

Be of Good Cheer, Be of Good Courage

Denver Snuffer 9-10-13

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It was 40 years ago today, about at this moment, when I was baptized in the North Atlantic at Sea Point Beach in Kittery, Maine. The fellow who presided at the service was named Jim Mortensen. He had just moved into the ward, immediately replaced one of the counselors in the Bishopric, but still no one knew who Jim Mortensen was as yet. There he was presiding over my baptism on the beach. And he has become infamous among some of us who were there for his statement: "Let's move it up the beach, Elders."

We had another baptism 18 days later and he didn't like that there were people in the area, somehow enjoying that awfully cold water. Again he relocated the service: "Let's move it up the beach, Elders." He was an old Marine; he used to fly combat missions off of a flat top carrier in Vietnam. He had all the demeanor of a flat top carrier pilot.

His wife was Monty. Her maiden name was Bunker. She was from the Nevada Bunkers. Bishop Bunker got into a whole lot of trouble because he did not buy the "Adam God" doctrine (now "theory" because of him). And Bishop Bunker had a trial for excommunication because of heresy. Well Bishop Bunker's court couldn't quite reach a conclusion on what to do because he defended his beliefs so well from the scriptures. And as a consequence of that, it was tabled without a decision.

Wilford Woodruff came down and they had another convening of the church court and in the second court presided over by President Woodruff ultimately they decided to punt rather than to do anything. And the doctrinal exposition that Bishop Bunker made has since become the doctrine of the church, although at the time it was dangerous heresy for the man to preach it.

Monty was, at the time and is still today, one of the loveliest women I have ever met. She texted me a little earlier today on my way here and said: "You beware of pride." Their son, Jimmy, texted me today too.

You know, shortly after that ceremony, I was ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood by George Hoger. George was the Elders Quorum President. Since I was not in a position to know what one ought to do to be ordained, and George being the primary guy leading the priesthood group I attended, I asked him to ordain me. So I have a priesthood line of authority that reckons through George.

George's wife was Judy. Judy was a nun who converted to Mormonism while she was living in a Catholic convent. She asked Mother Superior for permission to be baptized. And of course consent was given, but she was told you got have new premises, because you can't reside here.

Judy grew up Catholic, she was devout, became a nun, and she was for goodness sake "Christ's bride." And therefore, when George proposed to her, and they were going to actually have marital relations she tells the most hilarious stories about her pre-marital schooling from a doctor, when she asked about what was to be expected. I'll leave that aside.

Eighteen days after my baptism, I baptized a fellow. We remain good friends still. Eighteen days from now we will give the second of these talks, commemorating the gratitude that I hold for the doctrines that I have been taught. I mention these events and people's names because converting to the church is a lifelong experience. Friendships are established which endure. They are founded in eternal expectations.

You know, no one should be allowed to work in the Missionary Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who isn't a convert. Better still, an adult convert to the Church. Because no one joins the church because of some silly program. You only join because of doctrine. And when you choke away the doctrine, there's no reason to stay.

And so in gratitude for the principles which brought me aboard the restoration we are going to spend this next year looking at the doctrines which invite belief. Doctrine which doesn't abuse, control, or compel, but invites and entices, that is delicious, that makes you hunger for more. The principles of the gospel that not only edify but enlighten and enliven. The kinds of things which despite everything else that separates you from one another, you nonetheless can come together in love and appreciation. That's the gospel. That's the restoration.

I know of no more cheerful being in the universe than Christ. When he says: "Be of good cheer," we ought to all accept that as our own mantra. There is nothing that any of us will ever go through that he hasn't gone through, with a considerable greater degree of difficulty. He lived with a higher 'specific gravity' than any of us have ever had to fight against. And he won for each of us a prize that is potentially eternal. It will be eternal one, way or the other. But if you take full measure of what he offers it will be delightfully eternal.

Cowardice is largely predicated upon fear. Don't be cowardly. Don't be fearful. Fear is the opposite of faith. For goodness sake, you're already in the battle! You're already going to be overtaken. The fact of the matter is no one gets out of here alive. Live this life nobly, fearlessly. When you take the wounds that come your way make sure that they come to your front! Don't let them shoot you in the back. Go about your life boldly, nobly, valiantly. Because it is only through valiance in the testimony of Jesus Christ that you can hope to secure anything. Not valiance in your fidelity to anything other than Jesus Christ. The fact of the matter is that faith must be based in Him, and in Him alone. We'll get to that in Idaho Falls.

Tonight I want to introduce some ideas that are essential to salvation coming through the prophet Joseph Smith, which we really need to become reacquainted with.

But first a deviation. And I have to say, I'm deviating because I like the quote. I like the quote because of the substance of what is being said. I don't like object of the adoration so I'm not heaping praise upon the fellow who is the object of this statement. But I like the quote. It's good wording, and I like it. Andrew St. Victor made the statement in 1170. He was talking about St. Jerome, who is largely responsible for the compilation of the Latin Vulgate Bible. The Bible is something which the Book Mormon has absolutely nothing good thing to say about. It leads you into darkness. It takes away the covenants. It's part of making you blind. It's a big problem. Despite that, let us take this phrase and let us assume this phrase is applicable to someone who is worthy of it. In this case Joseph.

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

Joseph said: "Knowledge saves a man. And in the world of spirits no man can be exalted but by knowledge." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, page 357, hereafter "TPJS.") He also said in

another talk: "When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step-by-step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel---you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them. It's not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave." (TPJS, p. 348)

Now if you go back and reread that quote, and you comprehend that it is possible to pass through the veil before you leave here, then the words: "it will be a great while after you pass through the veil before you will have learned them. It's not all to be comprehended in this world" begins to take on new meaning. You begin to say, Ah, I think I understand why after 40 years of reflection Nephi commented about how it was his constant meditation to think upon the things upon which he had seen and heard. (See 2 Ne. 4: 15-16) The knowledge obtained from heaven is dynamic. It unfolds with deeper meaning as you ponder upon it.

In another place Joseph said: "A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power than many men who are on the earth. Hence it needs revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God." (TPJS, p. 217)

We equate in large measure, repentance, with whatever it is you're doing with your genitals. Joseph equates redemption and repentance with whatever it is you're doing with your heart and with your mind. The problem we must overcome to obtain salvation is our profound ignorance. And what the gospel offers defies ignorance, subdues it, challenges it, destroys it, and leaves it in the dark. So let's try and search into, and obtain some illumination.

First I want to read a passage from Job and misapply it, if you will. I want you to imagine that what I am reading is not merely a description of a mortal horse. What I am reading is a description of those horses which pull the chariot upon which Elijah ascended to heaven. This is the horse *you* need to ride in your quest for heaven. This is the way *you* to are to mount up:

Job 39:19-25

Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?
Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils *is* terrible.
He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in *his* strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men.
He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword.
The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield.
He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that *it is* the sound of the trumpet.
He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.

As the battle engages ride the horse. Not away, but toward the sound.

1838 was a terrible year. It followed a terrible year. Late 1837 the church in Kirkland was in turmoil. Several hundred saints questioned Joseph Smith's divine calling and withdrew from the church. In July 1837 the Kirtland Safety Society was forced to close its doors. There were a number of people who tried to take over leadership of the Church, to get Joseph voted out. They wanted to force the First Presidency from office and then oust them from Kirtland entirely. Among the people who had dissented was Warren Parrish, the one-time scribe and secretary to Joseph Smith. Also three of the apostles, John F Boynton,

Luke and Wyman Johnson departed the faith. Seventies, Hasten Aldridge, Leonard Ridge, Sylvester Smith, John Gould, John Grayson, and even Martin Harris, one of the witnesses of the Book Mormon.

In January 1838 Joseph Smith got a revelation that said, and I'm reading from it, "Thus saith the Lord Let the presidency of my Church take their families as soon as practical, and the door is open for them and move on to the west as fast as the way is made plain before their faces and let their hearts be comforted for I will be with them." On the night of the day on which that revelation came (January 12, 1838), Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon fled Kirtland. Fled at night. They were chased by people for 200 miles trying to kill Joseph. This is in January 1838, the beginning of this terrible year.

Now if we back up, and you can look it up in Doctrine and Covenants Section 47:1, we run into something that is of interest to our topic. This is a revelation given on March 8, 1831.

