

## Come Follow Me Class Insights 33 – D&C Sec. 88

I'm Taylor, and I'm Tyler. This is Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today, Doctrine and Covenants section 88.

Now to jump in, we want you to see something that's kind of – I think it's a beautiful contrast on the actual, physical, scripture page. Over here on page 164 of the English Doctrine and Covenants, we have section 87, and you can see this as revelation and prophecy on war. Over here, section 88, it says it was designated by the prophet as the "'olive leaf' . . . plucked from the Tree of Paradise, the Lord's message of peace to us" (Doctrine and Covenants 88 Heading). Huh, that's interesting. We have this Civil War prophecy that is going to find fulfillment beginning in 1861, and over here, you have this message of peace that is given beginning two days later. So, this one was on Christmas Day, December 25<sup>th</sup>, and then on the 27<sup>th</sup>, the 28<sup>th</sup>, and then a week later on January 3<sup>rd</sup> is where we are going to get the last set of verses, you get this beautiful revelation on peace, signifying the olive leaf.

Now, I apologize to those of you from an international audience outside of the United States, but I'm going to demonstrate something with our one-dollar bill in the United States. If you turn a one-dollar bill to the back – and you can Google this – you can look up the great seal of the United States, and you can see this image of this eagle. And you'll notice in the eagle's left-hand talons, the eagle is holding thirteen arrows. In the right talon, he's holding a branch with thirteen olives, and thirteen leaves on this olive branch. Interesting. You also have thirteen stripes on the eagle's shield, and you have thirteen stars above the eagle's head, and you have a banner in the eagle's beak with thirteen letters. And those letters are "E Pluribus Unum", which is a Latin phrase to mean "from many, one". It's the – it's the symbol of the United States, where you take these different groups of collections of people in these states, and from many, we're going to unite them and make them one. What are they becoming united in? They become united in their war - those arrows, they become united in their peace - that olive branch. They become united in their defense. They become united in their seeking of knowledge, and wisdom, and light from the stars, and the truth that comes.

Fascinating that the olive branch, the olive leaf, the olive, is this symbol of peace, and it has been for millennia. Why is that? You know, the olive tree is a fascinating one because it's one of the few that you can cut a branch off of the tree, and if you plant it just right and give it the right conditions, that branch will actually grow a root structure and become a tree, but it won't become a tree that is producing fruit for many years, sometimes 12, 14, 15, 16, 17 years before you get your first olives off of the trees. Well in antiquity, what happens when a conquering army comes in?

Well, you want to be able to destroy the ability for the people who may have been rebelling to rebel again, and so you would throw salt in the fields so they can't grow crops, and you would cut down the olive trees. And at this point, you're now looking at half a generation, or maybe a full generation, before you have olives again. And we won't go into it all, but olives were like

core to the Mediterranean diet, medicine, healing, light – there are just so many reasons that olives are so crucial. In fact, you and I, we've been to the Middle East, we've been to Israel, you can go to the Garden of Gethsemane, and near the Church of All Nations. And there are olive trees there that are upwards of a thousand years old, possibly fifteen hundred years old, and so these trees can grow for a long time and produce an enormous amount of fruit. You're not going to get that with an apple tree, or grapes, or corn, or wheat.

You get this beautiful symbol of the olive and this olive branch that – here in section 88 after this prophecy on war, now you get this prophecy of peace where the Lord says, don't be troubled by all of the prophecies of the pending destruction and war and rumors of wars that are coming. Let me give you something beautiful to hold onto. And as we jump into section 88, can I just say that – now this is just my opinion, I'm not speaking with any kind of authority here, this is from my perspective alone – I can't find a section of scripture anywhere that is more lofty and more profound than section 88. It is mind-blowing how incredibly cosmic and deep this theology is, these ideas are. It's the kind of section where you really don't need anyone to give you a lot of background. You can just jump in and start reading section 88, because there's not a lot of storyline that you have to know about, not a lot of background context. You can just start reading, and you see God pouring these huge ideas into our minds through the Prophet Joseph. And, by the way, look at the date, once again. It's December 27th, 1832. Joseph, four days before this, just barely turned 27 years old. A 27-year-old early American frontiersman is giving us this section from the Lord that is mind-blowing. I love section 88.

And if you look at other scriptures, as you were pointing out, there is nowhere in all the other scriptures, in all the canon, the Bible, the Book of Mormon, that has this type of concentrated - concentrated collection of incredible, theological insights and truth. In fact, I find it really intriguing that this revelation was so grand, so vast, it took three days, right? December 27<sup>th</sup>, and when it got late at night and Joseph Smith is, like – because he's there with a bunch of high priests. About ten or eleven high priests had gathered together to discuss, like, you know, the coming of the Lord. And they're like, it's time for us to go to bed.

So, they get up on the next morning, and the revelation continues. God's like, I've got more to teach you. And then another week goes by, and we get January 3<sup>rd</sup>, and even after that, there were a few more verses. The last few verses got revealed later at some point, we don't know exactly when and got included. But I just think, you know, I'm pretty happy if I can feel the Spirit while I'm praying, but I'm not sure if I've ever had a time in my life where I actually was having, like, three or four full days of revelation, and had to like tell God to be quiet so I could get to bed.

