

Come Follow Me Insights (Doctrine and Covenants 2; Joseph Smith History 1:27-65, Jan 11-17)

Welcome to Book of Mormon Central's Come, Follow Me Insights. Today, Joseph Smith History, chapter 1 verses 27 to 65 and Doctrine and Covenants section 2. And just to put the context in place, we're with Joseph Smith in Palmyra at his home.

Now, this is a section of scripture that is loaded. We're going to go all over the place. We're going to be in the Pearl of Great Price, we're going to be in the Doctrine and Covenants, we're going to be in the Book of Mormon, we're going to be in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Why is that? Because in this event what we have is Moroni is given that assignment to be the tutor, maybe, the personal mentor of this new prophet, age seventeen, the prophet of the dispensation of the fullness of times. By the way, we often look at prophetic visitations from a mortal perspective, from an earthly perspective, and we think wow! Joseph Smith got to see the Angel Moroni. I've often wondered what it might be like for some of these angels on the other side of other side of the veil. Can you imagine what it would be like to be Moroni and to be given the assignment from the Savior to go down and be the personal tutor, the personal mentor for the Prophet of the Restoration, Joseph Smith? I would imagine that in an angelic sort of a way, Moroni is just as excited about that encounter as Joseph is in a mortal way to see this heavenly manifestation.

Now let's pause in the story here for a moment and take a step back and look at a really big picture perspective for just a moment. One of my colleagues, Richard Bennett, he spends a lot of time looking at the first principles and ordinances of the gospel and how they tie into different things that are happening in this unfolding Restoration. Watch what happens when you do that with the first four visions that Joseph has. We're talking the big events.

So, you have the First Vision where at age fourteen near 1820, Joseph Smith goes into the sacred grove and he is introduced to the Lord Jesus Christ by Heavenly Father. Isn't it interesting that the first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? That's being established in that First Vision.

The second vision as we could call it is this visit from Moroni. Now you'll notice in the historical setting, why was Joseph Smith praying the evening of September 21<sup>st</sup>? It was, he was pleading for forgiveness, he was repenting. And the Angel Moroni appears to him, and as part of this process, and subsequent visions, three that night, one the next morning, and then every year thereafter until 1827, we are preparing the way to bring forth the Book of Mormon, which is a book that has all of the principles and ordinances of the gospel, but it really focuses a lot on helping us turn to the Lord. Come unto Christ; this repentance element is permeating that whole experience of the book.

Then, his third vision or third experience is when John the Baptist comes and restores the Aaronic priesthood to the earth to allow and authorize Joseph and Oliver to be able to perform baptisms again, that first ordinance of the gospel. So that third visit ties in there.

And then you have the fourth visit where Peter, James, and John come, and they restore the beginnings of the Melchizedek priesthood; they give the keys of the apostleship to Joseph and Oliver.

And so, it's going to be a little bit later up in Fayette, New York in Father Whitmer's bedroom, or we call it the chamber of Father Whitmer, where Joseph and Oliver are asking more specifically about the gift of the Holy Ghost, and being able to give this confirmation ordinance, when they are given the keys and the authorization to perform that ordinance there.

You know, it's interesting because with the Aaronic priesthood it's pretty straight-forward. With the Melchizedek priesthood, there are so many keys, and offices, and revelations that are going to come, revealing that priesthood, that it started with our fourth visit or our fourth vision, so to speak with Peter, James, and John giving the initial keys of the apostleship, but then multiple keys are going to be added to that key ring, so to speak, of the Melchizedek priesthood over time and for many years down the road.

So, you look at this and you say hmm, it's kind of nice, it's a nice overlay. It's a nice framework, and now we can orient ourselves and say, we are here, but you'll notice that as God establishes his work in various time periods through the history of the earth's existence, he seems to do it systematically. He seems to do it "line upon line, precept upon precept", he doesn't just pow! bring it all at once in a package deal (2 Nephi 28:30). It unfolds, and the people who are working their way forward through these events, they're moving in faith, they're trying to figure out what God would have them do, and they're discovering things. Whereas we, reading the stories in the modern day, we look back in history and we already know the end of the story. We know where it leads. We know where these events are going to end up, and so we sometimes read all of our perspective back in time at the beginning.