D&C 47:1

BEHOLD, it is expedient in me that my servant John

[That's John Whitmer, brother of David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses of the Book Mormon.]

My servant John should write and keep a regular history, and assist you, my servant Joseph, in transcribing all things which shall be given you, until he is called to further duties.

And so beginning on March 8 of 1831, and going on thereafter, the history of the Church was maintained by John Whitmer, the church historian. John would have kept the history when the Saints had been expelled from Jackson County in 1833. And 1834, Zion's camp. In 1837 the Kirtland Safety Society collapsed. The rebellion, the loss of Kirtland, the night time flight and the departure to Missouri. John Witmer was the church's historian throughout these events.

Beginning early in 1838, there were rumors of immoral conduct that were levied against Joseph Smith. There was a Church court by April 12, 1838. The Far West High Council brought nine charges against Oliver Cowdrey, the Assistant President to the Church. One of the charges was:

"For seeking to destroy the character of President Joseph Smith Junior by falsely insinuating that he was guilty of adultery etc."

The court in that proceeding ultimately excommunicated Oliver Cowdrey. David Whitmer left the church and likewise was excommunicated. John Whitmer, the church historian was excommunicated. Hiram Page, W.W. Phelps, all these were gone in 1838.

Sidney Rigdon in June 1838 delivered the "Salt Sermon" where he talked about how dissenters were worthy of being trodden, like salt that lost its savor, under the feet of the Saints. That ignited the anti-Mormons. It caused some of the disaffected people to go over and to encourage the further rebellion and hostility toward the church.

There were affidavits that year from Thomas Marsh, who was the President of the Quorum of the 12, testifying against Joseph and the Church. Orson Hyde also signed an affidavit condemning Joseph Smith. There was Mormon war in 1838. The battle of Crooked River was fought in October 24, 1838. The extermination order was issued on October 27, 1838. Hauns Mill massacre occur on October 30 and Joseph Smith surrendered at Far West, while it was under siege. On November 1 he was sentenced to death "at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning in a public square at Far West."

Well, this is the year in which Joseph Smith, because there was no history left once John Whitmer left, set about to compose a replacement history. This is the year and these are the circumstances in which the Joseph Smith History in the Pearl of Great Price got composed. Joseph Smith, against all of the odds, against all of the opposition, against all the treachery, against all the betrayal by his brethren who ought to know better, against all of those who should have known the man's heart and instead turned on him, composed what is as an act of faith and kindness a testimony that seeks to reclaim those who misapprehend the work of God. He put it plainly. It was not his (Joseph's) work. It was God's.

You can say that Joseph Smith wrote various versions of the First Vision and what we have in 1838 version is an innovation, a new invention. But the fact of the matter is that Nephi did not compose what he composed, until about 40 years after the event. Because it was time and distance and reflection that gave him the ability to put into words the truth of what it was he had experienced.

In the terrible circumstances of 1838, when Joseph Smith set about to compose his testimony of his history, this statement was itself an audacious, faith filled act of revelation, to defend what had gone on and in turn to explain what had gone on.

As a document, we don't have Joseph Smith's 1838 history anymore. It has been lost and never recovered. When you look at the history in the *Joseph Smith Papers* what you find is an 1839 copy that was prepared by Mulholland. And it is the Mulholland version that appears in the Joseph Smith History in the Pearl of Great Price. But we reckon it is a copy of what Joseph wrote in 1838 because of the internal dating of the document. He says: "...being now [1838] the eighth year since the organization of the said Church." That's verse 2 of the Joseph Smith History. In brackets they've inserted the year 1838. That was the year in which Joseph wrote his version and therefore it is apparent that Mulholland copied Joseph's writing from the previous year.

When you start out with the Joseph Smith History and read the words:

Joseph Smith History 1:1

OWING to the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil-disposed and designing persons, in relation to the rise and progress of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,

Recognize that what he's talking about are the statements that are made by people of his own faith, about him. These reports arise from Apostles, from Seventies, from the Three witnesses. This is Joseph Smith referring to the problems that are circulating in 1838 as a result of members of the Quorum of the Twelve aligned against him and other close associates and pretended friends who are aligned against him. And as prophets often do they have to way to put it back into context and into clarity with inspired words. In verse 2 he says: "In this history I shall present the various events in relation to this Church, in truth and righteousness, as they have transpired, or as they at present exist, being now [1838] the eighth year since the organization of the said Church."

Therefore as he begins to defend the Church, he starts with what is essential about the Church: " was born in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and five, on the twenty-third day of December, ..." Because if you want to know the truth about the *Church*, you must know the truth about its founding prophet. To the extent that there is anything that is desirable that exists within it, it exists as a consequence of the ministry of this prophet. Therefore if you want to find the truth, you have to look at Joseph.

Born on the 23rd day of December, the day after the winter solstice. The day in which the sunlight won it's triumph over the darkness. The first day in which the hours of light and the hours of darkness begin to

switch and light begins to prevail. A moment that is reckoned anciently as one of the four corners of the earth. Joseph's coming into the world at that moment was no accident. It was cosmic, and God alone controlled the moment of his birth.

In verse 5 he starts talking about how there is “no small stir and division amongst the people, some crying ‘Lo, here!’ and others, Lo, there!’ Some were contending for the Methodist faith, some for the Presbyterian, some for the Baptists.” Here we have the religious divides, because religion always divides. It divided in 1820, and again in 1838, and it still does in 2013-- and it ought not.

Joseph in verse 6 commends to us something. One of the litmus tests he's suggesting that ought to be applied, perhaps those who are in a state of rebellion, those who were in a state of rejection, those who are fighting against the Word of the Lord that comes through him, perhaps they will take a step back and look at what Joseph has to say. Because: “...it was seen that the seemingly good feelings of both the priests and the converts were more pretended than real; for a scene of great confusion and bad feeling ensued—priest contending against priest, and convert against convert; so that all their good feelings one for another, if they ever had any, were entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions.”

You know, at the time Joseph inserts clause, "if they ever had any," you can't help but think that he was lamenting the potential false feelings that it been demonstrated by of those of his own faith who had pretended to have affection for him. How bitter it must be for those whose friendship turns out in the end to be merely feigned. Well, verse 8 reads: “...so great were the confusion and strife among the different denominations, that it was impossible for a person young as I was, and so unacquainted with men and things, to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong.”

See that's the way it is. In verse 10 we see: “In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions...” There's always this war of words and tumult of opinions. And so Joseph is confused. You will have a ‘war of words and tumult of opinions’ whenever there is a prophet sent by God to speak His Word. How do you resolve this? Verse 11: “While I was laboring...” There is a key. “While I was laboring.” It is always labor.

Folks, in general, have your skulls so junked up with the crap of the Internet that you don't even have the capacity to labor (the way it needs to be labored) in order to solve the questions that need to be solved. It is labor for anyone seeking to know God. It is labor over the Scriptures. It is labor always under the extreme difficulties caused by these parties of religionists who will speak in opposition to one another always contending, always claiming “Lo, there” when there is nothing “there” to offer. He was one day reading: “...the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him*”...

Let him (let you) ask of God. God gives to all men liberally. And upbraideth not. And it shall be given him. I can ask God, God will give to me, God will give to me liberally. God will not tell me there are lines I you must not cross and there are things about which I must not inquire. He will not respond that there are things my heart is not yet prepared to receive, or that I don't have standing. He gives liberally. He can let *you* know what you need to know from your study and inquiry into the truth. And no man can stop that! Because this is a matter only between you and God. It's always been a matter between you and God. There is no friar with a brown frock that you need to bend the knee to in order to please God. If Joseph had believed in subjecting himself to a friar with a brown frock he would never have achieved the revolution that he achieved.

Well, when you're laboring as verse 11 suggests. And when you hit the right verse, as verse 11 recites, then verse 12 confirms how you get answers to these kind of inquires. “Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great

force...” Turn back to Doctrine and Covenants 76:18. This is the vision of the degrees of glory telling us of the Celestial, Terrestrial and Telestial post-mortal conditions. Joseph and Sidney Rigdon were reading in John. And in Section 76 verses 16 and 17, it gives you the verses they were reading in John. Look at the description in verse 18: “Now this caused us to marvel, for it was given unto us of the Spirit.”