Beautiful. So, for the big overview, section 88 verse 1 through 116 is this cosmic theology. It is so big, it is so beautiful, and it is so profound, especially for 1832, as we're getting ready to close out that year and open 1833, that new year. You'll notice that then, the second part, verse 117, look at the very first word of verse 117. It's “therefore”. So, he gives you all of this incredible,

mind-blowing teaching, and then he says, “therefore,” because of that, now here's what I want you to do. And then he gives you the remaining part, which is the very practical, very down-to-earth, here's how I want you to apply all of that knowledge that I just gave you, that light and truth. And you're going to build up a house and we'll talk about that's going to turn into the Kirtland Temple, and you're going to build the School of the Prophets. Those two things come out of this practical part of the section, and some very specific ideas of what to do with the School of the Prophets and the building up of that house.

So, with that foundation, let's dive in, section 88 verse – start with verse 3. He begins by telling them, "Wherefore, I now send upon you another Comforter, even upon you my friends..." (Doctrine and Covenants 88:3). Don't you love it when the Lord calls these – these high priests and Joseph “my friends”, that it's not ‘my servants’, or ‘my people’, in this context; it's “my friends” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:3).

Well, it's interesting if you actually look at the use of “friend” from God saying that to people throughout scripture, he uses a covenantal context. So yeah, God has servants, but those who have proved themselves faithful over time become his friends, and so there's almost like this peer relationship, and then eventually, sons and daughters. And it's all this covenantal experience that God wants to be fully with us.

So that progression is beautiful from servant, to friend, to son or daughter. So, it's fascinating to me to look at scripture, and to look at practicalities of life. God loves everyone. That is not in question. God loves everybody regardless, but those who are loyal to him, who take that love, and those covenantal obligations that he gives us out of love, those commandments, and those commitments, and we keep them, and we serve him, then we get to this level where this group of people have arrived, where he can say, “ye are my friends”, and then you continue loyal in that part of the covenant relationship, and you fully become his adopted son or daughter (Doctrine and Covenants 84:63).

So, we know that Abraham is probably the first person we have in scripture who's called a friend of God. And as children of Abraham, he's a model for all of us. I would include Sarah in this. Abraham and Sarah are friends of God, and it's that invitation that we all have. Let's all just – we've shared this before about the word “comforter”. If you take out the middle of that word, it's the word “fort”. We all know fort is a place of strength, and the “com-” actually means “with”, or it's even an intensifier sometimes. I'm going to add another word here you might remember: “Emanuel”, “God with us”. Right? In Hebrew, the word “Em” means “with”. And I actually see “comforter” and “Emanuel” as very similar words that – “Emanuel”, “God with us”, “Comforter”, God with us”, but he is strengthening us by being with us. So, when you read these verses and look about the script – look at the description of the Holy Ghost and Jesus and God, they want to be with us and they want to give us strength, and we all need it.

That's beautiful. This - this whole idea of the Comforter in verse 3 and 4 is calling to our mind the speech that Jesus delivers to his apostles at the Last Supper in John chapter 14. In the Greek,

there's the word "paraclete". You could look that up; there's a lot of research on "paraclete", and this Comforter promise, and what that paraclete is, that he's with you. He's that strength with you. It's really powerful, really profound. So, he's promising them this Comforter to his friends, "...that it may abide in your hearts, even the Holy Spirit of promise, which other Comforter is the same that I promised unto my disciples, as is recorded in the testimony of John", so that would be in chapter 14 (Doctrine and Covenants 88:3). "This Comforter is the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom;" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:4). We're going to talk more about the celestial kingdom a little bit later here. And then he tells you that that "glory is of the church of the Firstborn, even of God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ his Son—" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:5).

Now, notice this next verse. It's beautiful symbolism where he shows you how Jesus Christ and his various positions affect his capacity. Look at verse 6: "He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth;". So, here's Jesus who we're told in this has now ascended above all, and why was he able to do that, because he had first descended below all. He has encompassed all. There is nobody who is outside, either having sunk lower than him, or gets exalted higher than him. Nobody. He is - it is without exception. All are contained within these symbolic arms of Jesus Christ, his Firstborn, that he is the beginning and the end.

He is above all and below all things; his great condescension allows him then to make that great ascension to heaven. And isn't that interesting, that he who was a God before the foundation of the world, John chapter 1 verse 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." So, a God then condescends, comes down below us all, so that he could then exalt us. So, the reason he had to go below us was so that he could lift us up, and not just lift us up, but really understand us, succor us, run to us, get us, understand exactly what's going on with us.

He also encompasses us. And again, we get this word "comprehend", and years ago, I used to think comprehension simply, or to comprehend simply meant to understand, which is one of the definitions. But the real meaning of "comprehend" means "to contain", that only God can contain all things. We cannot contain God, because we - we aren't - we're in his container which he has created.

So, to tie this all in, verse 3 down through verse 6, and this promise of a Comforter, remember, look at verse 4: "This Comforter is the promise which I give unto you of eternal life...". It sounds like what - the doctrine that many of you may be familiar with, called 'the calling and election made sure'. That - back in the 1970s, 1980s, that was a really big deal in the Church. And unfortunately, some people made such a big deal of it that they "[looked] beyond the mark" of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and they sought for that which was too fantastical (Jacob 1:4). And in the process, many people ended up losing their - their membership in the Church and their faith in the Lord, trying so hard to be better than good. So, we have to be careful when we get into this

– into these discussions, that you keep your focus on the Lord Jesus Christ, and moving forward on his covenant path “...line upon line, precept upon precept”, and not trying to “run faster than [you have] strength” (2 Nephi 28:30, Mosiah 4:27).