But the reality is, Joseph had a vision when he was fourteen, of the Father and the Son, calling him to be a prophet. He didn't have any inkling of all of the things that were going to yet be brought to the earth through him. He just knew he was called to be a prophet. So, now he finds himself in this position at age seventeen where he's gone three years without a revelation, so to speak, without a huge manifestation or any guidance and direction. He got a call, but he doesn't know what he's supposed to do with it, other than, don't join yourself with any of the religious sects of your day and of your area there, but he doesn't know what to do and he gets caught up in some of these foibles of youth.

Now look, let's orient you with the physical setting here, okay? So, if you'll look at this picture, this is a picture of Joseph Smith and Lucy Mack Smith's home, where we have all these children living with them in this home. As you go in, this is a view of their main room, the kitchen and the main family room. It's a simple log cabin. The parents' room and the little children room is over here. Now if you come back into this main room and go up the stairs here, upstairs, this is where the older children all live. In this first room is the boys' room, and if you go through this little partition here, this is the girls' room. So now, let's come back into the boys' room.

It's here where Joseph Smith in Joseph Smith History chapter 1 verse 27, he gives you the date, it's the 21<sup>st</sup> of September one thousand eight hundred and twenty, and in all the time he's been struggling with temptations of youth and he tells you what some of those were at the bottom part of verse 28, he says he was "guilty of levity and sometimes associated with jovial company, not consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been." So, he has this

“native, cheery temperament”, and he feels like he's given into some things that he shouldn't have done (JSH 1:28).

So you'll notice verse 29 he's feeling condemned, he's feeling like his imperfections are pretty bad, and partway through verse 29 he says: "... on the evening of the above-mentioned twenty first of September, after I had retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies, and also for a manifestation to me, that I might know of my state and standing before him; for I had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation, as I previously had one."

He is going in with faith. He says he has full confidence that he's going to have some manifestation, that this prayer is answered. This has been eating at him for a while, and he's frustrated with the things that he's done. It's almost as if he's saying, “the spirit ... is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41). I want to be perfect, but he's recognizing, I'm not. I am not who I need to be, and he's pleading for forgiveness.

So, he's in this bed. Keep in mind, he's got brothers that are sleeping in this room. And the Lord's going to make it so that, of course, they don't wake up while Joseph has this incredible experience that's going to last all night long, with Moroni visiting him.

Now, before we go into the actual event that opens up in verse 30, let's just come back here for a moment and review what we're trying to accomplish today. Brothers and sisters, you can read Joseph Smith History, all of these verses. You can see the story, so our intent isn't to go through verse by verse by verse in the historical flow. It's to try to help us see these past historical events, the things that are happening here from a perspective of seeing God lay a foundation not just for Joseph Smith to bring forth the gospel of Jesus Christ or the Book of Mormon or establish the Church of Jesus Christ, but for us today it's to look at it through the lens of “how firm a foundation is laid for your faith” in a God who knows how to do his work. And he's going to do it with humans who aren't perfect, who feel weak, who don't know all of the things to do exactly when they should do them, and they move forward in faith, trusting in God.

Joseph Smith's story becomes an overlay for your story, and for my story, that the work that God had for Joseph to do was going to affect the whole world from that point moving forward. But the work that God has for you to do is going to affect your whole world, and your loved ones, and the people around you, moving forward for generations. And hopefully, as we discuss these elements in this lesson today, you will see God's hand working in your life, setting things in place that you didn't anticipate, you didn't know were coming, but as you move forward in faith, God will perform miracles in your life.

Okay, so now you can picture from looking at this, at the layout of this room here, you can picture these events now unfolding. Verse 30: “While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor.” And then he goes on to describe the physical appearance and the characteristics of the Angel Moroni in these next few verses and his robe.

Then, notice what he says most peculiar in verse 33, this opening message from Moroni. Verse 33: "He called me by name." Are you noticing a pattern? The very first thing Joseph Smith heard in the sacred grove was his name: Joseph, "This is my Beloved Son" (JSH 1:17). What's the first thing that he's recording hearing in verse 33? "He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do;" (JSH 1:33).

There are some people who are trying to tear down the idea that the Book of Mormon actually happened, speaking of it in terms of it being inspired fiction, or a parable kind of a story, to teach correct principles, but Nephi didn't really exist, and Captain Moroni isn't really a historical figure, and Mormon and Moroni weren't real. I love the fact that in the story, the angel who comes happens to be the last of that long line of Nephite writers in the Book, and he comes as a real person, a real being from the presence of God, not as a fictional character, like somebody that you see in a made-up movie who now comes. This is a real person. The angel Moroni was a real historical figure, and I love the fact that he's delivering this message to Joseph as a messenger from the very presence of God.

