

Come Follow Me Class Insights (Doctrine and Covenants 20-22)

I'm Taylor.

And I'm Tyler.

And I'm Anthony Sweat.

Welcome to Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today, Doctrine and Covenants sections 20 through 22. And just briefly, before we jump in, we have our friend Tony on with us because he teaches Doctrine and Covenants courses, and he has lots of good insights to share. We also want to encourage you to check out a series of videos that Tony is doing, called "The Unfolding Restoration", and he'll be looking at themes chronologically through the Doctrine and Covenants. So, this upcoming year, this year of the Doctrine and Covenants from Book of Mormon Central, we're working hard to bring forth lots of great content to help you dig deeper into the gospel and find joy and peace in your life.

So, for today's episode, there is a lot going on. This is a highly, highly significant event of the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ in the latter days. And so, we wanted to invite Anthony in to come and join us on this, and help us work through some of the historical events, the people involved, and the actual text that we have in section 20, 21, and then subsequently in 22, our last section that we're going to cover today.

So, to begin Tony, what would you say if here's this...

It's like watching Picasso, you know?

This is good.

Michelangelo could go here on the white board.

Here you have the Church of Jesus Christ being set up on the earth in 1830, which is what we're going to be covering today. What do you see as all of these foundation pillars that God had to put in place before we're ready for him to say, okay, now, here is the organizational structure?

Well obviously, the first one is the Book of Mormon. We've got to get the Book of Mormon in place. I don't think it's coincidental that the Lord doesn't organize the Church until the Book of Mormon is published.

Which is interesting, because the Book of Mormon is published in March of 1830. The first books come out in March, and then it's the next month when we get the Church established.

From the Book of Mormon, we'll get our foundational practices, like our procedures. We'll get offices of the priesthood. You get the priesthood restored. Yes, that happens beforehand.

We've got to throw in here the First Vision, that connection of revelation where God is saying, it's going to be my church, it's the Church of Jesus Christ. It's never the church of Joseph Smith.

But I need to establish a prophet who can be guided by revelation so that it can still be the Church of Jesus Christ.

Yes, so you kind of get these founding events as well that are in there. And in section 20 that we're going to look at, you're going to see all of this represented in this church constitution. By the time you're done setting up the foundation, you get an overview of what you cover in section 20.

Can we have one more leg, then? Can we get the foundational doctrines? Because we'll look at that in there as well. In the First Vision, the Lord says that "...they teach for doctrines the commandments of men..." (JSH 1:19). So, a lot of what the Book of Mormon also does, and what God teaches Joseph, is what are some essential doctrines of the Church, and we're going to see that in section 20 as well.

So now you have the 30,000-foot overview of section 20. Ironically, I put this one in the middle because back in June of 1829, so nine months before the establishment of the Church, God gave the command to Oliver Cowdery, in section 18, to start going through the Book of Mormon to pull out those doctrines: the elements of the priesthood, and the practices, and the procedures, to start setting in place this constitution, if you will, for how to even establish a Church. So that's why many of the things we're going to study in section 20, they were put in place, originally put in writing, beginning in June of 1829, which brings up an interesting point, Anthony. What would you say about the entire Doctrine and Covenants and this notion that some people get that God revealed it, it was written down as if it were written by the finger of God in stone tablets like on Mt. Sinai and it never changes? But the fact is, it does change. There are things that adjust and adapt. What can you say about that?

Well, if you didn't know that in section 18, so this is back in June of the summer of 1829, the Lord tells Oliver Cowdery, "...rely upon [that which is] written" (Doctrine and Covenants 18:3). Like, you're going to organize a Church. So, just like in the Book of Mormon, I'm going to call my apostles, organize the Church among the Nephites, I'm going to do the same thing. Joseph and Oliver are the first and second elders. Let's organize the Church. Oliver, "...rely on the things [that] are written" (Doctrine and Covenants 18:3). So, Oliver is going to go into the Book of Mormon and start to pull out what are the foundational teachings, and doctrines, and practices, and priesthood offices. And he organizes these things called the Articles of the Church, and Oliver Cowdery is the one that writes them down.

And when Oliver writes those down, Joseph, you're going to notice, if you have older scriptures, it doesn't say it, the older scriptures just say April of 1830. Yours are older.

Mine are the older ones.

The newer ones say this revelation of section 20 was maybe as early as June, of the summer of 1829, because we don't know when Joseph is going to actually write section 20, first of all. He is going to take Oliver's articles and augment them, basically, through revelation and prophetic

authority; add things, clarify, make sure it's all set up and ready to go, but Joseph never views even that, section 20, as set in stone. They're not just chiseled on Mount Sinai. Should we give some examples?

Please do.

So, let me give you, for example, there are three basic reasons why Joseph will amend revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, even after they're published. Like section 20 will go through an amendment from the 1833 Book of Commandments to the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. He'll amend them because there are errors in typography or transcription, editorial kind of, we get that, that one's easy. But Joseph will also amend things to clarify intent so that people don't misunderstand something. So, one example, if I can, can I use yours?

You can use my scriptures.

Look how colorful those are, that's wonderful.

I was deprived as a child; I didn't get enough coloring time in my youth so I'm taking it out on my scriptures today.

Go to verse 40. So, in section 20 verse 40, it's talking about, you're going to ordain elders, and priests, and teachers, and deacons. Well, what do these priests and elders do? Look at verse 40: "And to administer bread and wine -- the emblems of the flesh and blood of Christ--". The earliest written version that we have of this, in printed versions of it, doesn't say "the emblems of the flesh and blood" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:40). It says "to administer the flesh and blood of Christ...", as though -- and some people could misunderstand that (Doctrine and Covenants 20:40, earlier versions). Is this bread of life, is this the bread of life sermon, or transubstantiation doctrine? So, they'll go on and clarify later, "the emblems"; this represents the blood and flesh of Christ (Doctrine and covenants 20:40). So, that's a clarification addition that is made.

