

## Denver Snuffer Podcast 197: Discussing Covenant of Christ

In this podcast, Denver defends the Covenant of Christ as evidence that our Lord cares for, and is reaching out to, our generation just as He has done before.

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DENVER: I got an email asking about contacting those involved in the Covenant of Christ text, because the writer wanted to pose questions to have the text defended. I responded with the below answer, which I also forwarded to those who worked on the project, as he requested. The answer to his question may be of general interest, so I am putting it up on this website below:

While I will pass it on, the accountability is confined to me.

During the years of work on moving words into modern meanings, I consulted on choices between variants, but the text remained essentially a restatement of the original with all the difficulties of reading the textual construct of the original.

When it was turned over to me, I trusted all of the predecessor work and went through the text originally believing it was only going to be a sort of commentary. But on the winter solstice I learned otherwise, and the revelation of that night has been put into the prayer I read at the conference.

That changed things. I worked through the text and made more changes to the content structurally, and condensed things that were redundant because it cleared up the text's message to say it clearly once. I went through the entire text rearranging, condensing, and clarifying often by using fewer words.

Some of the text was particularly difficult and obtuse in meaning, so I highlighted the passage and moved on. As I proceeded I found one place where a sentence was repeated in two different versions. The ones who had it before me had not reached an agreement and one of them rendered the sentence one way and the other rendered it another way. I looked at the original sentence in the Book of Mormon and deleted both of the options and wrote it again plainly.

As I went through I also discovered late in Alma that there was a missing sentence. I found the original text in the Book of Mormon and recovered that missing sentence.

Please understand that I was "inspired" by another, higher intelligence than mine as I uncovered details, such as those I just mentioned and claim that the Lord guided my poor efforts.

After coming to the end I went back and looked at all the highlighted text materials and made the effort to figure out what the text was saying and then put it plainly in English we would understand today. As I did that I looked at the text before and after those places and

found that it could be improved still further.

The first pass-through shortened the text by over 20 pages in the MS Word format I was using.

So I returned to the start and went through the text a second time from beginning to end. Then, after completing it I returned and did it again a third time. Then again a fourth time. Each time through the text was clarified and condensed, and sharpened in the statement the text was conveying.

By this time the text was shortened by over another 27 pages in the MS format I was using,, reducing the text by over 47 pages total,

As I finished, there were still some things that I knew needed to be standardized but I did not want to keep the text from my predecessors and returned it to them with instructions about standardization and asked for their reactions/input. They completed their assignment and returned the text to me.

I then went through the text for what I believed would be a final pass through, and made still more changes and corrections as inspired to do, trusting this would be the end of the work. At that point I finalized and presented the prayer to the Lord to get the text approved by Him. Instead of approving I was again directed to go through the text another time from front to back. I did so and made the final changes to the text, again offered the prayer and received the Answer.

I made thousands of changes to the text in order to render it in the final form. I believe that all of the changes were attributable to the Lord and is specifically for the reason He stated to me on the Winter Solstice: "But this has a different purpose. This is to help a new generation to understand the content to help with the Lord's return." It has been a rework under Divine direction to accomplish that purpose. All of the restatements of the text are designed to sharpen the reader's focus on those things most important for preparing a generation for the Lord's return. Therefore I recognize that the text speaks a message now that was out of focus in the earlier text and therefore greatly sharpens the warning to us. The war chapters that seemed so random before are now aimed directly at us. We are now shown how selective and precise the destruction of the wicked has occurred in the people on this land who ripened in iniquity and failed to heed the God of this land.

The text is now ours. To either heed or reject. To parse into segments that ignore the direct and threatening warning sharpened in the restatement in modern English, or to give heed and realize the Lord will "in His wrath" do again what has happened before on this land.

This is a work that belongs to the Lord, because as He has stated: "There is as much Divine attention and assistance in getting this new version completed as before."

I would never dare to make any change to anything the Lord has provided to us as scripture. It would take such gall and foolishness that I could not consider it. But, inasmuch

as the Lord had condescended to speak with me, I will obey and do as He directs. And I will also confirm and testify the Lord has stated to me, and I have faithfully recorded His word that: "I labored alongside you in this work. My word is truth. My word is spirit. As you worked with the text I gave you my word and it is to be kept as it was given. My word carries with it the power of truth, and you are not called to alter it, but are to defend it. As you have considered comments from others you have feared man more than me. The corruption of scripture has been caused by men fearing others and failing to heed my word. You were told to update the language, and that included restating my doctrine, sacrament and baptismal prayers but you hesitated and needed to be commanded to do so. Let your work of updating the language now end with the words I have given you.

Publish it for the people to read. Then, have the voice of the people determine if they will accept it as my Covenant, as they will be judged by their voice on this matter."

I will, therefore, defend it, just as I have been commanded to do. The accountability for the text rests with me. Although I will pass your email and this response along to the others who have worked on it, the overwhelming rewrite was my responsibility and was accomplished between December 10, 2023 and the Summer Solstice of 2024. Those were happenstance dates that I didn't take any notice of until it was later pointed out to me by one of the others working on the project.

If there are questions or complaints I think I owe the responsibility to defend the text.

As I understand it, clarifying what something means is not changing its meaning. It is restating the matter in words that are better understood. However, even if a person believes and accepts that there are "changes" in their understanding of that word, the Lord has told us: "I Am the same yesterday, today, and forever, and I deliver My words according to My own pleasure. And because I've spoken one word, there's no need for you to conclude that I can't speak another. Because My work isn't finished yet, and it won't be until the end of mankind, or even from then on and forever." RE 2 Ne. 12:9-10. If the Lord has more to say, then it should be His prerogative to do so. I dispute that the text has been changed, although it has certainly been clarified. Sometimes in surprising ways that would not be attainable without the Lord's clarifications.

