

Denver Snuffer Podcast 161: Comprehending, Part 2

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

DENVER: Zion is not just a topic. Zion has occupied the attention of *every* prophet from the days of Adam down to today. When I talked about covenants in Centerville—ultimately, many of the covenants that were made throughout history had, as their bedrock, the assurance that, in the last days, God would bring again Zion. That was a critical component of the covenant that was made in the days of Adam. That was part of the covenant that was made with Enoch. To understand Zion is to necessarily comprehend that there were covenants made by God which He intends to vindicate.

To understand Christ's Gospel, it requires you to understand Christ's Zion. Zion can not—can not—be brought through a 'Strongman.' The talk I gave about the Priesthood in Orem was given, in part, to inform you about what's necessary, as a Priesthood component, for the existence of Zion. But a Strongman will not work.

If you go to Doctrine and Covenants section 84, beginning at 19, it says:

And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof [and in the ordinances thereof], the power of godliness is manifest. [And I would note, as a parenthetical, that you have to have Priesthood in order to have the ordinances.] And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh...

And Zion is a fleshly endeavor. It is to involve living, breathing people. Therefore, as you read these verses, you oughta recognize that the power of godliness being manifest to men in the flesh through the ordinances, as a component, is talking about the rudiments that's required for Zion.

*For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought...to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, **which rest is the fullness of his glory...***

The glory of God is intelligence. The “rest of the Lord” is the fullness of His glory or, in other words, light and truth—or in other words, it requires a people that are competent in the things of God who have an understanding which will reach into Heaven.

Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the holy priesthood also... (D&C 84:19-25; see also T&C 82:12-14, emphasis added)

Thus **ended** Zion—because Moses went up the mount, and Moses talked with God, and he spoke with Him face-to-face. He wanted to bring the people with him up there so that they (like he) would speak with God and be in His presence face-to-face. That's what Moses sought after, at which point Moses' status as a leader ended because no one would need to say to another, “Know ye the Lord,” for they all would, therefore, know Him—a prophecy about Zion in the last days. That is an accomplishment that requires people and not individual. When this event occurred, that ended it. **It did not end the Strongman**, 'cause they kept Moses for another 40 years—wandering about in the wilderness, as they did; wearing out their Adidas and their Nikes, as they did; eating manna from Heaven, and grouching and bitching about it, as they did. But they had a Strongman! So, what? **You can't get there through the Strongman model.**

Here's the incident—Exodus 20, *And all the people...* This is 20, beginning at verse 18:

And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be [proved] before your faces, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was. (Exodus 20:18-21; see also Exodus 12:14 RE)

You can't have a model of Zion in which there is ‘some big Strongman’ leading you. Moses is the perfect example of one of the greatest Strongmen in history. And Zion failed in his day precisely because they wanted **him** to go speak to God for them, rather than **they** going to speak to God directly. Zion requires a people to rise up, and it cannot come otherwise.

It will require you to have faith, which was the subject that we addressed in Idaho Falls. And it was addressed in Idaho Falls precisely for the reason that it was necessary to get that on the table before we begin to introduce the topic today.

It will require that you repent to know God, which was the topic that we covered in Logan, which was required for an understanding of the subject today.

If you do not comprehend the foundation, you will not understand the subject. You're not just going to walk into Zion and take up residency there. You must have sufficient intelligence in order to be comfortable there. Its glory must be within you. As I read a minute ago, *which rest is the fullness of his glory*—in other words, **you**, you have to be the possessor of light and truth, which is the glory of God.

Moses saw Zion. If you go to Moses chapter 1, verse 8, it tells you that Moses—

*It came to pass that Moses looked, and beheld the world upon which he was created; ...Moses beheld the world and the **ends** thereof, and all the children of men which are, and which were created; of the same he greatly marveled and wondered.* (See also Genesis 1:2 RE, emphasis added)

It's actually amusing to me when I encounter Moses dealing with what he just told you about in one verse. Nephi made a valiant effort to hint around it, and then he defaulted back to the words of Isaiah to try and convey what it was that he saw. Isaiah made an enormous effort to put into epic poetry what it was he saw. And Moses, when he's given that same opportunity, his response in his record is that—I just read it to you—*[he] beheld the world and the ends thereof, and all the children of men which are, and which were created.* Well put, Moses. I **get** why you did it that way. Another one of the prophets: *[I] saw and [I] heard much* (1 Nephi 1:6; see also 1 Nephi 1:3 RE). [Laughter.] I get why they do that, and there's a reason for that. Therefore, Moses understood. Moses knew what it would take because he saw it.