Or if you notice when the Church is organized, there are only four priesthood offices: there's elder, deacon, teacher, priest. But if you look in section 20, you suddenly get in the references to, like look at verse 66: "But the presiding elders, traveling bishops, high councilors, high priests...". Now, that was not revealed in April of 1830. There is not a bishop in the Church until 1831. We don't get high priests until June of 1831. So, those are later additions to Joseph as he learns. So, the third reason why: so, errors in typography and transcription, clarifications, and if Joseph gets further revelation on subjects that he feels should be added to it, he'll go back and amend that in the sections of the Doctrine and Covenants.

That's really helpful, because it points us to this idea of an unfolding Restoration, that it's not God, from the beginning, giving them a book that is complete, and perfect, and entirely finished from the beginning of the coming forth of the Church. It's like a plant, a tree that's growing, and a new branch, all of a sudden, sprouts out here that we didn't know about back in 1830, but it's part of the Church, and it's like adding a leg. And now we live in the 21st century, and I love the

fact that we are not bound by only what is written in the scriptures, but we have living prophets whose right and authority it is to receive revelation from the Lord to say, let's take all the good that we've got from the past, and we're going to move forward in possibly new directions. That's one of the beauties to me of a living, breathing, growing Church. It is the Church of Jesus Christ.

Amen. I like that. Speaking of amens, that would be another good one, there you go.

A great way to organize section 20, when you're studying it, is look for the “amens”. It's a fun, it's a different revelation, in that sense, in that you get distinct sections where there's something talked about, “amen”; something talked about, “amen”.

Yeah, the Lord, it's beautiful to me how he'll take big concepts that, it's very clear to him, but these are new concepts for the people in 1830–1831, and the new converts coming in. And for somebody who's joining the Church today, some of these are new concepts. I love how he reasons with us, how he uses logic, and how he'll organize things in such a way to make it bite-size, easier to digest and understand, and even talk about or comprehend.

So, you'll notice back in the Book of Mormon, for instance, with Nephi having this, what we would call a panoptic, vision of all these incredible things in 1st Nephi chapter 11, 12, 13, and 14. You'll notice what the Lord does there, through the Spirit of the Lord, and then the angel, as Nephi's tutor: he'll say “Look!” “Look!” “Look!” “Look!” And there are scene changes. It's as if he saying, okay, that screen's done, now look at this one, now look at this scene. He does the same thing with us in section 20, like Tony is talking about, but he doesn't use the word “look”; he uses the word “amen”. So, you get these little clusters, and if you were just to open up your scriptures to section 20 and just highlight, however it works for you, the “amens”, then you now have these bite-size chunks where God is systematically going to march you through what's necessary for building up his Church in the last days.

And in section 20, as you look at those “amens”, you're going to see some foundational, you're going to see three big, I mean I think there's maybe five “amens” in there. I'm not sure, I actually didn't count them myself, but you're going to see at least three major shifts and ideas. You're going to get foundational history; we're going to get, what's our, can I write on the board?

You can use the white board.

You're going to get a foundational story. So, what is our founding narrative? You're going to get that in there. You're then going to get our foundational doctrine, so what is the central, foundational doctrine of the Church of Christ? And then you're going to get some foundational practices for, or maybe you could say procedures that you're going to get. And so, look through, as you go through section 20. You can see where the Lord will tell a story and say, this is our founding narrative, “amen”. Here are some of our founding doctrines, and then we'll get an “amen”. And then the majority of the section deals with this, and so you get a big “amen” on these ones. But it's just a great way to break up the sections and look at it.

Yes, it's beautiful. Now, let's go back, and let's start at the very beginning. Sorry, I'm going to erase your beautiful handwriting here. Let's do our first cluster, which is 1 through 4, that's going to end with an "amen", this initial foundation of the Church. Tony, what can you say about verse 1? Because there is a lot of speculation, and there's a lot of commentary through the history of time on section 20 verse 1, and what it might or might not imply or mean.

Yes. Well let's read them: "The rise of the Church of Christ in these last days, being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh, it being regularly organized and established agreeable to the laws of our country, by the will and commandments of God, in the fourth month, and on the sixth day of the month which is called April--" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:1).

Now, why has that verse invited so much commentary and speculation? Well, because the Church is going to be organized on April 6, 1830, and a lot of people will use that verse as saying, oh, April 6, 1830 "being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord... in the flesh," thus Jesus must have been born April 6th (Doctrine and Covenants 20:1). Now, whether he was or wasn't, I have no idea. That's not my call to make, if that's a historical fact or a prophetic revelation.

What I will say is that verse 1 of section 20 isn't, in its intent, meaning to tell us when Jesus was born. Its intent is to tell us when the Church was organized. And what we do know from Joseph's history is that God told Joseph Smith to organize the Church on April 6th of 1830. Joseph said that was the day we were commanded to organize the Church. So, there is something that God had in mind on that date. Now, what it is, I don't know. I don't know if you know, Tyler. But I do know that that day was chosen to organize the Church on, and in that verse, by the way, is likely written as an introduction by John Whitmer, the Church historian. It's not even written likely by Joseph Smith or Oliver Cowdery; it's John Whitmer saying, hey, we organized the Church on April 6, 1830.

That's really helpful, Tony, because I love this idea of whenever you come in scriptures to something that you don't know, you can end up out in the weeds really quickly, in a variety of directions, and it can turn into contentious arguments and debates. So, the practice that I love in scripture study is when you don't know for sure, when it's not clearly stated, then don't spend too much time focusing on what you don't know. Go back to what you absolutely know. And what do we know: that God picked a very specific day. He didn't say sometime during the first week of April, or you know, sometime in the spring of 1830. He said, April 6th, 1830; I want that to be the day that is the beginning of my Church being established. And he knows all the reasons why he picked that date and we can speculate, but at the end of the day we're not sure on all of those, so let's go back to what we do know: God picked that date.

