

Come Follow Me Class Insights 27 D&C Sec. 71 - 75

I'm Taylor, and I'm Tyler. This is Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today Doctrine and Covenants sections 71 through 75.

So to begin this particular block of sections we have to begin with a story. Ezra Booth is kind of the central focal point in section 71. How do we handle what he's doing? So to give you the background information.

And we've heard of him before.

Yeah. Yeah.

And it's not just section 71, because this background that you're about to give us actually ends up creating the context for a whole bunch of church history from October 1831 all the way into March where some pretty negative things, hurtful, painful things happened to Sidney and Joseph.

Yeah, so the fascinating thing is Ezra Booth, we've talked about him before on that trip out to Independence and back and his frustrations with the prophet and with the land out in Independence. Let's turn the clock back to the beginning of where he came into the Church. He's a Methodist preacher living in the Kirtland, Hiram, Ohio area, he's good friends with John and Elsa Johnson and they're having this little meeting. So, in the writing of one of these early histories of the Church it says, quote, "Mrs. Johnson had been afflicted for some time with a lame arm and was not at the time of the visit able to lift her hand to her head. So the party visited Joseph Smith, partly out of curiosity and partly to see for themselves what there might be in the new doctrine."¹

So, they're having this meeting and sometime during the conversation the flow of conversation turned to supernatural gifts and gifts of the Spirit, at which point, somebody said, here is Mrs. Johnson with a lame arm. Has God given any power to men now on the earth to cure her? So the conversation then proceeds and a few moments later Joseph Smith got up, walked over to her and says, quote, "Woman, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command thee to be whole". And immediately he left the room. Well, that group is sitting there watching and the next thing they know Elsa Johnson starts moving her hand and her arm is normal and they – they thought hmm, this is interesting. The next day she's able to do her laundry and do cooking and there's no negative effects from her arm at which point Ezra Booth and probably some of these others who've seen this miracle, they say, alright, I'm in. Count me in. This is good and he joins the Church.

What's interesting, there's – we are told multiple times throughout scriptures that those who believe will have gifts of the Spirit and one gift of the Spirit is the ability to heal or another gift is the faith to be healed. And Ezra Booth, as a good Methodist, he understands these things. And we could go back to other sections of the Doctrine and Covenants where God actually had to reveal again what the gifts of the Spirit are and how they're to be used because people were like well, this is the Restoration, we should have all these gifts and people are going off the deep end in some regards. It's interesting that what happens is Ezra, this becomes the foundation of his testimony. In fact, it seems to be the only thing that really draws him into

¹ Smith, Joseph. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter -DAY Saints: Period I*. Vol. 1, FORGOTTEN Books, 2016.

the Restoration is this miraculous healing that happens and we can then see what happens when people found their testimony or established their testimony on the extraordinary versus just the simple power of God's love in their lives.

Yeah. I think we could say with confidence that Ezra Booth gained a firm testimony that yeah, this is the work of God and I want in, which then begins this process. It's almost as if a testimony is a doorway to begin this process, this long, drawn out lifelong process of becoming increasingly converted to the Lord.

Well, it's only a matter of time before his testimony gets overpowered by other things that are going on and lacking some of those deep taproots of conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ. His testimony seems to be more rooted in and based in Joseph Smith and this miraculous experience. And so now he's – he's left the Church by the time we get section 71 and he has started publishing in newspaper articles all of these slanderous and terrible things about Joseph Smith, his leadership and his lack of inspiration and against the Church. And it's starting to really turn people's hearts against the work, against the missionaries, against Joseph and the Church and what's – what's moving forth here in this early time period of the late 18, the year, 1831.

Lots of persecution. In fact, what we'll see here is that God actually has to give this revelation to have Sidney and Joseph stop the work of God – well, they didn't stop the work of God but to stop the translation, to go out and actually preach and mollify and explain. And it's just sad that even though back in 1831 this is the first time we have in print criticism against Joseph Smith and the Church. Many of the criticisms against Joseph Smith that are circulating on the internet today are basically repetitions of Ezra Booth's complaints. This is a guy who started to have doubts when his colleague, Simonds Ryder has his name misspelled in a revelation and Ezra is like, oh, well Joseph Smith can't be an inspired prophet if he spelled something wrong.