If you go to Numbers, there's an incident that happens in chapter 11. Two of the men in the camp (Eldad and Medad), the Spirit rested upon them that they began to prophesy. They prophesied in the camp, and a couple of young men run and told Moses. And I'm beginning at verse 28:

Joshua...son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of [the] young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. ...Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD's people were prophets, and...the LORD would put his spirit upon them! (Numbers 11:28-29; see also Numbers 7:19 RE)

Moses was not jealous of someone having revelation. He welcomed it. He understood what it would take in order to create a people of God. And he was not jealous that there happened to be two of the people of God within the camp demonstrating the gifts that are given to the people of God.

The Strongman model will not work.

The Strongman model constructs the **opposite** of Moses' desire for all men to be prophets. It constructs the **opposite** of Moroni's prophecy when he quoted from Joel. It is the **opposite** of Joel's prophecy, which says:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh [again, the flesh! Here! Now! You! Living! Breathing! In the flesh!]; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaid[ens] in those days will I pour out my spirit. ...I will shew wonders in the [heaven] and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and...terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call. (Joel 2:28-32; see also Joel 1:12 RE)

The Strongman model is the opposite of that prophecy. It would **prevent** Zion precisely because God **must** dwell among the people. If He does not dwell among the people, it is impossible to have Zion—because Zion is a place where God comes to dwell among them. And if God is dwelling among a people, no one need say, “Know ye the Lord,” for everyone shall know Him who is there. The false construct of ‘the Strongman’ has got to be replaced. Zion will require a covenant. It will require authority from God for that covenant. And it will require a level of conduct that meets the requirements or honors the covenant.

There's this curious incident, and I want to point it out in Acts—because before you get too enthusiastic about signing up to join up for what the Lord is about to bring, I want to remind you of what happens when a covenant is established, and it is done authoritatively, and it is approved by the Lord and then people neglect to perform it.

If you turn to Acts chapter 5, beginning at verse 1:

But [there was] a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear

came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

And it was about the space of three hours after, that his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answer[ing] unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. (Acts 5:1-10; see also Acts 3:2-3 RE)

It's a good thing that we forfeit the power to make authoritative covenants from time to time. Because if we had everything that we claim we had, and if we lived under an obligation that God would honor, and if we chose to violate that—as will be the case when we have Zion. You cannot endure a Terrestrial glory in a Telesial state. Lying, and stealing, and deceiving, and adultery, and whoremongering (all of the abominations that people prize in this generation), your lusts, your ambitions, your desires to lord it over one another (the common affliction of the Gentile)—all of those things are a level below what Zion requires. And so, if one happily strolls into Zion while profaning the conditions upon which it will be established, they subject themselves to the penalty of being where they should not be, in a condition in which they cannot endure.

I don't think that the pretenders in the Strongman model have any clue what it would take to bring again Zion, because they do not kneel down to serve and elevate the least. The only way to bring again Zion is if **you—you**—rise up; is if **you** come to know the Lord! Not me! The only way is if **you** comprehend the Gospel of Christ, accept the invitation, prepare your heart, prepare your mind, prepare your soul, clean yourself up, leave behind your sins, and come and face the Lord.

Zion is a **level**. It is an absolute level. Here's a description of the level. This is Moses chapter 7, verse 18, *And the Lord called his people ZION, because they were of one heart and of one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there were **no poor among them*** (see also Genesis 4:14 RE, emphasis added). There were no poor among them because it's intolerable for your sister to suffer in want if you have enough and to spare. There were no poor among them because you cannot dwell in righteousness if you find a need, and you're unwilling to fulfill it.