I'm glad that Tyler has laid it out this way because the phrase “calling and election”, we should just break it down – thank you for holding that – “calling and election”. So, there's a covenant path. Think about the tree of life, people following that path with the rod of iron, and God is symbolized - Jesus is symbolized by the tree. So, imagine Jesus is there calling to us, okay? Do we choose to be gathered? If we press forward, and we all struggle at times, we fall, sometimes we wander off the path for a bit, but if we keep listening for his call, and keep choosing to be gathered, that's what's going on. I actually find it very interesting that the underlying word here of “-lect” actually in the original language means “to gather”.

Really fascinating. In fact, you had mentioned a few minutes ago, you talked about Jesus in John 1, he's the word. The Greek word for “word” is “logos”. Just trust me on this one, the Greek word “logos” and the word “-lect” actually come from the same root word, and it's when you speak, you actually are gathering words to share. So, God, in the phrase of being the Word, is actually the logos, the one who gathers. To be elect means ‘one who has gathered’.

Now, all of us are called. How many of us actually allow ourselves to be gathered? How many of us, step by step, just do the simple, basic things of, I'm going to go to church and partake of the sacrament? I'm going to seek today to try to repent and try to forgive? The gospel's not complex.

Isn't that – isn't that beautiful and fascinating that Jesus calls us? He has elected us, which means he's voted for us, he's put his confidence in us, he's, with his words, he's calling to us to gather to him. Now the question is, can we make that sure? Can we say, yes, all of this confidence, all of this effort that he has put into me and you, we can make it sure, and we make it sure by moving forward step by step on that covenant path. You don't have to be better than good today. You don't have to be superwoman or superman in the gospel. You just have to be loyal to the Lord, and you have to repent, and change your heart, and change your mind, and keep relying on God as we move forward. Section 88 is filled with a handbook of how to do this – this step by step gathering for us and our loved ones with some very lofty ideas.

So let's pick it up. Look at verse 7: "Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made." Now, you're going to see as he takes you through these various elements of the cosmos, how he, Jesus, is the light whereby they are able to function and be - be what they are. The sun, Jesus is “the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:7). Verse 8, as he is in the moon, the light of the moon, and in the stars, verse 9, and in the earth also. So, you get the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, all of these things, Jesus is the real light source. None of these things are independent of him. Hmm, it makes you wonder if maybe there is a connection to humans as well. None of us is independent of the light source, the giver of life. And watch how – watch how the light and life get connected in – throughout this section.

Look at verse 11: "...the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings;". Did you notice how there's an external light? There's a physical, scientific light, these photons, these rays of light that are visible or that can bring life to plants and to the earth, the elements on the earth, but then there's the light that is unseen, the light that's inside, the "light that quickeneth your understandings;" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:11).

Look at verse 12: "Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—". There's no part of space that doesn't get affected by this power emanating from God, using this analogy of light. Hmm. Stop and think about this for a moment. Here, you have human beings, and there is – out there in space, you get this giant void with all these planets and stars and everything that's out there, and he's saying my light fills the immensity of that space. The fascinating thing is, if you get microscopes strong enough and powerful enough and you go not to the macro level, because there's where you use your telescopes, but now if you go the other direction, now if you go microscope and go in, scientists will reveal that most of what's here is space. Most cellular structure and most down at the atomic level is wide open space, with some electrons orbiting a nucleus. So, you've got this inner space, and you've got the outer space.

Here's my point: there is no space, either macro or micro, either out there or in here, that isn't directly affected by the power of God that comes through this light that permeates all space. So, rather than having this be just an astronomy lesson, or this big cosmic, mind-blowing experience, the goal is that when we finish with section 88, we walk away not just seeing the hand of God, but feeling the presence of God, feeling the majesty of God moving, not just among the stars and the planets, but among my thoughts and my feelings, that he's giving me life.

Look at verse 13: "The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things," you'll notice it's in, it's not external. That light that is symbolized externally, it becomes a part of us, "...which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, and who is in the midst of..." once again, "...all things" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:13).

Now we get agency. We can choose to not like that, we can choose to not respond to the light. Somebody can shine things on something and reveal truth to us, and then we have a choice. We can reject that and say, no, I'm not taking that, I'm not going with that. Or, we can choose to respond to the light that comes from God, those expressions of his love, and his power, and his knowledge, and his grace, and his goodness. And we can be loyal to that and continue moving forward on that covenant path trusting him, or we can think that we're smarter than him, or embrace darkness rather than light. That will come up a little bit later in the section.

Now, look at verse 15. This is monumental: "...the spirit and the body are the soul of man" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:15). So, this is the first time we get this concept introduced in scripture where, when we use the word "soul", from here moving forward in this context, we're referring to both the body and the spirit. Now, be very careful that you don't take that knowledge

that is restored in 1832 to Joseph Smith and then superimpose it backwards in time onto every previous prophet in every previous scripture, because you can find lots of scriptures in the Bible, and even the Book of Mormon, where they use the def – they're using the word “soul” to be more equated with the spirit, which is more of the traditional understanding of that word. I think the significant addition we're getting here is to say, don't hold past prophets hostage to this – to this new insight, but take this new insight, and as you move forward, recognize that your soul, my soul, is comprised of body and spirit. Why is that powerful? For me-- I'll just give you little ole Tyler's opinion here for a minute. I love this, because it gives power to the eternal nature of what we will be in the resurrection: body and spirit combined. Why? Because sometimes, if we're not careful, we demonize the flesh, we demonize the physical body.