I don't know where in the revelations it says a prophet is perfect, that can't make – and so he starts to get this doubt in his heart which yeah, he saw this miraculous healing, but he said well, I see something that's not perfect and so maybe this whole thing is wrong. And the word “doubt” literally comes from the word “duo” or “two”, and you're basically stuck at a crossroads and you can go one way or the other and he has doubt. He has seen the healing power of God but he also has seen that Joseph Smith isn't perfect, that Joseph Smith actually makes spelling errors and so what does he do? Ezra Booth decides well, that spelling error, I'm going to follow that path. I'm going to go see what light and truth I can find in that versus okay, I saw a healing by the power of God; what if I actually continue to work towards the truth that I saw and get converted to God? And he goes off the deep end and finds all these crazy criticisms that end up causing enormous contention and many problems and still, unfortunately, the weeds that he planted in 1831 are still producing tares today.

So I think it would be fair to say that the Simonds Ryder experience was one step. I don't think Ezra Booth would say yeah, that was – that was the major issue. I think it was just one little teeny, tiny step. Then he goes on that mission with Joseph and all along the way he's looking for more things to stack up against Joseph. He sees interactions and he hears conversations, he sees the land and they don't match up to how he thinks they should and before you know it they returned to Kirtland. We're so far down the stream from Simonds Ryder's situation that the devil doesn't care, brothers and sisters, what it is that gets you

turned in a direction away from the Lord. He doesn't care what the situation or the setting is just as long as he can turn you away from the Lord and keep you walking on that path.

This is the Elder Uchtdorf principle of a plane flying and being one degree off. Well, you know, for just a short while one degree is not that big of a deal, maybe for just a little while longer, and the power of repentance allows you to change course. But if you continue to pursue step by step, you're going to - time's going to go by and you're going to find yourself like way, way out in the weeds.

So now, let's open up section 71 and look at those – those instructions given to Joseph and Sidney. He says: "Behold, thus saith the Lord unto you my servants Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon, that the time has verily come that is necessary and expedient in me that you should open your mouths in proclaiming my gospel, the things of the kingdom, expounding the mysteries thereof out of the scriptures, according to the portion of the Spirit and power which shall be given unto you, even as I will" (Doctrine and Covenants 71:1). You'll notice the pattern. It's teaching out of the scriptures, proclaiming the gospel, expounding the mysteries out of the scriptures according to the Spirit, the things that the Lord gives us in power from his Spirit, even as he will.

So verse 3: "Verily this is a mission for a season, which I give unto you." So you're going to stop translating the Bible process that you're working through because there's this real world event that's taking place. Don't you love the fact that in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, God doesn't say you're going to do this one thing and there's going to be no variance? He adapts the Church – the programs, the policies to fit the specific needs at specific times. That's exactly what's going on here. It's not nope, we never want you to work on the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible ever again, it's just for a season, there is a bigger need and we're going to have you meet that need so go ahead and you can start laboring in the vineyard.

And we get this back in the Bible, Ecclesiastes, chapter 2 verse 1: "To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven." And I just love that God takes this opportunity to alert Joseph and Sidney, that many of the sections that we've received at this point are because of specific questions that Joseph or others have. And this one's interesting where Joseph is working off a revelation, he's been commanded to do the translation and God actually has to intervene. So revelation can come in lots of ways. You could ask for revelation, and sometimes when you don't realize you need a revelation, God may come and interrupt you. Not all the time, but this is a case where God needed to raise some awareness because if the Church actually at this point had been completely pulled off track by all the persecution, we wouldn't be here today. And God needed to protect the small Church that had just been organized.

You know Taylor that's an interesting insight that I think applies to many of us today who maybe, perhaps at times feel a little bit overwhelmed reading their patriarchal blessing or feeling this inspiration from the Lord that these things need to be done or looking around at their family obligations and their Church calling, and feeling a bit overwhelmed like wow, I have all this stuff to do whereas what's going on here is just trust the Lord, move forward. Do the best you can with what you've got and if there's something that is being side-lined right now that the Lord needs to take a little more of a front – center stage for you for this next phase of your life, trust him. He'll help you know when that needs to adjust or shift, but we can move forward with confidence doing the best we can, that there's a time and a season for all things. Isn't it wonderful that he gives us a lifetime, however long that is for each one of us, which means we don't

have to perform all of our plays or sing all of our music this week? We've got a lifetime to just keep working, keep growing, keep striving to dig in deep to understand God's will.