Here's how you destroy Zion (we know, because there was an abortive attempt made during the time of Joseph Smith): Doctrine and Covenants 101:6. This is **after** it failed. This

is the Lord explaining why. Here's why; this is how you avoid Zion. *Behold, I say unto you, there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore by these things they polluted their inheritances* (see also T&C 101:2). That's how you destroy Zion. It's a fairly simple thing to accomplish because we all jar one another. We all contend one with another. And if you've gotta Strongman, we all envy him. We have our lusts (which means 'ambitions' in this context). Lusts and ambitions are the same thing: "I really want to get ahead in the organization." Covetous desires—inequality. Inequality invites lusts. Inequality invites covetous desires. To be one, you must have... You must have equality. You can't have one heart, one mind, and no poor among us if you have a stratified group of people. There can't be any rich or poor. As a consequence of what it takes to have Zion, you cannot have a Strongman model. It will not work. As Gentiles, you are prone to this; you crave a Strongman. Therefore, you seek what cannot be in Zion.

The last days' Zion is connected with the rights of the Fathers. And I talked about covenants. And I talked about the preliminaries. And in Centerville there was some material that is relevant to this topic. From Adam to Noah and then to Melchizedek there was an unbroken chain of both priesthood, on the one hand, and father-to-son descent, on the other hand. There was literally "a family of God" that began with Adam as the son of God, and it descended then, generation after generation, until Melchizedek in an unbroken chain. But then there was an apostasy from that Order. As a result of the apostasy from that Order, the chain got broken. And because the chain got broken (like we looked at in Centerville), it was the hope of Abraham to reconnect that chain.

I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same [that is, the rights of the fathers]; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge and [possess a greater knowledge, be a greater follower] and to be a [and this doesn't make much sense unless you comprehend what it was that he was looking at, and you are convinced that what he was looking at is exactly that Order that began with Adam; he was desiring to be a] father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers. It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, even from the beginning, or before the foundation of the earth, down to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or the first father, through the fathers unto me. (Abraham 1:2-3; see also Abraham 1:1 RE)

This is what Abraham sought. And the reason Abraham sought that was because he understood that once that connection had been broken that he needed to turn his heart to the fathers so that he, Abraham, would not be smitten with the curse of apostasy. Therefore, he sought for the “blessings of the fathers.”

Now, in this late moment in time—in this late period of the generations of humanity—I don't think we can much aspire to being one of the Fathers because, well, they were established long ago. But we ought to be turning our hearts to the Fathers. And we ought to be seeking also for what it was Abraham was seeking for... Not to become, ourselves, but to become connected—not as a Father but as a descendant, as a son or daughter.

When Abraham reconnected into the Fathers, Abraham was again able to perpetuate an unbroken chain from himself to Isaac, and Isaac in turn to Jacob, and Jacob in turn to Joseph, and Joseph in turn to Ephraim, to whom passed the right of the Fathers or the right of the firstborn—even though Isaac wasn't firstborn; Jacob wasn't firstborn; Joseph wasn't firstborn; and Ephraim wasn't firstborn. And yet they were all the firstborn because they received the inheritance by right, and it was conferred upon them by right. Therefore, they were the firstborn. Five generations in which the ancient pattern, through the faith of Father Abraham, returned and “took”—it actually endured for five more generations.

The day of salvation appears tenuously, almost as gossamer as a spider web. And if you don't lay hold of it, it is lost. And generations can come and go and sing hymns to the pride of their ancestry and the greatness of their religion—and go to Hell. Because when the Lord sets His hand, He sets it exactly the same way every time. And it requires faith to come aboard, and it requires faith to believe.

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe. [Slow of heart to believe] all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? (Ibid, vs. 25-26)

You don't understand. You don't understand, because the prophets have said this is exactly what our Lord would do. Shouldn't He have suffered? Shouldn't He have come in apparent weakness and vulnerability? Shouldn't He have come in the very manner in which He appeared and to have suffered?