Notice he tells Joseph that there's "a book deposited," in verse 34, "written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent". This isn't language that leaves a lot of wiggle room open for the book to be historical fiction or a parable. He's speaking in absolutes: Joseph, I'm a real person. I left a physical, tangible, real book. It's not theoretical, and it's in a hill very close to your home. And it contains a record of the ancient inhabitants of this continent, and in it, you're going to find the fullness of the everlasting gospel, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants. Oh, and by the way, it also is going to contain, the box that you're going to find, is going to contain two stones in silver bows and they're fastened to a breastplate, which constitutes the Urim and Thummim. As Taylor mentioned in an earlier episode last year, *urim* and *thummim*: the *im* makes it plural, so it's *ur* is light, *thum*, perfection, so it's the *lights* and *perfections* through which you're going to bring this book to *light*, to the *perfection*, of building up the kingdom. It's going to come through this beautiful, symbolic, these interpreters called the Urim and Thummim.

And, by the way, he says whoever is in possession and use of those stones is what constitutes a seer. Joseph, you're not just a prophet, you're now going to take on a role as a seer. And in the Book of Mormon, we learn, in the section with King Mosiah, that a seer is even greater than a prophet; it's to be able to see things past, present, and future, and it's a prophet, seer, and a revelator. You're going to see Joseph growing in his understanding of the responsibilities as they get placed upon his shoulders as he continues to move forward in faith as the Prophet of the Restoration.

Notice he then does some amazing teaching, some tutelage. Joseph has had, we love, in the Church, talking about how Joseph only had three years of formal education, and that's true. In a frontier sense, they didn't go to school at the end of August, like in a lot of western cultures today, and get out at the end of May or first of June. That isn't their school cycle. These are farmers. They're struggling to make a living off the land, so the three years of formal education that we afford to Joseph are actually truncated from what we get in our world today, because they're out clearing the land in the early spring and planting; they're harvesting well into the fall time. They generally do most of their schooling where he

learned basic reading, writing and arithmetic in those winter months: late fall, winter and early spring when your help isn't needed out in the fields.

So, we love saying that he had three years of formal education. Can I just say that Joseph had a lot more than that? Because he has a heavenly tutor, a mentor, a teacher, a guide, whatever you want to call Moroni. He's going to start teaching Joseph, and he's going to show him things in vision. He's going to explain things; he's going to expound and open up the scriptures to him, both ancient, and prophecies of Joseph's role moving into the future. And he's going to be connecting all of these different dispensations of the gospel, so that, in Joseph's mind, he can start to see more clearly what God is going to do through him.

So, you'll notice in this encounter on this night, you're going to get some quoted and taught scriptures from the Old Testament; from the New Testament; we're going to get stuff that is directly applicable from the Book of Mormon, from this prophet of the Book of Mormon; as well as prophecies moving forward into the future, that ancient prophets also saw and foretold. And now, Moroni is going to be bringing these all together and placing them on the shoulders of this young, seventeen-year-old farm boy, this no-name. As far as the elite of the world in 1823 is concerned, Joseph Smith is a nobody as far as they're concerned. But look at what Joseph Smith is as far as heaven is concerned.

Look at verse 36. "After telling me these things, he commenced quoting the prophecies of the Old Testament. He first quoted part of the third chapter of Malachi; and he quoted also the fourth or the last chapter of the same prophecy," but he's going to give some variations (JSH 1:36).

So, as we listen to Moroni's message, it's helpful to look at this framework of the core principles and ordinances of the gospel that Moroni, his message is really focused on getting people prepared for repentance. We might put in this phrase: "the great and terrible day of the Lord" (Malachi 4:5). So, when the Lord comes, and by the way, whether he comes when we're alive, or we all die, and we meet him, we are all going to have an opportunity to meet Jesus, so the whole idea of trying to predict the time when Jesus is going to return has never been part of the gospel. And if you hear people trying to predict his coming, you might kindly encourage them, let's focus on what God has actually taught, and it's these things.