Now, look at verse 4: "Wherefore, labor ye in my vineyard." That phrase "in my vineyard" is going to come up multiple times in section 72 and we'll talk about that again later, but pay attention to this idea that there's this big vineyard with lots of work to be done (Doctrine and Covenants 71:4). There are a lot of trees out in this vineyard and he's now saying the tree you've been working on, I need you to leave that one and go out and start working on some other things in my vineyard. Again, we'll come back to that as we branch out in our – that was terrible.

That was a good one.

Yeah, I was going out on a limb.

Look at what they're asked to do: "...Call upon the inhabitants of the earth, and bear record, and prepare the way for the commandments and revelations which are to come" (Doctrine and Covenants 71:4). Don't you love it that God's saying by the way, you've received all these revelations plus the Book of Mormon, plus the translation that you've been working through from the Bible. And he's promising him, you're going to prepare the way for these commandments and revelations which are to yet come; it's this unfolding Restoration, just get ready, Joseph, Sidney, there's more coming.

And on that point, there are at least 40, 50, 60 and more canonized revelations that Joseph is yet to receive. Now at this point he's already received like I don't know, up to 70 and it's just amazing how God sees the end from the beginning.

Beautiful. Now look at verse 5 and 6: "Now, behold this is wisdom; whoso readeth, let him understand and receive also; For unto him that receiveth it shall be given more abundantly, even power." So God is making a promise here that if we will be faithful to things that have already been given – now put this in Joseph and Sidney's context – these revelations, this process you've been working through as a prophet and as a scribe and these other assignments that Sidney's had and Oliver and others, if you'll be true and faithful to the things that you have been given, I'll give you a lot more. You're going to be given more abundantly and not just the same kind of things but actually power, your agency, your freedom to choose and to act is going to be enhanced.

Verse 7: "Wherefore, confound your enemies; call upon them to meet you both in public and in private; and inasmuch as ye are faithful their shame shall be made manifest." This one's interesting. Simonds Ryder, who actually joined with Ezra Booth in spreading this false information, and Ezra Booth actually refused to meet with Joseph and Sidney in a public conversation. They did not want to have an open conversation in front of – and why is that? They did not want to have their lies and their misinformation exposed. They knew they'd be exposed and so they were safer in quietly – they weren't quiet – they were safer in promoting everything without directly confronting the source of truth and knowledge.

Yeah. So verse 8 the Lord says: "Wherefore, let them bring forth their strong reasons against the Lord. Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you – there is no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper;" (Doctrine and Covenants 71:8-9). That's a powerful promise to people on the covenant path that there is

no weapon that's going to prosper. Now for a season there may be some temporary battles lost but the war is guaranteed. We already know who's going to win this war between good and evil, between light and darkness, between truth and error.

So if we look at the Old Testament, God is actually quoting from Isaiah which, Isaiah was probably quoting from God, so God's quoting himself from Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 54 verses 16 and 17 reinforces this concept. God says: "Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy" (Isaiah 54:16). Basically God's saying, anybody who's out there forming weapons, I'm the one who actually created the individual and their brain and their ability to go create weapons. See, I'm behind all that. And then he says after giving that contrast, that I'm the one who created the person who creates the weapons, verse 17: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper;". So this is the context: Ezra Booth is a child of God and yes, he can do all these doubtful and really problematic things that cause deep persecution against the Church and Joseph Smith and Sidney and others, but ultimately, God is in charge. Ezra is ultimately – I mean, he's not God, so everything that he does is ultimately dependent on God.

I just love that because in my moments when I suffered, struggled, felt like there were enemies out there, I have found great power in this verse. And I remember as a missionary going out and do you know what it's like for the first couple of weeks or months as a missionary? Actually it can happen throughout the mission, just the amount of effort and strain and stress at times, like am I doing the Lord's work properly? And I don't know how to speak the language, I don't know how to teach properly, and I fight this opposition, people don't want to listen to me. And this is a verse that meant a lot to me that gave me the courage every day to get back out and to do God's work. So I'm just impressed with Sidney and Joseph who get the persecution – I never really experienced persecution on my mission, not like Sidney and Joseph did.

