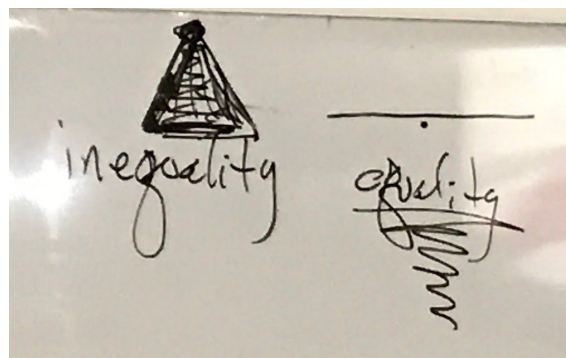


Episode 99: A Bag Full of Jesus

In this episode, Denver discusses how the community of Zion will be centered around the temple, and founded upon equality, service, and the words of Christ.

DENVER: In all of the Restoration Mormon groups that exist (from the Community of Christ, in its present form, to any of the fundamentalist groups), the way in which the structure of the people has been organized is with a top-down system, in which you have some function that takes place at the very top of this, and that's what radiates down to fill and to control the entirety of whatever group it is. And we know this doesn't work. If this kind of a system could be fixed by putting a righteous man at the top, then we could've fixed Catholicism, and we didn't need a new church. This organization has its inherent flaws. In addition... The fundamental problem with this is that you have an inequality that is structurally built into the system. And you can't escape that. It just is. I mean, to look at that is to know that what you've developed is a model in which there's inequality.

The only way in which you can have equality is if everyone's regarded to be on the same level. There's no higher, and there's no lower. There is only one. If you look at the example of the Savior who came to minister, the way in which the Savior ministered literally was to put himself below and then to labor to raise everyone else. In fact, if you're looking at the model of the Savior, if you're gonna draw a connecting line, the connecting line would turn this entire model upside down. Because He knelt to serve. And He knelt to raise. And He served beneath everyone else. And His objective was to treat them all as if they were those to whom He came to minister. And He didn't assume a different role.



In fact, if you pay close attention to the relics of what we have left over of the post-apostolic era, the Christian churches that got established by the apostles that knew Christ were built like this—they had exactly the same look and feel as the fellowships that we have. They met in homes. On occasion they would go into someone else's synagogue or someone else's

facility to teach, but they were a home-based, level community in which everyone was on an equal footing. And the bishops were elected by the common consent to serve temporarily. It would be like electing someone to be president or bishop or grand poobah of the upcoming Boise conference, who then serves in whatever that role is until the conference ends, and at the end of that, they drop back into... And their purpose is simply to facilitate something. Their purpose isn't to "great me, little you."

So, the model of Zion, in my view, has to be a model that assumes the equality of the participants. In my view, at this point in history there can only be one definition of success. And that is the New Jerusalem, Zion, and the return of the Lord. If success is defined as getting a movement going, we have every different flavor of movement. We have Christian Jews. We have gay, Methodist, female bishops. For all I know, somewhere in the world we have a gay Imam issuing fatwah's who may have eaten Mexican food. But the infinite variety of religious errors is inexhaustible. The proof of 'doing, believing, and acting' (in the way that pleases the Lord, satisfies the covenants that got made long ago to other people, and achieves what the fulfillment of all the ages anticipate) is the New Jerusalem, Zion, and the return of the Lord.

If we define success as anything other than that, then we're really looking for the wrong thing—which, again, is one of the reasons why I don't think numbers matter.

Now, if you want to see with clarity what the imagination of mankind gives you for a dystopian future, all you'd have to do is watch TV or go to any movie—because they are propounding a view of a dystopian future that ranges from MadMax to the Mazerunner. But they all have the same theme, and that's that we're all gonna die ugly, horrid deaths, and it's our own fault. That's the theme of our adversary.

So, the question is: given where we are now (which is not Zion), and at some points even in this process, as the scripture—incoming email—demonstrates vividly, we're not anything like it. The problem we have is in envisioning what—I mean, with some realistic degree of appreciation for the challenge—envisioning what it would take to get us from 'where we are' to 'there.' And if I were to draw one thing that represents an indispensable accoutrement for the accomplishment of it, I would say that the one thing that's required has to be the temple. Without a temple to ground the society, to provide the basis for the structure of a new society, a differently ordered one... I mean, this is the prophesy. This is page 600 in your Old Testament, towards the bottom, last paragraph, left hand side.