What's interesting, what you're talking about here, in the ancient world, the Greeks – some Greeks, some Jews actually found that the body was a problem. Now, we might all agree, the body has issues. We get sick, we get tired, we get hungry, it falls apart and eventually dies. And there were certain groups of some Greeks and some Jews and others around the world who felt that their purpose in life was to punish the body, punish the flesh. And it ended up creating quite a few problems for them individually, for their families, their communities. And God does not ask us to punish ourselves, but to discipline. Think about fasting. Now, as a kid I felt that was a form of punishment, but it was a way of disciplining to allow my soul to be in charge of my body and my spirit.

Beautiful, this combination of the two. So rather than seeing your body as evil, or bad, or dirty, or unclean, rather seeing it as an integral part of your soul, and stop and think about the fact that the most wicked people we have record of in scripture, the most evil, vile of all, they never had a body. Satan and all of his followers up in the pre-mortal council, all they were was spirit. So, rather than demonizing the body, I love this concept that the soul is the perfect combination of body and spirit. Beautiful.

And then verse 16: “...the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul. And the redemption of the soul is through him that quickeneth all things, in whose bosom it is decreed that the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:16-17).

So, this word “quick” or “quicken”, it shows up right there at the end of the Book of Mormon where Moroni says, he's talking about – he's commending people to God, “the [judge] of both quick and dead” (Moroni 10:34). And this word “quick” actually has a definition most of us don't think about, that means “to be alive”. So it's not something about running fast, which it can mean that. When it talks about quickening, it's he makes alive all things, which is what we just read a few verses ago, that the light of God is everywhere and provides life to all things. And what does the adversary want to do? He wants take that light all to himself, so other things die away, and he has now stolen all the light and love from God. But he can't do that. God will not allow it.

Now watch as God opens up our understanding of the actual earth, the physical earth on which we live. So we've been told back here that Jesus is the light of the earth, the means whereby it

even lives. Notice at the bottom of verse 17, we're told that "...the meek of the earth shall inherit it", the earth. Look at verse 18: "Therefore, it must needs be sanctified from all unrighteousness, that it may be prepared for the celestial glory; For after it hath fulfilled the measure of its creation, it shall be crowned with glory, even with the presence of God the Father;" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:18-19).

So, this earth on which we live, this planet, this dirt and rocks and air and water, is going to be perfected. Why? Verse 20: "That bodies who are of the celestial kingdom may possess it forever and ever; for, for this intent was it made and created, and for this intent are they sanctified." I love that! The progression that God shows us that the earth is going through the same process for a planet-level of perspective as you and I are as children of God, that it is going to one day become purified, sanctified, made completely whole, and it will become the celestial kingdom for those who attain unto the celestial kingdom, and he's going to talk about that.

Now watch this. Look at verse 21: "...they who are not sanctified through the law which I have given unto you, even the law of Christ, must inherit another kingdom, even that of a terrestrial kingdom, or that of a telestial kingdom." So, he's given a law, and if we can't abide that law, then we can't abide that kingdom. Look at verse 22: "For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory." Some people wonder, well, why doesn't God love all of his children so much that he brings all of them into his presence again, into a celestial glory? It's – it would be an unjust and an unfair God to do that.

So, in verse 22 to 26, you get his – kind of his description of filling the measure of our creation, and God trying to do everything he can to help us abide the law without taking away our agency so that we can receive, we can become like him. And then, you'll notice he shifts down in verse 30 to people who are quickened by a portion of the terrestrial glory, and then in 31, a portion of the telestial glory. And then verse 32: "...they who remain shall also be quickened;". This is outer darkness, sons-of-perdition people who have lived on this earth, "...they who remain shall also be quickened", will also be resurrected, brought back to life, "nevertheless, they shall return again to their own place to enjoy...", notice the wording here, "...to enjoy that which they are willing to receive, because they were not willing to enjoy that which they might have received" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:32).

So everyone who's born on the earth is going to get resurrected, and you have the celestial, the terrestrial, and the telestial people, those kinds of laws that they were able to uphold. But those who couldn't even uphold the telestial law, they will be given a resurrected body, but they are going to go now "...to enjoy that which", the wording once again, "...that which they are willing to receive" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:32).

Brothers and sisters, the "willing to receive" has far less to do with this, and it has far more to do with covenant connection, covenant loyalty to God. They weren't willing to do that, so now they are going to "enjoy that which they are willing to receive, because they were not willing to enjoy that which they might have received" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:32).

We have the story from Numbers in the Old Testament, the Israelites are out in the wilderness, they're getting bit by snakes. And God commands Moses to make the brazen serpent, and raise it up, and have people look at it, and that will heal them. God did not force anybody; agency was fully alive and uncompromised, and some people said, that's way too easy, I cannot imagine looking at a fake snake on a pole is going to save me. And any one of us might find ourselves in a similar situation. God has now raised up his Son, Jesus Christ, and all we need to do is to look to him. Are we willing to look to him? And sometimes, there are people out there, like, that sounds way too easy. Salvation should be way harder. Other people, they get discouraged, or they fall off the covenant path and feel like there's no way they can be saved, and they start to doubt their own lovability from God, and they become unwilling to receive. But the invitation that God is consistently offering all of us is that his love is everywhere, his light is everywhere, and just receive it, accept it, and keep coming back to his table of the light, the sacrament table, every single week. And wherever you might be, you're always, always welcome back to the table of God.