Not like this. Now, we want to spend some time really digging down into this concept of what is truth? What is reality? "...Things as they really are," as they were and as they are to come, to use a scriptural definition of what is truth because we live in a world that makes all kinds of truth claims, that can take a series of events and portray them to you, present them to you in such a way that can – can twist the meaning (Jacob 4:13). You know it's interesting that you can't go to a store today or go to the internet and buy an instrument that you could – that you could set up in your room there and it's this fancy electronic instrument with a little meter on it that will swing from side to side and over here is light and over here are truths. And when somebody is telling you a lie, then it will register that they're telling a lie and it will come over, if it's a bold faced lie, clear over here, or a slight lie or a slight truth or a complete, absolute truth. There's no scientific instrument that you and I can buy that will measure truth for us, that will reveal deception from reality and yet, brothers and sisters, every one of us were sent down to this earth from the royal courts on high from heavenly parents with just such an instrument built in to each of us; it's not external. It – this doesn't exist but we all have a mind and we have a heart and we have a commandment from God to seek truth. How do we do it? With all of our heart and all of our mind and all of our strength and our might. We seek truth where we can discern lies from God's reality.

This is interesting how you bring this up. It reminds me of lessons I've learned from people who work in the building industry, like if you take a piece of wood and put a nail right in the middle, you can spin that

piece of wood all around, but if you nail on two sides, that then is totally secure. That's your mind, that's your heart. And I work at a university and I try to train students how to use their mind and their heart to get to nail down truth. And some students feel pretty good about their heart, like, oh I'm really good at feeling things. I'm like, that's great. But you need to be able to triangulate with other data. Some are really good at just saying ah, I've read all this stuff and I've done some scientific experiments and I've done some triangulation, but they've missed the heart. And in bringing these things together, there is security and that is what God is asking us to do. And we live in a world where people want to tell you not to use your heart, only use your mind, or to only use your mind and not use your heart. God invites us to do both.

Now there will be times where you have questions, you turn to the scriptures, you turn to the words of the living prophets, you can't find answers. It's okay to not have all the answers right here right now. We move forward with what we do know. Again, we've mentioned it before, one of my favorite statements from Elder Neil L. Anderson is, “[we] don't know everything, but [we] know enough”.² We know enough to keep moving forward in faith, to search the scriptures and keep digging out whatever answers we can from them and the words of the living prophets and apostles and the leaders of the Church.

So let's – let's diagram this scenario that is going on back in 1831 and that's playing out here in a metaphor sort of a way, this seeking of truth; let's diagram it through the analogy of a tree. What you have is three distinct parts of the tree: you have the roots, the trunk and the major center part of the tree, and then the branches and the leaves. When you're in a discussion with people about what you believe and what they believe or when truth claims are being made, usually, the majority of the time is spent talking about conclusions that people have come to or the fruits of their seeking for truth, okay? These fruits are the conclusion, the conclusions.

Isn't it interesting that sometimes when you find yourself in an argument with people, when there's a disagreement going on, when you're saying he's crazy, he's just – he is not seeing things the way I'm seeing, it's usually because we're sitting here comparing different truths, we've come to different conclusions and we think each other is crazy because we're not seeing it the same way. If you go down to not to the fruit level but if you go down to the root level, these are the assumptions in – in a more academic setting we would call these the premises, the major and the minor premises, these beliefs that we bring into this process of searching for truth. And then the trunk could be seen as seeking for evidence that these assumptions are helping us to find which then leads to the fruits of our conclusion.

It's fascinating when you have a doctrinal disagreement with somebody, if you'll just step back for a moment from the exact disagreement that you're having and push pause and ask the question, wait a minute, what would cause a person to conclude what you've just concluded? What do you really believe down at the assumption level? When you can have discussions at the root level, you will often find oh, oh that – yes, okay, so now I understand why you came to that conclusion. It's because you believe that there – and then fill in the blank. So for instance in biblical studies there are a lot of conclusions that get taught in the biblical studies realm that are based on an assumption that there is no such thing as revelation. There is no such thing as being able to see the future or that Jesus is not the divine Son of God, that he's

² Andersen, Neil L. “You Know Enough.” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, Oct. 2008, www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2008/10/you-know-enough?lang=eng.

just a historical character that people after the fact turned into a God by telling fantastical stories about him. Those are their assumptions, therefore, the conclusions that they draw about the Bible and about Jesus and about life in general, you can say oh, okay, I would probably come to that same conclusion if I believe that same assumption, but I don't. And then you can have this friendly conversation at the root level rather than a Bible bash at the – at the conclusion fruit level and say let me help you understand where I'm coming from. I believe that Jesus Christ was the divine Son of God. I believe that he did have power to perform all those miracles. I do believe, this is what's feeding my conclusions, that there is such a thing as prophecy and revelation, and therefore my conclusions might be different from yours.