One of the clarifications that the Covenant of Christ makes very clear is that the text is NOT a history. That point is made continually: Jacob 2:13: "And not even one percent of the doings of this people, who are now becoming numerous, can be written on these plates." Words of Mormon describing what his abridgment has included: 1:2: "I can't write one percent of my people's activities." Helaman 2:4: "But not even one percent of events are included in this book, such as an account of the Lamanites and Nephites wars, conflicts, divisions, preaching, prophecies, shipping, shipbuilding, building of temples, synagogues, and sanctuaries, and their righteousness and wickedness, and their acts of murder, robbery, and plunder, and all kinds of abominations and whoredoms and idol worship." Ether 6:20: "Then he ended his record, but I haven't written one percent of it[.]" 3 Ne. 2:16: "they can't all be written in this book. Indeed, this book can't contain even one percent of what occurred among so many people in 25 years."

Even Christ's teachings are likewise not given but in a tiny sample: 3 Ne. 12:1: "And now not even one percent of what Jesus taught the people can be written in this book." I assume that if over 99% of what the Lord taught was omitted from the text, then He has every right to make His message more clearly stated for us.

Covenant of Christ (like the Book of Mormon) is NOT a history. It is instead a prophecy. As the one who abridged the text explained why the less than 1% of the material was given to us today as our warning: "Why have you altered God's holy word so as to bring condemnation on your souls? Look to God's revelations, because the time is coming when all these things will certainly be fulfilled. The Lord has shown me great and awe-inspiring things about what's going to take place soon after these words appear among you. Now, I speak to you as though you were present, yet you are not. But Jesus Christ has shown you to me, and I know the things you do. I know you live pridefully. There are none, except for a few, who aren't lifted up in pride to their very center, to the point of wearing very fine clothing, and to the point of envying and strife, malice, persecution, and all kinds of iniquity. Your congregations and churches — every single one of them — have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts. You love money and your material possessions and your fine clothing and decorating your houses of worship more than you love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted. You pollutions, hypocrites, and you teachers who sell yourselves for things that will corrode and decay, why have you polluted God's holy congregation? Why are you ashamed to take upon yourselves the name of Christ? Why don't you consider that the value of an endless happiness is greater than misery that never dies? Isn't it because of the world's praise?" Mormon 4:5.

Covenant of Christ was meant specifically as a warning to us. Now. And we need to understand the text. As Jesus Christ forewarns us about this very moment we live in: "Yes, woe to the Gentiles unless they repent: For when that day comes, says the Father, I'll take away your strength from you, and I'll destroy your security. Your cities will fall and I'll break open your guarded borders. Your sciences and learning will turn into foolishness, and your false beliefs will cause your failure. I'll expose the fraud of those in authority, and your trusted institutions will lose everyone's loyalty." 3 Ne. 9:12. This is now underway. We need to awaken and see how the Covenant of Christ is aimed directly at us, to awaken us to our present plight, the justified condemnation we are under, and coming judgments.

The Lord's clarifications throughout the new text are all intended to address us where we are today.

I've addressed false beliefs derived from the Book of Mormon text in the past. I coined the term "Trinitarian comma" because of doctrinal disputes over whether Joseph Smith's understanding of the Godhead changed over time. There are many scholarly works exploring the apparent changing view of the Godhead by Joseph from the original Book of Mormon text to the Lectures on Faith and Nauvoo era sermons. I dismissed these by pointing out that John Gilbert provided all the punctuation to the text, and by replacing the punctuation I could make the text read consistent with the Lectures on Faith. Those punctuation changes were adopted for the Restoration Edition of the Book of Mormon. I only point this out to show that doctrinal errors crept into beliefs because of content in the

text that were not part of what the Lord intended, nor what Joseph Smith even provided.

I've heard of criticisms that some traditional, long-held, widely defended interpretations of the text are contradicted by the rewording in Covenant of Christ. This criticism assumes the traditions are correct. That ignores the possibility that the Lord has now deliberately clarified His meaning in order to precisely reject the traditional view and make His meaning directly opposed to it. After all, He has told us something about traditions, especially those borrowed from Historic Christianity: "they were all wrong, and the personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight, that those professors were all corrupt, that, They draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof." T&C 1, JS-H, Section 2:5

I'd suggest reading Covenant of Christ as if it were a new message and see what it tells you about our present circumstances. The book is for and about us. It is not history. It is prophecy and warning for us at this very moment in time. It was clarified for the very generation when the book's message was intended to be understood. Read it to try to understand what it is telling you.

These series of posts are not to benefit those who accepted the Lord's 2017 Covenant. Feedback from those who believe has been overwhelmingly positive, and may well be unanimous in accepting the new text, Covenant of Christ. Just yesterday I got an email from a woman whose gratitude for the new book brought tears of joy to my eyes as I read her tender message.

But the text is not solely for use by those who believe the Lord has begun anew the forward progress of the restoration. The book is to help all who believe the Book of Mormon to understand the content through modern English.

The hope is that LDS, Fundamentalists, Community of Christ, and others who study the Book of Mormon will welcome this new version and consider benefitting from the content. The text was originally prepared by the authors to come forward for this generation. And events now happening are discussed in the book's prophecies. Therefore, it is important for people living today to learn the wisdom, warnings, guidance and testimony provided by writers who were inspired by Jesus Christ for our benefit.