The Spirit cannot lean upon you and cannot focus your mind upon the revelation that you are entitled to receive unless you use the Scriptures as they were intended to be used: as a Urim and Thummim. They must become a basis from which you draw out the truths of God. And the best material in scripture is, of course, the Book of Mormon. This is why the Book of Mormon is the primary scripture I’ve used in all my writings.

You can look at D&C section 138 and you find that Joseph F. Smith sat in his room pondering over the Scriptures. He's near death at the time; it's about eight weeks before the death of Joseph F. Smith. The Church had a lot of challenges going on at that time. Fortuitously for us the man who sat at home infirm and worried about his impending death happened to happily be the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He got an answer (not to any inquiry about leading the Church and not about anything having to do with his position, or with budgets, or with anything else that manages an organization) to his personal concerns, his deepest apprehensions, his impending death. He would die about eight weeks after this. The Scriptures opened like a Urim and Thummim to his view and we get the vision of the redemption of the dead, which we have now canonized. Labor over the scriptures and revelation go hand in hand. The restoration began as a consequence of laboring over the scriptures. It will continue when you finally stop what you’re doing and return to study of them.

Back to the Joseph Smith History verse 12: “It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again...” Now that's an interesting statement. Because it doesn't appear that this "labor" was a one-off event. It occurred over and over as he sought more understanding, searching deeper and deeper into trying to understand what he ought to do and how he ought to accomplish it. He thought about it “again and again knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did...” You should be asking God so that you can understand Scripture. You should not be trusting the expositions of anyone, myself included. These Scriptures have a message for you. God has a message for you. God would like to talk *to you*. Not through me or any other man. God would like to talk with *you*. To be saved by knowledge the things you need to know are uniquely situated. The things you have the right to get from God are uniquely situated. Therefore unless you ask of Him, you will never recover the unique message intended for you.

I got an answer from God. That's why 40 years ago today, I got baptized. Elder Brian Black baptized me. During the baptismal service it was approaching sundown, the moon had emerged overhead and the first stars began to shine. Brian Black commented in the talk given by him before laying on hands that all the signs of heaven, the Sun, the moon and the stars, had been visible during my baptismal ceremony. I have felt the presence of God with me from that moment through today. Just this morning I checked into my office before coming here. When I arrived at my office there was a dove on the lawn to meet me. And she stayed there as I went by. Now it's a small thing. But if you're acquainted with the Scriptures, you understand what such a symbol can mean, and to me did mean this morning.

Your lives should be filled with wonder. Be not faithless, but be believing. And be of good cheer. He knows you better than you know yourself.

I was bellyaching about an idiot friend in prayer a while ago. During this particular session in which I asked the Lord to do something to fix the obvious defects of the fellow, the answer I got redirected the subject from my idiot friend to myself. The Lord pointed out the reason I could so readily recognize my

friend's shortcoming was because I had the same irritating defect. I could detect it in him but not in myself. It was an interesting reply from the Lord.

Well, my Stake President asked me a few weeks ago about whether I was praying at the time I had one of the encounters he and I were discussing, and I said, 'It's not a fair question. I'll wake up in the morning and I start to pray. Throughout the day, I will take care of a thousand things. And whenever I am free, my mind will revert back to the prayer, and we'll continue the dialogue. And it goes on all day. There's not a moment in my life in which I am not being prayerful. And so the answer to his question is, I suppose, yes I was praying. Because there's hardly a moment when I'm idle, when I am not praying.' Prayer, scripture study, laboring to know God, all go together.

Well, God intends to speak to each of us about us., and about what matters to us, and most importantly about what matters to you. He, unlike us, is not bounded by the linear existence we have. All things past, present, and future are continually before the Lord. (D&C 130:7)

As an aside, if you want an interesting study, take a look at what Lord does in 3 Nephi. He has this agenda that He was assigned by the Father. Christ discharges the agenda. As you read the chapters of the Lord's ministry set out in 3 Nephi it is structured, orderly, and builds throughout. Then when He announces, "Now I have finished with what the Father has told me to deliver to you" and He begins to talk, what unfolds, is non-chronological. It's topical, but it's past, present, and future. His thoughts are not like our thoughts, they're nonlinear. And sometimes it's not easy to receive what comes from Him. It requires reflection and contemplation to parse His greatest revelations. You should understand that Nephi's forty year effort at reflecting on what he had seen and heard is not merely optional, but it is mandatory. God's revelations have depth and layers beyond the human mind because they originate from the Highest Source.

Returning to our subject tonight, in verse 13 we read: "At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God." So it is for all of us. You want to know the truth of the proposition? You ask God, and don't be fearful. If you ask, He'll answer. But you better be prepared for the answer. Because the battle that is already upon us, is going to require valiance. Cowardly, effeminate, hen-like behavior, can never, ever obtain the promises of God. Christ asked, "What went ye forth to see? A reed shaken in the wind?" Is that what you want? Because that isn't who the Lord sends. Oaks,, not reeds, respond to His call. I don't think John the Baptist cried on demand. And Zion isn't a bank.

Continuing in verses 14-15: "So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally. After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction."

We have Orson Hyde's account of this thick darkness and I want to read it to you. This is Orson Hyde writing about Joseph's experience: "He therefore, retired to a secret place in a grove but a short distance from his father's house, and knelt down and began to call upon the Lord. At first he was severely tempted by the powers of darkness which endeavored to overcome him. The adversary benighted his mind with doubts, and brought to his soul all kinds of improper pictures and tried to hinder him in his efforts, and the accomplishment of his goal. However the overflowing mercy of God came to buoy him up, and gave

new impulse and momentum to his dwindling strength.” If salvation consists in obtaining knowledge, and it does, then you can't afford to clutter your mind with the kinds of things which can readily summon up improper images, improper thoughts, improper ambitions. In fact, it doesn't matter what you want. There's only one thing that matters. And that is the Lord's will for you, and with you. And that will is always the same: to bring about your happiness, ultimately, to bring about your joy. He tells you that his burden is light (Matt. 11: 30) because it does not matter how it may have seemed in the dire circumstances of 1838 in the life of Joseph Smith, *this* statement of faith by Joseph, *this* testimony of truth was worth the price that Joseph was called upon to pay in order to obtain it.

The things of God are infinitely preferable to anything that can be offered to you here in this world. You may indeed be able to buy anything in this world for money. But don't let that ever be the case with your heart or with your soul. Zion will not have an economy, because they have all things in common.

So Joseph, in verse 16 tells you that it is some marvelous power from the unseen world. Let me take you back to this statement: "A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if 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..." (TPJS p. 217) Well, apply that quote in the context of what Joseph is experiencing there. And realize this is not something you will only experience after you depart this world. It, in fact, does happen here. Being blinded here is part of being captured by the captivity of the adversary of your soul. Those who have not paid the price in laboring will be deceived even while they, quoting authorities and scripture, march militantly to hell proclaiming against God's messengers.

Awake and arise! Shake off the scales that blind you. Scales which can both be likened to dark contact lenses keeping light from entering your eyes, on the one hand; but also like the scales used to weigh and judge a matter wrongly, on the other hand. You have to judge a matter aright. If the judgment that you judge is not just, then the scales of your eyes are darkness indeed. Take care, therefore, as you judge a matter so you don't wind up saying that which is of God is really of the devil.

Joseph called upon God to escape this being from the unseen world and he saw, as he tells it in verses 16 and 17: "...a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages..." We will get into this more in Idaho Falls. He saw two "personages." Note the word he uses. Joseph knows what he's talking about. He was in the presence of these Beings. He will later describe them as a doctrinal exposition which the Church accepted as doctrine. And which was for a season in your Scriptures. That's why you need to bring your *Lectures on Faith* to Idaho Falls. Continuing, "One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"

I've mentioned this on a number of occasions and I want to mention it again here. When God calls a person by name, it's not your full legal name, such as Joseph Smith Junior. I don't know what Joseph was called at that moment in his life by his closest friends. I don't know if it was "Joey." I don't know if it was "Junior." I don't know what the name was that he went by. Whatever his most intimate companion called him that was what the Lord called him. If his most intimate friend would call him "Joey" then it was "Joey." God doesn't call you by whatever your driver's license says.

