

Denver Snuffer Podcast 160: Comprehending, Part 1

This is part one of a series on Denver discusses how we can prepare ourselves to comprehend the things God wants to teach us.

DENVER: Verse 19 in section 130 says,

If a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come.

That's what Christ did. Christ gave no heed to the things that were pulling him in the one direction, and He gave strict heed to the things that were enticing Him to the other direction. And He obtained (as section 93 explains) a fullness of that. So, if there is an increasing flow of light/an increasing flow of truth that comes to someone by their heed and diligence in following the commandments, then that seems like a fairly simple formula for someone to follow if they're interested in obtaining further light and knowledge.

There was a time when all of these words crept into our language, and their usage in our common vernacular became popular when everyone simply assumed that we all were in contact with the mystic, with the mythic, with the forces that were around you. Everyone simply assumed that was the case. There was a way of describing the phenomenon. And the way that the idea was reduced to words was by using the concept of a third eye. Well, why that? It was because physically your eyes are the source that light gets into you. You perceive light through your eyes. So, if you're gonna collect light from somewhere else, two things are essential. The first thing is you have to realize that it's there, and then you have to be willing to see it. Well, it was a fairly common thing because people weren't as well educated as they are now. They weren't...yeah. They weren't schooled in naturalism and the philosophies of men, which we have so successfully commingled with Scripture that we have essentially supplanted, in all of Christendom, the gospel of Christ and replaced it with the doctrines of men and the precepts of men and the creeds of men. And we're beginning to develop our own set of creeds.

You see, it's hard. It's hard to keep the commandments. It involves inconvenience and sacrifice. It's hard. And for some folks, in a trial and error kind of way, it's like riding a bicycle. And when you start riding a bicycle you get bloodied elbows and bloodied knees, and you make mistakes, and it's unhappy. But you know what? You can write a Ph.D. thesis on riding a bicycle without ever getting on a bike or ever suffering an injury. Well, isn't that interesting? Because that's essentially the trade-off that we've made. That's the trade-off that Christendom made, and that's the trade-off that is rapidly, rapidly advancing right now...

I... Why would Satan ever change his agenda? Why would he ever invent a new tool if the old one works perfectly well? If I can use the sexual appetite of men to destroy a David, well, why not just bust that thing out all the time and aim it at whoever happens to promiscuously get in front of me? (In that context, the word means "randomly," and it was a

pun.) In any event, why invent a new way of corrupting the truth when the old way has been so entirely serviceable?

When the Jews returned from the discipline of Babylon, they learned the wrong lesson. And they became sophisticates in the Babylonian system of thought—which, as Lehi would tell us, was necessary because they were the only people that would kill their God, and they had to be in the right frame of mind (which is to say, "screwed up") in order to be willing to kill their God, because no one else would do it.

It takes a lot of learning to really be in hell, because the gospel of Christ beckons people to become childlike and to become simple. That's not to say the gospel is simplistic, because it comprehends all truth, and it involves light, and it involves everything that is—everything that was, everything that is, and everything that will be. And there are enormous surprises along the way. The gospel of Christ ought to be a delightful process of discovering new things all the time.

Well, at a time when people understood this idea that you could take in light, that it was possible to tune in and to receive information... And by the way, this information was so readily available that you just had to be sensitized to the awareness of its existence and the willingness to look into the matter for you to begin receiving it, whether you were Lutheran or Calvinist or involved in folk magic. In fact, folk magic largely grew out of the idea that you can tune into these things.

This has been a war that has been waged (and waged successfully), and...it's my own people that did it. I'm just... The Scottish Enlightenment, my ancestors, they're... They just—you know, David Hume and the gang—they won. And whether you know it or not, your minds are full of that crap. And Joseph Smith brought... He was carefully selected at the time that he came at the end of one epoch And the American Revolution was a war against some of that stuff; we wanted to preserve an island/a place where you could still be in touch with the deity and be free to accept and receive things from the deity. There were more things in play at the time of the American Revolution than simply a new form of representative government. It was trying to preserve an ideal—an ideal that was rapidly fading—and allow an environment in which people could continue to be in touch with God, however you envisioned your God to be, because there were things available that, if you would let them in, would speak to you (if you were willing to see them).

So, if you find yourself out here at the extremity of the mortal condition, you are still supported from moment to moment. The breath that you are taking in is loaned to you by God who gives you the power to live and breath and move and has sustained you from moment to moment. So if that's where you find yourself, then the deeper you look inside yourself—the farther in you go—the closer you will come to the point of contact between yourself and God.