Amen!

Amen!

I'm going to say amen through this whole thing, is that all right?

So did Joseph and Oliver. Look, now, at the very first thing mentioned after the date being established for the birth of our Church. Verse 2: "Which commandments were given to Joseph Smith, Jun., who was called of God, and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the first elder of this Church;"

Brothers and sisters, I need to just say here that there are a lot of people who have said a lot of things about Joseph Smith, about whether he was or was not a true prophet, about whether he stayed true or became a fallen prophet. And there have been a lot of people who have tried to slander him through historical stories that they've told, and things that he said, or did, or didn't say, or didn't do. I love how the Lord Jesus Christ establishes, in verse 2, that it is God who picked Joseph, and it is God who ordained him an apostle of Jesus Christ. And it's not for public opinion to say, I think he's a fallen prophet now. That's God who called him, and so as we progress forward through the rest of the Doctrine and Covenants, and you watch God working through this prophet, let's not forget that Joseph is an instrument in the hands of God. This isn't Joseph's work that he's creating out of whole cloth, making it up as he goes along. He's an instrument being guided by God.

If I can add to that, first of all I will give an opinion.

Go for it!

Joseph Smith is a prophet of God.

Amen!

He's a prophet among prophets. The things that he reveals and does never cease to amaze me as I study his revelations and teachings, and I love that man with all my heart. It's really interesting though, I might jot down in verse 2 that when he, and then in verse 3 Oliver Cowdery is called the second elder -- Joseph and Oliver get their apostleship from Peter, James, and John. That's really important to know. So, when Oliver and Joseph say, I'm an apostle, that term means different things in 1830. We think of Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "Apostle" meant I'm an authorized messenger, teacher, disciple, witness of Christ. But they will tie their apostleship back to the keys that Peter, James, and John gave them.

That's beautiful, and we get these two witnesses, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, first and second elder, with that authority: we're apostles, and we've been given authority to govern the kingdom of God. So, that to me is a beautiful beginning of this Church as well, that they're not there on any earthly authority. They are not on their own errand. This is given by God.

Now, we shift at the bottom of verse 4. You'll notice, there's your first "amen", which now leads us into the second cluster. Look at verse 5: "After it was truly manifested unto this first elder..." Now, if you look over again at verse 2, that's Joseph; the first elder is Joseph. "After it was truly

manifested unto [Joseph Smith] that he had received remission of his sins, he was entangled again in the vanities of the world;" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:5).

Now, stop right there. This is why you have to know the First Vision accounts, and I hope you've all read them. Sometimes you'll hear critics of the Church say Joseph Smith didn't talk about a First Vision. Joseph Smith didn't publish an account of his First Vision; he made it up ten years later. The first published version of the First Vision didn't come out until 1840. Right here, you get the first reference in 1830 to the First Vision. It is right here in section 20. And if you know the 1832 account, Joseph was seeking a remission of his sins, and he prayed to God in the woods, and the first thing that God said to him is, "...Joseph, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee...".

And then after the First Vision, Joseph says he fell into the vanities of the world, he got into the follies of youth, "foibles of human nature;". So right here, please mark verse 5. This is the first published version of the First Vision. April of 1830, from the very beginning, Joseph is saying, yes, my vision from God, my experience with him, was foundational. Verse 5; then, now look at verse 6: "But after repenting, and humbling himself sincerely, through faith, God ministered unto him by an holy angel..." Who's that? Well, that's Moroni. So, the second story is, now Moroni has come. Now he's seventeen, and Moroni's going to give him commandments. And you know you talked about "...whose garments were pure and white... And he gave him commandments which inspired him;" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:6-7). I love that phrase too. Joseph, your heart is not quite right yet. I'm going to work with you. Let's get some things right, Joseph. Joseph is like, this inspired me.

Now the third story: "And he gave him power from on high, by the means which were before prepared, to translate the Book of Mormon;" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:8). Now, so the third founding story is God gave Joseph Smith power and authority to translate the Book of Mormon. So then, that's the third story is with that power, Joseph translates the Book of Mormon, verse 9, "which [is] a record of a fallen people, and [has] the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ...".

Now, here's the fourth story. In most of our narratives we would go First Vision, Moroni, Book of Mormon, then priesthood coming through John the Baptist. Joseph doesn't go there. Joseph says, "Which was given by inspiration, ..." meaning the translation of the Book of Mormon, "...and is confirmed to others by the ministering of angels, and is declared unto the world by them--" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:10). So, his fourth founding story is the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon.

And now, some of us, that might throw us for a loop. Why didn't Joseph go to Peter, James, and John, or John the Baptist? Because his intent is in verse 11: "Proving to the world that the holy scriptures are true, and that God does inspire men and call them to his holy work in this age and generation, as well as in generations of old; Thereby showing that he is the same God yesterday, today and forever. Amen" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:11-12). Joseph wants to say, look, God spoke to me, he gave me a book, I translated it, angels have declared that this book is true, and

let me hand you this book, which is what we still do today as missionaries, and if you read the Book of Mormon, you will know that Joseph Smith was called to be a prophet also, proving that God did call him. That's the logic of those four stories there.

I love it.

Okay, now we go to our third set from verse 13 through 16, the next set finished with an “amen”. You'll notice how he starts out with 13 with this, invoking the law of witnesses right from the get-go: "Therefore, having so great witnesses," everything that Tony just addressed, having so many; it's not just one or two. It's all these witnesses: "...by them shall the world be judged, even as many as shall hereafter come to a knowledge of this work." I love the fact that God is saying, look, you're responsible, and each individual is responsible, for finding the truth. And you can't say, well, I thought it was all a lie, because he's saying, you need to seek the truth, and I've given you a lot of witnesses of what is true here.

