

## Come Follow Me Class Insights-16, D&C Sec. 37 - 40

I'm Taylor, and I'm Tyler, and I'm Ken Alford. This is Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today, Doctrine and Covenants sections 37 through 40, and we've invited our friend and colleague Ken Alford to join us today.

Well, Ken, it's a real privilege to have you join us today because these are some very, very important sections in the unfolding Restoration and in the establishment of the Church and its initial gathering. Question for you initially would be, from a 30,000-foot overview, looking at sections 37, 38, 39, and 40, what would you hope the people would walk away with?

I would ask you to think about a couple of questions and put yourself in the position of these early Church members. No one in the Church at this point has been a member of the Church even a year and that includes the Prophet. I mean we've never had that situation in history. The Prophet has been a member of the Church less than a year, and then on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December in 1830, Joseph received instructions from the Lord that they are to gather. And so I would just ask you to keep these questions in mind.

And the first question is, individually, for you, what's been the greatest sacrifice that you have been asked to make for the kingdom of God? You know, being a Church member has lots of little things that we do, but what's the biggest sacrifice that you as an individual have been asked to give to the Lord?

The second question that I would ask is, you know, in this interesting period that we're living in right now, how easily do we as individuals accept and embrace change? Because change is, you know, change is one of those things that it happens whether you want it to or not, but how we deal with change, I think, is a totally individual determination.

And probably a third question that I would ask is, you know, why? Why do things happen in our lives and how do we react to that? So those questions, I guess, would be kind of the overriding questions as we look at sections 37, 38, 39, and 40, and also just one very broad, general concept is the doctrinal concept of gathering. That concept we will talk about it in various ways here, but if you can just kind of keep those things, sacrifice, change, and gathering in your mind as we begin these sections.

That's really powerful, Ken, because at this stage of the Church our membership is not localized at all. It's spread out throughout New York, throughout now Ohio because of those four missionaries who went on that journey to the west, converting people and baptizing them and establishing the Church as they went, and we're kind of scattered. And so we're going to introduce this gathering.

And the Lord knows, he wants very soon to build a temple, and that's really hard to do in the 1830s if you've got people living across New York and you're not together. Yes, so, as we dive in, you're going to be seeing God work with these people, but this question right here becomes really

important because the timing – in my mind the timing couldn't be worse as far as testing their faith and what are you willing to sacrifice because of the time of year and the situations going on? The world in 1830, 1831, the world, not just the U.S. at that time, but the world is in upheaval. There's a lot that's happening.

Now from the perspective of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, things look pretty calm, but for the period at the time, Joseph frequently mentions in his journals and has his scribes note his concern over world events and kind of these closing days and they see it in that perspective. So section 37, just to set the stage, section 37's a really short section. In the previous video, Tyler, that you and Taylor did, you discussed the events of the mission to the Lamanites and the mission to find where Zion was, led by Oliver Cowdery and those four missionaries that went out. Well, as a result of that, in some of the baptisms in the Kirtland, Mentor, Ohio area, we have Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge who will soon become the first bishop of the Church, he doesn't know that yet. He's a hatter, by the way, he makes hats. And they travel to New York to meet Joseph.

When section 35 is received, Sidney is called as Joseph's scribe, which is very helpful for Joseph, because his scribe, Oliver, had been sent out to Missouri to the borders of the Lamanites, as it says in the revelation. And so Sidney takes that calling to be scribe very serious. And Joseph and Sidney actually go to Canandaigua, New York. It's near Fayette, and they go to Canandaigua and do some translating, and as they are translating, this is a copy of what's called a Phinney Cooperstown Bible. This is not the original that Joseph and Sidney used, but I will tell you, the original looks exactly like this. It has this leather-tooled cover and it's a very large print Bible, and this is what they're using as they're doing the Joseph Smith Translation. And in those weeks prior to section 37 being received, they finish up chapter 5 of what we know as the Book of Moses, then they get chapter 6, then they get into chapter 7.

Now interestingly, those verses in the Book of Moses are about what? Well, in large measure, they're about Enoch, and Joseph learns from the Lord through revelation he is able to expand on the account of Enoch, that's in, it's very brief in the Old Testament as we have it in the King James Version, but he learns about Enoch and how Enoch did two interesting things: he gathered the people, and he created a Zion. Now, isn't the timing on that just interesting? Because in section 37, what does the Lord invite Joseph to do?

Wait a minute, Ken, so what you're saying is that sometimes the way revelation might work is, God will take things that we have been focusing on in our scripture study as those ideas come into our mind and into our heart and he'll take those and he'll help us find application for those principles in our life today. Is that what you're saying?

I'm going to guess that people watching this have had that experience where you hear a General Conference talk or you read something in the scriptures or you see something in Come Follow Me or something somewhere comes to your attention, and then in the next while you see it again and again and again, and for the previous portion of your life that verse might as well not even have existed. You just really didn't notice it, and as soon as you read it or learn about it, it just keeps

reappearing and the Lord keeps teaching you additional things. That's one of the really fun things about life and learning from the gospel. I love that.

Now one thing that we need to pause here for a second and discuss is the JST, because it goes on pause right here. They are told in section 37 to kind of put a hold on that for now. It'll – it'll come back, they are going to finish it, but keep in mind, Joseph started translating – now that's an interesting word that we use, because, that, he will use the word, the translation of the Bible, in some of these sections coming up, but traditionally in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when I say to somebody, I translated that, the implication is that I know two languages and I know them well and I'm taking something out of one language that I know, translating it into another language that I know.

The fact is that this stage, 1830, Joseph Smith does not know Egyptian, he doesn't know Hebrew, he doesn't know Greek. He doesn't know the languages of ancient scripture. But he still, through the help of the Holy Ghost and other prophetic means, he's still making a translation of sorts, even though he may not know those original languages. God knows them; the Spirit knows them; and it's fascinating to see that you have over 3600 verses in this Bible that he goes through that he's going to make changes, 3600 plus, and then there are hundreds of additional verses that are added to this inspired version of the Bible that he's creating that don't even appear here. And as Ken was talking, many of them are going to be in Enoch's story.

The Book of Moses, for instance, you get Moses chapters 1 through 8 in your Pearl of Great Price; those were the equivalent of Genesis chapter 1 through chapter 6 verse 13. You're noticing that there's a lot added that doesn't ever appear in the Holy Bible, which, by the way, causes a little bit of potential discussion and even at times contention among some of the early members where Joseph's teaching things about the Garden of Eden and about the fall of Adam and now Enoch and building up of Zion that – they haven't read these things before. This is new. For years it was kind of distrusted because many thought that some other people had probably changed some of the things Joseph did.