Love that. Love that, Taylor. Look at verse 33. I had a neighbor growing up who was a dear friend and a mentor to me in so many ways, Ed Kearney. He used to quote section 88 verse 33 to me all the time whenever he would be giving a gift or something that he'd grown in his garden. And I'd always say we can't take that. He'd always quote D&C 88:33, which is a beautiful concept for giving gifts between humans. But in the context of section 88, it's a beautiful concept in the cosmic level of God saying, I am trying to give you a gift, the celestial law. I'm giving it to you, it's a gift. Look at verse 33 now: "For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift." If you look at it in this con – look at this verse in this context, God's saying, I am offering you this gift of my celestial law. And if you don't receive it, then you don't rejoice in it, and you're not going to receive the blessings, and I don't rejoice in having been able to offer it to you, which to me is an interesting concept.

There is nothing that little ole Tyler Griffin can do to repay the Lord Jesus Christ or our heavenly parents for the life that they've given us. I can't repay them, but what I can do, the one thing I actually can do, is to receive the gifts that they've given me, and to recognize from whence they came, and to value them, and to value life, and to value loved ones around me, and to do everything I can to move forward and encourage others to move forward on that covenant path and accept the glorious gift. That is what our missionaries are doing every day out in the field, is they're trying to help people recognize this beautiful gift given to them by God in - packaged in his Son – in the power of his Son and the infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ that allows us to become who we need to become, and thus partake of all of these additional blessings that come as a result of keeping those covenants.

We might remember, in fact, I think this is crucial that the word “law”, we all think it's like this legalistic thing that we're all going to get in trouble if we break it. In a biblical context, “law” simply means covenantal instructions, God's instructions to us for how to be in covenant with

him. So, whenever you see “law” in the scriptures, you can remember, it's God's covenantal instructions. It's his instructions that he gives us for how to get blessings.

Beautiful.

That's all it is.

That's beautiful. Look at verse 34: "And again, verily I say unto you, that which is governed by law is also preserved by law and perfected and sanctified by the same." So if you're governed by law, then you're preserved by the law. The covenant goes both directions. It's not just God saying, hmm, what can I make up to fill their time? What can I get them busily working on? Like I do for my kids on Saturdays. Maybe, maybe a little bit like that. Look at verse 35, "That which breaketh a law, and abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself, and willetth to abide in sin, and altogether abideth in sin, cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, nor judgment. Therefore, they must remain filthy still."

Oh, sisters and brothers, I don't know how to emphasize this more. God loves you, but what we're trying to build here is our ability to be trusted by God, our ability to receive more from God, not – not say, well, he loves me so much he's just going to save me anyway, it doesn't matter what I do. It does matter what I do; it matters a great deal what we do in order to not abide in sin, but rather walk in his light, and his law, and his love.

This word “abide” is an interesting one. It's not one that we typically use in English. But if you look at the root meaning of “abide”, and the etymology, it actually comes from the word “trust”, to have confidence. Let's reread that. “[Those who trust] in sin, and altogether [trust] in sin...” – if you just translate that into the more apparent meaning of what “abide” is, how many of us actually want to trust in sin? I'd rather trust in God and his light and his goodness. And that's what God is saying is, like, you have a choice. On one hand, you can fully trust me; on the other, you can trust in the opposite of what I am, and that is sin. You can choose to trust, and you can build an entire apparatus of your life, and systems, and institutions, and groups, and sociality that reinforce that level of trust in sin, or you can be on the covenant path, and follow the covenantal instructions, and receive everything I have to offer, and become like me, and fully partake in all things.

That's beautiful. And he goes on to say all kingdoms have a law given. And there's no – there are so many kingdoms – there's no such thing as space out there that isn't occupied by some sort of a kingdom. Look at verse 39: "All beings who abide not in those conditions are not justified. For intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light; mercy hath compassion on mercy and claimeth her own; justice continueth its course and claimeth its own; judgment goeth before the face of him who sitteth upon the throne and governeth and executeth all things" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:39-40). Are you noticing a pattern here?

As a little child is born, and as it starts to develop and grow physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, as you learn certain principles of living, and you abide by those principles, it then sets you up to learn higher principles, and you get more skilled, more knowledge, more intelligence and light as you are true and faithful to those lesser elements that you've already received. I love that progression and that idea that, you know what, I don't have to be perfect today. I'm just going to do what God has asked, which is put one foot in front of the other on that covenant path and change, repent, and move forward in faith, trusting in the Lord to help me keep his covenantal instructions that he's given me to a greater degree today than I did last week, or last month, or last year.

Look at verse 41, "He comprehendeth all things...". What's the percentage there? All's pretty inclusive, "...and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:41). Goodness, gracious, I don't know if there's a verse that is more beautiful to just show in this one verse the all-encompassing nature of God. There is – there is nothing you and I do or think or feel or desire that is outside of the realm of God's knowing about it and being aware of exactly who we are, where we are, what we're doing.

Notice verse 42, "Again verily I say unto you, he hath given a law unto all things, by which they move in their times and their seasons; And their courses are fixed, even the courses of the heavens and the earth, which comprehend the earth and all the planets" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:42-43). Now notice the sun, the moon, the stars, they don't have a lot of choice, they don't have a lot of agency, but you and I, we do. We are put in these environments and then given laws, but unlike the planets and the stars, we don't have to abide those directions that are given; we get to decide what to do.