And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (Ibid, vs. 27)

Right here—right here—is how the New Testament got framed. When you go to Matthew, when you go to Mark, Luke, and John, you are seeing an echo in each of them what the Lord

did on the road to Emmaus with these disciples. He proved that Christ came and suffered as He ought to have done, because all that the prophets have spoken were fulfilled in Him. Therefore, He opened unto them the scriptures that they might understand.

Our Lord, who could've borne testimony of Himself, revealing 10,000 new truths—our Lord, who could've disclosed and preached and delivered practically any new content He chose to deliver—our Lord expounded the scriptures concerning Himself. That should tell you something.

When the Lord first spoke to me, He expounded the scriptures concerning the Restoration. When He appears on the day of His resurrection, His visit with everyone that day was brief, was perfunctory, included a small amount of information—and here we have the Lord taking **hours**, walking and talking, opening up: *he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself*. They don't recognize who He was. He came in; they asked Him to stay (and you can read the rest of it there). But at the end of all this, after everything that had gone on that day,

...they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? (Ibid, vs. 32; see also Luke 14:2-3 RE)

I don't believe it is necessary to reveal any new thing in order to be able to teach in a manner that opens eyes to everything the Lord has and is doing, other than to expound the scriptures. **He** didn't think it was necessary.

If you go to verse 19 of the Joseph Smith History and you read the words that come out of the Lord's mouth when He speaks to Joseph, He quotes or paraphrases Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Paul. In just one short, run-on sentence, the Lord talks about the doctrines that they teach for commandments the doctrines of men, *they have a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof, they draw near to me with their lips but their hearts are far from me* (JS-H 1:19; see also JSH 2:5 RE). Once again, when He appears to Joseph in the First Vision, our Lord is expounding the scriptures. He picks and puts it together and says, "This is the condition in which you find yourself." **This** is what the prophets were speaking about. **This** is that day about which mankind would search the earth and not find the word of God.

When Moroni comes to visit with Joseph Smith, what does Moroni do in order to qualify Joseph for the ministry that he's about to embark upon? Moroni quotes prophecies from Malachi, from Isaiah, from Peter, from Joel.

And so, it took a long time for me to be able to see the pattern. But the pattern in which the Lord reveals and discusses new truth is the same in every generation. And so, when He came in answer to prayer and spoke to me sitting in a barracks—despite the fact that there were no fireworks, no pillar of fire, no shining man in a robe—He used the scriptures and expounded them to increase my understanding.

So, today I wanna use the scriptures in order to bear testimony of who our Lord is and how significant His example is for us. And I told you before in Idaho Falls that in my view the Lectures on Faith are scripture—they were adopted as such, and I'm gonna read from the Seventh Lecture on Faith, paragraph 9, about Christ:

Where shall we find a saved being? for if we can find a saved being, we may ascertain without much difficulty what all others must be in order to be saved.... We think that it will not be a matter of dispute that two beings who are unlike each other cannot both be saved, for whatever constitutes the salvation of one will constitute the salvation of every creature which will be saved. And if we find one saved being in all existence, we may see what all others must be or else not be saved. We ask, then: Where is the prototype? Or where is the saved being? We conclude as to the answer of this question there will be no dispute among those who believe the Bible that it is Christ. All will agree [with] this, that he is the prototype or standard of salvation, or in other words, ...he is a saved being. And if we should continue our interrogation, and ask how [is it] that he is saved, the answer would be, because he is a just and holy being. And if he were anything different from what he is he would not be saved, for his salvation depends on his being precisely what he is and nothing else. For if it were possible for him to change in the least degree, so sure he would fail of salvation and lose all his dominion, power, authority, and glory, which constitutes salvation. For salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power, and dominion which Jehovah possesses, and in nothing else, and no being can possess it but himself and one like him.

We read this, and then we immediately gloss over it as if what salvation consists of is Him and “fairy dust,” which He can distribute to make us like Him. This teaching that appears... This was what Joseph Smith worked on editing for the months prior to the publication of the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835. He doesn't say in his diaries that he spent any time on the revelations—that was trusted to a committee, and the committee was responsible for getting those ready for publication. And they did a bunch of freelancing and embellishing and expanding; and some of the stuff they added to the revelations was **remarkably** more expansive than what Joseph had received revealed to him. That's not where Joseph spent his time. He spent his time on the Lectures on Faith. And this is early in his ministry—this is when he wanted to make sure that the doctrine was correct. And this is the doctrine that came rolling out in that first publication. And yet, despite that, we tend to read this and not

take it seriously. **If you are going to be saved, you must be *exactly*, you must be *precisely* what Christ is and *nothing else*.** K? You! At that moment, that is when **you** are saved.