We have a political season underway in the United States at this moment. The divided political camps are both making the same plea to the public. Both claim that the "other party" is evil, not to be trusted, lying and dangerous. It doesn't matter which side you hear, the message is the same, only the identities are switched.

Listen to the description of the "other party" that airs nightly on Fox News, MSNBC, CNN, Daily Wire, Newsmax, Washington Post, New York Times, and even the Wall Street Journal. Go to any other news source and compare messages. The messaging is to fear and distrust the rival political party and those who will vote contrary to the viewpoint being advocated.

The ultimate objective of the messaging is exposed in Covenant of Christ. When the leader of one faction wanted to violently overthrow his opponent, it required him to dehumanize his target, and stir up anger to motivate violence: “As soon as Amalickiah obtained the kingdom he began to manipulate the Lamanites against the Nephites. Indeed, he appointed men to speak to the Lamanites from their towers accusing the Nephites. In this way, he influenced them against the Nephites, so that in the latter end of the 19th year of the judges’ rule, having carried out his scheme to that point, having been made king over the Lamanites, he also made it his aim to rule over the entire land, and all the people who lived there, the Nephites as well as the Lamanites. So he had advanced his plan, since he had hardened the Lamanites’ hearts and blinded their minds and stirred them up to anger, so much so that he collected a large army willing to attack the Nephites.” Alma 21:31. It was the tools he used that are being used again today to manipulate the public and motivate violence: “Amalickiah had, in this way, been obtaining power by fraud and deceit[.]” Id, 32.

Bloomberg News today said the United States is now the third-most likely nation to experience widespread civil violence next year. If angry political voices are able to stir up the public for a long enough time, there will be resulting violence.

It has been the trajectory of two prior civilizations that occupied the Americas to disintegrate into violence and upheaval when they abandoned worship of the God of this land: Jesus Christ. The purpose of Covenant of Christ is to forewarn this generation about that destiny awaiting us, if we follow that same path.

We still have time to repent and return to following the Lord. These posts are to persuade everyone who is willing to read Covenant of Christ and consider just how relevant the warnings in that book are for where we find ourselves right now.

Perhaps the greatest clarification in Covenant of Christ comes from the Lord reaffirming His role as the Second Comforter. In the King James Version of the New Testament, in the 14th Chapter of the Gospel of John, the Lord referred to the Holy Ghost as “the Comforter.” He promised to send the Holy Ghost to His disciples upon His departure to comfort them. But He also refers to His own continuing willingness to also visit them: “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” (KJV John 14:18.) I’ve written about the reality of this promise by the Lord in the book *The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*.

The Lord’s Sermon at Bountiful is similar to the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew. In the newly restated Sermon at Bountiful, the Lord provides us the way He wants us to understand His greatest sermon. Traditionally His message has been stated as “Blessed are...” while describing the difficulties His followers are to face in this world. But in Covenant of Christ He reaffirms and reasserts His role as the Second Comforter. He wanted it stated in these newly clarified words:

“[B]lessed are those who believe in your words and come down into the depths of humility and are baptized, since they will be visited with fire and the Holy Ghost and will receive a remission of their sins. Yes, God is with the poor in spirit who come to Me, for the kingdom

of heaven belongs to them.

And also, God is with all those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

And God remembers the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

And God accompanies all those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled with the Holy Ghost.

And God loves the merciful, for they will obtain mercy.

And God blesses the pure in heart, for they will see God.

And God is with all the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.

And God is beside all those who are persecuted for being called by My name, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. And God stands with all of you when people revile, persecute, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, because of following Me, for you should all have great joy and be very glad, because a great reward awaits you in heaven; the prophets who lived before you were persecuted in the same way.” 3 Ne. 5:11-19.

Here the Lord is telling us of His immediate and accessible presence: He is WITH us, He REMEMBERS us, He ACCOMPANIES us, He LOVES us, He BLESSES us, He is BESIDE us, and He STANDS WITH us as we go through this life’s trials and challenges.

It took three days for the Lord to teach me about this specific sermon before I was able to render His message in this newly clarified manner. The Sermon is His. And may His name be praised for what He has done to clarify and explain His meaning to us. More than any previous generation we have the ability to see how the Lord wants to not only connect with us, but how He asks us to accept and recognize His presence as we pass through the ordeals of life.

Of all the great clarifications given by the Lord in Covenant of Christ, His restatement of His meaning for us in this greatest of sermons is perhaps the gift I prize most.

While I worked on Covenant of Christ, there were passages that were very difficult for me to understand. So much so that I would highlight them and move on, then return later to grapple with the text.

An example of this kind of difficulty that I had to spend time studying to understand is the passage below from Helaman 4:11 “And may God grant, in his great fullness, that men might be brought unto repentance and good works, that they might be restored unto grace for grace according to their works. And I would that all men might be saved.” This was written by Nephi, son of Helaman who was the son of Helaman, Alma the Younger’s son. I’ve read that passage for half-a-century. Probably have see it over a hundred times. But it never stood out to me until Covenant of Christ.

To understand the text I had to go back to the earlier text materials he wrote just prior to this, as well as the materials that he wrote afterward. This particular passage is a critical part of his overall message. It is a wonderful insight into how God dealt with his people, and in turn how God will deal with the Gentiles who receive the warnings in this book of scripture.

The believers in Nephi's day fell into errors, forgot God, needed to be reminded to repent, and suffered punishment to bring them back to remember God. The Lord inflicted them with punishment, violence, slavery and death from time to time in order to motivate them to remember Him.