It was Robert J. Matthews from our Church who did his masters and PhD research on it, and he brought it back to the Church, and actually what had happened was, Brigham Young had actually sent, I believe it was John Bernheisel, it may have been another early member of the Church, but he sent an emissary over to Emma Smith, asked for the manuscript of the Joseph Smith Translation, and the Church had been told to publish it, we'll see that later as we get into section 124 where William Law was commanded to publish it, but did not do so, and Emma kept it basically as personal property. She had carried it out. That's another story that I'm sure will come in future weeks, but Emma did not give the manuscript up, and as a result, we kind of did distrust it because it was published by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in 1867, and we had just little bits.

We had the Book of Moses, and the reason we had that is because it was published in Nauvoo in a newspaper called The Times and Seasons, and we had the Joseph Smith Matthew, but we just didn't have very much from it up until 1979 when the new Bible came out, 1981 when the Doctrine

and Covenants came out, but Genesis, this Moses, it actually begins with Genesis zero, I would say, because Moses 1 is a chapter before the Old Testament actually begins. And the Joseph Smith Translation -- a fascinating topic. You can find lots of resources on the Church's website about the Joseph Smith Translation. It's been known by various names. The Lord calls it the Translation; he also calls it the New Translation, that's how Joseph referred to it. It's been also called the Inspired Version when it was published in 1867, and it became known as the Joseph Smith Translation in 1979. They were initially going to call it the New Translation and use the abbreviation NT in our Bibles, but NT had been taken. It was New Testament, and so the scripture committee said, well, it's the translation that Joseph Smith did, let's call it the Joseph Smith Translation, and so today we know it as the JST.

Now there's one other element that we need to discuss regarding the Joseph Smith translation of the Bible and then we're going to move on. Some people have assumed that what Joseph is doing, these 3600 plus changes or verses that are changed plus the additions that are made, in many cases there's an idea out there that what Joseph is doing is restoring the original in all of these thousands of cases. The fact is, Joseph has a variety of reasons for making changes. In some cases he's restoring what the original author wrote, like Moses 1, as an example, that we don't have. In other cases, he's modernizing the language. He's making -- he's turning things like "wist" into "know" -- I wist not -- versus I knew not, and it had absolutely nothing to do with any of the original writers of the scriptures, whether it were Hebrew or Greek, what they wrote, because it wasn't attached to that.

There are other times where Joseph is making changes that a prophet has that right, a seer and a revelator has that right to take scripture and make it more accessible doctrinally, to teach or expound on a doctrine or to clarify where modern language maybe has shifted the meaning of a word or a phrase or a concept, it's his right to say, this is what the prophet meant. He never wrote -- he didn't have to write it that way, it didn't have to be translated that way, but for us now, this is what he meant, and if the Lord were here redoing this, this is how it would come out.

What I'm saying is, there are a variety of reasons for the various changes that occur. The problem comes when you assume that all the changes were trying to make it exactly the way as it came from the pen originally. That may or may not be the case. But don't you love the fact that we live in a Church where we're open to God giving us more revelation, more clarification? "...We believe that he will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Articles of Faith 1:9). And to me, the Joseph Smith Translation is kind of a little fruit of that root doctrine that we have.

And it does all of that and there are many kinds of changes made. One other thing it does, though, is it serves, it's the way I think the Lord teaches Joseph the gospel. Joseph learns the gospel through two major translation efforts: the Book of Mormon and the Joseph Smith Translation. One thing that I would just encourage you to look for throughout this year as you study the Doctrine and Covenants is to look for a connection between Joseph's efforts translating the Joseph Smith

Translation and sections in the Doctrine and Covenants. There are literally dozens of sections that come about because Joseph or a member of the Church had questions because of what Joseph had learned while doing the Joseph Smith Translation, and it's beautiful to see that Joseph got answers to revelation, we learn scriptural doctrines, and the Restoration unfolded in large measure through the Doctrine and Covenants because Joseph or somebody else asked a question.

And I think the analogy there is, well, if I want to learn the gospel for myself, how do I do that? I study the word of the Lord, and when I don't understand everything, I ask questions. And we can learn the same way Joseph did.

Absolutely. That pattern President Russell M. Nelson has pled with us to seek more inspiration and more revelation, to hear him, and the quickest way to hear him, many of our prophets and apostles and other church leaders have said is, open your scriptures. Start studying and you'll hear his voice.

All right, now, section 37 verse 1, we get an introduction to this concept that had to be revolutionary, coming there at the end of December 1830: "Behold I say unto you that it is not expedient in me that ye should translate any more until ye shall go to the Ohio, and this because of the enemy and for your sakes."

And I would just mention, section 29 is where that term is first introduced in a previous lesson I'm sure that was mentioned, and now it's about to be operationalized. Now we're going to actually do it. It's going to go from theoretical to real very quickly here. We're going to move to the Ohio. Notice verse 2: "Again I say unto you that ye shall not go until ye have preached my gospel in those parts, and have strengthened up the church whithersoever it is found, and more especially in Colesville."

I love that, that the Lord, we see in these verses, well, throughout all the scriptures, but we see it multiple times in the readings for this week that the Lord says, I hear your prayers. I know who you are, I know your faith, I know your situation, and because of that, let me help you out. I just know how to help you and those good saints in Colesville, we're going to see them – well, in many future weeks – they get battered from pillar to post, but they stay faithful and they stay active by and large, it's an amazing group of folks.

It's interesting, Ken, because if you go back to your very first question that you posed at the beginning, what are you willing to sacrifice for the Lord and for his gospel and for building up his kingdom on the earth? I think if we were to have any of those Colesville members of the Church here today to ask them that question, I don't think they would focus on how hard those sacrifices were, because like you said, that particular group is going to go through a triple portion of struggle, but I think we watch the Lord shaping them and working with them through that intense opposition. If you want to talk about refining gold, that's a group who had their gold refined and they were remarkable.