MAN: One or two?

DENVER:

*The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, ...let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: **for out of Zion shall go forth the law.** (Isaiah 2:2-3, emphasis added; see also Isaiah 1:5 RE)*

See, you have to have this in order to learn something. And what it is that you learn there is so valuable that those who come and receive it regard what they have been given as a law. I don't know how many times in scripture the Lord says, "Eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, nor **yet** hath it entered into the heart of man what great things the Lord has prepared for you."

And how often does He tells us that there are things that have been kept hid from the foundation of the world that He would like to give. And then we have the prophecy that says, "The time's gonna come when you're not gonna need to say to me and I'm not gonna need to say to you, 'Know ye the Lord,' for everyone will know Him from the least to the greatest." A temple serves as the basis for orienting a society that gets built around and centered in the temple.

It's a different way of living; it's a different way of thinking; it's a different way that reorients you instead of to this [the inequality triangle], orients you to that [the equality inverted-triangle]. Let's go learn about the path of God. You have to have **this** [equality] in order to structure a society around this [the temple]. And I don't think it's going to be easy. The challenge is right there—the world has never managed to get right there [equality]. Never. And that includes communities of monks, nunneries, that includes ascetic people, Walden Pond. Everyone who has tried Utopia—everyone who has envisioned Utopia—has failed because they haven't had the "seed" [of equality and service] that is constructed around the mountain of the Lord's house with the law that will go forth out of Zion—because Zion is differently situated.

Now, this is on page 82 of **this book** [Doctrine and Covenants, Restoration Edition, Preview], and it's talking about the glory of the Telesstial kingdom. If you skip down a little while it says, these people *are liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie.* Okay, so, it's a bad crowd. But earlier when it's talking about the people who merit this Telesstial condition: *the glory of the Telesstial is one, even as the glory of the stars are one.* You know, you can sit on the surface of the earth and look out into the heavens, and you can pick out the stars instantly, and it doesn't matter that they

are visible to the human eye—there are category one stars; there are category... To the human eye, you can pretty well see up to category six stars, sometimes category seven—but you can see them and know and recognize instantly that they are a star because they have this consistently subordinate degree of glory. And yet, they still stand out in contrast to the night sky, because they “shine in the darkness.”

The glory of the Telestial is one, even as the glory of the stars are one; for as one star differs from another star in glory, even so differs one from another in glory in the Telestial world; for these are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas, these are they who say they are some of one and some of another: some of Christ... (D&C, RE Preview, pg. 82; see also T&C 69:26)

Disappointingly, some of the voices that have been raised in opposition to the work of the Lord right now are those who claim to be of Christ. “I am faithful to Jesus, and all I need is a bag full of my Jesus. And if I fetch that bag full of Jesus, well, He tells me everything I need to know. And (hmm...) He tells me not to do this covenant, and He tells me (hmm...) you’re creating another Mosaic dispensation. And (hmm...) you’re being misled, and (hmm...) and Jesus tells me it’s so. And my bonafides is, Look! It’s Jesus. See, see... I got my Jesus coat.”

When it comes to Zion, it’s not “Jesus plus me.” This is isolation; this is destruction. This is... Read the Sermon on the Mount. The gist of the Sermon on the Mount was how to make you and you and you [pointing to people in the room] live together in peace. It's not teaching you how to sit on a mountain somewhere and say, “I got Jesus, and you know what? I’m better than you. You know what? I... I fetch revelations, and Jesus likes me. I don’t know what’s wrong with you people, but as for me, I’m cool. I’m Fonz.” (You know. I don’t know how many of you remember Happy Days, but...)

That’s not the message for the culmination of the work of the Lord. The message for the culmination of the work of the Lord is the unity of His children. “How oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chicks under my wings, but ye would not.” And why would ye not? Well, because one chick looks at another chick and says, That chick really rubs me wrong. And the gist of the Sermon on the Mount is, “Hey, get over it.” The problem isn’t your fellow chick; the problem is entirely internal to you. Because as soon as you start saying, “I am of Jesus, and that makes me better than you because you’re of John. I am of Jesus, and that makes me better than you because you’re of Cephus, you’re of Paul.” Everyone who’s doing that has forgotten that what Christ is attempting to do is to make **you** less of a savage and more like Him.