So, "the great and terrible day" is going to be great for some and terrible for others (Malachi 4:5). It all depends on whether we're going to repent. And so, Moroni's bringing this message: that the world needs to prepare. You need to prepare your individual hearts and minds for the day that you die, because that will be the day of the Lord for you, or if you happen to be alive when Jesus returns, it will be great if you have repented and terrible if you have not.

And in all the symbolism we find in scriptures, and particularly in what Moroni's quoting about the burning that's going to happen, we want to just talk for a few minutes about that concept: the principle that God is a God of fire, and that he has many characteristics. We learn some in the First Vision, but the idea of fire shows up interestingly throughout the scriptures.

Let's go back early on to the Abrahamic Covenant. Genesis chapter 15 verse 17, where God demonstrates his trustworthiness to Abraham. He confirms to Abraham that God will fulfill his promises

to Abraham and his posterity, and in part, the Restoration is God fulfilling his promises to Abraham. And how did God prove to Abraham that God was totally trustworthy, that he will fulfill his covenant? He passed through with a flaming torch (Genesis 15:17). The symbolism here is that God himself is sealing the covenant with Abraham. Later, we have Moses, sees the burning bush, and God speaks to Moses through the burning bush (Exodus 3:2-15). Later, the Israelites are guided through the wilderness by the pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21). And I think it's significant that, in years past, there were two temples in Utah that had that symbolism built into their architecture. The temple in Ogden, the temple in Provo, had golden spires and a single spire that represented the presence of God, that pillar of fire that guides Israel through the wilderness.

Also interesting is, we have the story of Elijah, which also shows up in Malachi, his name, and also, Elijah is crucial to the restoration. Elijah also calls upon God to help him in his contest with the priests of *Baal*, or Baal, and God burns the sacrifice. Later, Lehi, when he has his great revelation, he sees a pillar of fire on a rock (1 Nephi 1:6).

The reason I go through all this is that one of the core characteristics of God is his power expressed through fire. And one of the great hymns of the restoration is "The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning", and this takes us down to the Holy Ghost. So again, at the great and terrible day of the Lord, there'll be burning. And either you have experienced the burning in advance because you've repented and been baptized, and had the burning sensation of the Holy Ghost purge you of your sins, or you'll be burned for not repenting. And so, this is kind of what Moroni is laying part of this foundation is, it's time to prepare. It's time to motivate yourself to turn to the Lord, and he's fully willing to embrace you, as we have talked about in many lessons.

So, let's just talk just a moment about Malachi. A really fascinating book of scripture, the last book in the Old Testament, and it turns out that when Moroni shows up, he tells Joseph, I am a messenger sent from God. So very interesting. The word *malach*, in Hebrew, literally means *angel* or *messenger*. And in Hebrew when you put a little *i* at the end of a word, it makes it possessive. So, this name Malachi, it actually could have been the name of a prophet, or it could be a symbolic name that would, in Hebrew, say "my messenger". And I love how God works with revealing his truth. Well, who is "my messenger"? God himself is speaking. Who's the messenger he sends? In this case, it's Moroni. Moroni is a *malach*, or a *malachi*, or a *mala-kee*, sorry, I'm speaking in Hebrew a bit, he's the Malachi for Joseph.

Later Elijah will show up. He also is a messenger. Who are our messengers today? The living prophets. They are the *Malachis* that God is saying, "these are my messengers that I've sent to you, and if you listen, you will learn about my characteristics and you will have faith in me." They are going to invite you to repent, and to be baptized, and partake weekly of the sacrament, so you can have the purging fire of God's Spirit to be with you, so that when the day of the Lord comes, whether at your death or Jesus himself has returned, it's a great day for you. Otherwise, it's going to be really terrible. And again, this ties into temples. We sing this hymn "The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning". We go to temples both to feel the Spirit, and to do the work for those who have gone on, and this is one of the key things that Moroni reveals to Joseph Smith. He says to him, I'm going to send to you Elijah who will reveal the priesthood. So, the hearts of the children and the hearts of the fathers will be turned to one another. Otherwise, the whole earth will be wasted at his coming (Malachi 4:5-6).

Now, I've paraphrased, a bit but it's fascinating that temples are a core element of bringing this all together at the fire of God's presence. His Spirit is there, and the priesthood empowers all these ordinances so that we can have the earth prepared either for us departing or for God returning.