Now jump down to verse 4 in section 37 to close off that section: "Behold, here is wisdom, and let every man choose for himself until I come. Even so, Amen." You'll notice throughout the Doctrine and Covenants and, quite frankly, throughout all of scripture and through any dispensation of the gospel, that God is saying to us basically, without using these exact words in scripture, the phrase he's giving is, do you trust me? Do you trust me? I'm God. I'm a creator of "worlds without number" (Moses 1:33). I hold them in my hand, my eye can pierce them, I know my works. I'm powerful. I know everything. Do you trust me? That's the question. Let every man choose for himself, this agency element that came out of his initial translation of the Book of Moses and the Garden of Eden, these questions are swirling around the people's minds and he's saying, you get to choose for yourself, but don't forget who I am and don't forget who you are.

One thing I like to think about is, how many times has Heavenly Father successfully taken his spirit children through the plan of salvation with a winning result? It's an infinite number of times. I mean we – and then I look at it and how many times have I completely gone through the plan of salvation and it's point something – it's zero point something, so hopefully we're wise enough to balance an infinite number of successful results with our zero point something experience and recognize that when the Lord says you can trust me, here's my hand, take my hand, I know how to do this. These are the ways you should live your life and obey the commandments, these are the relationships we can establish with ordinances and covenants, and take my hand. I'm going to give you some help, I'm going to give you the scriptures, I'm going to give you prophets, I'm going to give you apostles, I'm going to give you the Holy Ghost, I'm going to do everything I can for you, but as it says at the end of verse 37, let every person choose for themselves until I come. I've got all these things, I've set it up, I know how this works, I can bring you safely home, but you still get to choose. I'm not going to force you to do it.

So what happens, then, we have this on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December, three days later, just three days later on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January, 1831, the Church holds its third conference. They're holding their conference in Fayette, and so I don't know if we have a count of the number of people that assemble for the conference, but it's not huge; there's no big auditoriums and halls and there's not that many members of the Church at that time anyway. But they assemble in Fayette, so Joseph and Sidney come back from Canandaigua; they assemble there, and Joseph stands up in the conference and teaches the Saints, brothers and sisters, just three days ago, the Lord called us to gather to the Ohio. And here's what's been happening with Oliver and Brother Peterson and Parley P. Pratt and Peter Whitmer, Junior, who were out there teaching. They've had phenomenal success, and the Lord is calling us to gather from all these little branches in the New York area and join with those saints in Kirtland, and he's calling us to do that now.

Now, if I was a member of one of those little branches, I don't know, I might have a question, and that question might be, why Kirtland? And why now? Joseph, I don't know if you've checked the calendar, but it's, you know, I look outside and it's January. And I own a farm, and there's not a lot of folks looking for farms in January in upstate New York, and, as you pointed out, there aren't a lot of folks looking to buy farms, period, in 1830, 1831. So there's got to be some why questions,

and, in fact, the history of the Church says the saints basically, I'm going to paraphrase, but basically inquired of Joseph, and I think that's probably a loaded phrase. I'm guessing there was some serious inquiry of Joseph regarding why now? Why this? Just why?

And so Joseph inquires during the conference and receives section 38. This is something really interesting about section 38. Most of the commandments we receive from the Lord, the Lord does not give a postscript saying, here's my reasons why. And here, section 38 is basically the – but think about it, this is the first time, when was the last time saints of God were asked to gather and build Zion? How many centuries had that been? It had been millennia. And so the Lord takes that early Church by the hand, and he says, let me help you out. We're going to go west. Joseph, I'm going to help you out with the saints, I'm going to give you section 38, and, brothers and sisters, here are some reasons why you should gather. And, by the way, here's the blessings I'm going to give you if you do that, and that's what section 38 is all about.

But just as a side note to bring this out of the 1830, '31 time frame into the 21<sup>st</sup> century into our modern day today, what has President Nelson repeatedly been inviting the Church to do with regards to this and how does it apply to us? This gathering effort is not exclusively important to them. This is – it's growing in its importance.

President Nelson said this, this is from October of 2020 in General Conference. He said: "For the more than 36 years I've been an apostle, the doctrine of the gathering of Israel has captured my attention."<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, if you go back and you look at President Nelson's addresses in General Conference and other addresses that he's given from the time he was called as a general authority, this doctrine of gathering Israel has been a constant and recurring theme throughout his teachings. I wonder if maybe we're listening a little closer now that he's the prophet. But it's been a consistent theme, and he said: "Everything about it has intrigued me. ... When we speak of gathering Israel on both sides of the veil, we are referring, of course, to missionary, temple, and family history work. We're also referring to building faith and testimony in the hearts of those with whom we live, work, and serve. Anytime we do anything that helps anyone – on either side of the veil – to make and keep their covenants with God, we are helping to gather Israel."

“Anytime we do anything that helps anyone – on either side of the veil” – oh, my gosh, can we be any more inclusive there? “Anytime we do anything that helps anyone – on either side of the veil – to make and keep covenants with God, we are helping to gather Israel.” Oh, yay for the cause of Zion! I mean, what a great, what a great statement, and so section 38 kind of, the Lord kind of pulls back the curtain. He does that sometimes in the scriptures, you know, when we don't understand, he'll pull it back enough so we can understand but not so much that he overwhelms us. And in section 38 he's pulling back that curtain for us so that those saints could see there's a bigger purpose here, and as much as they'll understand from section 38, the Lord also knows if you'll gather to Kirtland, I can tell you about temples and you can build a place where we can have

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<sup>1</sup> Nelson, Russell M. “Let God Prevail.” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, Oct. 2020, [abn.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2020/10/46nelson?lang=eng](http://abn.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2020/10/46nelson?lang=eng).

additional priesthood keys restored. But the saints have to show their faith and gather to Kirtland first before they ever learn about any of that, and that will be in future lessons in future weeks. That will come.

So as we look at section 38, one of the things you might want to do as you go through that sections is just look, what are some of the things that the Lord is saying are the reasons why he's having them do that, because again, this is one of those rare times when the Lord says, I'm going to let you see a little bit of things from my side, and it starts right in verse 2. In verse 2 of section 38 the Lord says, when he's talking about himself, he says, "...for all things are present before mine eyes;". In other words, whether you live in Fayette or Palmyra or Colesville, wherever you are, I know who you are, I know everything about everything, and I know what's for your best good, and this gathering to Ohio is so going to be for your everlasting benefit.