We have a very coarse kind of intellect in the West. We have a "give us a rule; give us a formula—if I follow the steps, then, as a result of following the steps, I will produce the relevant gas, explosion, fire, compound, cake, cookie, whatever. So, all I want from you, therefore, is a list. And if I follow my list, I will produce, at the end, the fire I want, the taste

I'm looking for, the whatever-it-is-that-I'm-trying-to-build." And so when we pick up the scriptures, it ceases to be for us a Urim and Thummim, and it turns into a rule book. It ceases to be a contact point between God and us, in which God, himself, can be speaking, and the manner of revelation that He gives to us are the words contained by other prophets elsewhere. It ceases to be that, and it turns into a bibliography for our behavior; a justification for what we're all about; a way to say, "I'm right; you're wrong." It becomes clutter and noise and nonsense—and useless.

What is inside you, sustaining you from moment to moment, is God.

What organized you and keeps you intact, moment to moment, is God.

What lies at the deepest core inside you is God.

What you should be trying to regress back to, and find within yourself, is God.

The kingdom of heaven is within you, said Christ. Well, if the kingdom of heaven is within you, if—in your core—there is a contact between you and God, then our rule books don't do us a whole lot of good.

There's another way of looking at the mangled mess that we find in the minds that we have with us. And, by the way, the vision of Daniel (where it was necessary, in the last days, to grind up Babylon into dust)—despite the fact that Babylon has been gone for 2500 years—is because Babylon's still alive and well and running around inside your head. That's the manner in which you think. You're the product of Babylon; you're the product of the Medes and Persians; you're the product of the Greeks; you're the product of the Romans. You're the product of all those things, as they've accumulated and been handed down. Therefore, it must be ground to dust in a regression back to a point where—within you—you find that simplicity.

There's another tradition: it hails from the East; it is, in fact, the tradition out of which Christ Himself came, and that was one that focused upon the transcendent. The Gospel of John was written by someone who fully bought into the notion of transcendence, that there is this great and powerful and over-governing word (or order or truth or light). And that the greatest embodiment of that word (or notion or truth or light) finds itself embodied fully in the person of Jesus Christ. And that great light, that great truth, came down here in the person of Jesus Christ and dwelt among us.

See and there's a statement rather on point with that in the scriptures as well. Doctrine and Covenants section 88, beginning at verse 6:

He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in...and through all things, the light of truth; Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; [And] the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made; And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which shineth,

which giveth...life, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. (D&C 88:6-13, emphasis added)

When we read that, we say, "Cool, wonder how that science works? Wonder what rules we've got to learn in order to have that happen?" But an Eastern mystic would say, "Yes, I have seen that; yes, I have felt that."

When it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ, which according to Joseph Smith comprehended all truth. It is our own fear that limits our capacity to gain from what's being offered. It's a measure of our ingratitude, when declining the invitation that Joseph extended to search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God, we elect to withdraw fearfully and conclude that we're just not interested in what might have been had.

It's actually a trick of the devil to get people to close their minds and close their hearts, because they fear what they may be learning will do damage to them. You see, when Adam and Eve partook of the fruit and then Satan called to their attention the fact that they were naked, that's the beginning of the mischief that gets visited on humanity by the adversary who seeks to bind and control and to limit the freedom of all mankind, to imprison them. He pointed out to them that they ought to be ashamed. And when therefore they heard the voice of God speaking they withdrew, not because of shame, but because the shame triggered within them – fear. They were afraid to come into the presence of that being who they knew to be just and holy, because now they were in a state in which fearfully they were naked. Their "nakedness" came to them as a consequence of understanding the difference between what they were and what they are, and that knowledge came to them by partaking, out of season, of the fruit that they weren't scheduled to receive a command to part of, until after a day of rest had been observed. So now, not only are they naked before God, they are also violating the Sabbath and beginning the labor of the mortal existence out of time, out of sequence, out of season. That's the way a great number of errors are made in humanity.

You see, we're commanded not to partake of some things out of season, and then we are commanded to partake within season, and when we get the timing wrong we wind up with difficulties and problems that ought not to have been visited. The other references on that same statement, about the opposite of love is fear, is 2 Timothy 1:7 and Moroni 8:16.