As a consequence of that, to speak of Christ is necessarily to speak of salvation. To understand Christ is to understand salvation. Despite how plainly this has been put, we still stop short of comprehending the doctrine. Joseph Smith's mind returned to this topic again, all the way down at the end of his ministry in April of 1844—the last General Conference of the Church that Joseph Smith would be alive for. And in April—April 7th of 1844—Joseph gave a talk. I'm gonna first read to you the version that appears in *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. But then, to make sure that you realize how important the point was, I'm gonna go back to the talk as recorded by various of those who were present that day, because one matter in this is picked up by every one of those who was present in recording what was said in their diaries. Joseph says,

I wish I was in a suitable place to tell it, and that I had the trump of an archangel, so that I could tell the story in such a manner that persecution would cease forever. What did Jesus say? (Mark it, Elder Rigdon!) The Scriptures inform us that Jesus said, As the Father hath power in Himself, even so hath the Son power—to do what? Why, what the Father did. The answer is obvious—in a manner to lay down His body and take it up again. Jesus, what are you going to do? To lay down my life as my Father did, and take it up again. Do you believe it? If you do not believe it, you do not believe the Bible. The Scriptures say it, and I defy all the learning and wisdom and all the combined powers of earth and hell together to refute it. Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and **you [you]** have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as **all** Gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead... (TPJS, pg. 346-347, emphasis added)

“Exaltation to exaltation”; “grace to grace”; “until you attain to the resurrection of the dead.” Christ said, *I am the resurrection and the life* (John 11:25; see also John 7:3 RE and Testimony of St. John 8:3). You must be precisely what He is and nothing else.

You hear those who say, “The Church has all the keys.” But we do not yet have the keys of the resurrection. That's because even when **you** are resurrected, you will not have the keys of resurrection until you, like Christ, have gone from exaltation to exaltation, until you likewise attain to the power to resurrect all that depends upon you.

John 5:19, *The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise* (see also John 5:4 RE). And the

Father went before, and the Son follows after. And if you think that you can, at some point, like Him, attain to the status of godhood, then you're going to have to do **precisely** what it is that the Gods do. Therefore, to understand Christ is to understand the challenging destiny about which Joseph Smith is speaking in this last Conference talk given in 1844.

Until you attain to the resurrection of the dead and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power. (*TPJS*, pg. 347)

Even what we envision as the highest heaven is a condescension for those who sit enthroned, able to dwell in everlasting burnings. Else why in section ~~132~~ [130] would you be given a white stone that reveals things pertaining to *a higher order of kingdoms* (D&C 130:10) when you are **in** the Celestial Kingdom! It's because where you are now (at this moment, in this meeting, hearing my voice in this room today) is about halfway to where you need to grow (and it's been almost infinite in getting you here—today) in order to arrive at the point that you might be able to be as Christ. And where Christ arises to, in everlasting burnings, is about halfway to where things ultimately **can** go. You say it's necessary in this condition to have a physical body in order to come down here and perform, and you say that rightly. But there are other places beyond.

I want you to know that God, in the last days, while certain individuals are proclaiming his name, is not trifling with you or me. (*TPJS*, pg. 347)

That's Joseph talking. We preach, and we exhort; and largely we do so vainly, having not power—not having been asked and not teaching what ought to be.

But “to attain to the resurrection of the dead” means you have the power to resurrect—and not yourself, but those who are dependent upon you. It's a ways off yet.