Once again, you can almost hear him asking the unwritten question, do you trust me? Or maybe the better question there, to what extent do you trust me? You'll notice the opening of section 38, because of the degree of sacrifice that is going to be required of this group, you can see verse 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, the Lord's putting a little extra emphasis on identity as far as who he is, who we are. Just share a quick quote with you from October 2020 General Conference, as well from Sister Michelle Craig. She said, "Perhaps the most important things for us to see clearly are who God is and who we really are--sons and daughters of heavenly parents with a 'divine nature and eternal destiny.' Ask God to reveal these truths to you, along with how he feels about you. The more you understand your true identity and purpose, soul deep, the more it will influence everything in your life."<sup>2</sup> That's exactly what I see going on here, is God clearly establishing identity, because these people, quite frankly, I don't know how many of you would be willing to just up and walk away from a home and a bunch of land that you've developed and just walk away in some cases, in the middle of the winter, to go out into the frontier. This is not an easy ask.

But I love the fact that as we watch God working with shaping, molding these saints through these historical events as they unfold, that you're watching some shrink and fall away, you're watching others, it seems that they're just holding the course, but others just seem to be refined. When they come to the end of their life, they're a totally different person than they were at the beginning, and I love the fact that now you translate that into our day today. Ken, without being too personal, your family's been called to go through some pretty difficult and trying things this last year and years, and what effect has it had on your relationship with God, on your sense of identity of who God is and who you are?

Yes, just very briefly, we've had some experiences, not myself, but those near and dear. We've had leukemia in the family, we've had continuing cancer challenges in the family and other challenges, and I guess through all of it, the thing that's just been really amazing is that Heavenly Father can

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<sup>2</sup> Craig, Michelle D. "Eyes to See." *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, Oct. 2020, [www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2020/10/14craig?lang=eng](http://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2020/10/14craig?lang=eng).

comfort infinitely, and he knows the end from the beginning. And we don't know how some of these stories are going to turn out yet, but it's going to be okay.

You know, two quotes come to mind on this topic. Elder Hales, Robert D. Hales, who had continuing health problems, heart problems and other problems, he made a statement in 1998 in General Conference and he said this. This was in the October Conference. He said, quote, “I have come to understand how useless it is to dwell on the whys, the what ifs, and the [only ifs] for which there are likely to be given no answers in mortality. To receive the Lord's comfort, we must exercise faith. The questions Why me? Why our family? Why now? are usually unanswerable questions. These questions detract from our spirituality and can destroy our faith. We need to spend our time and our energy building our faith by turning to the Lord and asking for strength to overcome the pains and trials of this world and to endure to the end for greater understanding.”<sup>3</sup>

You know, another General Authority that the Church watched his trials was Elder Scott, Elder Richard G. Scott, who lost his sweet wife Jeannine, and he shared this in 1995. He said, quote, “It really does no good to ask questions that reflect opposition to the will of God. Rather ask, What am I to do? What am I to learn from this experience? What am I to change? Whom am I to help? How can I remember my blessings in times of trial?”<sup>4</sup> You know, nobody gets out of this life alive. Mortality is an interesting experience, but I think one of the things that's just such a blessing of being a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is to have the Holy Ghost and the comfort and the bigger picture, to know that, I mean, the knowledge of the plan of salvation is worth everything. And the saints in this early time in this, you know, the Church is only eight months old, the Lord's already taking them by the hand and starting to lay the foundation for them so they can do that.

Maybe it would just be appropriate, Brigham Young with this call to gather, and you know we talk about it, I think sometimes a little too much abstract. My family followed me around the world for almost thirty years in the military; I served in the Army and we got moved every couple of years, and so these verses in Church history where they're called to move and uproot themselves, they were very real for my family because we did it all the time.

But I want to just share with you a statement that Brigham Young made. Brigham Young joined the Church, came into the Church in the Kirtland era, and he didn't join at this period, it was actually about two years later – two-and-a-half years later – but let me just share Brigham's statement with you, because I think it gives a feel for these early saints. Here's what Brigham said. This is from the Journal of Discourses volume 11: quote – “When we arrived in Kirtland, if any man that ever did gather with the saints was poorer than I was, it was because he had nothing. I had two children to take care of--that was all. I was a widower. ‘Brother Brigham, had you any

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<sup>3</sup> Hales, Robert D. “Healing Soul and Body.” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, Oct. 1998, [www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1998/10/healing-soul-and-body?lang=eng](http://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1998/10/healing-soul-and-body?lang=eng).

<sup>4</sup> Scott, Richard G. “Trust in the Lord.” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, Oct. 1995, [www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1995/10/trust-in-the-lord?lang=eng](http://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1995/10/trust-in-the-lord?lang=eng).

shoes?’ No; not a shoe to my foot, except a pair of borrowed boots. I had no winter clothing, except a homemade coat that I had had for three or four years. ‘Any pantaloons (pants)?’ No. ‘What did you do? Did you go without?’ No,” he said, “I borrowed a pair to wear until I could get another pair.” And here's the key, here's how he ends that reminiscence. He says, “but Joseph said: ‘come up;’ and I went up the best I could.”<sup>5</sup> I think that just speaks volumes.

What a difference that would make in the Church if, when we raise our hand to sustain our prophets, seers, and revelators, if we gave them that kind of sustaining faith in Christ that he's giving us the direction that we need to do things the best we could as it comes from the prophets, seers, and revelators. What a beautiful principle.

Now let's dive into these beautiful words, section 38. You'll notice verse 1 through 4 like we said, it's this incredible introduction of identity where verse 1: I, “...the Lord, your God, even Jesus Christ, the Great I Am, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, which looketh upon the wide expanse of eternity, and the seraphic hosts of heaven, before the world was made;”. “[I know] all things”, verse 2, I created everything. Verse 4: “I am the same which have taken the [city, or] Zion of Enoch into mine own bosom;” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:4). That's going to mean more to Joseph at that point, that adds context now. And he finishes all of this, and then notice the very first word of verse 5. After introducing his grand identity, the very first word of verse 5 is “but”. It's this, in spite of all of that, “...behold, the residue of the wicked have I kept in chains of darkness until the judgment of the great day...” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:5). Even though I got all of this amazing stuff to give, there are still people who refuse to let me be their God, and I've reserved some judgment for them. Verse 6: “And even so will I cause the wicked to be kept, that will not hear my voice but harden their hearts, and...” – mark it – “...wo, wo, wo...”, three, “is their doom.”