So he called him by name. Do you know how comforting it is to have God call you by a familiar name? Instead of recoiling in horror H is drawing you in. Instead of stiff-arming you like, as the Wizard did in Os: "I am the Great and Powerful," God wants you comfortable in His presence. So much so, that when you enter into His presence, it is a matter of course, that God invariably forgives your sins. Isaiah in the temple saw God high and lifted up. And his first reaction was, "Woe is me! I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips. I dwell among a people of unclean lips." It required one of the Seraphim, one of the "fiery

ones," to improvise an ordinance in which he took a coal off the altar with tongs to touché Isaiah's lips to purify them. Afterward the Lord inquires, "Who shall I send?" To which the now purified Isaiah responds: "Here am I, send me." (See Isa. 6: 1-7) It was the same man who had been cowering and proclaiming "Woe is me" who was then proclaiming, "Here am I, send me." What accounts for the difference? It is found in the compassion, the forgiveness, the integrity of the Lord. "I know thou art a God of truth and canst not lie." (Ether 3:12) When He testifies to you that your sins are forgiven, only a fool will thereafter charge you with sin. But the world is stocked with fools.

Well, here now we have in Joseph's history this peculiar scene, where a young lad is put at ease by the Almighty, calling him by an intimate name putting him in the position where he's been drawn into intimacy with the Almighty Himself. God then pauses. He lets the lad collect himself. The Father and the Son are not quick to speak. In that respect, they remind me a lot of Enoch, "slow of speech." (Moses 6: 31) They do not interrupt. Laws control these things. You must inquire to unlock the law and permit the answer. Until you inquire, They will wait. And so They waited for the young Joseph Smith to compose himself and inquire.

Joseph's account continues in verse 18: "My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light..." We don't know how long this took. We don't know how long it took for the lad to get himself composed. To God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, it didn't matter. God is in no hurry. And he's in no hurry to fix you. He will wait on whatever it is you need to be allowed to dispose of for you to come along. And he will wait. At length Joseph recomposed himself and posed the question: "Which should I join?" Verse 19 retells: "I was answered that I must join none of them, for 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." This response is a mixture of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Paul all woven together. Joseph's account uses words of Scripture to compose a brief commentary sweeping from the Old Testament to the New Testament in the language of prophets we all recognize, condemning the entirety of the Christian world.

Remember Joseph composed this in 1838. He put into words of Scripture the concepts that flowed into his mind from the Lord eighteen years earlier. Sometimes the Lord leaves it to you to put words to it. Sometimes the Lord gives you the words. In section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the words were given. I don't know which verse 19 is, whether these are the exact words given Joseph or if this was instead a concept Joseph was left the challenge to put into words. Either way it is light, it is truth, and it is true because it reflects the intention of God in the communication given to Joseph Smith.

What do you suppose it means, "having a form of godliness but denying the power?" How do you deny the power of godliness? How do you obtain the power of godliness? What does it mean to have possession of the power of godliness?

Let's go back to that section 76 again because it has some very nice material in it. I want to go to the very end. We are going to run into the same notion in the First Vision and in section 76. Remember section 76 is a transcript given to Joseph which was dictated, transcribed, read back, approved and then the dictation continued until we reach the end. Look beginning at verse 113: "This is the end of the vision which we saw, which we were commanded to write while we were yet in the Spirit. But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion; Which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter; Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows

on those who love him, and purify themselves before him; To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves; That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, **while in the flesh**, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory.” Notice when this is to occur: “while in the flesh.”

Is this related to not denying the power of godliness? To have the ability to “bear his presence in the world of glory.” As we get farther along in our discussion about the topic of Zion, it becomes critical that you be able to bear His presence while you are in the flesh. For those unable to bear His presence will be destroyed at His coming. Therefore, whatever this power of godliness is, I think we all must obtain it if we hope to stand in Zion.

Continuing in Joseph Smith History verse 20: “He again forbade me to join with any of them; and many other things did he say unto me, which I cannot write at this time.” That is always the case. Those the Lord ministers to invariably know more than they say. There are reasons for that. There are laws involved in that. And section 76 suggests man is not even capable of making some things known. It's really hard to convey into this linear world things that don't relate well here.

Turn back to Mormon, in the Book of Mormon, beginning at Mormon 9:2. These words really sound ominous. This was written by Mormon late in his life. He has lived what we would rate as an NC-17 life if it were depicted in film. Between the rape, followed by the cannibalism of those captured women, the scenes of murder, mayhem, and torture continually before his eyes, his life was distressing. Remember this is the man who abridged the Book of Mormon. That's the life that he was subjected to. So look at these words beginning at verse 2: “Behold, will ye believe in the day of your visitation—behold, when the Lord shall come, yea, even that great day when the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, yea, in that great day when ye shall be brought to stand before the Lamb of God—then will ye say that there is no God? Then will ye longer deny the Christ, or can ye behold the Lamb of God? Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with him under a consciousness of your guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws? Behold, I say unto you that ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell. For behold, when ye shall be brought to see your nakedness before God, and also the glory of God, and the holiness of Jesus Christ, it will kindle a flame of unquenchable fire upon you.”

Now I want you to read those verses carefully and ask yourself: Exactly what is it, that God is doing? You will discover the only thing that God is doing is being. He simply exists. This terrible ordeal being described is you. God is. He is simply revealing Himself to you. And this is your reaction. And why is this *your* reaction? Because you don't have the power of godliness. Why don't you have that? Because you need to repent. And what is it that you must repent of? The absence of knowledge about God. You don't know enough yet to be saved. The plan of salvation is the plan of education, the plan of knowledge about God and the principles of godliness. And the basis upon which, all of you, can live together, and be of one heart and one mind. It doesn't matter that some of you have strange political beliefs. It doesn't matter that some of you would like to see every gun in the universe recalled and melted down. And others of you, would like every child issued their own concealed carry permit and to be armed in kindergarten. None of that stuff separates you from being able to love one another and be one. Because much of what you think matters doesn't matter one whit to the Lord because when you're anxiously engaged in the right cause you will all be surprised how much of our deepest concerns, are merely trivial. The things of the heart are what matters. The things upon which we are capable of becoming one, in love toward one another, are infinitely greater than the political, social and economic issues that divide us.

That's why in this fallen, dark world it is necessary to keep you distracted by this Celestial kingdom in which you presently reside. You are fixated by all the crap that goes on down here. You're worried about

the Kardashians. It doesn't matter. [I suppose a certain level it's possible that the Red Sox don't even matter. But we're eight and a half games ahead in the American League East right now and I'm telling you it's looking good.] But I digress.

In any event mark that page number 484 in your Book of Mormon. Go back and re-read that and ask yourself, what is God doing, other than merely being? The only thing He does is "be" and all the rest of this painful discourse is how you react. You are running around hysterically, doing a 'pee-pee dance,' because you're in agony, your presence is unacceptable, you're unclean, you're unworthy, that's what He came to fix. And when He fixes it, part of the fix consists of telling you: "Set it aside. Set it aside, be my child, accept love." And then in turn you love others even when they don't love you. Because what "fixes" is God's love.

Joseph Smith said, and this goes hand-in-hand with Mormon 9:2-5, "A man is his own tormentor and his own condemner. The torment of disappointment in the mind of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone." (*TPJS*, p. 357) Inflict that upon yourself. The quickest way to achieve that is to act in this life like the coward who is unwilling to be valiant in the testimony of Christ. Be unwilling to stand up when opposed by those who tell you it ought not to be so. Valiance is the only way by which you secure the blessings of God.

When Uriah was killed, he was killed with a message sent by King David delivered by the hand of Uriah himself to Joab. King David knew of the integrity of Uriah's heart that Uriah could be trusted with the order condemning him to die. And Uriah, faithful to his King, carried the message to Joab. There are accounts, not the one we have in our King James Old Testament version, but there are accounts that suggested that when Joab opened the message and read it, he read it to Uriah. Uriah knew he was sent to his death. And in those accounts the men who died with Uriah died with him willingly. It's one of the few places in Scripture where the word "valiant" appears. (2 Sam. 11: 16-17) Those men went "where the valiant men were." In turn the unworthy King forfeited something in his cowardice. Don't be cowards. Stand and be valiant no matter what it is. If you do not then in the day of judgment you will find yourself wanting. Then too in this life you will find you lack the power of godliness, unless you obey the law upon which all blessings are predicated and you make sacrifices. You obey *Him*. And to obey *Him*, is to find yourself oddly incongruent with everything in the external world in which you find yourself.

