deriding him. I prefer to think him virtuous and noble. I think it is only possible for any person whose heart is pure, and who prizes virtue, wisdom, and nobility to respect Joseph Smith by regarding him as pure, wise, noble, and virtuous. To me, adultery, promiscuity, and deceit are none of those things.

I reject adultery by any name or description. It's morally wrong if you call it plural wives, polygamy, celestial marriage, or any other misnomer. Adultery is prohibited in the Ten Commandments, and remains an important prohibition for any moral society.

Mormonism should never have been saddled with Brigham Young's program of making adultery a sacrament. But Mormonism should not have been saddled with many institutional accretions. Between June 27, 1844 and today, there have been too many incorrect subtractions, and far too many uninspired additions. Mormonism today requires both dramatic subtractions and necessary additions. No one seems willing to do that with the precision required to *strive to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (2 Timothy 2:15; see also 2 Timothy 1:6 RE).

Brigham Young was not the only one who betrayed Joseph and caused his memory to be held in derision. David Whitmer betrayed Joseph in 1838, testified against him, and helped cause his Missouri imprisonment. Many years later, Whitmer's testimony as a traitor and accuser was published in "An Address to All Believers in Christ." Though he had been excommunicated in 1838 and never lived in Nauvoo, he accepted and echoed the *Nauvoo Expositor's* claims about Joseph and polygamy.

Bastille posed the question in a song, "Pompeii": "Where do we begin? The rubble or our sins?" I think it begins with our sins. They first have to be set aside through Christ. But afterwards we have a Mormon landscape filled with rubble, out of joint, out of level, out of plumb, collapsed, or collapsing. Mormonism's founding texts tells us this is as it should be for the present. We were never supposed to see Zion before the witnessed Gentile failure and apostasy.

Christ declared to the Nephites a warning to the Gentiles:

*“And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you, At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel and shall reject the fullness of my gospel and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings and of deceits and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy and murders and priestcrafts and whoredoms and of secret abominations, and if they shall do all those things and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, Behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fullness of my gospel from among them.” (3 Nephi 16:10; see also 3 Nephi 7:5 RE)*

This is not phrased as a possibility, but as an inevitability. It was never a question of “if” the gentiles would reject the fullness. It has always been only a matter of “when” it would take place. The various institutions quarrel over whether it has happened. Some of them deny it can or will happen. The soothing mantra “we will never lead you astray” defies the message Christ was commanded by the Father to declare to us.

Joseph Smith has been held in derision for too long. Even those who claim to follow the commandments from God that came through him, deride his memory. This has gone on unchecked for far too long. The saints fell under condemnation in 1831 for taking lightly the Book of Mormon and former commandments given through Joseph Smith. Then eight years later we’re warned it was foolish to hold Joseph in derision. Reclaiming the restoration requires repentance. First, recovering and accepting the text of the Book of Mormon, and restoring the former commandments to what God originally spoke. That’s been done by a small group of remnant believers. But second, we need to end the derision of Joseph and acknowledge that he was pure of heart, noble, and virtuous, and to act accordingly. It’s foolish to magnify his errors to justify our own. It’s wicked to attribute uncommitted sins to him to give ourselves a license to sin. Generations have been cursed for this error. We have been led astray. All of us in every branch of Mormonism err.

We’ve stumbled, and we’ve fallen down. We’ve discarded the expansive theology of Joseph Smith. The earliest dispensations had truth from Heaven as their guide. Joseph began re-assembling what was lost, but was slain before it was completed. We are the offspring of Heaven, and are capable of reuniting with Heaven while mortal. We also have the opportunity, through eons of progression, to become as our Parents, the Gods.

Now is the time to awaken, arise, and shake off the dust.

Some will awaken, arise, shake off the dust, and push forward to recover the restoration. God will set His hand a second time to accomplish His covenants. We’re promised that

there will be a last-days' Zion established on this, the American continent. We know that when it is here:

*[E]very man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety, and there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under Heaven, and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be said among the wicked, Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible, wherefore we cannot stand. And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among the nations, and shall come to Zion singing with songs of everlasting joy. (D&C 45:68-71; see also T&C 31:15)*

The restoration has indeed squandered many opportunities by those who went before. Most of those who accept Joseph Smith as a founder of their religion are still squandering the opportunity to see the work continue. But God's purposes do not fail and we have the option to proceed now. Some generation, at some point, still has a glorious, promised completion to anticipate. As long as some, even a very few, are willing to walk in God's path, they will see the completion of this glorious, final work.

*This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul? And His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back? (2 Nephi 24:26-27; see also 2 Nephi 10:8 RE)*

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

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The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #4 entitled "Covenants" given in Centerville, UT on October 6th, 2013
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #1 entitled "Be of Good Cheer" given in Boise, ID on September 10th, 2013; and
- The presentation of Denver's paper entitled "The Restoration's Shattered Promises and Great Hope," given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on July 28, 2018