Everyone needs to be on the same line of equality, and if you have anything to do or to contribute, then help raise the line. Help the line love one another. Because as people, Zion can never be done in isolation with Jesus and you. Zion consists of people of one heart and of one mind—not because someone has managed to obtain a following for themselves. That’s irrelevant. They’re of one heart and of one mind because they respect the Lord, they desire to do what the Lord is telling them to do, and they forgive one another, and they’re able to live in peace with one another. The reason we don’t live in peace with one another is because we will not accept and do what the Lord asks us to accept and do.

Now, the problem is that if one man lives the Sermon on the Mount and his neighbor is willing to exploit that, he will come and ask for his coat. And then he’ll come and ask for his cloak. And then he’ll come and ask for his lawn mower. And then you’ve got Homer Simpson taking everything from Ned [*The Simpsons* TV series]. **That’s not Zion.** But in a society that is structured around it, in which everyone has **the same commitment to doing what the Lord asks**, Homer’s either gonna change and become acceptable as a neighbor, or Homer will never even be gathered because he will destroy the society. And eventually, if Homer’s left outside and he’s watching the society from a distance long enough, he may ultimately become persuaded that this and this is valuable enough a thing to have that I’m willing to do this. I’m willing to be no better, no worse. In fact, when I think about it, maybe in order to get that, every one of us have to turn into that [refer back to the photo above of the Lord being the “dot” under the “equality line,” where He endeavors to lift the line]. We all have to kneel down and to raise one another. Because we’ll never get to the point we need to get to if we don’t regard the welfare of others highly enough to sacrifice our own interests for the betterment of everyone else—which is exactly what the Savior did. And He did it all the way to the end, in which he sacrificed everything.

WOMAN: I mentioned to you... I would go so far as to say that, at least as far as I have noticed, all scriptural accounts of the prophets or people “seeking for more”... So, Nephi saying, “Tell me, Lord, what did my father see?” Or... It’s all designed for the betterment of the human family. Nephi says over and over and over again, “I seek these things to bring **my people** to the presence of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” It is its only purpose. “Jesus and me”—it’s just you; it’s just you. And I haven’t found in the scriptures where people who are seeking for this are seeking for it for any other reason, any other stated reason, than “I wanna bring my brothers and sisters to the presence of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” It says over and over and over again. Yeah, if you’re doing it for any other purpose, I don’t think you’ll be stopped up, but I don’t think you’ll... I don’t think you’ll get out of it what you’re actually intended to get out of it. And eventually, it’ll just be a bunch of “me’s.”

DENVER: You know, there shouldn't be anything flattering about any of this process. And there ought to be a lot of pain going along in the process, because helping other people (particularly when they're as stubborn and obstinate and as abused in their past as refugees from the typical Mormon experience are that come to this; they got a chip on their shoulder)...

Look, let's assume that, for some reason, Jesus comes and sits in your living room tonight and spends the evening talking to you. Okay? Do you think He cares more about you two because He spent the evening talking to you than He does about every other person who's living at this moment? I mean, if He's trying to restore a people and to redeem the offspring of Adam, everyone alive matters. We're not going to be able to change the world until we finally get in a position to have an actual seed planted that measures up to what is required for Zion—and **that** has been attained twice that we know of. It happened once with Enoch. It happened once with Melchizedek.

Now, if you look at the structure that has failed to produce Zion, the structures that have failed to produce Zion always involves this [inequality triangle]. If you separate structure from the content of teaching, Christ may have put together something that turned into this [the inequality triangle] twice now. But the content of what He teaches is this [equality inverted-triangle]. And if you took seriously what Joseph received when he was in Liberty Jail composing the letter from Liberty Jail, you would realize that what the Lord was talking to Joseph about in Liberty was that *no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood* (T&C 139:6). In Liberty Jail, even though this model [inequality triangle] had been erected, the revelation turned it on its ear...except **that** message never survived into practice.

It's on paper, and it's exactly what the Lord taught (in the Sermon that gets repeated twice in the volume of the New Testament and the Book of Mormon)—but it didn't get practiced. And so, because this model [inequality triangle] produces, internal to it (model after model after model as you go from Ward to Stake to Region to Seventy to Twelve to First Presidency—it's just a whole bunch of this, endlessly repeated)... The best way to avoid falling into that trap is what's happening with the new scriptures project, and that is the elimination of this structure. We don't need to know about it, because it won't work.