Now Joseph says something in 1844 that's remarkable:

These are the first principles of consolation. How consoling to the mourners when they are called to part with a husband, wife, [daughter], mother, child, or dear relative, to know that, although the earthly tabernacle is laid down and dissolved, they shall rise again to dwell in everlasting burnings in immortal glory, not to sorrow, suffer, or die anymore; but they shall be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. What is it? To inherit the same power, the same glory and same exaltation, until you arrive at the station of a God, and ascend the throne of eternal power, the same as those who have gone before. What did Jesus do? Why; I do the things I saw my Father do when the worlds come rolling into existence. My Father worked out his kingdom with fear

and trembling, and I must do the same; and when I get my kingdom, I shall also present it to my Father, so that he may obtain kingdom upon kingdom, and it will exalt him in glory. He will then take a higher exaltation, and I will take his place, and thereby become exalted myself. So that Jesus treads in the tracks of his Father, and inherits what God did before; and God is thus glorified and exalted in the salvation and exaltation of all his children. It is plain beyond disputation, and you thus learn **some of the first principles of the Gospel**... (TPJS, pg. 347-348, emphasis added)

You heard that right.

It is plain beyond disputation, and you thus learn some of the first principles of the Gospel, about which so much hath been said. (Ibid)

Now, the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: faith, repentance, baptism, laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. We know that, because Joseph wrote that in *The Wentworth Letter*. We lifted it out of there, we put it in the back of *The Pearl of Great Price*, and it's now *The Articles of Faith*, right? The first principles and ordinances of the Gospel. Now he's talking about "about which so much [has] been said." That's because in the Restorationist environment in which the Gospel was restored, everyone was talking about the first principles of the Gospel. "The first principles of the Gospel are..."—and you could've gone to Sidney Rigdon long before Sidney was baptized a member of the Church of Christ (when that was what it was called in Joseph's beginning era), and Sidney Rigdon would've told you that the Restorationist movement all believed that the first principles of the Gospel are faith, repentance, and baptism. That was a mantra. Parley Pratt, who was also one of the Restorationist Campbellite ministers, would've told you the same thing. That was a rallying cry for people that said that "the New Testament needs to be restored; the New Testament church needs to be returned; it needs to be revitalized; it needs to be restored and reconstituted. And the first principles, as we find in the New Testament church, are these..." And so Mormons, largely, were drawn out of the same environment, and they're talking about it, and Joseph conceded the point, and he used that. That's what he put into *The Wentworth Letter* when he sent *The Wentworth Letter* off.

But now, we're far along in the process. Now, we're in 1844, and Joseph will be dead about 60 or 90 days after this talk is given. This is the **end** of his ministry. This is not the beginning of his ministry. And so, now, he's talking to people that had been aboard for awhile. They've heard him preach. They know something more about what God intended. They had the Book of Mormon—they'd been converted through it. They had more revelations that had rolled forth. They'd been taught for awhile. And so, he returns now, and he says that... that "first principles about which so much has been said," now let me tell you what they really are. They really are this:

- Resurrection from the dead.
- Becoming Gods.
- Walking in the same path as our Lord walked.

This is the **first** principles of the Gospel! That's why he wished he had the trumpet of an archangel with which to declare it. He didn't have that. But I read his words as if they came from an archangel.

You thus learn some of the first principles of the Gospel, about which so much hath been said. When **you** climb 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've learned them [all]. It's not all to be comprehended in this world; it'll be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave. (*TPJS*, pg. 348, emphasis added)

Wilford Woodruff recorded the same talk. And in the Wilford Woodruff account:

You've got to learn how to make yourselves God, king and priest by going from a small capacity to a great capacity, to the resurrection of the dead, to dwelling in everlasting burnings. I want you to know the first principle of this law, how consoling to the mourner when they part with a friend to know that though they lay down this [he misspells "body"], it will rise and dwell with everlasting burnings to be an heir with God and joint-heir with Jesus Christ and join the same rise, exaltation, [and] glory until you arrive at the station of a God. What did Jesus Christ do? The same thing as I see the Father do. See the Father do what? Work out a kingdom. When I do so too, I will give the Father which will add to His glory, He will take a higher exaltation, I will take His place, and am also exalted. These are the first principles of the Gospel. It will take a long time after the grave to understand the whole. If I should say anything but what was in the Bible, the cry of treason will be heard.