Verse 14: "...those who receive it in faith, and work righteousness, shall receive a crown of eternal life;". Are you noticing that we're only in our third set, and God is already pointing us to the end goal of why even establish a church in the first place? Why do I need a church? Why can't I just be a good person? He's setting us up for his kingdom in heaven by giving us a portion of that kingdom on the earth to prepare; to practice; to learn how to be the kind of being that he wants us to be forever, which is a follower of Christ. And it's all here. It's all laid out.

And we'll get to this in 22 as well, but you read, and the Lord tells Oliver Cowdery, go into the Book of Mormon. You'll find everything to establish my church. So, the Lord uses three phrases, just to back-track on that a little bit. He says, in them you'll find everything about my rock, my gospel, and my church. My rock, my gospel, my church. I'm going to use a little of Helaman 5:12, "...upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ... ye must build your foundation;". That's Jesus. The gospel: faith, repentance, baptism, Holy Ghost, yea “verily... this is my gospel” (3 Nephi 27:21).

The Church, that's the organization. So, back to Tyler's question: why do we need a church? We need a church to dispense the gospel, to have the priesthood keys and authority to do these covenants of the gospel. We're going to talk about covenants, in section 22, that bind us to the rock. The Church gives us the covenants to bind us to Jesus. And a lot of section 20 will get into that logic of, let's talk about the organization of the Church, let's talk about Jesus, which we will in a second. Sorry, I did that backward. Let's talk about Jesus's Church, but we're going to talk a lot about ordinances, and priesthood, and covenants that bind us. This is a Restoration of covenants, of a covenantal Church.

Beautiful. Now we jump into the fourth segment. This one takes us from verse 17 down to verse 28. Now, notice how this little snapshot, this scene, if you will, begins. Verse 17: "By these things we know that there is a God in heaven," and then it gives some of his attributes, "...who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of

heaven and earth, and all things which are in them;". By the way, stop and think about this in the context of the actual event of the seed being planted on the earth, of the kingdom of God on the earth beginning in a farmhouse in Fayette, New York, frontier America at the time, with a bunch of, quite frankly, poor farmers who they're not renowned, they're not famous, they're not well-known. And you get these, in this little agrarian setting, these huge, lofty principles and ideals being declared with authority. Not we hope this is true, I think something might come of this; it's, here we are in this little log cabin in Fayette, New York, with this idea of, there is a God in heaven, and he is infinite, and he is eternal. And he has established the whole creation of the earth. Verse 18, it's the creation of mankind, men and women, male and female, and the commandments being given for us to serve him.

But then you get the Fall introduced in verse 20: "But by the transgression of these holy laws man became sensual and devilish, and became fallen man." So, as Tony has mentioned, we're now getting into elements of these principles of the gospel. You've got to know about the Creation, the Fall, and then what do we have in 21? "Wherefore, the Almighty God gave his Only Begotten Son, as it is written in those scriptures which have been given of him" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:21). And what does he do? "He suffered temptations but [he gave them no heed]. He was crucified, died, and rose again the third day; And ascended into heaven, to sit down on the right hand of the Father, to reign with almighty power according to the will of the Father;" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:22-24).

To me, what that's saying is, here we are establishing the Church of Jesus Christ, but it's not Jesus making this up. He's reigning according to the will of the Father. He's getting everything from God Almighty, through him to us, and now we're building up the kingdom of Christ on the earth. And we're told later on, in the Doctrine and Covenants sections 76, and 88, and other places, where he says, once it's all finished, the Son is going to then present that kingdom, spotless, to the Father, because everything keeps bringing us back to God. All of those invitations in the Book of Mormon, and throughout scriptures, to come unto Christ, that's our job, and it's Christ's job to give us and present us to the Father. We don't work our way into heaven. We work our way to Christ with his help, and it's his job to bring us to heaven.

I'll say that often, you and I, we are learning attributes of deity to become, but we're not trying to qualify ourselves for heaven. If that was the goal, we're all going to fail. We're qualifying ourselves for Christ, and then Christ qualifies us for heaven.

Amen! His merits, "his mercy and [his] grace" alone at that point (2 Nephi 9:8).

And Christ tells us, what do you do to qualify? Well, you take his name upon you, faith, repentance, baptism, Holy Ghost, and continuing in that.

There you go. So now, look at verse 25: if you believe, then you're going to be baptized, and endure in faith to the end, and then you're saved. And then he introduces the Holy Ghost in verse 26. By the way, did you notice, verse 17: God in heaven. Verse 21: the Only Begotten Son.

Verse 26: the Holy Ghost. We have the Godhead. To me, it's the three heavenly witnesses that keep coming into this narrative of, they're all saying this Church is now being established with Godly authority; all three are involved in this process. And he mentions that in verse 28: "...Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God, infinite and eternal, without end. Amen."

Amen!

You can't skip the "amen", my brother!

Amen!

Now, that is coming straight out of Book of Mormon doctrine, which is taught over and over, and we mentioned this last year when we were covering the Book of Mormon. The word that the scriptures use to describe the Godhead is "one"; it's never "same". And in an 1830 context, trying to figure out and wrestle with the identity of who God is, and who Christ is, and who the Holy Ghost is, and how they work and function together, and if they're the same, and if they're not, it's beautiful to me how clear the Book of Mormon is in using the word "one", especially when you put it in the context of other relationships that God has commanded us to be one in, like a marriage, like a group of people trying to build Zion, to become one. It doesn't mean we become the same, it just means that we become unified and one. And that is his goal for us as a Church, for us as a world, for all of the daughters and sons of Adam and Eve through time, is to become one. I love it.

So, Tyler just walked you through, back to these foundational things, and these verses really do lay down some of our foundational doctrine. As you notice there, and part of this is the unfolding Restoration, if someone said, what's the foundational doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? It's tithing, and setting up lots of metal chairs, and you know, food storage, of course. You know, we have all these peripheries, and I don't mean any of that pejoratively, those are all important. But sometimes we get out on those branches a little bit too far, and get away from the trunk, and 17 to 28 just gave you the trunk. What's our basic doctrine? We have a loving Father in Heaven who created us, we are his children. But we're fallen; therefore, we need to be redeemed, so he sent his Son. And if we'll come unto his Son, we'll be saved. That's our core, essential doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ.