But we have this going on today. We have some scholars who make the claim or the assumption that the Book of Mormon is not an ancient, authentic witness of Jesus Christ, it's just a modern fiction produced by Joseph Smith or somebody connected to him in 1830. If you start with the assumption that the Book of Mormon was invented in 1830 by Joseph Smith or somebody else and it's not an ancient, authentic witness of Jesus Christ, yeah, you will actually see things based on your assumptions and make conclusions and you could probably convince a lot of people you're right and maybe become very famous about doing it. But if you actually start with the core assumption which the book invites all of us to take, which is this is the witness and testimony of ancient people of Jesus Christ, you will see the evidence both in your heart and in your mind and get to the conclusions. And this happens today and sometimes we just have to stop and say, what got planted down here, or what are the assumptions that got planted, and why? And in some cases we have to root up or snip off those assumptions because they're erroneous and they get us to fruit that ultimately is bitter and actually doesn't produce the health – the spiritual health that we need.

Might I say something else here about truth? I love that Tyler has used this metaphor of a tree. And I mentioned this last year in another lesson but this word is fascinating because it's connected, at the root level. The root of this word also produces this word – you can actually see the connection here – and another word, “trust”. So the word “truth”, “tree” and “trust” actually all originate from the same seed of a word anciently. And what's fascinating about this is that if you want truth, truth will actually produce a tree of fruit of goodness and it's things that you can trust and I just don't know how these words all connect, and so as you're pursuing truth, you might consider this metaphor that am I planting a tree that I can trust, that will bring forth fruit that will actually lead me to salvation.

So to build on this Taylor, isn't it interesting that when a person makes a truth claim, what they're doing is they're asking you to trust them. They're saying trust me. I know what I'm saying. This is true. They're making this claim. Not all trees produce fruit. It's fascinating how many people through the history of time have given truth claims, who have asked people to trust them as being an authority or knowing what they're talking about on a subject, and it turns out that they were wrong. It turns out that it wasn't – the major assumptions, the major premises were inaccurate, they were in error. And even though you found great evidence to back up those assumptions, you weren't able to produce fruit unto life and salvation. It's not a tree of life. I love the fact that the God of the universe is saying to us, will you trust me? I love that Heavenly Father is saying, hear him, my Son. Listen to him, not all the other voices in the world that are making these claims trying to tell you how to be really happy or how to live your life or what you need or what you don't need in order to succeed in finding peace in life.

So from a worldly perspective they would look at this and say ah, you're just encouraging people to blindly follow the prophet and blindly follow the scriptures. Brothers and sisters, I don't blindly follow the prophet. I follow the prophet and I follow scriptures to the best of my ability because I recognize my own inadequacies, my own blind spots. And I trust that God is going to give me more truth when I go to authorized, divine sources than when I go to some site online or some neighbor who claims that I should be able to trust her or him. Those – those – that to me would be blindly following rather than saying that God has an authorized way in which he reveals truth that's eternally significant. And the irony is, he also has ways to unlock truth in a scientific way and those don't have to come by inspiration of the Holy Ghost to my mind and my heart through a study of the scriptures. Most of those are going to come after people who are experts in their fields have spent years in laboratories running experiments.

What's powerful about this, I remember President Nelson, I believe it was November of 2020, he did a video for the Church, a very short video, very powerful, and he identified himself with two phrases. He began with I am a man of science. And I am a man of faith. And I have felt for a long time there isn't a conflict between faith and science. We should also point out that the truths that we've been talking about this whole year are kind of capital "T" truths, salvific truths, and the truths that you get from science are not the truths that are going to lead you into God's kingdom, but they might help you to have a more prosperous, peaceful, happy life.

And let's actually talk about the word "science" for just a minute and why this matters. So, the word "science" comes from a beautiful Latin word that simply means "knowledge". God is a God of knowledge. So if we just take the core etymological, root meaning of science, God is a scientist and scientists are seeking to be more like God in the sense that they're seeking after knowledge. Now again, they're not out there looking for the covenant path and it's okay that – the covenant path is a pathway to be saved with God and through God, but there's a lot of other things in the world that are also good and "lovely and of good report", and we should become knowledgeable about those things and science is a very powerful way to do it (Articles of Faith 1:13). And in my experience, some of the most humble people I have ever known are scientists, people who every day are diligently and very deliberately and rigorously pursuing answers to significant questions and not simply being swayed by every wind of doctrine of whatever shows up on the internet, and they are drop by drop, adding to the store of human knowledge to make our lives better. And if you look around, in the last hundreds of years, one of the major reasons why there is so much peace and prosperity, and I know there is still a lot of trauma and difficulty in the world, is because scientists have labored to seek after knowledge and to share it with others.