Repentance is a critical thing. It is the message of the Book of Mormon. It is the greatest message that's contained within the Book of Isaiah, and it is the message of all the true prophets. The thing that stirs you up to repenting is actually two things: the first thing is to awaken to your awful situation, and the second thing is to arise, and that is to connect with the source which will cure what is wrong with you because we are not self-curing. We are filled with that same shame that came to us in the beginning as a consequence of doing what we were not supposed to be doing. The greatest way in which the adversary keeps us

in a state of slumber is to prevent us from looking about and becoming awakened to the awful situation in which we find ourselves.

We have a tendency, all of us, to take concepts or pictures or ideas and to put them in our heads and then to rely upon those pictures as we go forward learning new things. The object being to fit what we learned that is new into the framework of what we've already know or we're already familiar with. That can be handicapping. In the 28th chapter of Second Nephi, Nephi cautioned us about permitting, what he calls, the traditions of men to override, what he calls, the whisperings of the spirit. And he suggests that you run into mistakes, you run into errors, some of them terrible errors, when you permit those traditions, or those pictures that you already have inside your head, to be the framework from which you reconstruct new information that you learn. It's hard to do so, but when it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ, you would be best advised to start with a blank slate and to allow it to inform you as if you are hearing it for the first time because those words in scripture don't necessarily mean what the picture in your head suggests that they mean.

Let me pull an example. If you've got your scriptures, you're welcome to pull them out, and turn the pages and make all the noise you want finding the Joseph Smith History. You are not in a Sacrament meeting and therefore your scriptures are welcome to be used. In the Joseph Smith History the, it's the eighth verse. He says about halfway through that eighth verse "in process of time, my mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and I felt some desire to be united with them." Once again, this is high praise for Margaret Barker, a Methodist scholar. But laying that aside; during the time of this period, there was a, particularly in the revivalist part of Methodism, there was a group called The Shouting Methodists; and The Shouting Methodists had a tradition. That tradition was to go into the woods alone to pray, and when they prayed alone in the woods, they were looking for some experience that would bind them up and when they got bound up, they knew that they had an experience with God and The Holy Ghost and they came back converted. The miracle of The First Vision of Joseph Smith does not consist in the fact that he went in the woods alone to pray, nor does it consist in the fact that when he's in the woods alone and praying that he got bound up by some darkness which entirely overcame him. The miracle of Joseph Smith is that when that happened, he rejected it as the source of conversion. He did not allow his fears to control him. He did not allow the tradition to control him but calling upon God, he then pressed through to receive what lays on the other side of the fears and of the darkness and of the things that put you off the trail to God. And he tells us about the vision of the Father and the Son telling him that he was to join none of them. He goes on for some space of years, and during that space of years, he talks about how he frequently fell into many foolish errors displayed by the weaknesses of youth and the foibles of human nature and then he talks about he was guilty of levity and sometimes associating with jovial company. One of the pictures I think you have in your head about me, if you've read what I've written and you've read my blog, is that you may entirely misapprehend, number one, how difficult it is for me to get up here and do this. And number two, how incredibly irreverent I am by my native nature. I am not a stoic religious person. I undertake to do what the Lord asks, what I think pleases Him; at the cost of personal inconvenience. I don't like being up here and it's being recorded by my voice and not by a camera because I don't want people

recognizing me. I don't wanna be a celebrity. I want my privacy. And when it comes to a native cheery temperament, I have, I suppose, a wicked sense of humor.

Well, he called upon and he had confidence because he had previously received an answer, and verse 29, he had confidence that he would have an answer and a divine manifestation as he had previously had one. Then, he gives the account, in some detail, of the appearance of the angel Moroni, how it occupied the night and he passes through the events of his life until we get to the time in which, during the translation of The Book of Mormon, beginning in verse 68, they come upon the ordinance of baptism. They went into the woods, they prayed in May of 1829, and John the Baptist appears and confers authority upon them, and immediately after conferring the authority upon Joseph Smith, the angel says to him "He said [that] this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter;" and then we get to verse 73, which is a description of what happened after being baptized:

73 Immediately on our coming [up] out of the water after we had been baptized, we experienced great and glorious blessings from our [Father our] Heavenly Father. No sooner had I baptized Oliver Cowdery, than the Holy Ghost fell upon him, [and] he stood up and prophesied many things which should shortly come to pass. And again, [as] [so] soon as I had been baptized by him, I also had the spirit of prophecy, when, standing up, I prophesied concerning the rise of this Church, and many other things connected with the Church, and this generation [of the children of men]. We were filled with the Holy Ghost, and rejoiced in the God of our salvation.

74 Our minds [now] being [now] enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we [could] never [could] attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of.