But then he goes on. The next "amen" is in verse 29 through 36, and this one's interesting. So now, if that's our core doctrine, therefore what? Well, it's back to Tyler and what we talked about with covenant: therefore, we need to "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him," through a covenantal relationship, through obeying his gospel (Moroni 10:32). So, look at verse 29: "...all men must repent ... believe ... worship the Father... endure in faith ... be saved...". And we read before, that includes baptism and the Holy Ghost, but then we get some great words in here that we often do not use in the Church. And the two words are "justified". If you look there in verse 30, and I'm going to just give a little shout out to my good friend Brad Wilcox and all of his

wonderful, he loves these verses, because notice it says: "We know that..." in verse 30, "...that justification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true; and we know also, that sanctification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ..."

From the very beginning, we have been teaching grace. We believe in being saved by grace from the very beginning. It's in the Book of Mormon, it's in our constitution. It's right there. If someone asks you, do you believe in being saved by grace, say yes! Amen! Give a hallelujah! Of course, "...there is no flesh that [will] dwell in the presence of God, [only by] the merits... mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah..." (2 Nephi 2:8).

Well, if you and I will obey the first principles and ordinances of the gospel, it does these two things: it justifies us, and it sanctifies us by Jesus's grace. Well, what are these words? Think of justifying, look in our computer day, we know this. If I write a bunch of text, and if I click one of those buttons, usually there are these three buttons, and one of them looks like that, and it's left justify, center justify or right justify. And I can highlight my text and click on that, and it moves all my text. So, to be justified means to be aligned. Where you're put, you and I, me anyway, I don't know about you, but I get out of the way often because I'm human, and I make mistakes, and I have shortcomings and sins, and I get out of the way. And then, through Christ, I get re-justified. It's like Jesus grabs me, through his grace, he purifies and cleanses me, and re-justifies me before God, like hey, Tony gets off, but I'm making him good again through the Atonement, and through grace. That's what justification means.

Sanctification, though, is different. Sanctification means we are made more holy or pure. So, as Jesus continually re-justifies me and forgives me, and as I receive of his Spirit, and I become born again, I become changed. I'm a different man today than I was ten or twenty years ago. I hope I'm a different man ten or twenty years from now because of Jesus, and that his Spirit, and the Spirit of God, makes me more holy. Therefore, by the grace of Christ, from the very beginning, if you and I will obey the gospel, we'll be justified, and we'll be sanctified.

But there is a warning. Now, in some Christian teachings, not all, but some, there is a teaching that once you accept Jesus, you're saved, no matter what. Jesus has saved you, you've accepted him, and you cannot fall from grace. But from the very beginning, the Lord wants to clarify, no. Look at verse 32: "... there is a possibility that man may fall from grace and depart from the living God...". That verse has actually, having a discussion with an evangelical scholar, we were talking about grace, and I read him -- he asked me that question. Do you think that once someone accepts Jesus, are they good forever? I read him section 20 verse 32, and he was blown away by that. He said do you think that you can lose the grace? And I said, yes, if we don't abide in the covenant. That's why it's faith, repentance, baptism, Holy Ghost, and continuing, or enduring, abiding, whatever word you want to use, it is a covenantal relationship that, just like a marriage, we've got to stay loyal in and faithful in.

Beautiful. And isn't it interesting that this sanctification is not necessarily an event? This is, to me, what Tony just talked about, this is the covenant path, the straight and narrow way, life in the Church of Jesus Christ, whatever label you want to put on it. That's what Jesus is doing with us. "...come unto Christ and be perfected in him..." (Moroni 10:32). That's what that is. It's this long process of the covenant path.

Mine looks like this. But I hope the trajectory is like this.

But your trajectory is identical. So, just as a beautiful concept to add on to this sanctification, if you look at the word "sacred", or "sanctification", look at what happens in English when you take a certain word and put "-ment" on the end. It becomes the process, or product, of that. Well, what is that Latin root of sacred or holy, the base of sanctified? How do you -- what is the process? The process of becoming sanctified denotes this long life of preparing for and worthily partaking of the sacrament. It's more than just bread and water, and now he's going to introduce that whole concept coming up next. After he finishes with "amen" here, we now open up the next segment which is the last one, it's the sixth of the amens, which is 37 all the way to the end, which is 84. This is the biggest chunk of all. And how does he open it? He opens it with baptism, and then he goes to the sacrament. So, baptism...

I love this. I'm sorry to interrupt you. That's great because as we talk about sanctification, "...to bless and sanctify this bread [or water] to the souls of all those that partake of it" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:77).

So, baptism becomes literally this gateway, this entry point onto the covenant path. But then, as Tony was saying, we have desires, "the Spirit... is willing...", but man, this "...flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). And God knows that, so he gives us this opportunity, once a week, to keep coming back to this sacrament experience in verse 40, "...to administer [the] bread and [the] wine -- the emblems of the flesh and blood of Christ --" for me and all of my imperfection to be reminded in a very tangible way, an internal way, of Christ's perfection and his willingness to keep walking with me on that path until I attain unto that level of perfection that he is infusing into me.

Now what Elder Bednar called this process of sanctification, I can't remember his words off the top of my head, but he gave that parable of the cucumber to the pickle, this repeated, steady succession of immersion. Just like how in the Book of Mormon you've just finished studying last year, there's a pride cycle that we've all heard. And don't forget, there's also a righteous cycle, and the righteous cycle is to "come unto Christ", faith, repentance, baptism, Holy Ghost (Moroni 10:32). We all sin, but then we all recommit. We omit, the pride's there in all of us, but we omit the forget, the leaving, when we fall into sin and pride, which we all do, we then repent, and remember, and recommit through covenant. And that process brings that steady succession, that sanctification.