Now let's just share one more perspective on this. So some months ago I saw this image on the – some friend shared this with me and it really made me smile and I thought okay, this actually explains how the human brain works. The human brain is designed to tell stories and to find patterns and data and sometimes the patterns that we think we see are really just all made up, but really what we are seeking is the wisdom that comes from the knowledge of seeing true patterns so let's map how this works out. First of all you get a bunch of data, all these data points. Information is when you start to see how some data is connected to other data. And then how that goes along and starts to connect to each other, that leads to knowledge. Insight is how two disparate data points actually have a connection that you've never seen before, and the wisdom is to draw that connection.

The one that makes me laugh is conspiracy theory where somebody comes along and draws a unicorn, a purple unicorn with wings and as you can see, you can draw all those dots in such a way that it looks like a unicorn. Conspiracy theories are alive and well and have been around for many, many generations. Humans just kind of get pulled into these things. And what's interesting about the word "conspiracy", it comes from the word "to look" and actually it's an intensive looking almost as if somebody's like, you've got to really see this, like you've got to – it's almost an intensified view beyond what is real. And our invitation is, look for information and look for knowledge, seek the insight and make the connections to wisdom. Science can help and God absolutely can help and let's protect ourselves against creating fake or false stories or believing or spreading lies that might make us feel good or make us popular but ultimately aren't trustworthy, are not founded on things that are real or true or trustworthy and will not lead to fruit that actually matters to life, happiness or salvation.

So as you picture Joseph and Sidney going out into this mission effort now to try to combat some of these truth claims that Ezra Booth has started to publish and spread, you can picture the frustration of trying to share with people what you know to be true and then saying no, this is my view of reality and combating what you're saying. To illustrate this, I want to share with you a little segment from one of C. S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia. This is the Silver Chair, book six in his Chronicles of Narnia series. Just to bring you up to speed so that this section makes sense and you can see its connection to what we're talking about today, you have this "marsh-wiggle", this made-up creature named "Puddleglum" who's kind of a frog-like, tall, lanky character in this story. You have the two human children, Eustace Scrubb and Jill, these two children and Puddleglum have come into the underworld and have found the prince of the Narnian throne, the son of the king. His name is Rilian and they have released him from his – from his bondage that this queen of the underworld has – has placed him under. And the queen bursts in unexpectedly to see them in this setting and she throws a magical powder on the fire which creates this aroma and she starts playing this instrument very pleasantly and then she starts talking and she starts trying to separate them from what is real, from what is truth, and to get them to believe her lies.

So they're in this state in this underground cave area trying to fight through what is real, what is fake and here's what – here's a part of the dialogue: "Then came the witch's voice, cooing softly like the voice of a wood-pigeon from the high elms in an old garden at three o'clock in the middle of a sleepy, summer afternoon; and it said: 'What is this sun that you all speak of? Do you mean anything by [that] word?' 'Yes, we jolly well do,' said Scrubb." That's Eustace, the boy. "Can you tell me what it's like?" asked the witch (thrum, thrum, thrum went the strings). 'Please it your grace,' said the prince very coldly and politely, 'You see that lamp. It is round and yellow and [it] gives light to the whole room; and hangeth moreover from the roof. Now that [which] we call the sun is like the lamp, only far greater and brighter. It giveth light to the whole Overworld and hangeth in the sky.' 'Hangeth from what, my lord?' asked the witch; and then, while they were all still thinking how to answer her, she added, with another of her soft, silver laughs: "You see? When you try to think out clearly what this sun must be, you cannot tell me. You can only tell me [what it is like]. Your sun is a dream; and there is nothing in that dream that was not copied from the lamp. The lamp is the real thing; the sun is but a tale, a children's story.' 'Yes, I see now,' said Jill in a heavy, hopeless tone. 'It must be so.' And while she said this, it seemed to her to be to be very good sense. Slowly

and gravely the Witch repeated, 'There is no sun.' And they all said nothing. She repeated, in a softer, deeper voice. 'There is no sun.'"³