Nephi was keenly aware of what is required to let hard-hearted people return and repent. His account portrays these difficult circumstances as part of the necessary things to save people. In this difficult to understand text he is saying that he hopes, no matter what it requires, that God will take the steps needed to get people to repent and return.

Here is how that passage now reads in Covenant of Christ: "And may God in His infinite wisdom do whatever is required for mankind to be led to repent and do good works, so they can be restored to grace for grace based on their works. I want all mankind to be saved."

If you read Covenant of Christ and compare it with the Book of Mormon, you will find that the book now addresses our condition, need to repent and accept Christ, and the danger of rejecting faith in Christ more clearly and understandably. Young people who are less able to understand 1600s English language will be particularly benefited from reading this new version.

The Book of Mormon explains that it is an imperfect record containing errors. That point is made at the very start of the record, and then again at the end of Mormon's abridgment, as bookends for the book of prophecy. Here are those two acknowledgements of the record's flaws. They are stated below, first in the language of the Book of Mormon, then secondly in the language of the Covenant of Christ:

Dedication text: Book of Mormon: "And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ." [As changed by the LDS church's version of the book, because they did not like the original way Joseph Smith translated it. What follows is the way in which Joseph Smith originally translated as the dedication.] "And now if there be fault, it be the mistake of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment seat of Christ."

Contrast that with the newly restated language in Covenant of Christ: "If there are any errors, they are human mistakes. That being the case, do not condemn the things of God, so you can be found spotless at Christ's judgment seat."

Then we have both an acknowledgement and a description of how some of the miscommunication happened in Mormon 4:11:

Book of Mormon: "Condemn me not because of mine imperfection, neither my father because of his imperfection, neither them who have written before him. But rather, give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been. And now behold, we have written this record according



to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us according to our manner of speech. And if our plates had been sufficiently large, we should have written in the Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also. And if we could have written in the Hebrew, behold, ye would have had none imperfection in our record.”

Covenant of Christ: “Don’t condemn me because of my imperfection, or my father because of his imperfection, or those who have written before him, but rather give thanks to God that He has shown you our imperfections, so you can learn to be wiser than we’ve been. We’ve written this record, according to our knowledge, in characters we call reformed Egyptian, handed down and adapted by us to fit our speech. If our plates had been large enough, we would have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew characters have been adapted by us as well. If we could have written in Hebrew, however, there wouldn’t have been any miscommunications in our record.”

These statements (and others) in the record were taken into account as the modern English restatement was accomplished. If the original authors acknowledge and explain their weakness, then it would be counter to the authenticity of the record to smooth everything into flawless language, complete sentences, and perfected punctuation. The original has very difficult grammar and sentence structures, often with interrupting clauses that make it very difficult to follow. In dealing with the text it was unnecessary to remove and correct all that. Instead there was a single focus: Make it understandable.

The text has been transferred into modern English that an average reader of the language today will understand. The objective was clarity, understandability and comprehension. NOT reforming it into exemplary prose.

If you accept the original as an authentic prophetic message from inspired writers in the past, whose record nevertheless has flaws, then the modern English restatement will mirror that same record in a way that equips you to understand its message.

The record advises us to consider its message, not its flaws. That is perhaps even more important for us who have Covenant of Christ to read: Consider carefully its message, not any real or imagined flaws that you notice.

The LDS version of the Book of Mormon often interferes with understanding the text. The funeral sermon given by Jacob following the death of his older brother, Nephi, is divided by the LDS Book of Mormon into chapters that disrupt the continuity of his message.

Nephi was approximately 20 years older than Jacob. Nephi married a wife before Jacob was born in the wilderness. Because he was older, Nephi was the undisputed community leader until his death.

Jacob assumed the role of the priestly/prophetic leader upon his older brother’s death. It is clear that Jacob saw their community had drifted into serious sin, and on the occasion of Nephi passing he attempted to correct those lapses.

In Covenant of Christ, the entire funeral sermon is in a single, undivided chapter. That Chapter 2 begins with: “The words Jacob, Nephi’s brother, spoke to the Nephites following Nephi’s death.” (Paragraph 1) The sermon ends with: “This concludes what I said following Nephi’s death. Now I Jacob spoke many more things to the Nephites, warning them against fornication and adultery, the inciting of lust, and every kind of sin, explaining to them their awful consequences. And not even one percent of the doings of this people, who are now becoming numerous, can be written on these plates.” (Paragraph 13)

In this sermon Jacob condemned greed, failing to care for the needy, and taking plural wives. The portion of the sermon dealing with plural wives in the Book of Mormon reads this way: “Wherefore, thus saith the Lord: I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem by the power of mine arm, that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph. Wherefore, I, the Lord God, will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old. Wherefore, my brethren, hear me and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife, and concubines he shall have none; for I, the Lord God, delighteth in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me; thus saith the Lord of Hosts. Wherefore, this people shall keep my commandments, saith the Lord of Hosts, or cursed be the land for their sakes. For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me I will command my people otherwise they shall hearken unto these things. For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land of Jerusalem, yea, and in all the lands of my people, because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands. And I will not suffer, saith the Lord of Hosts, that the cries of the fair daughters of this people, which I have led out of the land of Jerusalem, shall come up unto me against the men of my people, saith the Lord of Hosts. For they shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people because of their tenderness, save I shall visit them with a sore curse, even unto destruction. For they shall not commit whoredoms like unto them of old, saith the Lord of Hosts. And now behold, my brethren, ye know that these commandments were given to our father, Lehi. Wherefore, ye have known them before, and ye have come unto great condemnation, for ye have done these things which ye ought not to have done.”