It's beautiful. Now, we finish off section 20 with these descriptions. So, you'll notice in verse 46, you can just highlight the words "priest's duty", and then in verse 53, "the teacher's duty", and verse 57, "the deacons". And so, you're getting these descriptions of, here's what you need to do. And then he outlines how the Church is supposed to be organized into conferences, and in these earliest days it was about every three months you need to gather together. And he talks about licenses and how to administer the movement of the Church.

And then, if you jump down to verse 68 ...

Before you go there, can we just touch on one?

Please do.

With this priesthood and licenses, and verse 65 and 66, well 65 in particular, is really important. And there's a reason why every Sunday, we've done this: Timmy has reached the ripe old age of fifteen. You know, Timmy, come up, Timmy, come on. Timmy comes up and stands, the bishop has to pull him in, come close, and Timmy stands awkward. And Timmy is proposed to be a priest. All in favor? Timmy, raise your hand. You know? Why do we do this? It's not to recognize Timmy's birthday, okay? We've got plenty of opportunities for that. It's because our constitution tells us to do that, in verse 65: "No person is to be ordained to any office in this Church without the vote of that church;". Meaning, whoever administers to that congregation, that congregation will have that person presented to them to sustain them. That is Church Functioning 101: deacons, teachers, priests, elders, your bishop, high councilmen. Your stake president is presented to you at stake conference because he administers over the stake; general authorities at general conference. There is no such thing as a secret ordination in this Church. Nobody gets secret authority. Nobody gets a secret, special call to administer the ordinances and covenants of the Church. From the very beginning, it's done in order, they are presented, they are sustained by the body. That's a crucial verse.

So now, something that might be very relevant is verse 68. Mark it. "The duty of the members after they are received by baptism--" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:68). So, you can go back into our constitution from day one in the Church. What is my responsibility once I become a baptized member of the Church of Jesus Christ, or as it's described here, Church of Christ? And, by the way, I'll point this out now. We'll cover it again when we get to section 115 towards the end of the year, but you're going to see the Church referred to by a variety of names: it's the Church of Jesus Christ, it's the Church of Christ, as it's described here in 68. Other places, you're going to hear people referring to it as the Church of the Latter-day Saints.

Yeah, we go through a little period, there, where we forget Jesus.

We just kind of leave him out. It's the Church of the Mormons, the Church of Latter-day Saints, or just LDS. You'll notice that it's not until eight years and twenty days later that he finally puts

his official name, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, on the organization. So, we get this eight-year period to kind of figure things out. And I think there is a beautiful symbolism there for our life, that we get an eight-year period where we're learning, we're growing, we're being taught, we're being brought along, and then at age eight, the name is officially put upon us: The Church of Jesus Christ. We take his name upon us collectively, in an official way, and no more is it going to leave him out.

Look at verse 70. He talks about, if you have children, what is your responsibility? Then he gives you the description of baptism and the sacrament prayers. So, notice earlier on, they were introduced as foundational pillars for the Church. You could kind of look at verse 37 through 84 -- this may be taking it too far, I might be taking too much license here, but to me, I see 37 through 84 as the first official Church Handbook of Instructions. It's the earliest Handbook of Instructions. He's giving them, here's the how-to manual, here's your basis of doing baptism, of doing your sacrament ordinances, of how to deal with transgressions that are of a serious nature.

And by the way, those things can change. This is important, as we've seen in the Church today. But Taylor, Tyler, and I were looking before we turned the camera on, and Oliver Cowdery's original articles, it says that the priests, or the elders, before they offer the sacrament, not only are they to kneel, but remember what we read? The whole congregation is supposed to kneel down with them.

Now, we don't do that practice anymore, even though it was in Oliver's original articles and that is later, that's not carried over. So, even though this is the handbook, the handbook can amend as circumstances and situations and revelations change.

I love that.

So, as we've talked about this constitution of the Church, and by the way, the word "constitution", the word, the "con-" actually is an intensifier, and the "-stitution" literally means "to stand". So, it's an intensifier of standing. And earlier in the lesson, we had that foundation with those different legs. So, imagine what God's trying to do is to provide a very firm foundation to have you standing in his holiness.

Now, let's look at a couple of verses that are interesting. And, sometimes there's been some misunderstanding among members of the Church, and the Christian world in general, about what God means by not adding or taking away from his revealed word. We had this back in verse 35 of section 20: "And we know that these things are true and according to the revelations of John, neither adding to, nor diminishing from the prophecy of his book, the holy scriptures, or the revelations of God which shall come hereafter by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, the voice of God, or the ministering of angels."

Now, we could look at a couple of verses that are similar to this that we find in the Old Testament and the New Testament. If, for example, you go to Deuteronomy chapter 4 verses 1 through 2, God says, “O Israel, [hearken] unto the statutes and judgments...” and he says, “[do] not add unto the word which I command you...” and don't diminish it, and don't take away. If you go back to Revelation 22 verse 19: "...if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life...". People have interpreted this as saying, no more revelation. No more revelation. And even here in D&C section 20, we want to be careful to not misinterpret what God has been saying in Deuteronomy, in the Book of Revelation, and right here.

It's not about God cannot add or change revelation. It actually comes to the core idea of a covenant, which we've talked about a lot. And we talk about it a lot because it's so significant. God wants to come together with us. And imagine God owns the covenant. He offers us the terms of the covenant. Should we be changing the terms? No. God can change the terms and offer them to us, which we can accept. That's when we say “amen” after covenantal rituals, but we are not supposed to be changing the covenant. Now let me just use a brief example. If you've ever received a loan from a bank, say, for a mortgage, would you go home with that agreement, that covenant with a bank, and you, without the bank's authorization, you change the agreement? That doesn't work. Now, the bank can change the agreement; they can update the terms. It is their prerogative, they're the one who offered you all this money. And so, in some ways, you're kind of duty-bound to follow their recommendations of, really, what they expect you to do. And if you don't, you have to give all the money back.