Brothers and sisters, that is a very significant verse. Here we are, it's right after New Year's Day, it's a day later in 1831, and we're getting ready to gather to Zion – to Kirtland, rather, and God is pronouncing a triple woe on this group of people who prefer to live in darkness and in chains, rather than walk in the light. The triple woe only appears twice in the Book of Mormon, in 2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi chapter 28 verse 15 and in 3<sup>rd</sup> Nephi 9 – right before he returns – right before coming to the Nephites and Lamanites, and then you get it here, and then there's one other time where it appears. So, there are four triple woes. The other one is in Revelation chapter 8 where he's going to pronounce these three woes in a row. It's the superlative curse of doom and destruction, so to speak.

Don't you love the fact that verse 7, after he gets through with the triple woe, what is the very first word of verse 7? “But”. Again, in spite of this now, “But behold, [verily], I say unto you that mine eyes are upon you. I am in your midst and [you can't] see...” – I can see you, but he says, you can't see me. You're not seeing me. Hmm. I wonder. I wonder if we could take section 38 and ponder it in our day today and look around and say, hmm, there are some pretty crazy things going on in

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<sup>5</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 11.

our world today, in all countries of the world, and there's some pretty difficult situations, and then come back to verse 7 – but, and then trust that God's eyes really are upon us. That he's in our midst.

And then in verse 8, “but”, notice the first word. By the way, this section is one of my favorites for doing this, where you take the first word of each verse, and it really sets the stage. He gives you a precursor for exactly what he's going to tell you and it flows in this nice, grammatical, logical, chain of events here. So, the “But the day soon cometh that you shall see me, and know that I am;” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:8). Even though you don't see me now, the “but” gives us hope that it won't always be that way. There will be a day when we can see him clearly.

And then he says in 9, okay, now that you know this information, what do you do about it? “...Gird up your loins...”, and that's scripture talk for ‘get to work’ (Doctrine and Covenants 38:9). Okay? You can look up on the internet what it meant to gird your loins; it's tucking in your tunic. But he also says at the end of verse 9, I just love this, look, it's all worth it, because “the enemy shall not overcome.” This is the only dispensation out of the history of the world, this is the only dispensation where the good guys win, and the good guys and gals win in spectacular fashion, ushering in the millennial reign of the Savior and rolling up the earth into the celestial kingdom. I mean, the win is so huge in this dispensation but this is the only one in which good triumphs ultimately.

Isn't it fascinating that Joseph, he really, really gets excited about the dispensations and the dispensation heads through the history of time? And there are lots of dispensations, but the seven that he keeps coming back to repeatedly are Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus himself, and then the seventh dispensation, the dispensation of the fulness of times, which is ours. You have all of these apostasies that have occurred with these falling away that have taken place, and there's only one other dispensation that didn't end in a complete apostasy, although once Enoch's city is translated, the rest of the world is left in an apostasy. And it's fascinating that that is what is on Joseph's mind more than anything right now, I want to do what Enoch did.

And the Lord is putting it on Joseph's mind through multiple ways, through the Joseph Smith Translation, through this command to gather, and the theme of building Zion is a continuing theme throughout this dispensation. It's going to occupy much of Joseph's time, it's going to move the Church again after Kirtland into Zion, into Missouri, and it says it's a continuing theme, and today we are still seeking to build Zion. Where? In the stakes of Zion. We're trying to build Zion in the stakes.

And so, as we look at these verses, there are just some wonderful, wonderful things in here. Section 38 is one of those sections, I think, that you can skim across the top, but if you'll take just a minute and wade in a little bit, there's some really cool things in this section.

Now keep in mind that the magnitude of the day in which you and I live. Keep in mind that what God is now doing with his small handful of, quite frankly, poor farmers and other, you know, tradesmen in frontier America. What he is trying – what he's not trying but what he is going to do

with them eventually, is what Enoch did with one city, and keep in mind, timing is difficult when it comes to that far back in the Old Testament time frame, but the biblical account gives Enoch 365 years to create Zion in one city. You'll notice what God is now doing in the dispensation of the fulness of times, what was accomplished in one city, like Ken was saying, where do you gather? It's not gather to one city. It is here at this stage of the Church, but today, it's gather to the stakes across the world. God is turning this Zion concept into a global concept, not a one city, one location ideal.

And so, then as section 38 continues, the saints – the Lord again parts the curtain and he says, there's some things going on in the background that you just don't know about, and he mentions it in verse 13. He says, there are things going on in secret chambers and they're plotting your destruction. And he goes over and continues later in the verses and basically says, you talk about wars in other lands but you don't even know the hearts of men in your own land. Many have seen that as perhaps a precursor of the coming American Civil War, but also the fact that there are those that are bent on destroying the Church. Satan would have loved nothing more than to squash the Church when it's little, young, and helpless.

But the Lord says, now the way I'm going to fix this is I'm going to pluck up all these individual branches; I'm going to move them and put them as a group, because there's safety in numbers, and I'm going to put them there. They're going to be big enough to build a temple, they're going to be away from everything else. Because Kirtland, Ohio, at that point, you know, Ohio was the northwest territories, and it's pretty rough. My family and I lived in New York for a while and we've seen the Coleville area, and it is just lush and beautiful, and when you went to Kirtland, you had to clear the farm of original growth forest which had to just be a trick in and of itself.

And so the Lord describes that Kirtland area as a land of promise, "...a land" – in verse 18 – "...flowing with milk and honey", but it's only that way after they clear the land and make it such, but there are some fun comments in verses 14 and 15. The Lord says at the end of that verse, he says, "I will be merciful unto [you in] your weakness. Therefore, be ye strong from henceforth;". So right now you're just weak and I think of, you know, Ether chapter 12 where the Lord says I'll take weak things, and your weaknesses and I'll make them strong unto you. And there's a great quotation that I heard many years ago from Elder Neal A. Maxwell that I just think is just kind of sums up this concept, that even though we're weak, the Lord can make us strong, and here's what Elder Maxwell had to say. This was in a July 1975 Ensign magazine. Quote, "God does not begin by asking us about our ability, but only our availability, and if we prove our dependability, he will increase our capability!"<sup>6</sup> I just think that's a great, great quote. "God does not begin by asking us about our ability, but only our availability, and if we prove our dependability, he will increase our capability", and that's exactly what the Lord's doing here.

These, I mean, by the standards of the nation this is maybe a little more schooled group, especially when they get out to Missouri and see the state of the folks in the frontier area, but these are not

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<sup>6</sup> Maxwell, Neal A. "It's Service, Not Status, That Counts." *Ensign*, July 1975.

schooled people. These are not, you know, they're not wealthy by the world's standards. These are humble folks that the Lord has gathered up, you know, one of a family, one of a city. And he tells them though, in verse 19, to "...seek [this] with all [their] hearts", and isn't that a key, Tyler, to making this all work? If you go in, you know, whole hog, things are just going to work out.