Well, why are "they all corrupt?" You know there is a line in Luke (I like to quote him when he fits). I gave a talk one time titled "On the Road to Emmaus." It's drawn out from the book of Luke. I think Luke was the other character that was walking. He names Cleopas but he doesn't name himself. Well it is in Luke we find a quote I love. This should be carved on the wall of the Utah Bar office and again on the wall of the lobby. We should require lawyers to put on their business cards. It is Luke 11: 52: "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."

False teachers prevent others from obtaining salvation, period. Happily, they will be accountable for that. You've "taken away the key of knowledge"... "you enter not in yourselves"... "them that were entering in ye hindered." This is the work of the deceived. Being deceived they believe themselves our adversary's messengers and proclaim a message that prevents others from entering into God's presence.

Well there is another verse in D&C 121. This would be the one written in the year following the Joseph Smith testimony we are reviewing tonight. Joseph was sentenced to die on November 1 of 1838. The general who was supposed to carry out the execution rebelled and wouldn't do that. Joseph ultimately wound up being kept in prison in Liberty Jail. While he was in Liberty Jail he wrote a letter. We've taken out three excerpts from the letter and we canonized them. Section 121 is one of those three sections. I

want you to look at verse 45 and ask yourself whether this has something to do with “the power of godliness.”

D&C 121: 45-46: “Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.” God governs without compulsory means. He moves all things by His power allowing anything which exists to choose. (D&C 93: 30-31) His way is by inviting and enticing (Moro. 7: 13). You break yourself against the laws that have been ordained. (D&C 130: 20-21) You condemn yourself by the things that you bring upon yourself. God just is. And He gives you opportunity. He opens opportunity to allow you to enter in if you are willing to enter in. (Rev. 3: 20) Whether you are willing to enter in or not, is predicated upon your own conduct, your own desires. The best way to determine what your desires are is based upon what it is you do.

We are so situated that we have the inability to do two things at once. No matter who you are, you are only doing one thing at a time. Your entire life you are either focusing on one thing, or on something else. Whatever thing it is upon which you dwell that's what you've chosen. Hence the saying we read a little bit ago: "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly then shall the confidence wax strong in the presence of God." Is the power of godliness related to that? Is the power of godliness related to the presence of God? Well, the Book of Mormon continually declares that to be the case. And anyone who suggests otherwise is flatly contradicting the message of the Book of Mormon. That book is all about the ascent back to the presence of God. Testimony after testimony, experience after experience, that's what the Book of Mormon stands for. *That, the ascent to God,* is the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You encounter it almost immediately in the first chapter when Lehi rises up. And you encounter it in Nephi. And you encounter it in Jacob. And you encounter it in Enos and in Alma and in Mosiah. You just continually get the same message.

Joseph Smith said: “I advise all to go on to perfection and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of godliness.” (TPJS p. 364)

Turn to Doctrine and Covenants section 8. Oliver wanted to translate in April 1829. He had arrived to become the scribe to Joseph shortly before this, and he tried to translate. It didn't work out so well. The Lord told Oliver in verse 2: “I will tell you in your mind and your heart by the Holy Ghost” and so on. He talks about a gift Oliver has, “the gift of Aaron.” (Verse 6) That's the rod, he was able to use a divining rod. We're kind of embarrassed about that now and we don't really talk about that much anymore, because we think gifts like that are kind of wacky. Yet here it is in Scripture.

Some of you have gifts that you find a little odd. And yet, you all have gifts. And not everyone has the same gift. And if it gives you access to information from a divine source, like Oliver you ought to trust it. It doesn't matter that in the way that you do it and the way that somebody else does it you are differently situated. No one had ever thought about a seer stone until Joseph Smith encountered it only later to find it ratified in the book of Mosiah in Book of Mormon. (Mosiah 8: 13) Well, in any event .I'm interested in verses 10 and 11 in the revelation given in April of 1829 where it says: “Remember that without faith you can do nothing; therefore ask in faith. Trifle not with these things; do not ask for that which you ought not.” So okay, you've got to be careful. Don't you be asking for something that you ought not to ask for! For goodness sake! That is prohibited! Well, this is followed immediately by the statement: “Ask that you may know the mysteries of God.” That is a commandment. And anyone that tells you, that you ought not to be searching deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God, well I think we just read about them in Luke, didn't we? You don't enter in yourself and you don't suffer those who *are* entering in to be permitted to

go. Because you do not understand the power of godliness! You deny the power of godliness! I declare to you in the words of Scripture “ask that *you* may know the mysteries of God!” That's a commandment, given to us by revelation, enshrined in the Scriptures you folks claim to believe in. Stop denying the power of godliness. And stop falling for the sophists and lawyers who would deceive you by suggesting that you should not inquire into the mysteries of God. *They* are anti-Christ. *They* are opposed to the doctrine of salvation. *They* deny the power of godliness. And I am not, and you should not be.

Well, we've now gotten 20 verses into the Joseph Smith History and we've learned a bunch of stuff. He's told that there are some things he can't write. I want to ask yourself at this point: How do you know if Joseph is telling the truth? How do you know if what you are seeing here is a true testimony or not? How are you to fix that? How are you to know that? Doctrine and Covenants section 63 has a reminder of the stakes involved in preaching falsely. Look at verses 60-62: “Behold, I am Alpha and Omega, even Jesus Christ. Wherefore, let all men beware how they take my name in their lips—For behold, verily I say, that many there be who are under this condemnation, who use the name of the Lord, and use it in vain, having not authority.” This is taking the Lord's name in vain.

How do you know someone speaks with authority? How do you know that Joseph is writing a testimony that is authoritative? How do we know if anyone who opens their mouth and they speak that God has approved the message that they are delivering? Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 5. This is March of 1929. Oliver Cowdrey wouldn't arrive until April 5th the month following this. Take a look first at verse 3: “And I have caused you that you should enter into a covenant with me, that you should not show them except to those persons to whom I commanded you; and you have no power over them except I grant it unto you.” At this moment in 1829, Joseph Smith is perhaps the only man alive who had a covenant with the Lord. “You have entered into a covenant with me.” We are all the beneficiaries of covenants that existed from the beginning, given to “the fathers” which will become an important topic this year. But in terms of someone whom the Lord has struck a bargain with and made a covenant at the moment we are looking at in 1829, that person was Joseph Smith. Our Lord is a Man of covenants. Our Lord enters into covenants on a regular basis. To know Him is to covenant with Him. And Joseph when section 5 was revealed had one.

Looking at verse 4: “And you have a gift to translate the plates; and this is the first gift that I bestowed upon you; and I have commanded that you should pretend to no other gift until my purpose is fulfilled in this;” I want you to mark that. I want you to notice that Joseph is being told by God; “Don't pretend to any other gift than this translation.” Why would God do that?

Go back to verse 20 of the Joseph Smith History which happened in 1820. We already know Joseph had been tutored by the Lord with “many other things did he say unto me at this time which I cannot write.” Joseph already knew a great deal. He had already seen things beyond the mortal eye. He had already been endowed with that certain understanding that reckons from the other side of the veil. As a consequence of which, Joseph knew a great deal more than what he was saying. But he had an assignment. The assignment consisted of the obligation to translate the Book of Mormon. Therefore Joseph was authorized at that moment only to accomplish that work. If Joseph stepped beyond the boundary of the assignment entrusted to him at the moment he was doing this work he would be entertaining a pretence. This is because the errand given to him at the moment of the revelation was confined to the Book of Mormon. Did he know more? Absolutely. Did he have more at his disposal that he could've entertained people with? Without any question. But he was asked to do a work. And in the fidelity of his heart he confined himself to that work until it was first accomplished. To do more than that, would've been a pretense.

These are just asides on our way to the answer to the question about how to tell whether Joseph is telling you the truth. The answer is given beginning in verse 5: “Verily I say unto you, that woe shall come unto

the inhabitants of the earth if they will not hearken unto my words;" This is Christ owning the words. It's not Joseph nor Joseph's words, but Christ's. Then we have verses 6-7: "For hereafter you shall be ordained and go forth and deliver my words unto the children of men. Behold, if they will not believe my words, they would not believe you, my servant Joseph, if it were possible that you should show them all these things which I have committed unto you."