In Covenant of Christ this portion of the sermon now reads: “The Lord says: This people are beginning to increase in iniquity; they don’t understand the scriptures, trying instead to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms because of what’s written about David and his son Solomon. Indeed, David and Solomon had many wives and concubines — something offensive to Me, says the Lord. Therefore the Lord says: I led this people from the land of Jerusalem by My power so I could make from Joseph’s offspring a righteous branch that will follow Me. Therefore I won’t let this people do like others did in the past. So, my people, listen to me and hearken to the Lord’s word: No man among you is to have more than one wife — and he is not to have any concubines. I the Lord God delight in women’s chastity and prostitution is an abomination to Me — says the Lord of Hosts. Therefore this people must keep My commandments, says the Lord of Hosts, or the land will be cursed on their account. For in My Wisdom I will have covenant people, says the Lord of Hosts, whom I’ll command and lead, and they will hearken to this commandment to have only one wife. I the Lord have seen the sorrow and heard the sobbing of the daughters of My people in the land

of Jerusalem, and elsewhere in My people's lands, because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands. The Lord of Hosts says: I won't let the cries of the beautiful daughters of this people, whom I've led out of the land of Jerusalem, come up to Me against the men of My people, says the Lord of Hosts. They're not to mislead the daughters of My people — because of their kind, gentle nature — and use their vulnerabilities to subjugate them. If they do this I will chastise them even destroy them if needed, because I've commanded them not to commit whoredoms like others did in the past, says the Lord of Hosts. Now, my brothers and sisters, you know these commandments were given to our father Lehi; so you are familiar with them. And you've come under great condemnation, since you've violated what you were taught."

In this portion of his sermon, Jacob reminds his people that their father, Lehi, was the one who gave the command to have only one wife. That command was being obeyed by the Lamanites, but not by the Nephites. At the funeral sermon Jacob acted immediately upon assuming the role of the priest/prophet to reaffirm the commandment, and to denounce the sin.

We have no real ability to reconstruct whether Nephi's age and infirmity prevented him from addressing this problem in the final years of his life. Whatever may have provoked this lapse into disobedience, when Nephi died his brother immediately took up the subject to reform his people. That first sermon of Jacob, following the death of Nephi, is one of the most important clarifications given to us in Covenant of Christ. Whatever mistakes may have been made in the past, we now have a clear clarification to guide us away from this serious error.

After a half-century of reading, studying and teaching the Book of Mormon I had no real appreciation for how focused its text was. Covenant of Christ has changed my view entirely. The text is not just focused, but it was tightly composed to deliver a very specific warning to the present generation.

The "war chapters" which seemed almost superfluous before, are a clearly integral part of the prophecy. All of the destruction included in the narrative are to illustrate how destruction awaits us if we fail to worship the God of this land, who is Jesus Christ.

The Lord sent Alma to Ammonihah to preach repentance. The people not only rejected his message, but they also then killed his converts and burned the believers' scriptures. Shortly afterward, they were destroyed. "Lamanite armies entered the outskirts of the land from the wilderness side, coming right into the city of Ammonihah, where they began to kill the people and destroy the city. Before the Nephites could raise an adequate army to drive them from the land, they had killed the people in the city of Ammonihah, as well as some in the outskirts of Noah, taking others as prisoners and left into the wilderness." Alma 11:1-2. Their destruction was surgical. The attack was focused, limited, and resulted in only the loss of Ammonihah. Other cities visited by Alma and in which there were believing converts were spared.

The account of Ammonihah is included in the text, like all the other accounts of violence,

death, enslavement and deliverance, to warn us by the example of what the Lord has done before. We are foolish to ignore the plain message to us in Covenant of Christ.

The death cult now meeting in Chicago continues their war against children, encouraging the slaughter of the unborn. To interfere with God's plan for mankind to bear children to replenish the earth, they offer free vasectomies and abortions during their national celebration of the power to destroy life. Interestingly, their convention's first day repeatedly celebrated and encouraged killing unborn children as part of their appeal for continuing political power. They believe the voice of the people will sustain this continuing slaughter by voting to elect their death cult into office.

Amulek was a resident of Ammonihah, and prior to Alma's return to the city he was selected by an angel to help Alma. Amulek described his call to support Alma: "The angel told me: He is a holy man. I know he's a holy man because God's angel said it. I also know the things he's testified about are true. I tell you as the Lord lives, He absolutely sent His angel to reveal this to me, and He's blessed my house while this man named Alma has been there. Indeed, God has blessed my household: me, the women of my family, my children, my father, and my relatives." Alma 8:3.

Amulek acknowledged the Lord's blessing on his own father and family. But despite this, when he left Ammonihah, "Amulek left behind all his gold, silver, and valuables in Ammonihah for God's word, and was rejected by those who were once his friends, as well as by his father and family." Id., 10:16. Those members of his family whom the Lord blessed still rejected the invitation to repent. They would be included in those destroyed in Chapter 11.

Although the Book of Mormon has been available for nearly two centuries, converting it into modern English makes this generation directly accountable for its warning. You do not need to have any ability to parse middle English from the time of Shakespeare, nor to have any familiarity with King James era language. Its message is a warning to you, today.

We have a sermon by Abinadi in the Book of Mosiah that presents an interesting way to understand the content of both the Book of Mormon and Covenant of Christ.

I'm going to quote a passage, first as it appears in the Book of Mormon, then as it appears in the Covenant of Christ. Before doing this, I want you to consider exactly what we are reading.

This is a sermon spoken by Abinadi, which he never wrote down. In his talk, Abinadi is quoting from an earlier prophet named Isaiah. Whether this was an actual quote or just a paraphrase of Isaiah by Abinadi is not clear from the text. But Abinadi attributes the content of this part of his sermon to Isaiah.