Thomas Bullock Report—he also says:

This is eternal life to know the only wise and true God. You've got to learn how to be Gods yourself, and to be king and priest to God, the same as all have done by going from a small capacity to another, from grace to grace until the resurrection and sit in everlasting power as they who have gone before. And God in the last days, while certain individuals are proclaiming His name is not trifling with us. All earthly tabernacles should be dissolved, that they shall be heirs of God and joint-heirs of Jesus

Christ to inherit the same power and exaltation until you ascend the throne of eternal power the same as those who have gone before. You thus learn the first principles of the Gospel. When you climb a ladder you must begin at the bottom.

This is the basics of the Gospel. This is the foundation upon which salvation itself rests. This is the way through which **you** must tread in order for **you** to be like Him. If you understand Christ, you understand salvation. He's the prototype, and therefore, **you must be like that prototype** in order for **you** to be saved.

If you read the Lectures on Faith and the definition of the Holy Ghost, what you read is that the Holy Ghost represents the mind of the Father and the Son, and They together are one. And this mind of God—this Spirit that emanates from Them—fills the immensity of space; it is part of God too. And that is as accessible to you, **if you will receive it**, as it was accessible to Christ—which is **how** you can become one with Them. *Father, I pray...for [these] whom thou hast given me...that [they] may be one [as thou and I art one]* (3 Nephi 19:29; see also 3 Nephi 19:23 and 3 Nephi 9:3-4 RE). “They may be ‘one,’ like us because They share the same mind.” And you likewise can do so.

Christ said of Himself (and I'm reading from Ether chapter 3, verse 14)—Christ said of Himself:

*Behold, **I am** he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, **I am** Jesus Christ. **I am** the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and...daughters... (see also Ether 1:13 RE)*

...so that you also might become a son of God, as the One who redeems you becomes your Father, so that He who is the Only Begotten of the Father might in turn beget many sons and daughters Himself.

If you will receive it, faith in Him comes by hearing the word of God—not by a pretender, not by someone guessing, not by someone offering up their theory of how this stuff ought to be understood, not by someone citing you a bibliography—but hearing the word of God delivered as He would have it delivered, by **whomever** it is that He may choose to deliver it.

If you receive it, **then** you might have faith and that, too, in the Son of God that **you** might receive Him. But if you will not, if you will harden your hearts, if you will blind your minds, if you will not receive what **He** offers from **His** mouth in **your** day, then **you don't have faith in Him**. And **you** will fall short of that faith which **will** bring you to become His son

and His daughter. It is that way; it has always been that way; it will always be that way. There is no other test.

Therefore, either I am a liar, and you oughta forget everything I've said, or I have been sent by someone who is greater than I, and you reject and you quibble over the things I declare to you at your peril!

And it oughta be that way. And I oughta be damned if I'm a pretender. And I ought to be damned and rejected by God if I'm saying things about which I do not know anything. But I bear testimony to you, I know what I'm talking about.

He (Christ) was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. And why did the world not know Him? The world did not know Him because—the same reason why people would not know a messenger if one were sent today—because our Lord was so very ordinary. For all the world he was just another itinerant preacher. There had been so many pretenders in the days before then. The Maccabean rebellion... The family of David had fallen into great disrepute by the time the Lord arrived. When the census was taken and everyone had to go to their own city and he went to the city of David to be enumerated, there was no room for **them** in the inn. It was... It was in His day as it is in ours.

The Lord Omnipotent who [reigns], who was, and is from all eternity...shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay... (Mosiah 3:5; see also Mosiah 1:14 RE). Father is a tabernacle of Spirit and Glory. The Son descended to be among us in a tabernacle of clay. To the extent that you can receive our Lord (though He was here, like you are), the only way you could tell the difference was He declared things that were filled with light.

How was the Lord able to accomplish all that He did? Abraham 3:19, the Lord tells you. He says, *I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all* (see also Abraham 5:4 RE). Why is the Lord able to say that He is more intelligent than they all? Because our Lord went from grace to grace to the point in which He **understood** all things because He had been **through** all things; He had **descended below** all things, and He had **risen above** all things—therefore, He **comprehends** all things. He's more **intelligent** than us all, because He's more **experienced** than us all. He has arrived at a state in which He is worthy, holy, sanctified. Having been left to choose between good and evil, He has chosen good. He declared who He was when He introduced Himself to the Nephites, and He said He suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning.