God owns the words. You wouldn't believe the rest of it if you won't believe what's authorized to be spoken. Joseph confined himself to delivering what Christ wanted delivered. And it was up to them to choose. And if they recognize the Master's voice (John 10: 27) then they received the message from Him. The revelation expands this in verses 8-9: "Oh, this unbelieving and stiffnecked generation—mine anger is kindled against them. Behold, verily I say unto you, I have reserved those things which I have entrusted unto you, my servant Joseph, for a wise purpose in me, and it shall be made known unto future generations; But this generation shall have my word through you;" When we fail to heed a message coming from Christ, and fail to recognize His voice, then the Lord's anger is riled. His disappointment is palpable. We should know better.

This theme of Christ's words coming through Joseph for our day is echoed in a letter from Liberty Jail, found in D&C 122: 2: "While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand." That marks those who please God today: They still look at Joseph's revelations as containing Christ's voice. This is the Lord's word to Joseph Smith about those who are wise, who are noble, who are virtuous. They are the ones who are going to seek counsel and authority and blessings under the hand of Joseph. That is as true at this moment as it was then.

How do we today receive blessings "under the hand of Joseph?" Well if you look at the use of the word "hand" almost invariably it is associated with words found in Scripture given or composed by the prophet. The book of Abraham was written under the hand of Abraham. (See headnote to Book of Abraham.) The Book of Mormon, under the hand of Mormon. (See title page of the Book of Mormon.) The hand of Joseph is still the hand we ought to be looking at if we want to know what God's word was for our generation. You have no clue how thoroughly we have supplanted the words given at the hand of Joseph Smith, and what it is you entertain yourselves with each Sabbath day. We contradict what we've received under the hand of Joseph continually, but not with impunity. We will have to account for that eventually.

Going to D&C 5: verse 14: "And to none else will I grant this power, to receive this same testimony among this generation, in this the beginning of the rising up and the coming forth of my church out of the wilderness—clear as the moon, and fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." This description will show up another time in the dedicatory prayer to the Kirtland Temple in section 109. It is a description of the Lord's Church. The Lord's Church is "clear as the moon, fair as the sun." The words "clear the moon" means they meet the description that is given in Doctrine and Covenants section 76 describing those who have the glory of the moon as their inheritance. "Fair as the sun" is described in Doctrine and Covenants section 76, and describes those who will inherit the celestial glory. That is how He describes His Church. And they will be the only ones who will be able to stand at his coming.

The minister for those in the terrestrial glory is the Son, meaning the Son of God. (D&C 76: 77) Who intends to make many sons of God. And in the celestial glory the fullness of the Father dwells.(D&C 76: 92) And so the Church which He owns, which He calls "mine," that He intends to bring out of the wilderness of darkness and confusion and into the light by which they can understand things of God is necessarily composed of those who have sufficient knowledge to be "clear as the moon, fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." When we get to Grand Junction and we're talking about the condition of Zion and we're going to be looking at how very, very perilous it is to encounter this kind of glory when you are unprepared to be there.

Let's go to Luke 9: 25-26: "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and *in his* Father's, and of the holy angels." You see if Joseph is speaking the words of the Son, and if you are ashamed to own the words that come to us by the hand of Joseph, your shame is not toward Joseph but your shame is towards Him who taught Joseph the words to speak. Of those who are ashamed to acknowledge these are the Lord's words shall the Son of Man be ashamed.

Well Joseph's credentials was his possession of Christ's words. Did he come with authority? Did he speak Christ's words? Had Christ entrusted him with a ministry and a message? The answer to that is, yes. He came with authority. It's all vain, all vanity, all nonsense if he doesn't have a message from God. But if he does then his credential is His message. And how do you know that? Well, didn't we stumble across that just a few minutes ago, James 1:5? Everything that was and is going on in the restoration comes back to James 1:5. Why don't you ask God who giveth to all men liberally? Would like you to know a great deal more than you presently do. He doesn't upbraid, He doesn't scold you, nor does He say the mysteries are off-limits. He says instead come and learn of me. He says, I command you to ask and inquire into the mysteries of God. He says, salvation itself is dependent upon knowledge. "And this is life eternal that you may *know* Christ." (John 17: 3) How can you serve the Master you don't know? (Mosiah 5: 13)

Well, let's skip ahead to verses 25-26 in the Joseph Smith History: "So it was with me. I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth?" That will always be the case if you know Christ, because those who do not know Him disbelieve that *you* know Him. There are laws ordained before the foundation of the world which require that they must serve their father. And you must serve yours. There is no other choice. There are only two teams, only two churches, only two ways. And it doesn't matter, if the particular whore you choose to follow is comely, tidy, well mannered, and wearing a white wedding dress. There are only two churches. Only one of which is Christ's.

Joseph Smith History verse 26: "I had now got my mind satisfied so far as the sectarian world was concerned—that it was not my duty to join with any of them, but to continue as I was until further directed." Isn't that interesting? Here you have Joseph who had been given instruction, and he's simply assuming that he ought to continue on his way until he get some further direction. This will go on for years, mind you, for years.

In the Joseph Smith translation of Matthew, chapter 3 (we won't look at that) but he talks about what happened in the incident at the temple when Christ was 12 years old, then what happens when He begins His ministry. It was "many years" that pass while the Lord waits for "the hour of His ministry to draw nigh." Similarly Joseph was waiting until he finds out what else he ought to do.

Look at verse 27: "I continued to pursue my common vocations in life until the twenty-first of September, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-three..." Oh look at that, twenty-first of September, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-three, which is another one of the corners of the earth. This is the autumnal equinox when everything is in balance, the light and the dark. That moment that will soon be upon us, today being September 10th.

Looking in verse 28, about halfway down: "I was left to all kinds of temptations; and, mingling with all kinds of society, I frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth, and the foibles of human nature; which, I am sorry to say, led me into divers temptations, offensive in the sight of

God. In making this confession, no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins. A disposition to commit such was never in my nature. But I was guilty of levity, and sometimes associated with jovial company, etc., not consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been. But this will not seem very strange to anyone who recollects my youth, and is acquainted with my native cheery temperament.” [As an aside, Christ has a cheery temperament. Joseph has a cheery temperament. Be of good cheer.]

Remember this testimony Joseph Smith wrote in 1838 following the trial earlier that year in April at which the allegations of adultery were leveled against him by Oliver Cowdrey. The minutes of the High Council said they dealt with "the girl business" or Oliver's allegations about the girl business. Joseph was exonerated. We entertain a lot of false notions about Joseph Smith and the practice of plural marriage. Hales has completed and is now out with a three volume set. In his books he gathers together every single one of the existing source materials involving Fanny Alger. In the account dealing with Fanny Alger and the incident in the barn, which some people have blown up into Emma Smith catching Joseph Smith in the very act of intercourse with Fanny Alger, he tracks down. When all the source material is gathered what you learn is that Emma Smith witnessed "the transaction." The "transaction" consisted of Levi Hancock performing a wedding ceremony in the barn, with Joseph Smith telling Levi the words to use and Levi performing the ceremony. Emma was at the door listening, or witnessing "the transaction" in the barn. This is the "transaction" which has become subsequently embellished into all sorts of libido-driven license for those who would like a less virtuous prophet than the one we actually had. We want more weaknesses in him to allow us to enjoy greater weaknesses.

As Joseph put it: "No one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins. A disposition to commit such was never in my nature." It wasn't in Joseph's nature. Those who claim otherwise, are looking for a license Joseph didn't think he could grant to himself.

Going to verse 29: "In the above mentioned night of 21 September, I had retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies..." After Joseph continued his way and waited for the Lord, he got to the point in which he had some apprehension about his standing before God, because it had been a long time since his last visit. Notice it is Joseph who drove the events that happened on the autumnal equinox by making an inquiry about his sins. He asked for forgiveness and wanted to know of his state and standing before God, saying at the end of verse 29: "I had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation, as I previously had one."