It's interesting because it's that idea of, what is it that your heart really desires? What do you think about when you have nothing to think about? What is – where does your mind and where does your heart go when it comes to life? Why are we here on this earth? What is it all about? All of the sacrifice, all of the trials, all of the tribulations, all of the setbacks, all of the successes, all of the pleasures and the joys, put it all together and say, what is it really all about? And here I think we get this witness that President Nelson has emphasized again and again, there is no work that is more important, there is nothing going on, on the earth right now that is more important than the gathering of Israel and the building up of Zion.

And then the Lord says in verse 22, "...hear my voice and follow me...". And you know, it's been mentioned before, but it's worth mentioning again, so many sections in the Doctrine and Covenants use the word "hearken". Now I personally like that because my first name is Ken, and so I think it's a personal invitation from the Lord because it begins the Doctrine and Covenants with hear, Ken, but if your name's not Ken, I'm sorry that doesn't work for you. But the key is he says, ..."hear my voice and follow me," and then in 23, teach one another. So, as we've come to learn something, we teach it to our families, to our loved ones, and to everyone who will listen. Love it.

Verse 24, what a difference it would make in our world and in our society today if people would live verse 24? "Let every man esteem his brother as himself, and practice virtue and holiness before me" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:24). And then you'll notice a very interesting shift. Verse 26. This is an outlier in the scriptures of the Restoration. Why? Look closely.

"For what man among you having twelve sons, and is no respecter of them, and they serve him obediently, and he saith unto the one: Be thou clothed in robes and sit thou here; and to the other: Be thou clothed in rags and sit thou there – and looketh upon his sons and saith I am just?" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:26). That's a really strange insert here.

Look at the qualification he gives in 27: "Behold, this I have given unto you as a parable, and it is even as I am. I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine." Brothers and sisters, are you noticing that one of Jesus's favorite or preferred teaching techniques in his mortal ministry among the Jews in the Galilee, in Jerusalem, and throughout Judea is to teach in parables. And did you notice that when he came to the Nephites in 3<sup>rd</sup> Nephi, he didn't share a single parable that we have record of. It doesn't mean he didn't, it just means we don't have any record of it if he did. And here in the Doctrine and Covenants you would think, wow! He's going to be able to share all kinds of parables with these people and you only get a couple of them. This is one of them in the Doctrine and Covenants where he himself says, I'm giving this kind of like a parable to you. Why is that?

Parables were given as this setting side by side of concrete, well-known situations that people would be familiar with in order to teach abstract truth and eternal truth; it's kind of hard to wrap our head around. It's fascinating to me that in Restoration scripture, God doesn't need to do a lot of the setting side by side, he just teaches directly. I guess what I'm saying is, be grateful for the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the Doctrine and Covenants, he doesn't have to veil or cloak meaning behind parables and symbolic place holders. He really is just talking to us directly, for the most part, isn't he?

And you – but you will find in the Doctrine and Covenants that the Lord explains, gives little pieces, little portions of verses several times that explain his New Testament parables so that we can clearly understand them. And in fact, there is one instance, I won't steal the thunder of future weeks, but there is almost an entire section where the Lord explains the parable of the wheat and the tares, and he says, here's what it meant. They really didn't understand it, but here's what it is, I'm going to give it to you just right out.

And so then we have that beautiful verse about being one, and then he says, “I tell you these things because of your prayers;” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:30). You've been praying, you want to know why you're doing this. I'm going to help you out and tell you these things. And then in verse 30 he says, I just love the ending of that verse, in verse 30 where he says, “...if ye are prepared ye shall not fear.”

And you know, that just doesn't apply to scriptural things. That applies to temporal preparedness; that applies to, you know, emotional preparedness; it applies to financial preparedness; it applies to just everything. I think that is just some of the most wonderful counsel we've ever been given, that if you just sit down and prepare, one of the things – while I was on active duty in the military, one of the things the military has to do is to prepare for scenarios that we hope don't occur, but because you are prepared, if they do occur, whether it's a natural disaster or whatever it might be, somebody's already thought it through, we're already prepared, you don't have to panic in the moment.

We know from the scriptures that there's interesting times coming and it's – the Lord has said, you know, be wise. I've let you know these things are coming, I'm giving you the signs of the times, we'll see other sections that are dedicated to that in future weeks, but he's saying, be wise, be prepared, and if you're prepared, you just – you know, it doesn't mean that it's easy to go through. The world's gone through, you know, a world-wide pandemic – not easy, but where preparation had occurred, it was easier and we were prepared.

Look at verse, as we now begin to make this transition from New York, to physically move that group of people, notice there's a group, but we haven't even started making the move, but there's a group that Jesus doesn't want forgotten in all of this. Verse 35: "And they shall look to the poor and the needy, and administer to their relief that they shall not suffer; and send them forth to the place which I have commanded them;". Isn't that interesting, that God has a special place in his heart for those who are sick and afflicted: fatherless, widows, the poor, the needy.

It does exactly the same thing in section 136 when the pioneers are getting ready to move out to the west. He specifically addresses the poor and the needy and says how they're to get out there. They do the same thing when they're leaving Kirtland, they do the same thing when they're leaving Missouri, they do the same thing when they are leaving every – you know Nauvoo, Winter Quarters, just every time.

Can we back up just a bit? Verse 32, I think is a really important verse. In verse 32 he says: "Wherefore, for this cause...", in other words, remember we said he's telling them why. He just comes right out and says it. He says, "Wherefore, for this cause I gave unto you the commandment that ye should go to the Ohio;" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:32) Okay folks, you've been waiting for it, here it is. I'm going to tell you point blank, "...and there I will give unto you my law;" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:32). And if you check the footnote, it footnotes it to Doctrine and Covenants section 42, so just a little preview of a coming attraction next. Section 42 is one of those sections that has a nickname or a subtitle, and it is called, the law, and you'll see next week for a very good reason that the Lord says, if you'll show faith and go to the Ohio, "...I will give [you] my law", and my law is, here's how you live if you want to be a Zion people, and I'm going to give that to you when you get there (Doctrine and Covenants 38:32). And part two is, and "you shall be endowed with power from on high" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:32).