Now, here are the questions: He saw God the Father and he saw Jesus Christ in a vision. And if you'll read all of the accounts, you'll find out it was a vision that included a view into heaven for he saw the heavenly hosts because the Father does not appear without a host. The Son can appear alone, but the Father never does. If you see the Father, you are going to see a host.

And thereafter he is visited by the angel Moroni and he is tutored; not merely through the one night but in successive annual occurrences for four years; and yet the first time his testimony mentions the Holy Ghost is after baptism, and after baptism, using authority which the angel told him had not the right to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost. That would happen at some subsequent occasion. Why then, without the laying on of hands by one having authority, did Joseph Smith receive the Holy Ghost? Not merely as a visitation, mind you; read the words. It lingered, it persisted. Because after they were baptized, "we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed [to] [unto] us."

That required scripture study over the ensuing weeks, months, years. There we encounter a word: Mysterious passages. You know that Peter in Second Peter chapter one, I don't know

verse 16 maybe, you look it up. He says that the scriptures are not of any private interpretation. But holy men spake as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost.

The scriptures were given by the power of the Holy Ghost, and now Joseph Smith is explaining that he could unravel their mysteries by the power of the Holy Ghost and things that did not make sense before, began to make sense. That was a hiccup. If you've read *The Second Comforter*, in the chapter about becoming as a little child, there is an excerpt taken from a book, *Godel, Escher, Bach*, a brilliant mathematical book about Bongard problems. Bongard problems are designed to test a certain kind of reasoning using symbols in order to test the person evaluating them. And invariably, Bongard problems are solved by children and they confuse adults; because the children's minds have not become cluttered by the kind of mathematical complexity that we have bouncing around in our heads. As a consequence of which, they look at it simply. And they see things simply and they can solve the Bongard problems in a way in which adults fail to grasp. The gospel is adapted to the simple mind. The statements that are contained in scripture are given in simplicity and in plainness. So, when we encounter Joseph Smith, speaking to us now about having the mysteries of the gospel laid open to his mind as a consequence of having the Holy Ghost, I am reminded of a statement that he made that you find in *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* about the Holy Ghost on pages 149 and 150, which I am gonna read an excerpt from:

"There are two comforters spoken of, one is the Holy Ghost, the same is given on the Day of Pentecost and that all saints receive after faith, repentance, and baptism."

This first comforter, and by the way, Joseph Smith is saying this at a time when the authority for the laying on of hands had been restored, but his list is: faith and repentance and baptism, and that produces the same effect as on the Day of Pentecost. If you listen to the words of the ordinance that's performed in the church, the words of the ordinance are an admonition to you to receive the Holy Ghost. It's telling you to do something. Well:

"This first comforter, or Holy Ghost, has no other effect than pure intelligence. [It's] It is more powerful and expanding the mind, enlightening the understanding, and storing the intellect with present knowledge."

Did you get that list of things? The effect of the Holy Ghost is pure intelligence. I can watch Lawrence of Arabia, and when they've successfully knocked the train off the track, and the group he is leading has charged and overcome the enemy, and Lawrence is walking on the tops of the trains with the flowing robes, I can get goose bumps. It is moving; it is stirring. That's not the Holy Ghost. I can have that same effect with *Les Miserables*. I can have that same effect with some of the scenes in *Joseph's Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Moving and stirring things can delight your senses. That's not the Holy Ghost. Has no other effect than pure intelligence; expanding the mind, enlightening the understanding, storing the intellect with present knowledge. I'm not here to entertain you. I am trying to inform you of doctrine that will save you. I don't care if any of you are stirred, or like one of our MSNBC folks, had a tremor run up his leg at the president's speaking. I don't care about that. I care about your salvation. I care about your souls and I care about you understanding the things

that will save you. Joseph Smith gave the list: pure intelligence, expanding the mind, enlightening the understanding, storing the intellect with present knowledge.

In the translation of the Book of Moses, which was Joseph correcting the Book of Genesis, he gives a list there of the Holy Ghost as well. Let me read you that list:

"...the Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory;" [this is Moses chapter six, verse 61]

"...the Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment." (Moses 6:61)

This is the Holy Ghost. Joseph Smith returned from the first vision and didn't talk about the Holy Ghost because that incident, quite frankly, was not understood by Joseph Smith at the time it occurred. When he explained to his mother, he said: "Never mind, I'm well enough off. I've learned for myself that Presbyterianism isn't true." And I think that is a candid description of what Joseph got out of it that day at that time. He had been converted and he knew now not to join the Presbyterians. What Joseph Smith learned from the angel Moroni, also did not confer upon him the Holy Ghost. Faith, repentance, baptism, and then he notes the Holy Ghost. And what are the effects that he reports, immediately? Number one. Prophecy; one of the hallmark signs. Paul lists it in Corinthians. Mormon and Moroni list it in Moroni's book. The list of what the gifts are, you can find it in D&C section 46 if I am remembering that correctly.