If Joseph Smith could go get a divine manifestation respecting his standing before God, so can you. If Joseph Smith could go out and inquire about what Church to join so can you. Moroni 10:4-5 tells you: "by the power of the Holy Ghost you may know the truth of all things." The truth of *all* things. There is nothing off limits. There's nothing about which you are going to be upbraided and told, "don't ask. Don't inquire. I won't tell." Now you may ask for something you are unprepared to hear an answer for because there is some preparation yet left. But if you ask then you set in motion on the other side permission to fix what's wrong with you.

Have you read the 10th Parable (*The Missing Virtue*)? If you've read the 10th Parable you know there is a time lag in which a missing virtue gets supplied as a consequence of real world experience. The answer gets set in motion, as a consequence of the laws of God, upon which all blessings are predicated. This verse in Joseph's testimony shows how mandatory it is that you must *ask!* And by the way, the answer to the question you ask from God will always be "yes." However, if you are not ready for the "yes" then you will go through a period of renovation and repair. How long you need to be renovated and repaired, depends upon just how much of the toxic nonsense of this Telestial Kingdom you've drunk in and how much of it you continue to drink in as the Lord works to answer your inquiry. Everything you take in which opposes the ability of God to speak to you will hinder Him answering you. So as soon as you will

lay down that nonsense and in faith become believing, so soon will God be able to plug the leaks, repair the hinge and fix the broken window. He really does have a house of order, or better put He will only enter a temple that is holy, which temple ye are. (1 Cor. 3: 17) It's not built by human hands. It was built by God in the womb of your mother. And you were endowed with it when you took your first breath. That, and you are wearing it now, is His temple. The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple. (Mal. 3: 1) But it must not be defiled. Clean yourselves up. If you want to know what your state and standing is, because you are uncertain, then ask God. Expect Him to answer.

Look at the next verse of Joseph's account (verse 30): "While I was thus in the act of calling upon God..." While he was *in the act* of calling upon God! If you are in the right way with the right faith looking for the right answers, you don't even get to finish the sentence. God knows what you have need of "before ye ask Him." (Matt. 6: 8) That's from the Sermon on the Mount. Christ tells you that. That horrible aching, the longing, the hollowness, the emptiness within you is what Christ is intended to fill. That is His purpose in coming to His temple.

So while he was in the act of calling upon God he discovered a light appearing in his room, "which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor." [As an interesting aside, I want to ask the question, why? Why did Moroni stand in the air with his feet not touching the ground? It's an interesting topic that we are not going to talk about here. It's off subject and it won't get us Zion anyway but there is "stuff" here.]

Oh, and he had on a loose robe. Verse 31 records, "He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen; nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant. His hands were naked, and his arms also, a little above the wrist; so, also, were his feet naked, as were his legs, a little above the ankles. His head and neck were also bare. I could discover that he had no other clothing on but this robe, as it was open, so that I could see into his bosom." Notice this was not ceremonial garb. As a consequence of this, I can tell you it's okay to be buried without temple regalia because you're not going to be wearing that stuff in the resurrection anyway. If you inherit the glory which the angels of God including Moroni (who is certainly exalted), wear, it will not be merely ceremonial.

You can read about the description of what Christ wears in the Scriptures as well. Ceremonial garb is just that: ceremonial garb. It is designed to teach you about the creation, to endow you with certain knowledge about the process of being exalted. But it is not the attire that you will see on the streets of heaven. I actually think attire in heaven looks Egyptian, but that's not particularly important for our purposes.

This angel who came to Joseph was wearing only a robe. It was not ceremonial. He didn't have shoes on his feet, nor a bonnet, nor any of a variety of things that we would associate with ceremonial dress. You can read a description of Christ's attire in 3 Nephi 11:8. And the description there is very much like the description that we have here, Christ and Moroni wearing the same kind of things. And just for the fun of it, let's go back to Exodus.

Looking at the description of ceremonial attire for the Tabernacle of Moses in Exodus 28, beginning at verse 4: "And these *are* the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. And they shall take gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen." As in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*: "...and yellow and green and purple and orange and white..." I'm sorry, I shouldn't do that. But you can read the description of the attire, running through chapter 28. The Lord dresses you in plenty of ceremonial attire designed to convey symbols with meaning. But they are not an end, they are merely symbols. Six days of creation

symbolized by six articles of clothing in the present temple rites. Each one of which can be associated with one of the days of creation. Therefore as you enter through the veil, it is as if the entirety of creation is redeemed in your person. You represent salvation for the entirety of creation. Because in you, should you be able to be rescued, creation itself continues. These are symbols. They communicate to the mind ideas. Ideas which are eternal. They are not ends in themselves.

Well keep that in mind, because you are here in this estate to be trained. You are here to learn something. You here to learn about the power of godliness. And by "here" I don't mean this room, although that is certainly true. I'm talking about this lifetime in which you find yourself. This place, this terrible fallen world, this glorious opportunity in which sacrifice is actually possible. You don't avoid it, and you don't necessarily seek it out. But when it comes upon you, you face it down bravely. You stand where God places you. And you don't let any *man* move you from where it is that God would have you be. Because therein lies salvation. You are obeying a law ordained before the foundation of the world. You cannot take a hold on such blessings, unless you obey the law upon which it is predicated. There will always be in absolute numbers only a few who will find that straight and narrow path. There will be an overflowing abundance of those who will fight against it. That is because they serve *their* master. You don't have time to worry about them. You serve yours. And that Master needs to be Christ.

Well, we are now just about getting to tonight's topic. Once again, Joseph is called by name and this is verse 33. He was afraid but the fear soon left him. The reason he was afraid was because he was seeking forgiveness of his sins. In response to this concern a perfectly white, bright lit individual appeared, who represented the cleanliness of heaven itself. Joseph, in contrast was worried about his own cleanliness. He was inquiring to know about his sins and a visibly cleansed being stands before him, therefore he was afraid. And why was he afraid? Because, once again, you see the remarkable contrast between yourself and heaven. You and I know what lies in our heart. I know what failings I've had, and I know an angelic being can see through me. Therefore, I need something that will remove from me my fear. Joseph explains: "He called me by name." It is the same thing as before. Moroni dispels the fear by letting Joseph know we have a brotherhood, we have a relationship. We see the results: "fear soon left me." "He called me by name."

This is what we want to talk about. The angel told Joseph about the accoutrements that he was to receive. But in the first meeting Moroni gives Joseph something more important and entirely intangible. It is what is most important. It is knowledge. Moroni delivered a message. But his message was not like what we find in the King James version of the Bible. Read Joseph Smith-History 1: 37: "*For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall burn as stubble; for they that come shall burn them, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.*"

The words "root" and "branch" are genealogical words. Notice also "they that come" and ask yourself: who are they? Why are "they" going to "burn them" at "their coming?" These are important matters.

Joseph continues: "And again, he quoted the fifth verse thus: *Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. He also quoted the next verse differently: And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.*"

We will probably get to this part around Spanish Fork in the coming year. Everything about this is telling you something that is remarkably different from where we now find ourselves. The day is coming that will burn them. When?

And we have Moroni's warning about "they that come." Who? Neither "root" nor "branch" will be left after the coming burning. That's genealogical. Then there is mention of Elijah and the priesthood. We will talk about that in another day. "Children get planted in their hearts" because the children are living. But what is planted are "promises made to the fathers." Who? What promises? When were they made? All these are important to consider. Then Moroni speaks of "children's hearts turned to their fathers" and we have another matter to consider. There is so much in that that we need to pick apart. We need to understand. And we're going to go there. Because understanding this is understanding the foundation of Zion.

The foundation of Zion consists largely in reconnecting the children as a consequence of the promises that were made to the fathers, back again to the fathers. This is so there might be a welding link that connects the children who are on the earth with the fathers who are in the heavens. Not a connection to the dead who are in the Spirit world. They who are dead are in desperate need of your ministrations to save them. For in connecting yourself to them is to connect yourself essentially to the damned, the dead, the disembodied. The fathers who are in heaven are the ones to whom you need to form the link. And I've written a paper on that which I assume some of you have read. Just send a note to the blog and I'll email it to you. It's "*The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered*." But see, the whole purpose behind these promises and prophecy delivered to Joseph by Moroni was to fix this problem. Because if it were not so, the whole world would be utterly wasted, utterly wasted at His (and "their") coming.

Then Joseph reports: "In addition to these, he quoted the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, saying that it was about to be fulfilled."