Now watch what happens with the name Malachi, who is our last prophet in the Old Testament, in the Christian Old Testament. The very last thing you have is in chapter 4 verse 5 and 6, at which point you then enter a 400 year of silence, as far as scripture is concerned, until Jesus Christ is born. And his prophecy in those last two verses are all connected to Elijah. If you look at his name, in my mind, this is one of the coolest names ever in the Old Testament, because it has both names that are kind of significant: *El* referring to *Elohim*, or God, and *Yah*, or *iah*, or *jah*, in the Old Testament is referring to Jehovah. It's the root *yahweh*, it's a shorthand way to refer to the God of the Old Testament, Jehovah. So, in this case, the name *Elijah* is "Jehovah is my God". It's beautiful that this is the prophet who holds keys that are very specific. They are sealing keys. Whatsoever is sealed on earth will be sealed in heaven; whatsoever is loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven (Helaman 10:7). There's a powerful symbolism going on here with what Elijah is going to bring.

So, here's Joseph. He's in his bed. It's the middle of the night, 21<sup>st</sup> of September 1823 when Moroni is here and he's quoting these prophecies, these huge, monumental prophecies from the Book of Malachi and culminating with Elijah. Well, what are the keys that Elijah was bringing? The clarification you get here, compared to the King James Version, is it's not just that Elijah's going to come before "the great and dreadful day of the Lord:"; he's actually going to come and give keys to help prepare the way so the earth isn't utterly wasted at his coming, that everything just turns out to be all for naught. There's something specific that has to be done, and it's going to come through you Joseph. You're going to unlock this door with these keys that are going to be given to you to open up salvation, not just for people on this side of the veil, but for all of God's children, not just in this dispensation, but ultimately, by the time we're done with this, through the Millennium, opening up the door of salvation for all of God's children, on both sides of the veil, through all dispensations of time.

This is a significant event. I don't know that Joseph, on that night, glimpsed the enormity of what Moroni was telling him was about to happen. Stop and think about it this way. The keys delivered by Elijah, the sealing keys, are to "turn the hearts of the children to [the] fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:6). For decades in that early Church, they used sealing keys only exclusively, from what I can see, looking at all the historical records, they only ever used those to seal husbands and wives together. And they were never used, in those first decades of the Church, to seal children to parents. It was only after the Manifesto, after the 1890 statement from our prophet at the time, Wilford Woodruff, shutting the door on plural marriages and sealing multiple wives to husbands, even posthumously, and they believed that somehow, many of them thought that, my family had to somehow be connected with the prophet or one of the Apostles' families through these sealings, in order for me to have a place in the Celestial Kingdom.

They let go of that in 1890 and then in 1891 is the first time that I can see where they, for the first time, seal children to parents. It's this idea, this growing "line upon line, precept on precept", both individually, and collectively as a Church, where you see the full import of those keys coming to bear to say, it's not that I have to be sealed to a prophet somehow through one of my family members with one

of his family members or to him, it's that all of God's children through the family of Adam and Eve need to be sealed together in this unbroken chain back to our first parents (2 Nephi 28:30).

So here we sit in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, looking back in time, and we can kind of see the unfolding of these different events, and it makes it clear, we can see more clearly what was going on and sometimes we want to judge harshly what those earliest members of the Church and the leaders of the Church did. "How firm a foundation is laid for [our] faith", **that** God cares about family; that he cares about that relationship between husband and wife, between parents and children and grandchildren, and all the extended family, that these sealing keys matter. And he's going to prepare a way for all of us to be able to be interconnected in this family of Adam and Eve.

Now, there's another factor going on here that we need to pause and talk about. It's the calendar dating of these events. You'll notice that it's on September 21<sup>st</sup> that Joseph retires to his bed, and he's repenting. This, for those of you who keep track of lunar events and solar events on the calendar, this is the fall equinox. It's either on September 21<sup>st</sup> or September 22<sup>nd</sup> each year, somewhere in there where it's an exact halfway point, the sun is up for half of the day and it's down for half of the day. It's the perfect equinox. You get it in the spring and in the fall. This is connected to the Jewish calendar, because they run everything off of their lunar and solar cycles of the calendar as it moves around from year to year to year. There's an amazing thing that happens on September 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> because most of the vision comes to him on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, because he retired to bed on the 21<sup>st</sup>. And at midnight, this is going to be the lasting all night, so most of the events we're talking about today actually happened on September 22<sup>nd</sup>.