Now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we hear that and we hear that word "endowed" and we immediately think of what, Tyler? The endowment. The temple. We absolutely do, but I've got to believe in 1831 in January on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January when they heard this, that's not the first thing that popped into their mind, but they did understand that God is going to give us a great gift. He's going to just give us a great gift.

Joseph said this about gathering because the Lord is saying, I'm causing you to gather, Joseph said this: what is the object of gathering? "When the people of God in any age, of any age in the world, the main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby he could reveal unto his people the ordinances of his house and the glories of his kingdom and teach the people the way of salvation. It is for the same purpose that God gathers together his people in the last days, to build unto the Lord a house to prepare them for the ordinances and endowments, washings and anointing, etc."<sup>7</sup>

Now coming from a military background, one thing that struck me about this is, my wife and I had the opportunity as newlyweds to live in Europe. And so, one thing that I really love, and I love medieval castles, I just – I can't remember a lot of people's names sometimes, but I remember every castle I've ever been to and when it was built, just the way your brain works. But on medieval castles, they are built so that, you know, this is stone, and this is called a merlon, and this is called a crenel, and so this up and down, and it's on basically every medieval fortress, it's called the crenellation. A crenellation is built that way so that you can hide behind the merlon while you are

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<sup>7</sup> Various Authors. "Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 2, 10 March 1843–14 July 1843, Page 242." *The Joseph Smith Papers*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, [www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-2-10-march-1843-14-july-1843/250#foot-notes](http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-2-10-march-1843-14-july-1843/250#foot-notes).

stringing your bow or reloading your weapon, and then you step into the crenel to take offensive action. And this is across the medieval world.

Well, interestingly, when Brigham Young was telling the saints how the Salt Lake Temple should be built, because I say the Salt Lake Temple is probably the most iconic of all the temples. When Brigham Young sent out Truman Angell over to Europe, he instructed him to look at cathedrals and castles and stately buildings, and then Brother Angell came back. And Brigham and Brother Angell as they designed the Salt Lake Temple, when you look at a picture of the Salt Lake Temple, that temple is filled on almost every edge with crenellations. Because what did crenellations do in medieval castles? They protected the people on the inside, and what is the purpose of the temple? It's to protect us against the world and to endow us with power and to give us the ordinances and covenants that we need to return to our Heavenly Father. And so, I can't look at the Salt Lake Temple and not see those crenellations first, that's the first thing I notice every time I look at a picture of the Salt Lake Temple.

And I hope you will too in the future and recognize, I think the Lord is sending us a very visible symbol in that building, because in stone the Salt Lake Temple has way more symbolism on – in the stone of that building, but it applies to every temple in the world, that it's a place of refuge. It's a house of the Lord, it's a place to learn but it's a place of safety and a place where we can be endowed with power. I just think that's just a wonderful metaphor.

Beautiful, Ken, and it brings us back again to what you emphasized at the bottom of verse 30 again, "...if ye are prepared ye shall not fear." You're not out in the open where you can be destroyed by the enemy who is combined against you.

The Lord also warns them in verse 39 against pride, and, boy, just coming off of Book of Mormon Come Follow Me year, we saw that the Lord once or twice in the scriptures – and isn't it interesting that he invokes the actual Book of Mormon people who fell to pride, "lest ye become as the Nephites of old" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:39). Well, and then he says in verse – well, he says in verse 40: a commandment, okay? Go with your might, labor with your hands. We are commanded to build Zion.

And then he says in 41, "let your preaching be the warning voice, every man to his neighbor in mildness and in meekness." We are out there, not by way of commanding, we're not trying to compel, we are inviting. I love that in section 20 when it says basically the mission of the Church is to invite everyone to come unto Christ. And that's our invitation, is to just invite, and then he says in verse 42, "go ye out from among the wicked." We're going to pull you out from all these different places in New York and in parts of Pennsylvania and those areas and plant yourself in Kirtland, and then the Lord closes with, "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:42).

Tyler, do you want to, what imagery has the Lord given us here? It's beautiful because in Old Testament times and then into the New Testament as well, the imagery of cleanliness in bearing

the vessels of the Lord, it sees its fulfillment throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament. This idea of if a priest is called, for instance, to bear certain vessels in the temple or the tabernacle anciently, there are extremely stringent cleanliness rituals they have to go through, changing their clothes, taking a ritual bath, washing of the hands, the anointing. There are a whole bunch of elements that go into this, and while those are physical and literal in nature in antiquity, I think he's bringing it to us today. "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:42).

I love one of the little adjustments that was made in the temple recommend interview where there's that added statement that the Lord has said that all things are to be done in cleanliness before him (Doctrine and Covenants 42:41). I think there's power in that, that virtue, that holiness, that striving to be clean before the Lord in all things.

There's a wonderful statement from President Gordon B. Hinckley. He said in the April 1996 General Conference, quote, "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. Thus has he spoken to us in modern revelation." And then President Hinckley adds, "Be clean in body. Be clean in mind. Be clean in language. Be clean in dress and manner."<sup>8</sup> And this just kind of sums it up.

Well, section 38, I hope you'll give section 38 a good look. And now we move into sections 39 and 40 because they're kind of a matched pair. You can't have one without the other. I would add that research from the great scholars of the Joseph Smith Papers Project have helped us understand in recent years that section 39 was given one day before section 40. All we used to know earlier was that it was sometime in January, but they've now determined that it was on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January and the 6<sup>th</sup> of January.

James Covell, a little bit about him, he is a Protestant minister, he's been teaching – he's been teaching Christianity for about 40 years. He's been a circuit religion rider; he travels around to various areas preaching. He hears the gospel preached in the Canandaigua area when Joseph and Sidney are there, they give a presentation, I believe, in a large hall there, he hears the gospel, and he approaches Joseph, and as it says in the section heading, it says he covenanted with the Lord that he, James, would obey any command that the Lord would give him through Joseph the prophet. Well, section 39 is the list of commands that James Covell receives. He's told to do several things. He's told to teach the gospel, he's told to go gather to Zion, he's told to go west. That's going to be a little uncomfortable for him because he's always taught to the east his whole life, but he's specifically told in verse 14, "...go to the Ohio", and to do all these various things. And remember, he had told the Lord, I'll do whatever you ask me to do.