From what beginning? For **you**, why can that not be a beginning that starts now? For **you**, why can you not, from this beginning—at this moment, in this place—go forward saying that you will follow the will of the Father in all things, from this beginning? Why will you refuse to rise up and to receive grace for grace?

This is **how** you worship **who** you worship, because He was the Word of God, the embodiment of what the Father's will was. The Father declares what is true, and the Son does it. And thus the Son became the Word of God because He did what the Father bid Him do. Would you be a son or daughter of God? Do what He bids you do. This is **how** the Son worshipped. This is what you must do if you will worship Him also.

I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all (Ibid). D&C 93:36, The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth (see also T&C 93:11).

*The light [shines] in darkness and the darkness [comprehends] it not (D&C 88:49; see also T&C 86:8) because in the darkness, there are things that are forgotten; but in the light, there are things that are exposed and seen. Light and Truth: because you see things as they really are, because you judge things as they really are (not after the manner of men but according to the light that God shines upon it)—so that you can see and you can feel that the heart that is speaking to you is pure; that the words that are being spoken are given by the grace of God; that it doesn't matter how flawed a vessel the Lord chooses, He can cleanse any of you, every whit; that He has such power as that—so that He can take what is broken and mend it; and He can take what is unclean, even scarlet in color, and make it white as snow **by His word**, which is the word of the Father—because the two of Them are One.*

And so comes this sobering ~~verse~~ two verses in D&C 130, verses 18 and 19: *Whatever principle of intelligence...*

Remember, I'm the Lord thy God, [I'm] more intelligent than the[m] all (Abraham 3:19). The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth (D&C 93:36).

So now you: *Whatever principle of intelligence **we** attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And 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 (D&C 130:18-19, emphasis added)*

How will you gain intelligence? How will you gain knowledge? It says right here: you gain knowledge and you gain intelligence by your *diligence and obedience*. The words that are spoken are intended to cause action. When that answer came to me in the barracks, if I'd

done nothing, my life would've continued as it began. And there would've been no difference the next day. And today I would be in a far different place than I am at this moment.

Hearing without heed and diligence, obedience to the things that God asks you... I mean, what good does it do you to know more about the scriptures than another person if it does not affect your behavior? What good does your knowledge give you if your knowledge is not employed to bring you and others who hear you closer to the Lord? Knowledge can be used as a point of vanity. It can be used to make you seem bigger, better, brighter. It can be a point of pride. It is power. And wielded in the wrong hands, it abuses; it subjugates; it humiliates.

The Lord is not like that. He lifts. He raises. He elevates. He endows you. He blesses your lives. If you will receive it and act upon it, if you will soften your heart, if you will allow His Spirit to enter in, if you will receive the light that comes from Him, you will receive grace, and you will be more like Him, and you will be more gracious and patient with others—and you'll view them in their fallen state, and you'll hope for them better. And to the extent that you're able to do so, you will offer them better.

Joseph Smith, *The Teachings of the Prophet [Joseph Smith]*:

Knowledge saves a man; ...in the world of spirits no man can be exalted but by knowledge... 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... 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.

I read those to you on the very first day that we began these series of talks in Boise, Idaho. Now that we've come to the subject of our Lord, we get back to the topic of intelligence: "A man is saved no quicker than he gains knowledge," but knowledge requires you to act because it doesn't become part of you until you have lived it. Therefore, unless you're willing to live it, you can't receive it.

Our religion is centered in Christ. Therefore, our religion is centered in intelligence. It is not enough to know what Christ knows; we must also be loving or charitable as He is. He not only created this world, He also suffered to save it.

The foregoing excerpts were taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #6 titled "Zion" given in Grand Junction, CO on April 12th, 2014; and
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #7 titled "Christ, Prototype of the Saved Man" given in Ephraim, UT on June 28, 2014