Begin from this proposition and treat one another as if you are equals (because, in fact, you are), and gather in groups small enough that common consent is a simple thing to achieve.

WOMAN: So, why the two conflicting models? I'm a little bit confused about the fact that they say both in the scriptures. They both seemingly come from the Lord, so that... I think

that's where a lot of the hang-up is—is that we seemingly can justify both from Him. So, why the conflicting models?

DENVER: When the world began, the way in which the world was organized was as a family. And it was easy at the beginning to recognize that the Lord had given to Adam dominion over the whole world. His authority and his right to preside was unquestioned. Because of the fall and because of the entry of death into the world, everyone knew that the time would come when Adam would die. Therefore, everyone knew that that right would descend from Adam to someone in the next generation.

Eve was so impressed (over a long enough period of time of observing the conduct of Cain) that after an endless parade of rebellious apostate children, Eve had regard to Cain and said, We've gotten a man of the Lord; therefore, he cannot fail (see Genesis 3:6 RE)—because he had demonstrated a period long enough for Eve to make that observation about him and to feel confident that he was chosen of the Lord. He had a younger brother. And the younger brother imitated the example of his righteous, older brother—except as time went on, as it turned out, Cain became weary in well-doing and **did** get tempted (like all of his peers) and **did** at least contemplate some of the benefits of serving the adversary; and in making an offering, innovated (in order to split the difference between the Lord, whom he wanted to give lip service to, on the one hand, and the rest of what was going on, on the other) in order to have it both ways—whereas his younger brother remained true and faithful, devoted and singularly-minded to the Lord.

And the Lord spoke to both of them. And to Cain He said, "You need to... You need to choose. You need to be either with Me, or you are against Me. This is not a path that allows you to continue to walk in two directions." But there was no such complaint by the Lord to his younger brother. Cain realized, at that point in the world, that through the inheritor would come—through his lineage—the Messiah. And Cain was contemplating the risk of being displaced and losing—**forfeiting**—that right. And so Cain, accepting council from the adversary, who suggested to him there's an easy way out of this dilemma... "I mean, everyone's gonna die anyway—just move up the time period. Kill him now. You're going to inherit what he might have inherited because if he's not here, he can't inherit it." And so, he commits the first murder.

Take that moment in time and ask yourself: Okay, if Cain was willing to murder his brother in order to gain ascendancy in the right of descent from Adam, **why not kill Adam?** (It's an ob... I mean, it's a solution that gets adopted throughout the book of Ether. Kill the king. Kill the older brother. Kill the king.) It was unthinkable. It was unthinkable. Even Cain the

murderer would not **dare** kill Adam. And what did Adam do with his son the murderer? He just sent him away.

You realize just how kindly a soul father Adam was when you consider he had to grapple with apostate children. He had to grapple with the first murder. It was fratricide involving his own children, and yet, no one questioned Adam's right.

Well, the Jews respected authority. They had been slaves (I'm saying the Jews; it was really all of us). They had been slaves. They were in a vertically integrated society, and when they came out of it, they were unfit to be what they needed to be as equals. And so the Mosaic dispensation took a problem of slavery and solved the problem by land inheritance (for eleven tribes) and priesthood (by one), and the eldest of the descendants of Aaron becomes a high priest, and he presides. And you get a structure that will work—trying to bring slaves along to become something better, higher, more noble—and you can find a sense of that nobility in the Pentateuch. But they never overcame the impediment that they were given from a couple of hundred years of slavery in order to rise up.

When the Savior structured the New Testament organization, it was essentially a nod in the direction of the family of Abraham with Peter, James, and John; and the twelve princes—the twelve apostles; the seventy and... It was a nod in their direction, because they claimed that they would be saved by reason of their descendancy from Abraham alone. So, He recreates the family of Abraham in order to make it appealing and familiar.

But what He taught was based upon the equality and the unity of all. But again, you're dealing with (initially) Jews, and then (secondarily) you are dealing with the Roman empire. And over the course of 324 years, what Jesus left behind was recast into the Roman Empire with a pontiff or a pope (imitating Caesar Augustus), with a college of Cardinals (imitating the Roman senate), with Archbishops (imitating one of the military levels of regional command), with Bishops (imitating another level of the Roman army)... And so, they rebuild what Christ left behind—which appeared, for all the world, to look like that—into an imitation of the Roman empire.