You'll notice that in 1823 September 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> happened to be the first two days of the Jewish feast called Feast of the Tabernacles, *Sukkot*, Feast of the Booths. This is a joyful celebration where Jewish people live in tents and in booths outside in commemoration and remembrance of the forty-year wandering of the House of Israel out in the wilderness, where they slept in booths, in tabernacles, in tents.

So, we're lining up there in 1823, you'll notice after Joseph goes to the Hill Cumorah the next day on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, he is going to be told come back next year at this exact time. So, he's going to come back each year or these coming years. On September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1824, it's the day before *Rosh Hashanah*, it's the Jewish New Year, where you're opening up this New Year. On the 25<sup>th</sup> happens to be *Yom Kippur*. September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1825, when he's on the hill with Moroni being taught another round of lessons, it's *Yom Kippur*, which is the Day of Atonement, which most of us hear that and we think, oh, well I thought Jesus performed the atonement in the spring near Passover. You're right, he did. But to the Jewish people they call this the Day of Atonement because that's the day that Moses came down off of Mt. Sinai, saw them worshipping the golden calf and the fire of the Lord began consuming some of them and Moses makes atonement, intercedes, pleads in behalf of the whole camp of Israel and the destruction is stopped, it's held back. So, they commemorate that day, that event of Moses making intercession for them, mediating on behalf of their cause with God to say let's stop this destruction. So that's *Yom Kippur* which happens to be the only day that a high priest gets to go into the Holy of Holies, one time a year, on *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement.

The symbols are all starting to come together and you're seeing this triangulation and connecting the dots between different events. The day that Joseph actually got the plates out of the hill to then take home, because Moroni wouldn't let him take them home until 1827. September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1827 is the day they come out of the hill. That day, that year, happened to be *Rosh Hashanah*, it's the Jewish New Year. It's the Feast of the Trumpets. This is the celebration where all of Israel is glorying in the fact that God is reestablishing his kingship, reestablishing his covenant connection, the trumpets are blown, it's this glorious celebration of, we have a New Year, we have a new beginning, new covenants are being established, and old are being reestablished, and we're looking forward to God fulfilling his prophecies that have been made to those in the past. Isn't that interesting?

The New Year for the Jewish people is what occurs during the final harvest, it's the fall time of the year. It's when all of the planting and all of the prep work has been done, and all of the struggles of growing have occurred, and now it's time to go and harvest the fields, bring in the sheaves, bring in the grain, process the grain, get ready to burn the field and store up the grain permanently.

Brothers and sisters, I don't think this is a chance roll of the dice that this is the day that God is picking for these different events. I think our God likes tying symbols together across scripture, and across time, and across cultures and people. And I see this event of Joseph bringing those plates out of the hill on a Jewish New Year celebration as a fulfillment of all of these things in the House of Israel, that God is to, for one more time, he's going to harvest the fruit from the world, and he's going to bring forth his covenant to every nation, kindred, tongue and people which, by the way, if you go back to verse 33, the second half of verse 33 in Joseph Smith History, he says, "...God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people." That's a hundred percent. That's a pretty bold prophecy for a little, unknown farm boy, that you are going to be the means whereby God is going to bring forth these things, and your name is going to be had for good and evil in all the world. I think we're getting that prophecy fulfilled more and more with each passing day, each passing year.

Now you'll notice after he finishes the Malachi and the Elijah section, notice what came next, verse 40: "In addition to these, he quoted the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, saying that it was about to be fulfilled." Brothers and sisters, if you look at Isaiah chapter 11, this is an amazing section of the Old Testament where Isaiah is describing how, in chapter 10, the haughty are going to be humbled, and God is going to cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one. He's using this beautiful symbolism of a tree that you have this tree, this mighty tree that gets cut down. It's felled. And what you're left with is a stump. And in chapter 11, if you look at this, symbolism is beautiful, because it can have multiple layers of potential meaning. And at one of those layers, you get the idea of Israel getting carried away captive into Babylon or the Ten Tribes carried away captive by Assyria back in 721 BC and it looks like it's been lopped off and there's no more growth, no more fruit; it's carried away and we don't know where God went with those branches and grafted them in or planted those branches in other parts of the vineyard because all we see is this and then you look at chapter 11. He says: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse and a branch shall grow out of his roots..." (Isaiah 11:1). So, here's this tree that looks cut off, dead and all of a sudden there's going to be something

growing out of that that's going to come forth and it's that promise that Moroni tells Joseph is about to happen. Something new is going to grow here.