Look at verse 46: "Unto what shall I liken these kingdoms, that ye may understand? Behold, all these are kingdoms, and any man who hath seen any or the least of these hath seen God moving in his majesty and power" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:46-47). I don't know about you, but for me, the goal isn't just to be inspired by the wonders of the creation out there in the cosmos and to say, wow, I've seen the hand of God now because I've seen that. It's to translate that macro-outer-space vision of God into the micro-inner-space to see the hand of God moving in his majesty, not just in my life in increasingly trying to have my hand, and my words, and the way I see things become more and more and more in line with the way the Lord Jesus Christ sees things, or would say things, or would treat people, but it's also to look for that majesty in other people.

It's the concept from Mother Teresa of Calcutta when she says on one occasion, the concept that she shared was she looks for the face of God in everybody she meets, and I believe that she said she's never once been mistaken. She's been able to see the face of God in everybody she's met. She's looking for this – this goodness of God quickening everybody and everything around her, and in the process, she's seeing the hand of God. That's a beautiful concept with your family

members, or with loved ones in your extended family, or in your ward, or neighborhoods, or in colleagues at work. Sometimes it's easy to see the bad and the struggle, but I love the concept of looking for the hand of God moving in majesty and power to change, and to look for the good wherever possible, and to accentuate that in whatever way that is possible.

Now notice the transition into verse 48. "I say unto you, he hath seen him; nevertheless, he who came unto his own was not comprehended", he who came unto his own obviously being Jesus, who came to his own people and he was not comprehended (Doctrine and Covenants 88:48). They didn't get him, they didn't understand what they were seeing. He gives clarification on that in verse 49. "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not; nevertheless, the day shall come when you shall comprehend even God, being quickened in him and by him" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:49). Let it not be said of you and me that the Lord came into our life, or into our family, or into our circle of influence, and his light shined in the darkness, into the dark corners of our life, and we comprehended it not. We either turned a blind eye to it, or we didn't recognize it, or worse yet, we rejected it because we're more comfortable over in the dark. That would be a sad conclusion.

It's almost – it's almost like that verse is showing us this distinction between knowing about Jesus versus knowing Jesus. Recognizing facts and details about his life and being able to pass a multiple-choice test regarding Jesus versus knowing Jesus, recognizing him, hearing him, as we've been invited by our prophets to do, to tune our ear more closely so that we recognize more quickly, more readily when he is – when the voice of the Good Shepherd is calling after us.

Then you'll notice he transitions into this parable, which is interesting because parables were used extensively by Jesus in the New Testament to teach the setting side-by-side of the concrete, everyday stories that were set side-by-side with abstract, more difficult-to-understand concepts – a powerful teaching technique. Well, here you get this long parable. He introduces it in verse 50 by saying, "Then shall ye know that ye have seen me, that I am, and that I am the true light that is in you, and that you are in me; otherwise ye could not abound. Behold, I will liken these kingdoms unto a man having a field, and he sent forth his servants into the field to dig in the field" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:50-51). And then you've got these servants, 12 different hours when they're out working, and he promises them that if they'll go work in the vineyard, he'll come and spend time with them and visit them. And he goes to the first one for that first hour, and then the second one for the second hour, so on and so forth to the twelfth hour, the idea being God is going to come to us according to his timing. It's not according to ours. We don't tell him when and how to do things. We can make requests, we can plead with him for things, but at the end of the day, we have to trust him in his timing of when he comes.

Now as you finish that parable, look at verse 62 and 63, and let's apply it to us today, right here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Verse 62: "...again, verily I say unto you, my friends, I leave these sayings with you to ponder in your hearts...". Isn't that beautiful? He just told this parable about servants going out, and now he turns to this group surrounding Joseph, and he says, now, my friends,

you're out here, you're serving, but you're serving at a higher level. You're my friends, and I want to leave you with this saying to ponder in your hearts "...with this commandment which I [have given] unto you that ye shall call upon me while I am near—" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:62). That's profound. He's saying, recognize when I'm near. Recognize when I've come to you, when it's a time or a season when I'm laboring directly with you, it's your turn in the ministry, in the field, in the work, whatever way you want to word that, when I come to you.

Look at verse 63: "Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me...". Brothers and sisters, we live in a world that wants instantaneous answers, instantaneous solutions, and no ambiguity. We live in a world that says, oh, so I'm supposed to draw near, and I'm supposed to seek him diligently, and I'll find, ask and I'll receive, knock and it will be opened. So, we think, okay, I'm just going to kneel down and ask these really difficult questions, and he's going to answer them. And if he doesn't answer them, I'm going to get upset. That's kind of the over-arching mindset of our world, is we want – we don't want to have to wrestle, we don't want to have to belabor things over time.

Did you notice in verse 63 that he made a lot of promises, but he didn't put a time stamp on any of them? He didn't tell you how long you were going to have to seek, or how long you were going to have to ask, or how long you were going to have to knock, and for some of you, with some of your situations, it's pretty quick. You recognize something, you go to the Lord, and an answer is given, a resolve comes, and you "bear a song away", and it's beautiful and it's quick.<sup>1</sup> But there are some of you who sit in a sacrament meeting, and you listen to other people bear testimony, or you're sitting in meetings or lessons where people share experiences where these kinds of things have happened, and then some of you are sitting there thinking, what's wrong with me? I've been pleading, I've been fasting, I've been praying, it's my fondest desire, I have been reaching for the heavens for decades for a particular blessing and it hasn't come yet. I love the fact that verse 63 makes promises of the outcome, but it doesn't make promises of the timing of that outcome.