Joseph started with Americans who, presumably, believed in the equality of all men—the freedom of all men. He began in a Democratic Republic in which anyone could be elected president, assuming they were born here—unless of course you have the press sympathising with you, in which event a foreign birth doesn't matter and...

So, when it comes to the experiment in Joseph's day, particularly with the desires of the... I mean, if the Restoration at the beginning was a snake, the snake looked like this [like a

snake that swallowed a rat]—and that’s Kirkland filled with Cambellites. It’s so distorted, the center of gravity of Mormonism. I mean, you probably had (in total) around seventy-eight people that accepted the Book of Mormon (in three different locations). When the first missionaries were sent out and comes aboard, you know, 275—and then 500 **in Kirkland**. It **is** the church, and they’re Cambellites. And the throwaway of that changed the trajectory, and we never landed on our feet again. (Although in Liberty Jail, Joseph was reminded **again** that you’re supposed to be a servant, and everyone is supposed to be on a level. And you’re supposed to raise them.)

So, now here we are 180 years plus since, and what do we have? I mean, this model works if... If you’re evaluating success by the measures that the world uses, this model has created—probably, if you were really given access to the numbers—a trillion dollar empire. I mean, Bezos may be a rank amateur compared to what the Corporation of the President has—**if** we had the numbers out there. I can tell you that the project that they are undertaking in Florida, over the course of its life, will involve approximately a trillion dollars in today’s money in order to complete that project. And they have confidence that they can undertake it.

So, this model really works **if** what you are trying to measure is success the way the world measures it: numbers, dollars, wealth, politics, social influence, the ability to mobilize a vote, the ability to influence politics, state legislatures, congressmen, senators, the ability to publish what they want to publish. We’ve got this model begun, but I can tell you it’s a lot of work to stay below the line; and it’s a lot of work to reassure people that they belong on the line together. But you know what? We have people with remarkable talent who have spent a lifetime acquiring skills and developing the ability... And in many respects, what we’re able to do (using nothing more than that model and volunteers) **rivals** what this other, much bigger organization does—with as much quality, with as much attention, with as much skill.

At the end of the day, this community is built around a new law that is centered on Christ and makes every one of us no greater, no less; we all become servants; we all become His. And **you** are supposed to **bear** Christ in your countenance—which means you act, you behave, you serve, you kneel, you wash the feet, you do what’s necessary to elevate others.

We have an obligation to tell the world what we believe and to tell it plainly. We have an obligation to live it and to demonstrate it—but I don’t think we have the obligation to bludgeon people into coming aboard. And if they’re not persuaded and they want some “Jesus and them” and to charge up and wallow in their own self righteousness, they would be problematic in this, in any of it. A whole lot of personal pronouns referring to the

speaker in teaching about Christ... I mean, the most self-revealing thing I've written with little vignettes in *The Second Comforter*, and they are essentially an illustration of how to do something wrong—how to make an error, how to make a mistake—followed by a chapter explaining how to do it right. If you read that book, by the time you get to the end of the book, you're probably saying, "This guy made a lot of mistakes in his life, and God still worked with him. That gives me hope because I'm not **that** big a screw up."

MAN: Hopefully not to sidetrack... You know, one of the effects of the *Second Comforter* being kinda the first book you wrote, and sort of the starting point of all this is that there are those who value and claim an experience with the Lord makes you right, makes you an authority, makes you the one to be believed and listened to because you can't possibly be wrong. And in conjunction with that, there is a whole chorus of everybody who's met Jesus and met the Father and met the Mother. And I mean, you name it, all of these experiences and everybody claiming and... I guess my question is, frankly, the nuts and bolts. Is it really that... Well, is it really possible... because I believe these people are having these experiences with entities claiming to be the Lord. Is that more or less what's going on then, you know, when it says there will be false Christs. Is that a literal thing—entities coming and saying, "Congratulations, you made it, and I'm Jesus"?