Notice, verse 2: "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." In section 113 way later on in the year, we'll get to this. It's a question and answer period where Joseph is asking a couple of questions about Isaiah. This is one of them. Who is this that's growing out? And the Lord answers, it's Jesus. It's the Savior himself who's going to grow forth out of the root of Jesse. And, by the way, some of you are probably wondering well Jesse? Who is Jesse and what is this root, the root coming out of Jesse?

Well Jesse, if you go back to the Old Testament, happens to be the father of some sons. One of those sons is more famous than the others. It's King David. So, we know that the Messiah is going to be a descendant of David. That is Jewish tradition that the son of David is going to fill the throne of David and restore the kingdom.

So, you can see as God is starting to fulfill these Old Testament prophecies, how Joseph Smith is going to fit in here and if you want to jump ahead you can go and read section 113 and combine it with your study of Isaiah chapter 11 of these different elements surrounding the house of Jesse or the family of David, descendants of David.

So, as we jump back into verse 40 after talking about Isaiah chapter 11, it says, "He quoted also the third chapter of Acts, twenty-second and twenty-third verses, precisely as they stand in our New Testament." And, "He said that that prophet was Christ, but that the day had not yet come when 'they who would not hear his voice should be cut off from among the people' but would soon come" (JSH 1:40).

If you look at Acts chapter 3, the wording here in verse 22 and 23, he says, precisely as it appeared in the King James Version: "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you" (Acts 3:22). Brothers and sisters, hear him comes up here. This is Jesus and it's interpreted by Moroni to say the prophet that is spoken of in Acts 3 that Moses prophesied of, is Jesus.

Verse 23: "And it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." Now that's interesting because this is coming from Acts, that Luke is writing this account after Jesus has been crucified and resurrected. And he's speaking about it in future terms; it shall come to pass. That's in the future from right here, "that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:23). Moroni is verifying he's speaking of people in the latter days who are going to either reject or accept the Savior. I love the way Taylor described it last year, this cut off, that the Lord is extending the arms of his love and his mercy and his power and his knowledge to all of us to come into the fold and to be embraced by him but if they choose not to, what's the result? They're cut off from that power that is offered to them so freely and so warmly.

Notice then he goes to verse 41 and he says: "He also quoted the second chapter of Joel, from the twenty-eighth verse to the last. He also said that this was not yet fulfilled, but was soon to be." That's fascinating because at the Day of Pentecost with the experiences surrounding Peter and those early Apostles, that first feast after the Savior's resurrection about forty-nine days after that Passover that

year, Peter stood up in Acts chapter 2 and said, verse 16: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, and it shall come to pass in the last days saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams."

Brothers and sisters, Peter said these events that we just experienced, this is a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy and yet now you get Moroni saying to Joseph, this is the prophecy of Joel chapter 2 of these visions being given and dreams and manifestations to both old and young is about to be fulfilled in the latter days. And he further stated that the fullness of the Gentiles was soon to come in.

Now let me just pause there for a minute with what just happened with Peter. Joel made a prophecy. Peter experienced some things and reading the Old Testament he said, see, this is part of what Joel was seeing. This is what he prophesied. Now you get Moroni saying it's not yet fulfilled; it will continue to come forth at a different level.

Brothers and sisters sometimes if we're not careful we will pit prophets in different dispensations against each other and turn it into a competition and say only one of you can be right when the reality is in the unfolding of different dispensations of the gospel, what you get is each dispensation likening all scripture to themselves and there's something powerful about that. There's something powerful about saying all of these scriptures can apply to me and to what I'm experiencing here rather than saying well, I'm relegated to only have a few of these chapters that directly apply to me and the rest of them I, they're just black words on a white page.

I love the fact that Peter said, this day is this coming to pass for us, at the time of Pentecost. And I love the fact that we now live in a day and age that says, now let's not just leave the prophecies and the visions and the manifestations and the glorious unfolding of heavenly gifts coming forth, let's not leave those just to past dispensations. Let's not lose faith to the point where we shut the door on a God of miracles today, where we don't expect to have his miracles fully operating today in the fullness of times.