11 For all have not every gift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God. 12 To some is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby.

13 To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world.

14 To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful.

15 And again, to some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know the differences of administration, as it will be pleasing unto the same Lord, according as the Lord will, suiting his mercies according to the conditions of the children of men.

16 And again, it is given by the Holy Ghost to some to know the diversities of operations, whether they be of God, that the manifestations of the Spirit may be given to every man to profit withal.

17 And again, verily I say unto you, to some is given, by the Spirit of God, the word of wisdom.

18 To another is given the word of knowledge, that all may be taught to be wise and to have knowledge.

19 And again, to some it is given to have faith to be healed;

20 And to others it is given to have faith to heal.

21 And again, to some is given the working of miracles;

22 And to others it is given to prophesy;

23 And to others the discerning of spirits.

24 And again, it is given to some to speak with tongues;

25 And to another is given the interpretation of tongues.

26 And all these gifts come from God, for the benefit of the children of God. (D&C 46:11-28)

The list of the gifts; prophecy is always included as one of the hallmark signs of what it is that the Holy Ghost does. And then secondly, allowing Joseph to understand the real intent of what is in the scriptures. How much of a blank slate was Joseph at the time that the Holy Ghost allowed him the pure spirit of intelligence.

Well, I would suggest that if Joseph Smith can pass through the first vision and can pass through the incident of the visits of the angel Moroni and if he can even translate The Book of Mormon, which was then underway at the time this occurred, by the gift and power of God, but not attribute anything to the Holy Ghost until after he is baptized, that it is equally possible for you, good people, to go through everything you've gone through in your life, and yet not have experienced the thing that Joseph is talking about, which comes as a consequence of faith, repentance, and baptism.

...There is a veil and not a wall to permit you to talk through and to touch through and to feel your way through to the symbolic presence of God and then, that veil is not a wall, but something that can be, with merely the brush of the hand of our Lord, drawn aside so that you may enter into his presence. And the way you get there is by being prepared in all things, having been true and faithful in all things, coming to learn something from Him; not coming to tell Him something, not coming to impose upon Him, but coming to learn from Him. Our Savior was, and is, first and foremost, a teacher. By his knowledge, Isaiah and Nephi wrote, he shall justify many. By His Knowledge. He possesses things, which we do not yet comprehend. He possesses things which He would like us to comprehend. How then are we to comprehend the things which only He can teach? By permitting Him to do so; by coming to Him.

In the ceremony, there is an account given of the man Adam, and I have a question for you... Who, in the ceremony, is Adam? Is this a history lesson about the first man that lived on the Earth or is this, instead, a symbolic rendering of the lives of every man, or is it instead your life. Are you being told that in the beginning, you came here in an innocent, even a paradisiacal state. And in that state, everything was possible to the innocent mind. I mean, we impose, as adults, upon the credulity of our children by teaching them about the Easter bunny, and then to pull off the fraud, we have to go to the trouble every Easter of acting the

role of the Easter bunny, always out of sight; and we impose upon them Santa Clause, and they believe in these things. That faith and that trust that those children have, comes as a consequence of where every one of you began; in a state of innocence, in a state of purity, in a state in which it is possible for that mind to comprehend and to accept the things of God. But there comes a point when you become accountable. There comes a point when you grow out of that and you are expelled from that state of innocence and then in order to return there, you have to make certain sacrifices and you have to be willing to obey, and you have to be willing to pursue the gospel. And at length, because there is a difference between the age of eight when you begin to become accountable and puberty; at length, the range of temptation that will confront you will require you then to engage and obey the law of chastity. And then as you grow into adulthood, when you realize that this world really has very little to offer, you learn that the way to happiness does not consist in popularity or wealth or acclaim, it lies exclusively in consecrating yourself to the things of God. And when you have developed through that course and you've come to the recognition that consecrating yourself is the only thing of value.

That learned man knew...how obscure truth is, how deep it lies buried, how far from mortal sight it is plunged into the depths, how it will admit only a few, by how much work it is reached, how practically no one ever succeeds, how it is dug out with difficulty, and then only bit by bit.