Now, to cut down, there's more dialogue here about Aslan, the lion, Christ figure in the story where they talk about him and she's – she convinces them that they've made him up because they've seen some cats down in the underworld and they've now created a god out of something that they've seen in the underworld. And they keep having these struggles when finally, Puddleglum did something when they were all sitting there convinced that there is no overworld and everything that they thought they knew, everything that they thought was true was just them making it up, when Puddleglum goes over and with his frog-like foot puts out the fire and then he says this: "One word, Ma'am, he said, coming back from the fire; limping because of the pain. 'One word. All you've been saying is quite right, I shouldn't wonder. I'm a chap who always liked to know the worst and then put the best face I can on it. So I won't deny any of what you said. But there's one thing more to be said, even so. Suppose we have only dreamed, or made up, all those things – trees and grass and sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself. Suppose we have. Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones. Suppose this black pit of a kingdom of yours is the only world. Well, it strikes me as a pretty poor one. And that's a funny thing when you come to think of it. We're just babies making up a game, if you're right. But four babies playing a game can [come up with] a playworld which licks your real world hollow. That's why I'm going to stand by the play-world. I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan to lead it. I'm going to live as like a Narnian as I can even if there isn't any Narnia. So, thanking you kindly for our supper, if these two gentlemen and the young lady are ready, we're leaving your court at once and setting out in the dark to spend our lives looking for Overland. Not that our lives will be very long, I should think; but that's small loss if the world's as dull a place as you say.'"

Brothers and sisters all of the lies, all of the deceptions, all of the partial truths that the devil puts forth and spreads throughout the world to try to get people to sleepily deny what they knew before or what they've learned before, you'll notice they're never calculated to bring joy. They're never calculated to bring light or – or lasting relationships with people. They – they're calculated to bring doubt, to bring questions, to bring despair usually. I stand with Puddleglum in this search for truth when the devil's lies and deceptions come, I'm sticking with Aslan and I'm going to keep marching forward on the covenant path knowing that it leads out of the underworld to the overland where the sun shines the brightest in a heavenly context.

One other factor that we need to consider here is often in the world in which we live, people measure truth claims by the number of people they can get to agree with that claim, the number of followers, the number of likes, the number of - of views that, there, it must be right. There – there is this amazing concept that President Nelson has shared when he gave a talk at BYU. Three simple words: "Truth is truth"⁴. And you can't change it by public opinion. We can't get everybody on the planet together to vote against God's

³ Lewis, C.S. *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Silver Chair*. BBC.

⁴ Nelson, Russell M. "The Love and Laws of God." *BYU Speeches*, Brigham Young University, 15 Mar. 2021, speeches.byu.edu/talks/russell-m-nelson/love-laws-god/.

existence and have it do anything to God's existence, just like you can't get all the people on the planet to go and vote against gravity. You're still going to be touching the earth or driving home.

So gratefully, we have these sources to help ground us, to help build our foundation in truth, in Christ, these scriptures, the words of the living prophets and at the end of the day, truth will prevail, not the lies, not the deceptions.

Now in section 72 you'll notice that Joseph gets this revelation the first part of December in 1831 to set up a second bishop because up to this point we only have Edward Partridge as the bishop overseeing the law of consecration out in Independence, Missouri, but here in Kirtland we have all these needs. And so, section 72, we call a new bishop, Newel K. Whitney. Look at verse 2: "...it is expedient in me for a bishop to be appointed unto you, or of you, unto the church in this part of the Lord's vineyard." I love – look in section 72 at how many times the Lord uses the phrase, "in this part of my vineyard", or "in this part of the Lord's vineyard". It's all over the place in these – in these verses. It's that idea of, this need is very real here in Kirtland and so Newel K. Whitney is going to fill that – those duties of a bishop. Keep in mind, a bishop in 1831 is called to do some things that are very specific to the law of consecration and to the physical, temporal affairs of governing the consecrated properties and monies of the Church and giving the stewardships out to various people. Since that day, the office and the calling of a bishop have been more and more defined and clarified to today they have very specific directions given through scripture that's going to come later as well as through revelation that comes in more recent years in the handbook of instructions.

Look at verse 3: "...verily in this thing ye have done wisely, for it is required of the Lord, at the hand of every steward, to render an account of his stewardship, both in time and in eternity." That's, in essence, what the bishop's job is, is to render these – the accountability for these stewardships and to administer those – those particular affairs of the Church and the rest of that section is going to focus a lot on that.