So, you're free to be in the covenant relationship, but you're not free to change the obligations, or the instructions that God has given. So what God is saying here is, enter into this covenant freely, but don't change the covenantal instructions. But do expect God to provide updates to the covenantal instructions. And we've mentioned this before, and it's worth reviewing, the commandments are the covenantal instructions. And when God needs to make updates to the terms of the agreement, he will provide updates. That is the entire purpose of modern-day revelation. And this is what is going on here in Doctrine and Covenants section 20, is that God says, I am giving you covenantal instructions, and do expect that from time to time, I will provide clarification and updates. But nobody, no human, should go and take the covenantal instructions, and make any changes. I will inspire the people who are authorized to do it, but nobody else should go home and privately say, yeah, I don't really like these verses. I'm crossing them out, I'm not going to live by them. That just doesn't work. You cannot get full access to God's love, kingdom, and all that he has to offer you, if you change the covenantal instructions.

So now, as we shift our focus away from this initial constitution, this beginning document that kind of lays the foundation for us building the Church of Jesus Christ in the latter days, we come to section 21, which, Tony, how is section 21 kind of unique in the Doctrine and Covenants in its coming forth as -- its place in the D&C?

Well, it's not unique in that, section 20 is different in that it was written then amended over months and months and months. Section 20 is unique, too, by the way in that it was presented to the Church at the June 1830 conference and they all accepted it. What's interesting about 21, though, and I think what you're getting at, is that while they're there, during the meeting April 6th, Joseph receives a revelation in front of the congregation and dictates the revelation.

And this is the first revelation given after the beginning of the Church. The Church has just barely begun. They've been organized for a few minutes, six men according to New York law have signed the document, and then the Lord says, okay now, let me make some things really clear, right at the gate. I mean, you're on the threshold of this Church moving forward, and he establishes what? "Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of [our] Lord Jesus Christ..." (Doctrine and Covenants 21:1). It's beautiful, establishing this relationship with Jesus Christ at the head of his Church, speaking to us predominantly through his mouthpiece, Joseph Smith, Jun. And notice, as you jump down to verse 4 and 5...

Yeah, 4 and 5... from the very beginning, the Lord's going to say some really interesting things here. "Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments..." Now, look at the "all".

What percent?

Seventy-five percent, or the ones we agree with. No. But I would circle these three "alls" in verse 4 and 5, "the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness... For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith." "...give heed to all his words... in all holiness... in all patience and faith" (Doctrine and Covenants 21:4-5). Those are three really interesting "alls", because it shows that the Lord does need us to be all in, like we are following all the revelatory commands from Christ through his living prophets. We are trying to "[walk] in all holiness", but it's going to take "all [our] patience and faith", which inherently means, now for some of you out there, this may have never happened; for most of you, there will be a time when your patience will be tried, and your faith will be tried, based off God's working through his holy prophets.

That's just a natural thing, that you have to learn to be -- and sometimes people just aren't, in my opinion, they're not patient enough. They see that this is an ongoing Restoration, they want it to get on right now. Like, we've got to get this problem solved today, which is great, we do need to move the work forward. But we also work with the Lord's timing, his people's timing, the world's timing, the prophet's timing, and that takes a little patience. We don't, as Brigham Young said, we don't jump off the boat just because we see a board that's not screwed down right on the lido

deck, you know? Let's be a little patient. And we also trust and exercise faith that God is guiding the ship, "the Good Ship Zion". So, two important imperatives from the very beginning.

And I love the fact that through section 20, we got multiple warnings. And here it's worth repeating again, this idea that the scriptures, the Old and New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and Church history are filled with example after example after example after example of people who thought they were wiser than God's prophet, who thought they had a better grasp on reality than God's chosen servants, and those stories never end well in scriptures. But somehow in our day, people think, well, we're going to be the exception because this time, we are right. The prophets aren't quite keeping up with the times, and we're actually smarter than them.

And, by the way, first of all, it's not our decision to decide what is wrong or off. This is the Church of Jesus Christ; it's God's kingdom. But secondly, if there are things that are off, if there's a light bulb out, if there's a door missing, or it won't close, continuing the metaphor of the boat, God will relay that to his captain, and they'll make the necessary correctives.

Beautiful. In God's will, according to God's timing, to fulfill his purposes, which means sometimes he may delay things that, to all of us, might seem obvious, and it might take a long time for a certain clarity to come. But isn't that why we're here on this planet earth in mortality, is to experience trials of our faith, and to learn to become more like God? And God is very patient. That's one of his attributes. And he's giving us opportunities to learn that attribute, and develop that attribute, when all of the worldly influences would be yelling at us to abandon our faith, and just be done with it, and walk away.

I just have one thing. By the way, the promise in section 21 verse 6, if you and I will be patient, and have faith, and give heed to those three "alls", the promise in verse 6: "...the gates of hell [won't] prevail against you... the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you...". I think that sounds like a good thing. I don't want hell to win me over. I want darkness to disperse out of my life, and "...the heavens [will] shake for your good..." (Doctrine and Covenants 21:6). I don't quite know what that means, but I interpret that as that heaven will respond to my prayers, they'll move. I want heaven to hear my prayers, I want darkness to disperse, I don't want hell to prevail against me. So therefore, I'm going to do my very best, in my weakness, to give heed to all of Jesus's words to his holy prophets, "...in all patience and faith..." and "...in all holiness..." (Doctrine and Covenants 21:4).

And, by the way, we've been putting all of our emphasis, so far, on what we, as general members of the Church, do with reference to looking at the prophets and at the Savior. Notice what insight the Lord gives us, starting in verse 8, speaking of Joseph in this context, but I think it's not too big of a leap to think of our living prophets and apostles today, and insert that in your mind as you read verse 8 as well. "Yea, his [or their] weeping for Zion I have seen, and I will cause that he shall mourn for her no longer; for his days of rejoicing are come unto the remission of his sins, and the manifestations of my blessings upon his works" (Doctrine and Covenants 21:8).