DENVER: I'd have to... Well, ultimately, I would probably have to have a revelation before I could make my mind up about something. I don't challenge other people's claims. I leave them alone. But it is extraordinarily possible to have met with the Lord and been given an assignment by Him and to be ill-informed, partly-informed, erroneously oriented, and to require correction from the Lord. I'm not gonna give any examples, but time and time again, when I've inquired about something that I really needed to get an answer to, I've been told to study it out and to figure it out and to present the answer to the Lord. And I've done that. I've studied it out, I've figured it out, and I've presented my answer to the Lord—only to have the reaction of this, "Yeah, turn around. Okay? **That's** the answer. You're not only wrong, you're disappointingly wrong." It's like, "You know, I **vouched** for you in the corridors, and they're gonna be laughing. That's the best you've got?" I can't tell you how many times I've been wrong in my conclusions. But if I come and tell a conclusion to the public, I **know** it's right. And it's not me. It's right because I've been corrected.

And so, I can't tell you—I'd have to know a whole lot more about the people involved. And I don't know if people speak from a position of unjustified self-confidence or not. I can tell ya, I don't speak from the position of unjustified self-confidence. In my view, I am probably as error-prone and as wrong about my guesses as the next guy. But if I get corrected by the Lord and He makes a matter clear to me, I will speak with confidence about it—because I know what He just said. I know what His position is on that. Otherwise I'm inclined to... I mean, I hate... Anymore, I hate to even speculate, even casually. And if I do, I try to make it

really clear that all I am doing is speculating. That may seem so vague. Let me make one concrete example just so that... This is only an illustration to show you that I'm dumb.

Christ says to His apostles in the New Testament that when the end comes, "You twelve are gonna sit on the throne, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"—then Judas fell, So, Judas fell; the twelve apostles are gonna sit on the twelve thrones; they're gonna be judging the tribes of Israel—and I wanna know what's up with Judas. I mean, clearly, he's a suicidal betrayer; he's a bad guy. Alright? (Maybe I want him judging me. Maybe he'll be extraordinarily liberal about his assessment of me. I mean, I didn't do **that**. I did a lot of bad stuff, but I didn't do **that**.) But I reached a conclusion that he was gonna be replaced. So, I was inquiring somewhat diligently to know the answer to this. (Now, I got an answer to this, but I think the only reason I got an answer to this was because this question has come up repeatedly since then, and I've given the answer.)

But I was curious about it, and in praying about it, the Lord said, "Well, what do you suppose?" So, I had to figure it out. And I figure you can take the entire universe and narrow it down real tight: You either got the apostle Paul, who got called by Him, or you got Matthias, who got selected by lot and replaced Judas. So, it's gotta be one of those two guys, so... Eenie meenie miney... Nah, nah—I'm not gonna do... I think it's Paul; it's gotta be Paul! I mean Paul... Dude, he wrote two thirds of the books of the New Testament. It's gotta be Paul! So, with confidence, I go back to the Lord to get the answer. And I present my answer to the solution: It's Paul. Well, no. It's not Paul.

There were twelve who presided over the tribes, and one of them did not fall, retained his position—and Joseph will **always** be there. There has only been eleven vacancies. And so, the eleven vacancies are filled by the eleven who remained true and faithful, whom He selected. And Joseph retains his position at the head of the tribe, which I would never have supposed. But I can tell you that with confidence. And I can tell you it's not Paul. And it's not Matthias. And it's not Judas. Time and time again, there are those kinds of things that come up. Most of it has to do with what's happening in real time right now. If I talk about it, I talk about it with confidence—not because I'm self-confident, but because I know what the Lord has to say about something.

Now, the Lord doesn't do unnecessary acts. He doesn't just gratuitously accommodate mankind. He has a purpose. And therefore, I assume the purposefulness of that is to give us hope and to confirm that He's going to work with us to get this done. Mankind is so situated that we are always able to destroy, fall-short, rebel, and collapse into a heap—and so, you always have to realistically acknowledge that mankind can fail.

We've had Zion here two times. We are promised that it will happen a third time. We know it is going to be accomplished at some point. For that reason, it makes sense—given the time in which we find ourselves living—that we should expect that if we're willing to work with Him that this might come about. But we can always fail. I mean, the rule is "you fail." The exception is... Twice it's succeeded, and it's, you know, gonna be a third exception at some point.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- An organizational meeting for the Boise Covenant Conference, held in Burley, Idaho on May 13, 2017.