A listener named Alma heard it and would later record what he recalled of the talk. Whether Alma consulted with the Isaiah text as he wrote down Abinadi's earlier sermon, or repeated from memory what he remembered of Abinadi's words, we have no way of

knowing.

Then hundreds of years later the account Alma recorded was summarized in an abridged account by Mormon. He explained that he used Alma's record to make that abridgment.

Then the abridged account was translated "by the gift and power of God" through Joseph Smith. This, then, is how Abinadi's reference to Isaiah was remembered by Alma, summarized by Mormon, and translated by Joseph Smith:

"Yea, even doth not Isaiah say, Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men — a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from him. He was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray — we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment. And who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgressions of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death. Because he had done no evil, neither was any deceit in his mouth; yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief.

When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong — because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Mosiah 8:3-5.

Using the Book of Mormon as a starting point, and with the assistance of Jesus Christ who first provided the prophecy to Isaiah and also assisted Joseph Smith with his translation, the Covenant of Christ restates this same material in this way:

"Of course, doesn't Isaiah say: Who believes what we've heard? Who's heard the Lord's revelation? For He'll grow up with His favor like a lively vine springing from the desert ground. He has no rank or position deserving respect, and when we notice Him, there's nothing about Him to please us. He is despised and rejected by men — a man of sorrow and familiar with disease. And we turned our faces away, ignoring Him. He was despised and thought to be of no value. Yet it was our sickness He took upon Himself, our suffering He endured.

He suffered for our sins, healed our sickness; was punished for our iniquities, bearing our

guilt to completely restore us. We all strayed like sheep, wandering off — each one going their own way; and the Lord has imposed on Him the guilt belonging to us all. He was oppressed and submitted, without complaining; like a lamb brought to be slaughtered, and as a ewe is silent while they shear her, so He endured without opening his mouth. He was condemned by an unjust judgment. There were none who defended Him. For He was slain as a sacrifice for the transgressions of My people, who deserved the punishment. He died with the wicked, and was buried with the rich. Though He had done no evil, nor had He declared anything untrue; but the Lord was content with His offering; satisfied with His healing.

After He made himself a sin offering, He'll inherit offspring, obtain eternal life, and vindicate God's promises. He'll see His sacrifice and will be satisfied; by the understanding He gains the righteous Servant will make many others righteous, for He'll remove their iniquities. Therefore I intend for Him to inherit multitudes, and His triumph will endow Him eternally — because He submitted willingly to death, and He was regarded as a sinner; but instead, He took on other's guilt while making intercession for sinners."

It is worth reading both versions. The question is: Does the language used in Covenant of Christ help you to understand the text? For me, the answer is "yes" and I'm grateful to the Lord for it.

There is a thought that is almost lost in the Book of Mormon that leapt off the page to me as I read Covenant of Christ. That rather profound thought is that "wisdom must be learned." It is acquired through hard experience, and therefore learned.

Here is how the Book of Mormon originally includes the principle: "I say unto you, it is well that ye are cast out of your synagogues, that ye may be humble and that ye may learn wisdom; for it is necessary that ye should learn wisdom. For it is because that ye are cast out — that ye are despised of your brethren because of your exceeding poverty — that ye are brought to a lowliness of heart; for ye are necessarily brought to be humble." Alma 16:24

Here is how the same thing is stated in Covenant of Christ: "I tell you: It benefits you to have been kicked out of your synagogues, to humble you so you can learn wisdom; because wisdom must be learned. It's because you're rejected and despised by others in your community, due to your great poverty, that you're humble of heart. You've been forced to be humble."

Compare "for it is necessary that ye should learn wisdom" with "because wisdom must be learned." In the original the statement can be read as limited, by pointing only to the audience being addressed at that moment by Alma. A reader may well think that the principle does not apply to them. But in the modern English rendering, it is clear that the restatement includes the reader, and the necessity of learning wisdom is universal.

The rest of that passage is likewise stated more simply, clearly and in fewer words. As a young lawyer I was asked by the corporate president I worked for to write up a joint-venture agreement between his and his brother's corporations. I put together what I

considered an ironclad agreement, covering every contingency, resulting in a contract of some 34 pages. When I proudly presented it to the president, he didn't even read it before telling me to redo it in two pages. I thought he was asking me to do something so ill-advised that I wrote a memo protesting, before reworking it into two pages.

What I didn't understand as a young lawyer, that I would later learn through years of litigating contract disputes, is that the more language in a contract that can be disputed, the more disputes will result. The clearest agreements are more often short, using few words, leaving very little for clever lawyers to parse apart and quibble over meanings. I have observed that the longer the agreement, the more likely it is that an ambiguity or contradiction can be found for the parties to fight over.

Reading the same lessons stated in fewer words sharpens and improves the message in Covenant of Christ. It is more understandable. Understanding that book is critical for our salvation, because it is intended to save us from our sins by teaching us repentance and faith on Jesus Christ, baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost.

The Covenant of Christ rendering, provided to us through the mercy and grace of Christ, clarifies what He intended as His message for us today. It is a personal message from our Lord to us today.

Last post began comparing two versions of the same materials. Here is how the Book of Mormon originally read in that last post: "I say unto you, it is well that ye are cast out of your synagogues, that ye may be humble and that ye may learn wisdom; for it is necessary that ye should learn wisdom. For it is because that ye are cast out — that ye are despised of your brethren because of your exceeding poverty — that ye are brought to a lowliness of heart; for ye are necessarily brought to be humble." Alma 16:24

Here is how the same thing is stated in Covenant of Christ: "I tell you: It benefits you to have been kicked out of your synagogues, to humble you so you can learn wisdom; because wisdom must be learned. It's because you're rejected and despised by others in your community, due to your great poverty, that you're humble of heart. You've been forced to be humble."