Now 73 you'll notice the date; we're in the first part of 1832 now in January and Joseph and Sidney are called to now return to the translation process of the Bible. So they've been able to kind of level the playing field as far as the truth claims were concerned. Now they come back to translating the Bible as we move forward, and then we jump into section 74.

Let's take just a brief moment here. You know Sidney and Oliver have been working on the translation of the Bible, there have been questions that people have been raising and with particularly, 1 Corinthians chapter 7 verse 14 and here's what it says. It says: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." So this scripture has actually been confusing to people for 2000 years, almost since the time Paul penned this and so members of the Church wanted to know like well what does this mean? Do we do infant baptism? And of course we had the Book of Mormon that clarifies that you don't need the infant baptism and this revelation was given to provide a little clarity around what Paul intended here, and let me just point out a couple of things.

Paul is one of the great apostles in scriptures, but when Paul was writing letters to different wards, like the ward in Corinth, he was giving them very specific instructions for their time and place. And Paul likely

was not writing with the intention that two billion Christians 2000 years later would take every last thing he wrote as final statements with no new revelation to be received. And it's interesting how it ends up that people get so fixated – like, well Paul said it, it's got to be absolutely true. There's a whole reason why we have a modern-day prophet is to – for God to say, well let me clarify what people may have misunderstood from the ancient past or let me clarify it again because the circumstances from the people in the ward living in Corinth, the world's changed a lot, and now here is, here is what I would like you to do. So that's the point of that particular section.

So to verify that, what Taylor is saying, look at verse 5: "Wherefore, for this cause the apostle..." in this case it's Paul, "...wrote unto the church," we could add at Corinth, "...giving unto them a commandment, not of the Lord, but of himself, that a believer should not be united to an unbeliever; except the law of Moses should be done away among them,".

Corinth was actually a very cosmopolitan society, lots of different groups of people, different ethnicities, different religions, and you actually have a ward of very diverse people. And that's actually very powerful that in ancient Christianity, is that one of the draws – that people felt like the kingdom of God is for everybody. So you'd have the slaves and the wealthy, men and women, people of different religions, different languages and suddenly what happens is you bring all of these extremely diverse people into one group. How do you work it? And some of them like I'm joining but my spouse hasn't. And I love the power of the gospel that God basically says there is power in somebody living the gospel. It brings holiness and sanctity to the people that you're in a relationship with even if they haven't made any official covenants with God.

Isn't it amazing that your desire to walk the covenant path can actually enliven and enlighten the lives of those in your family or your friends?

Now we finish with section 75 which is a whole bunch of mission calls that are given out, and even some generic ones saying even if your name's not on the list – this list, go preach. You can go north, south, east or west. It doesn't matter, they're – you will find people everywhere to preach the gospel to.

Back to the early D&C, it's like if you have a desire, you are called. "...The field is white [and ready] to harvest;" (Doctrine and Covenants 4:4). And this is the – the conference is going on in late January that they didn't hold in early January because Joseph and Sidney were still working on the persecution and the false lies from Ezra Booth. And a lot of these people, like you'll see back in the former section, thought they'd just go out and preach until we have a conference. And now he calls all of these elders.

So if you look at verse 5: "...if ye are faithful ye shall be laden with many sheaves, and crowned with honor, and glory, and immortality, and eternal life." I don't know of any simpler way to conclude this mission call section than it's a call to be faithful, to keep the covenants that we've made, to follow the commandments that God has given us, to trust him, to turn to him as the source of all light rather than earthly sources of light when it comes to seeking divine truth. And notice he keeps using this analogy of laden with many sheaves. We're talking to an agrarian group of people – they live off the land and that speaks to them more than banking analogies or medical analogies or fishing analogies or other analogies that he uses in

other scriptures for other groups of people. He's speaking to these people "...according to their language, [and] their understanding" and it's beautiful (2 Nephi 31:3).

Now, in closing, brothers and sisters, there are a lot of claims out there. There are a lot of paths that you can choose to walk in this life but there's only one path that leads to enduring joy, that leads to ultimate connection, not just with God but ultimate connection with your loved ones and the people around you and it's the path that Jesus marked for us. And he didn't leave us without resources to know when we're on it and when we're not on it in this process of seeking truth. May the Lord bless all of us as we strive to press forward seeking to discover and follow and know things as they really are. Ultimate truth is our prayer for you and for us. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

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