Joseph said: "Knowledge saves a man. And in the world of spirits no man can be exalted but by knowledge." He also said in another talk:

When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step-by-step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them. It's not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave.

Now, if you go back and reread that quote, and you comprehend that it is possible to pass through the veil before you leave here—"it will be a great while after you pass through the veil before you will have learned them. It's not all to be comprehended in this world"—you begin to say, Ah, I think I understand why, after 40 years of reflection, Nephi commented about how it was his constant meditation to think upon the things which he had seen and heard. The knowledge obtained from heaven is dynamic.

In another place Joseph said:

A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power than many men who are on the earth. Hence it needs revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God.

We equate, in large measure, repentance with whatever it is you're doing with your genitals. Joseph equates redemption and repentance with whatever it is you're doing with

your heart and with your mind. The problem that we have is our profound ignorance. And what the gospel offers defies ignorance, subdues it, challenges it, destroys it, leaves it in the dark. And so let's try and search into and obtain some illumination.

How often, when an angel comes to instruct, does the angel simply open the scriptures? When you look at what happened with the Lord on the day of His resurrection—before He appeared to the twelve—and He walked the afternoon on the road to Emmaus with Cleopas and (I believe) Luke, He spent the afternoon opening to them the scriptures.

Angels instruct using the scriptures. The Lord, on the day of His resurrection, spent the afternoon talking about the scriptures. Joseph Smith, when he was trying to figure out which church he should join, labored over the scriptures. And yet, we think we needn't perform that same labor or become familiar with that same canon of scripture. And I'm telling you that the more you have inside you in familiarity with the words of scripture, the more able you are to comprehend the doings of God in your own life, and in the lives of all those around you, and in the time in which you live. So don't let it be lost on you that what the angel Moroni spent the night doing with Joseph was discussing scripture. And don't let it be lost on you that he returned again, to deliver another time, a message involving expounding the scriptures.

Well, the definition of salvation or life eternal, given in John 17, verse 3: *This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent* (John 17:3; see also John 9:19 RE). This is the knowledge of the Lord that he's talking about here. This is the day that Jeremiah prophesies. No one needs to say, *Know the Lord—for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest* (Jeremiah 12:9 RE). This is what the Gospel was intended to restore, offer, promise, suggest to each one of us.

Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 121. Beginning at verse 26 (these are the neglected verses because we don't pay attention to this stuff anymore):

God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy [Spirit], that has not been revealed since the world was until now [not the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit has been revealed. It's the knowledge that is coming that has not yet been revealed]. Which our forefathers have awaited with anxious expectation to be revealed in the last times, which their minds were pointed to by the angels, as held in reserve for the fulness of their glory; A time to come in the which nothing [should] be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they [should] be manifest. All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, [should] be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ. [As] also, if there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas, or to the dry land, or to the sun, moon, or stars—All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years, and all the days of their days, months, and years, and all their glories, laws, and set times, [should] be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times—According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before [the] world was, that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof, when every man shall enter into his eternal presence and into his immortal rest. (D&C 121:26-32; see also T&C 138:21)

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

Well, Jeremiah knew what he was talking about when he referred to the ordinances. We've long since forgotten the only way you apostatize from that stuff is through forgetfulness, because the testimony remains. And it's in front of your eyes nightly and daily. Everything begins with faith. You don't skip to knowledge. You begin with faith, and you progress. Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith on page 348 says, "When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel."

The principles of the gospel are not supposed to be comprehended in one bite. You progress. And the ladder that he's talking about climbing is, in fact, the ladder that is ordered and that Jacob referred to. Jacob's ladder is something that we refer to, and it's an ordered process. But whenever you begin that climb, you begin it at the bottom. And so, you find yourselves here. Notwithstanding finding yourselves here, there are absolutely, invariably (and we'll get to this eventually) seven rungs on Jacob's ladder. And we find ourselves, at present, at the bottom of it.

The foregoing excerpts were taken from:

- Denver's talk titled "Personal Revelation", given in Sandy, Utah on August 16, 2008
- Denver's talk given at the Chiasmus Conference in American Fork, Utah on September 18, 2010
- His talk titled "The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered", given in Spanish Fork, UT on October 14th, 2011
- Denver's fireside talk on "The Temple", given in Ogden, UT on October 28th, 2012
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #1 titled "Be of Good Cheer" given in Boise, ID on September 10th, 2013
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #2 titled "Faith" given in Idaho Falls, ID on September 28th, 2013; and
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #3 titled "Repentance" given in Logan, UT on September 29th, 2013