Compare: "I say unto you, it is well that ye are cast out of your synagogues," with "I tell you: It benefits you to have been kicked out of your synagogues," and ask if one is more clear than the other. Clearly "I say unto you" does not sound like we talk with one another today. "I tell you" conveys the same information in familiar language in use today. As the sentence continues, "it is well that ye are cast out of your synagogues" is an obtuse way to convey an idea for any modern average reader. How might an average reader interpret this? Is it clearly stated? Does it become any more clear when put: "It benefits you to have been kicked out of your synagogues,"

As it continues we read: "For it is because that ye are cast out — that ye are despised of your brethren because of your exceeding poverty — that ye are brought to a lowliness of heart; for ye are necessarily brought to be humble." It is an awkward structure with an

insert interrupting the sentence flow. Does its contents communicate clearly to your mind as you read it? Is it improved when restated: "It's because you're rejected and despised by others in your community, due to your great poverty, that you're humble of heart. You've been forced to be humble."

Both versions contain the identical content, but one is in language foreign to modern speech. It separates the reader by the language, whereas the restatement could be something you would hear said today.

Covenant of Christ speaks to a reader today in words used in everyday conversation. That is its purpose. That is what it accomplishes. Its value for the youth in particular cannot be overstated.

I love the way the following words of Jesus Christ are stated in the Covenant of Christ. This is part of His teaching redirected to the audience following things spoken exclusively to His twelve disciples:

"Or who of you, if your child asks for bread, will give them a stone? Or if your child asks for a fish, will give them a snake? If you then, with all your faults still understand how to respond to your children's requests, how much more does your Father who is in Heaven know how to respond kindly to things asked of Him? Therefore everything you expect others to do for you, do that for them, for that will satisfy the law and the prophets.

"You should enter through the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the road is vast that leads to destruction, and many enter through those; because the gate is narrow and the pathway tight leading to life, and very few find it.

"Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inside they're ravenous wolves. You can identify them by their results. Can you gather grapes from thorns? Or figs from thistles? Likewise you know that every good fruit tree produces good fruit, but diseased trees produce diseased fruit. A good tree doesn't produce bad fruit, neither does a diseased tree produce good fruit. Every tree that fails to produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by the fruit produced you can identify them." 3 Ne. 6:8-10.

The language is clear and meaning unmistakable. Even with all our faults, we still know how to respond to our children's requests. Christ reminds us that Father in Heaven knows how to respond kindly to our requests.

This world does have a wide gate beckoning us to enter through that accommodating entrance. And thereafter we also find the opportunities to walk in harmony with the world is indeed vast. There is no end to the variety of errors we are tempted to accept: our pride, ambition, jealousies, envies, foolishness, lusts, greed, impatience and ego are always eager to lead us astray.

A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things cannot produce the faith necessary for salvation. And so we are required to sacrifice our good name and reputation, to spend money to support our uncompensated efforts, endure the false accusations and continual slander from others, and to continually remember we are nothing but poor servants, and



even if we serve well we only are doing our duty.

The Lord accomplishes a great deal through weak things. If we rely on Him then even our weak abilities can nevertheless accomplish His purposes. But it is a very tight pathway. It confines us. We are left with His assurance that it will turn out well in the end, but for us now it is enduring the opposition and criticism of this world.

I think the Lord asks us to walk in that challenging path in order to understand Him. Without sacrificing we cannot understand His life. Even when we sacrifice all things as He asks, we remain unprofitable and serve Him poorly, even with our best efforts. Nevertheless, the Lord still is able to accomplish His will, vindicate His promises, and fulfill His covenants. He has and is doing a marvelous work and a wonder!

Christ provided the marvelous warning for us to beware of false prophets who come to you dressed in sheep's clothing. So they will be intent on the pretense of harmlessness. We cannot trust appearances because inside they're ravenous wolves. They're in it for themselves. They are a threat, even though they attempt to put on a show to appear benign.

So the Lord gives us a key to determine how to identify the wolves: You can identify them by their results. Where does their teaching lead you? Will it cause you to also sacrifice your good name and reputation, or soothe your ego? Does it lead you to help the poor and needy with your tithes and offerings, or is someone benefitting financially who is not in need?

Can you gather grapes from thorns? Or figs from thistles? Likewise you know that every good fruit tree produces good fruit, but diseased trees produce diseased fruit. A good tree doesn't produce bad fruit, neither does a diseased tree produce good fruit. Every tree that fails to produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by the fruit produced you can identify them.

It circles back to the earlier part of His sermon in which we are taught: "[B]lessed are those who believe in your words and come down into the depths of humility and are baptized, since they will be visited with fire and the Holy Ghost and will receive a remission of their sins.

Yes, God is with the poor in spirit who come to Me, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.

And also, God is with all those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

And God remembers the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

And God accompanies all those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled with the Holy Ghost.

And God loves the merciful, for they will obtain mercy.

And God blesses the pure in heart, for they will see God.

And God is with all the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.

And God is beside all those who are persecuted for being called by My name, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. And God stands with all of you when people revile, persecute, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, because of following Me, for you should all

have great joy and be very glad, because a great reward awaits you in heaven; the prophets who lived before you were persecuted in the same way.”