Verse 64: "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, that is expedient for you;". Did you notice that? "...It [will] be given to you that is expedient for you", that is the most beneficial, that is the best-case scenario for you. So instead of shaking our fist at heaven in frustration when we don't get what we want when we want it, perhaps these verses would invite us to bow our head and say, Lord, I really – from my perspective this is what I need, this is what I want, and this is how I want it and this is when I want it. There's nothing wrong with asking that, but at the end of the day, the covenantal loyalty and that connection with this being who has called us his friends, is to trust him that he knows what he's doing. He knows, when it comes to timing, and when it comes to magnitude of answers, he's got a best-case scenario for us. And what we're doing when we ask, when we seek, when we knock, is we're opening up that door

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<sup>1</sup> Doddridge, Philip. "How Gentle God's Commands." *How Gentle God's Commands*, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/library/hymns/how-gentle-gods-commands?lang=eng>.

from our angle for him to then give us those blessings when it's the best timing and the best fit from his all-encompassing knowledge, and view, and perspective.

Some of you have perhaps seen the inspirational message produced by the Church called Good Things to Come. It tells the story of Elder and Sister Holland when they were younger, and headed back east from Utah to go to school, and had some pretty major car troubles along the way. It's a delightful, short video. In that message, Elder Holland teaches this idea that for those who love the Lord, who serve him, good things do come. For some they come early, for some they come late, and for some they "...don't come [til] heaven", but he invites us and he even pleads with us in that talk, in that video, to keep walking, keep asking, don't give up.<sup>2</sup> Those good things will come in the Lord's timing if we'll trust in him.

Now look at verse 67: "...if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things." You'll notice where he starts it, your eye being single to his glory. It's – we're looking to God for the light of truth; we're not looking to the world for the false, fake light that – that lacks power, that lacks endurance. Verse 68, "Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, [in] his own way, [according] to his own will." Did you notice that? Three times, his own, his own, his own. It's not our own. We make requests, but then we trust, and we trust some more, and then we trust some more.

Verse 69, he gets pretty specific on some things here. "Remember the great and last promise which I have made unto you; cast away your idle thoughts and your excess of laughter [from] you. Tarry ye, tarry ye in this place, and call a solemn assembly, even of those who are the first laborers in this last kingdom" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:69-70). So, he's asking those first laborers, the ones who went out first to call a solemn assembly. Bring them, let's gather them, and I'm going to teach you.

Verse 73. "Behold, I will hasten my work in its time." Did you notice the pronoun? "...I will hasten my work in its time", and he's allowing his friends to help him assist in that work (Doctrine and Covenants 88:73). I love that promise.

Now we go to the calling, verse 74. "I give unto you, who are the first laborers in this last kingdom, a commandment that you assemble yourselves together, and organize yourselves, and prepare yourselves, and sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, [cleanse] your hands and your feet before me, that I may make you clean;". He wants this group that is pure to go and do his work where they are able to let their thoughts be focused more on God and less on the

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<sup>2</sup> Holland, Jeffrey R. "“An High Priest of Good Things to Come.”" *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, Oct. 1999, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1999/10/an-high-priest-of-good-things-to-come?lang=eng>.

profane, less on the things of the world and their ideas - their hearts focused more on God as well.

Now look at verse 76: "Also, I give unto you a commandment that ye shall continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth." And a commandment in 77, "...that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom." Now, keep in mind, 1832, this is the very end of the year, we're getting ready to go into 1833. Most of these Church members have been members for a year or less, the Church is growing quickly, and most of them aren't extremely well-learned, or rich, or famous, or any of that. And God is teaching them what he wants them to do, and it has nothing to do with the world's accolades or the world's positions or titles. These are things that every one of us can do, whether you have money or not, whether you're a man or a woman, whether you're old or whether you're young, whether you're black or white or bond or free. "...All are alike unto God..." (2 Nephi 26:33). I love the fact that as he's teaching this, he's giving hope to all of us.

Look at verse 78: "Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you...". Did you notice that? Take the very best you have; stop trying to be better than good. Don't compare yourself to other people. Don't – don't be overwhelmed by who you're not yet. Just be you. Do your very best to teach diligently, whether that's in the Church, or my favorite application of all of these principles is in the home. "Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly...". (Doctrine and Covenants 88:78). In what? Notice the list: "...in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand;" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:78). And he doesn't stop there.

He then gives you the curriculum, verse 79: "Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been...". So, now we've covered astronomy, we've covered biology, we've covered geology, and we've covered history. "...Things which must shortly come to pass;" these things that are coming to pass, current events, understanding the world in which we live, "...things which are at home, things which are abroad; [and] the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms—" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:78).

Wow! This is a pretty all-inclusive curriculum he's asking them to become experts in. You'll notice he didn't just say, sit down and study your scriptures in this – what is going to be called the School of the Prophets. These elders who were coming to be trained, he doesn't just want them reading their scriptures; he wants them knowing everything they can wrap their mind around. Everything is meaningful to God. Any amount of knowledge you gain that is truth, really true, not just public opinion, is encapsulated in verse 78 and 79.