But, let me just point out verse 6 for just a second. This is one of the few times in the scriptures where the Lord defines the gospel. These verses are kind of just put in kind of like the cherries on the top of the cupcake several times in the scriptures, but they're not that frequent, and this is one that's in the Doctrine and Covenants. And it says in verse 6, "And this is my gospel – repentance

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<sup>8</sup> Hinckley, Gordon B. "Be Ye Clean." *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, Apr. 1996, [www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1996/04/be-ye-clean?lang=eng](http://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1996/04/be-ye-clean?lang=eng).

and baptism by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter," and I love this definition of the Holy Ghost, "which showeth all things, and teacheth the peaceable things of the kingdom."

You know, if you look at the great need of the world right now, I would suggest that one of the great needs of the world is just for people to esteem each other, to respect each other, and just let peace prevail. And the Holy Ghost – that's what the Holy Ghost is all about. It's to show all things and to teach peaceable things, that you can't be riled up and upset and feeling contempt if you have the Holy Ghost with you. It's just incompatible.

This is fascinating if you can get beyond the black words on a white page. If you can try to visualize what it's actually like for a man like James Covell who, and, by the way, if you have the 1979, 1981 edition of the scripture, I guess 1981 edition of the triple combination, if you look in your section heading, it lists James Covill, and it tells you he was a Baptist minister for about 40 years. If you have the 2013 edition of the scriptures or if you look at the Gospel Tools, the online version of the scriptures, you're going to notice that his name is spelled James Covell and it tells you that he was a Methodist minister, not a Baptist minister. Almost a decade after this happened is when Joseph and others seemed to be remembering back and writing down some of the details, and they apparently got some of the details wrong because again –

Well, there actually was a James Covill minister in the New York area, just quite a ways away, and they figured, and scholars have figured out that it's this James Covell. Now, keep in mind, he's been a minister in the Methodist faith, traveling throughout – he's very experienced, 40 years' worth of preaching on top of his growing up years. Joseph Smith, he just barely turned 25 years old. He's not even a year in the Church having been established, and here he has this guy who he – James Covell knows the Bible pretty well. He's had a lot of experience working with people in a lot of life situations, and I love the fact that God speaks to him so tenderly, so gently, and so powerfully at the same time through the mouth of a 25 year-old farm boy who, quite frankly, if we were to have a final exam at this point on the Bible, I could be wrong, Joseph's had a lot of training from heaven at this point, but I think as far as the nuts and bolts of the Bible are concerned, I'll bet James Covell will do pretty well on that test. And yet, here's God speaking through Joseph to him, calling him to an amazing work to do, to perform.

Look at verse 8: "Verily I say unto thee, thine heart is now right before me at this time." If you like marking your scriptures, you might want to circle the word is, because that's present tense. January 5<sup>th</sup>, James, your heart is right before me. You're in a good place, you're humble, you're meek, you're willing to do anything I've asked you to do, so I'm going to give you some amazing things to accomplish.

And then what happens is, James Covell gets this revelation, and the record says that the next day he's just gone. He just disappears. And so, Joseph and Sidney are wondering to themselves, where did James go? He covenanted that he would do everything the Lord said, I got this wonderful revelation for him, and now he's gone. So, I guess there's a possibility that he went west and he

started teaching but that is not the case. So, Joseph inquires of the Lord and receives section 40. So, they learn about James Covell's decision.

Now note, it's one day later. James Covell's covenant to do whatever the Lord commands through his Prophet Joseph lasts one day. And the Lord says this. It's just three short verses. He said, "Behold, verily I say unto you, that the heart of my servant James Covell was right..." (Doctrine and Covenants 40:1). So, on the 5<sup>th</sup> his heart is right, he's willing to be baptized, he's willing to do whatever the Lord asks, and then he forsakes it and never joins the Church. And then the Lord says the reasons why in verse 2. He said, "And he received the word with gladness, but straightway Satan tempted him; and the fear of persecution and the cares of the world caused him to reject the word" (Doctrine and Covenants 40:2).

And don't you love verse 3: "Wherefore he broke my covenant...". This is a covenant that God made and tried to establish with him, "...and it remaineth with me to do with him as seemeth me good. Amen" (Doctrine and Covenants 40:3). There's a closure there that basically says to all of us, it's not your place to judge James. That's my job. I'll take care of that, and we don't know, so it's not our job to say, man, what a terrible guy. The fact is, is none of us can judge his situation. Only the Lord can.

Now, rather than ending on that particular note, let's end on a higher note back in section 39, something that he is told that I think quite frankly applies to us every bit as much as it did to James Covell on January 5<sup>th</sup> of 1831. Verse 10: "Behold, the days of thy deliverance are come, if...". Once again you can circle the word "if", this is conditional. "...If thou wilt hearken to my voice, which saith unto thee:", and then you can fill in the blank with whatever the voice of the Lord has prompted you with, either from scripture study, from listening to the living prophets, from your patriarchal blessing, from other inspired revelation that you've received personally, move forward. And then he says, "and you shall receive my spirit, and a blessing so great as you never have known. And if..." there it is again, "if thou do this, I have prepared thee for a greater work" (Doctrine and Covenants 39:10-11).

Now as you study through this week, these sections, you're going to find – we haven't even talked about all of the incredible stories that we have in the Saints volume and in the other Revelations in Context resources that the Church has provided for us of the incredible sacrifices and miracles and setbacks and triumphs that these different groups have to go through in order to move from upstate New York to the Ohio, but you can see God working with these people, shaping them and refining them.

Just a closing thought, there's a dream that Joseph F. Smith, prophet of the Church around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there's a dream he had, thinking back to the way section 38 and this scripture block ends, with the charge from the Lord to be clean. And Joseph F. Smith says that in his dream he was going to meet important people, and along the way he felt impressed to stop and to take a bath and to put on new clothes, and when he shows up, he's greeted by many of the early members of the Church, and his father, Hyrum Smith, is there, Joseph Smith is there. And he's chided a little

bit for being late, and he looks at them and admits he's late, but he says, yes, but I am clean. And then Joseph F. Smith, when he would share this dream or talk about the importance of being clean before the Lord and what a wonderful opportunity the Lord has given us to understand those things that we can do to become clean from the world and be able to return to his presence if we will take advantage of the Atonement and repentance.

I just want to share my testimony that these sections came from a prophet of God. Yay for Joseph Smith, Prophet of this Restoration! I just want to share my testimony with you. This is a prophet of God. He holds the keys of this dispensation, and I'm, next to Jesus Christ, he's done more than anyone else who's ever lived for the salvation of man. We learn of the Savior because of what we've learned through Joseph Smith. I just want to leave that testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.