He is WITH us, He REMEMBERS us, He ACCOMPANIES us, He LOVES us, He BLESSES us, He is BESIDE us, and He STANDS WITH us as we go through this life’s trials and challenges. But we are not spared from passing through the depths of humility, mourning, meekness, hunger, thirst (longing) for righteousness when we see so little evidence of it, showing mercifulness to the unmerciful, making peace with the un-peaceful and bitterly angry, persecution, reviling and evil lies because we do as the Lord asks to be done.

So if you want to harvest the good fruit, it comes at the price of facing the world’s opposition. We do get Him to be with us, to remember us, to accompany us, to feel His love, receive His blessing, know He is beside us, and finally to realize He stands with us. All of these are good fruit. But they are not easily harvested. They are gathered in a tight pathway after entering a narrow gate.

It is almost as if the contradiction between grapes and figs to be gathered seem pleasant and enjoyable, on the one hand. But on the other they are harvested by obedience to His requirements to endure this world’s opposition, and sometimes fierce condemnation.

In the end, however, we must conclude that if our religion does not require the sacrifice of all things it will never have power sufficient to produce the faith necessary for life and salvation. For from the first existence of man, the faith necessary for life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things: it was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained for us to enjoy eternal life, and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all he has for the truth’s sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice because he seeks to do His will, he does know most assuredly that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not nor will not seek His face in vain. Under these circumstances, then, we can obtain the faith necessary to lay hold on eternal life. It is absolutely vain for us to fancy ourselves to be heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and who by this means obtained faith in God and favor with Him so as to obtain eternal life, unless we in like manner offer unto Him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that we are accepted of Him.

If we follow the Lord’s teaching we can actually, literally, and even physically realize His promise to be with us, and stand beside us. Then all doubts will flee from us and our faith is supplanted by knowledge.

I love the text of Covenant of Christ. It resounds with words of eternal life, because Christ’s words are truth, His words are spirit. They bring with them the power of redemption because, when we recognize them as His, we then have Him speaking directly to and with us.

I anticipate this will be the final time I post the “Discuss” series on the Covenant of Christ. However, if it is approved by a vote in the October Conference I plan to teach from it. It is, in my view, a far more understandable and relevant text for the challenges we are facing in this generation. More so than in any time since the Book of Mormon was first published in 1830, the text addresses our contemporary circumstances in alarming detail.

As the text draws to an end, the final author invites us to ask God about its truthfulness. In the Book of Mormon it states: “And I seal up these records after I have spoken a few words by way of exhortation unto you.

“Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts. And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true. And if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, and he will manifest the truth of it unto you by the power of the holy ghost. And by the power of the holy ghost, ye may know the truth of all things. And whatsoever thing is good is just and true. Wherefore, nothing that is good denieth the Christ, but acknowledgeth that he is; and ye may know that he is by the power of the holy ghost. Wherefore, I would exhort you that ye deny not the power of God, for he worketh by power according to the faith of the children of men, the same today, and tomorrow, and for ever.” Moroni 10:1-2.

This includes words like “exhortation” and “exhort” and “denieth” and “acknowledgeth” and “worketh” which are rarely (if ever) spoken today. There are, of course, subcultures that may use some of these, but the vast majority of people whom the book is intended to warn not only do not use these words, they likely would need to look them up to determine what is meant. Unfortunately, today a spell-checker will red line the words “denieth”, “acknowledgeth” and “worketh” as misspellings.

This is unfortunate because it is one of the more important passages in the entire book. This invitation/challenge goes to the heart of the book. It might well be regarded as a critically important two paragraphs, essential to accepting the book as a message from God.

In Covenant of Christ it is put in these words: “After I give a few words of counsel to you, I’ll seal up these records.

“I would urge you that when you read these things, if it’s wisdom in God for you to read them, to remember how merciful the Lord has been to mankind, from the creation of Adam all the way down until you consider these things and ponder them in your hearts. When you consider these things, I would urge you to ask God the Eternal Father in the name of Christ: Aren’t these things true? And if you ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, He’ll reveal the truth of it to you by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost, you can know the truth of all things. Anything that’s good is righteous and true. Therefore nothing good denies Christ; on the contrary, it acknowledges that He exists. And you can know He exists by the power of the Holy Ghost. Therefore I would urge you not to deny God’s power — indeed, He works by power according to mankind’s faith, the same today, tomorrow, and forever.”

I have developed a deep appreciation for the candor and plain language of Covenant of Christ. It seems to penetrate my heart and mind in a familiar, kindly voice I recognize as coming from the Lord.

This same writer (Moroni) in the Book of Ether told readers this: “Now I’ll say farewell to the Gentiles, and to my people as well, whom I love, until we come face to face before Christ’s judgment seat, where everyone will know my clothes aren’t stained with your blood. Then you’ll know I’ve seen Jesus and He has talked with me face to face, and He told me about these things in plain humility in my own language, just as one person tells another.” Ether 5:8. When Covenant of Christ addresses us in our own current language, just like one person talks with another, it accomplishes the same thing our Lord did when He spoke with Moroni, the same thing He accomplishes when He speaks to anyone.

I not only welcome the new version of the Book of Mormon, I appreciate it beyond words. To me, it is evidence that our Lord cares for, and is reaching out to, our generation just as He has done before. We have an opportunity, as past generations were given the opportunity, to be gathered as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. It gives me hope.

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The foregoing excerpts were taken from:

- Denver's blog post titled "Covenant of Christ Text" from August 11, 2024; and
- Denver's blog post series titled "Discussing Covenant of Christ" (parts 1-12) from August 15 through September 15, 2024, which were subsequently recorded for this podcast by Denver on November 20, 2024.