Can you picture our living prophets, the kneeling, pleading, heartfelt prayers that they offer to God in our behalf?

What an amazing thing it is in the Church of Jesus Christ, when the appointed leaders are pleading with God for us. And if we would do a better job, collectively, of pleading with God for them, the feeling of unity and oneness, I think this kingdom would roll forward in profound ways, rather than us as a group saying, well wait a minute, why aren't they doing this? And why are they teaching that? And why did he word it that way? And why did she say it this way? And how did they leave that out? What a difference it would make if we were praying for each other, and sustaining and supporting each other, rather than pointing out what we see as flaws.

I love that, Tyler. I've got to share one story, as you were reading about the weeping for Zion and he'll rejoice. When the meeting gets over on April 6th, 1830, of the organization of the Church, they go out, and they perform a number of baptisms. They do a number of confirmations, including Joseph's parents, his father, who Joseph was always concerned about his father's soul, to be frank. And Joseph Knight, Sen., reports a beautiful thing: that Joseph had to go separate himself. He went out into the woods and prayed and just wept, just, you know, like it says, "his weeping... I have seen" (Doctrine and Covenants 21:8). Joseph Knight says Joseph wept like a child. It's so cool to think of that, and he says, because I think that Joseph sensed the work that had been inaugurated through him, that it was moving forward. It's just such a tender scene to see the Church organized, his family join it, his people coming together, the work of the Lord moving, and Joseph just goes into the woods and weeps. I love it.

Beautiful. Now, to finish off today, we've kind of tried their patience and faith, haven't we? We've gone a little long. You are getting an exercise in the principle of the gospel "endure to the end", so bless you (Doctrine and Covenants 18:22). If you've made it this far with us, you're well on your way.

These guys are like, we can't have that Tony guy. He makes these too long, he talks too much.

It's great.

Sorry about that. Let's go to section 22. There is a significant question that arises. Anytime you start some new organization, or start a new cause, and people are going to join that cause, they're going to bring with them their preconceived notions, or their past experience, or their perspectives. And in this early Church, you've got a lot of people who come, and they love what's going on, and they want to join, and they say, but I've already been baptized. I was already baptized by immersion by the exact same way you're doing it, so I'm good. I don't need to be rebaptized, right?

So, Joseph Smith asks the Lord this question: what do we do? Notice the date. This is only ten days after the organization of the Church. Yes, the Church is brand new, and people are saying, I

don't need to be baptized into the Church; I've already been baptized. Notice verse 2, the wording is incredible here: "Wherefore, although a man should be baptized an hundred times it availeth him nothing, for you cannot enter in at the strait gate by the law of Moses, neither by your dead works." And then down to verse 4: "Wherefore, enter ye in at the gate, as I have commanded, and seek not to counsel [the Lord] your God. Amen." There's another "amen".

You remember what Taylor said about people trying to change the terms of the agreement. What he's saying here is, authority matters. I gave authority to baptize, through John the Baptist, to Joseph and Oliver, and through them, to other priests and elders that are going to be ordained through time. That's the proper channel. It would be like me trying to act like I'm a bank, and writing a mortgage, and giving it to Taylor. I could do it exactly the same way, use the exact same font, even, that my bank would use, and set up this mortgage for him, but it lacks something. It lacks the backing, and the underwriting of all of the real bank's resources that I don't have. I might have the best of intentions, but I can't deliver on those intentions. Same thing with authority to baptize. God is the one who has set up that as a requirement, and he's authorized his servants to perform that ordinance in such a way that it meets the terms of the agreement that he has laid out for us in this covenantal connection.

And keying off Taylor is great. I love his covenant and contract, and I love, in verse 1, where he says, hey, that's an old covenant. That's an old contract. That contract is null and void. This is a new and everlasting covenant; this is a new dispensation, new authority, and that's the one I'm going to recognize. That's a great metaphor that Taylor gave. Then, I would just add also in verse 3, back to the rock, the gospel, and the Church. When Joseph Smith had the First Vision, in one of the accounts, the Lord says the everlasting covenant has been broken. Joseph, they have broken the covenant. They "[have] a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof" (JSH 1:19). The power of godliness comes through authorized covenants and ordinances. Just connect in verse 3 there, it's because of this dead work, this dead contract, "...that I have caused this last covenant and [church]..." (Doctrine and Covenants 22:3). I would circle and highlight those, and draw those two things together. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints exists to dispense the authorized covenant of God. And if we can grasp that, that will help us stay on the covenant path, as our prophet has repeatedly implored us.

Beautiful. And just one more thought to add to that. We need to be careful, when talking to people of other faiths, that we don't come across as elitist, or as if we've got all truth and they've got no truth. I love the fact with this baptism issue, you don't need to make people feel bad about anything they've experienced spiritually in their life before being introduced to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The missionaries' efforts today are not to go out and tear down people's faith, and destroy it down to ground level, and say, now let's build it up from the ground level up. I love what President Hinckley said on a couple of occasions, he says our message to the world is "...bring [all the good that you have] and... see if we [can] add to it."

So, in closing, we want to finish by saying the most simple thing we can. We know that God lives. We know that Jesus Christ is his Almighty Son who he sent to this earth to save us, and Jesus gives us all these things we've been talking about today. And one of those gifts that he has given us is his Church. And so, when we say we know that the Church is true, what I think we're saying by that is, we know who stands at its head. And we know that he's leading this Church through prophets, seers, and revelators, and inspired leaders today. And I would just say, we're going nowhere that matters without the Savior, and his gospel, and his Church. But the Church can move on with or without me, but I can't move on without him and his Church.

I think we should give one last amen. Amen. Know that you're loved.

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