Let's go back to that 11th chapter of Isaiah because, man have we made a mess of that. Okay, this is "about to be fulfilled." Isaiah reads: "AND there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." The Rod is the servant who is a descendant of Jesse, an individual who is both of Judah and of Ephraim, unto whom is rightfully belonging the priesthood. Keep your finger there in Chapter 11 of Isaiah and turn back to Doctrine and Covenants 113 and you'll see where these words are explained.

D&C 113: 1-4: "WHO is the Stem of Jesse spoken of in the 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th verses of the 11th chapter of Isaiah? Verily thus saith the Lord: It is Christ. What is the rod spoken of in the first verse of the 11th chapter of Isaiah, that should come of the Stem of Jesse? Behold, thus saith the Lord: It is a servant in the hands of Christ, who is partly a descendant of Jesse, a descendant of Judah, as well as of Ephraim, or of the house of Joseph, on whom there is laid much power."

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

So there is going to come forth "a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;" Notice that! Oh, thank God! Someone will finally fear the Lord, more than they fear man! I look forward to that moment. Hope to live to see it!

Continuing in verse 3: “And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth,” Notice that in this context the “rod” is not merely a person but it is also the word of God.

Continuing: “and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.” This is, of course, the Millennial day.

According to Moroni these things are shortly to come to pass. “And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”

We began with that theme. You see it is knowledge that typifies the Millennium. Imagine people who are full of knowledge of the Lord. That's what you have to lay hold on. That is what you must become.

Continuing: “And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left,”

Well, this shall shortly come to pass. Not then, not in Joseph's time, not that day, but by and by. This is why we need to review the restoration this year. We cannot go forward until first we remember what has already been given.

When a branch is spoken of, we should look at John 15:1-6. There Christ speaks of Himself as the “true vine” to which we must connect if we are going to bear fruit. We are not going to do that because our time is far spent. But Christ talks about a servant. About Christ being the true vine. None of us can bear fruit unless we are connected to the true vine. Once again, that is a genealogical term. That is a family of God term. That is a son of God term. And He intends to make many sons of God (1 John 3: 2), to bring many sons unto glory (Heb. 2: 10).

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

Throughout the coming year were going to try and lay that out. 2 Nephi 3, we could spend a day talking about chapter 3. We don't have that time. And tonight's time is far spent. But what I want to do is just look at some specific words for a moment. Because I'm telling you the muddle that has been made of the Book of Mormon by the nonsense that we believe about its words is worse than a Gordian knot. And how you sort that out at this point is a challenge. But you ought to rise by making it the subject of prayer and getting revelation. Because there is a story being told here, there is a covenant being described here. And

there are things in play here that until you awake and arise and then realize what the duties are that are devolving upon you, you don't have any chance of figuring out exactly what a mess we have made of the restoration of the Gospel.

Looking at 2 Ne. 3: 23-24: "Wherefore, because of this covenant..." [The covenant being described here, is a covenant made by God, with Joseph of Egypt.] "...because of this covenant thou" [Joseph, the son of Lehi] "thou art blessed; for thy seed" [Joseph, Lehi's son] "shall not be destroyed, for they shall hearken unto the words of the book." [That is the descendents of Joseph, Lehi's son.] "And there shall rise up one mighty among them,"

Ask yourself if the word "among" is genealogical or merely associational. It doesn't say one "from" them, which would be genealogical. It says "among" them. Someone's going to arise who's going to do: "much good, both in word and in deed, being an instrument in the hands of God, with exceeding faith, to work mighty wonders, and do that thing which is great in the sight of God, unto the bringing to pass much restoration unto the house of Israel, and unto the seed of thy brethren."

In all that goes on in chapter 3 of 2 Nephi dealing with the covenant it is framed about the Joseph of Egypt individual. The next chapter, by the way don't let the punctuation of the chapters fool you. This is all one discourse. This is the continuation of the statement. 2 Ne. 4: 2 explains: "For behold, he" [that is not Lehi, but Joseph of Egypt] "he truly prophesied concerning all his seed." Now realize that includes some of you.

Look our time is spent but our agenda is not. There was another prophecy that's made by Moroni which is repeated in Acts. That prophecy has this real complicated structure, because the past, present, and future time and how it all fits together. We'll pick it up there in Idaho Falls on the 28th.

About this time 40 years ago today, I was at a post-baptismal party at the Mortenson's house and it would be breaking up probably another 10 minutes from now, in which Jim asked me to give the opening prayer. Jim, being the man of the house, and Monty being the faithful wife and the descendent of the Bunkers, deferred to her husband in making that call. At the time I was rather giddy because I had never been baptized before. My mom wished me to be a Baptist. She was worried that I was going to hell because I never joined any church. Then I got baptized a Mormon and removed all doubt, for her anyway.

And I was a little too jocular in my native cherry temperament, being what it is. Therefore Jim asked someone else who is a little more Mormon and reverent to give the damn prayer. And so someone else gave the prayer. And I felt a little chided, and I thought, 'man these Mormons are tight.'

Anyway, as the evening ensued there was a little more of my jocular and a little less of a reverent atmosphere. Some folks took offense. There was some jarring, there was some contention; and literally the Spirit fled from the meeting we were having. All these wonderful people and all the stuff that they had put themselves to because I had been baptized was turning out to be a rather tragic evening.

So I interrupted and I insisted on the floor and made people listen. I went around person by person and I talked to each one of them. I talked to them by the power of the Spirit, with the gift of prophecy. And I touched the hearts of everyone who was in that room. I didn't understand it at all that night. But when you get a little further into the testimony of Joseph Smith, you find that on the occasion when Joseph and Oliver were baptized they were immediately given the gift of prophecy. I could no more have given you the name for what happened. All I comprehended that evening was that I, by an influence outside and greater than me, was able to calm the disunity and reunite the hearts of the people who were with me. I can tell you now I recognize what that was. But I was a few hours old initiate into this restoration process.

It's been 40 years. This is going to be a year in which I put on display my gratitude for the opportunity afforded to me to be baptized for the remission of sins. And it will allow me to testify about those things which I know to be true. And to speak about the work remaining undone devolving upon *you* to accomplish. This restoration merely got its toe in the door in the day of Joseph Smith. And hardly even that. The prophecies and the promises and the time and the opportunity are upon us. The question is, will this generation be just as careless, just as indifferent, as the one when the last, real prophet's voice was heard among us? When Joseph Smith could tell you, 'I know He lives because I've seen Him.' When Joseph Smith could say, 'God commanded me that I should bear record of Him because I have seen Him.' It has been too long, too long, between that moment and today. And it's time now we stop running away from the conflict. It's time for us to be valiant once again. Do not be fearful. Cowardice and fear are the opposite of faith.

If Joseph Smith in the ruins of 1838, can write the testimony that we find in the history of Joseph Smith as an act of audacious courage and faith and confidence in the work of God that he was pursuing, despite the ruin that he saw the church existed in at that moment; if Joseph could do that, why can't you have faith?

I don't care what a tattered ruin that you see around you today. Zion can come. We're still a few sessions away from encountering important parts of that religion Joseph was attempting to restore which are really most interesting. But I'm telling you that if you stay with this over the course of the next year you are going to realize just how much of the restoration is left undone.

There is nothing more delightful, there is nothing more delicious, there is nothing more exciting than the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We deliberately started this without an opening prayer. We are not going to have an opening prayer on any of these talks until Sundays. There will be a few of these on Sunday. One of these is going to be on Sunday in Logan. Another one's going to be on Sunday in Centerville, October 6. For those that are on Sunday, we will have an opening and closing prayer. For those that are not on the Sabbath, I'm simply going to talk.

But I will tell you that I know what I'm talking about. If you will ask of God and listen to the Spirit you will be able to determine whether I speak His words. I don't think it matters if I could reveal to you all things. If you won't believe the things I *can* tell you, you certainly won't believe things I'm not telling you.

But I wouldn't blame you if you don't believe me. I really wouldn't. It is so hard to be believing. This world is so acidic and this environment is so toxic. It's very hard to believe. I think that's one of the reasons why Christ's account said it is a greater righteousness to believe than it is to know and to say.

I bear testimony to you that Jesus Christ lives, He matters. I don't. He can save you. I can't. I can report on the glory of this Lord of ours but only He can dispense it. Of that I bear testimony intending to be held to account for the testimony I bear.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.