Now you'll notice that he finishes there, he showed him in verse 42 where to get the plates, he sees a vision and then verse 43 the communication ends, the light recedes and we're done. And then verse 44: "I lay musing on the singularity of the scene, and marveling greatly at what had been told to me by this extraordinary messenger; when in the midst of my meditation, I suddenly discovered that my room was again beginning to get lighted, and in an instant, as it were, the same heavenly messenger was again by my bedside."

Brothers and sisters, the Angel Moroni proceeded to give him the exact, same message as he had already given him and then he says, he added, the variation that he added was, "...he informed me of the great judgments which were coming upon the earth, with great desolations by famine, sword, pestilence; and that those grievous judgments would come on the earth in this generation" (JSH 1:45). and then he ascended to heaven again. Joseph's sitting there wondering about it and then verse 46 he comes again, repeats over again. This time he adds the caution saying, by the way Joseph, Satan is going to try to tempt you. He's going to do everything he can to get you to focus not on building up the kingdom of God, but on fixing the indigent, the poor circumstances of your family. These golden plates,

whether it's to sell the plates or to think, wow, if I publish a book and it sells really well maybe I get the profits. We don't know all the specifics. All we're told is Joseph, you must have "no other object in view in getting the plates but to glorify God, and must not be influenced by any other motive than that of building his kingdom; otherwise, I could not get them" (JSH 1:46).

You can all see how this applies to Joseph. What about you? Is it possible that God gives us opportunities by bringing things into our life and if we're not careful we'll allow the pull and the temptations of the world to shift our focus off of building the kingdom to getting gain for ourselves alone off of what it is that we're doing. I love that invitation here at the end of that third visit.

Then you'll notice in 47 once the messenger left the third time, he heard the cock crow. So, this has lasted all night into about 4:30 or 5:00 or 5:30 depending on the rooster, what time it's normally going to be crowing, but it's lasted all night long. So, then the next day he's out helping his father when he's weak; his father tells him to go back home and he collapses as he's falling over the fence and then in verse 49 the Angel Moroni comes and delivers the same message a fourth time and the only addition he makes is, go tell your dad. Go tell your father what you've been told.

Taylor, what's the significance of four times? Why wasn't one enough, or two?

Repeat to remember, remember to repeat. If you want to learn anything, that's the principle. I find it beautiful and significant that Moroni said go tell your father. I love the humility of Joseph Smith Senior. He didn't question his son, chastising, saying why did you stay up so late last night? You can't be out here helping farm, but he said, that is of God. You do as you are commanded.

Now wonder, as a father, as a friend, as a brother, as somebody who cares about the lives of others, do I encourage other people's revelations and for them to act on truth? So, I love that Moroni taught Joseph Smith on multiple occasions and impressed upon his mind, and then Joseph had somebody who trusted him and encouraged him to follow through with the lessons that he'd received.

So, Joseph Smith is going to go to the hill; he's going to uncover the plates and the Urim and Thummim and he's going to have that experience with Moroni and be told you can't have them right now, come back. And he's going to come back multiple years. The rest of that Joseph Smith History section, you can read about Joseph going and having different experiences down in Harmony, when he meets Emma, and how they end up getting married, and his experience with Martin Harris, and trying to understand the nature of what is written on those plates. And we're going to be talking about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in a later week.

For today, we want to finish with this idea of, as we look back through the corridor of time and see Joseph growing in his understanding of who he is and who God needs him to be and what God needs him to accomplish, we would hope that you sense a much stronger desire to have a firm foundation in your testimony for the faith that you have in the Lord. Why? Because life is hard. I love the verse: "When through fiery trials, thy pathway shall lie, My grace all sufficient, shall be thy supply. The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine."

In this year we're going to watch the Lord refine and consume dross for all of these people in history. Let us not leave these stories locked up in history. Let's bring them into our day and relive this unfolding of the Restoration as we allow God to build up our faith in him to the point where we can truly repent and truly keep coming to him either through the waters of baptism or through that sacrament ordinance every week to reconnect with him so that we can always have his Spirit, that refining fire of the Holy Ghost to be with us. He lives. He stands at the head of this work today. He stood at the head of the work in Joseph's day just like he did in Malachi's day and in his own day in the New Testament. And today he sits enthroned in yonder heavens watching over you as you move forward in faith and we leave that with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

“How Firm A Foundation”. Hymn no. 85.

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/library/hymns/how-firm-a-foundation?lang=eng>

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