I find this particularly inspiring, because we live in a world where truth is far more accessible than ever before. Now as a caution, there's a lot of misinformation, and we should always, as the brethren have encouraged us, seek after reliable sources. And as an idea, I spent some years in graduate school, and the particular school I was at had a library system of about 12 million

books. I mean, just an enormous amount of material that no one person could ever consume in one lifetime. And since that time, the internet has exploded, and there's so much information, much good and truth on the internet. And if you want to learn more about the world, go out and find who are the trusted voices who have paid the price to truly understand what they're talking about. And in addition to the doctrine and truth that we get from the Church, you could find incredible resources on every topic imaginable.

And I'll just say in my personal life, I actually love going to YouTube and other sources, and finding people, again, who have paid the price over many years of study and diligent effort to learn about many different topics, and I can go listen to world's experts on every topic imaginable and get the best ideas from them. And as God has taught us to learn out of the best books. If he was giving this revelation today, he might say learn from the best books, and from the best resources on the internet, and from the best people you can find. And my personal experience has been there's been tremendous joy in learning. If God knows all things, and he has all joy, I wonder, does our joy increase as we become more like him, as we learn more?

I love that concept. It reminds me of a fireside that President M. Russell Ballard did for young adults many years ago when he made an interesting comment. He said, 'though we are General Authorities, we're not authorities in general. We don't know everything about everything, that's not our calling.' And so, he said when he has questions, he turns to experts, not public opinion. He says he turns to experts, and he finds out what they know so that he can then put that through his own filter of truth and try to discover some of these elements.<sup>3</sup> I think that's a beautiful pattern, instead of expecting our prophets, seers, and revelators to be the only source we look to for all truth. I love this idea that God has spread knowledge down upon the heads of all of his children throughout the face of the earth to one degree or another, and part of our job in seeking truth is to find those best sources of knowledge. That's profound.

So, I've actually taken the time, I've gone to audio books, because I have lots of little free time in the day when I'm maybe walking somewhere. I turn on a headset, and I've been able to read thousands of books in the last several years on every topic imaginable. And it's been so mind-expanding to realize there is so much goodness and beauty and truth in the world, and so many good people. And obviously, we want to be centered on salvific truth like staying focused on Jesus, but if I want to understand about history, why not go spend time with historians or geology, spend time with geologists, or whatever it might be. And I have actually found over the last couple of years, as I've been reading more on many different topics from very qualified, reliable people, my joy has expanded. So, I love God's invitation to all of us to join with the School of the Prophets in seeking all truth.

Yeah, all truth. Look at verse 80: "That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have

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<sup>3</sup> Ballard, Melvin R. "Questions and Answers." *BYU Speeches*, 15 Mar. 2021, <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/m-russell-ballard/questions-and-answers/>.

commissioned you." He doesn't just want us knowing scriptural truth; he wants us prepared in all things to be able to go out and do what we need to do, and to testify.

Now look at verse 83: "He that seeketh me early shall find me, and shall not be forsaken." I love that! The earlier we can seek him – now, that is not an invitation for anyone who's a little older in life to then feel guilty and beat themselves up. I don't read it that way. I read it in the context of right here, right now. "He that seeketh me early shall find me, and shall not be forsaken" means don't delay seeking God for next week, or next month, or next year, or when you reach a certain threshold in your life, or in your career (Doctrine and Covenants 88:83). It's seek him today, seek him early, right now, start now.

Then let's jump down to verse 86. Again, this is – he's taking these big, huge, cosmic ideals and he's helping us package them in bite-size chunks for, what do I do with it? Verse 86: "Abide ye in the liberty wherewith ye are made free; entangle not yourselves in sin, but let your hands be clean, until the Lord comes." Did you notice what he just shared there? That sin is an entanglement that he sets up as the opposite of liberty. Now, you and I live in a world that would say commandments are binding; they remove your ability to do what you really want to do, to be free, to have liberty. And here's God saying, no, let me correct this. If you abide by the commandments, then you are free, you have liberty, you have agency. You can continue to choose at higher and higher levels. But when you sin, when you break those commandments, when you sin, that leads you to the bondage, to these ties that bind you down, and entangle you in sin, and take away future choice.

Then he adjusts into this section where he's describing you missionaries. When you go out, you're going to preach the gospel. If people reject your message, then after your gentle message of good news, of declaring liberty to the captives, if they reject that, verse 88, "...after your testimony cometh wrath and indignation upon the people. For after your testimony...", then he's going to send different kinds of testimonies. Testimonies like earthquakes, and the groaning in the midst of the earth, and men falling on the ground and not able to stand, then "cometh ... thunderings, and ... lightnings, and ... tempests, and ... waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds", and everything being in commotion (Doctrine and Covenants 88:90). He's setting things up now for this cataclysmic description of what's going to happen right before the Second Coming of the Savior, and we shift gears into the seven trumps being blown to prepare the way for this millennial reign and to get us through that millennium all the way down to the end.

So, in this first trump, to open up the great events of the millennium, you'll notice that first trump is sounded, and there are people in verse 96 who are on the earth who are alive that are faithful, the saints, are caught up to meet him. So, verse 97, the graves are opened of the celestial candidates, and they are – they come forth and are caught up to meet him. And then 98, they "shall descend with him first..." (Doctrine and Covenants 88:98). Notice they ascend, and then they descend. When Jesus comes again in the clouds with his glory, with the trumpet sounding,

the faithful will be caught up to meet him, but you'll notice he doesn't turn his back on the earth and go away to heaven with us; he prepares the world to then descend back into the world with us.

Huh, that's a little bit like symbolically what happens every time you and I repent. We first turn from the earth, we turn to God, we come to God, and we plead with him to cleanse us and to forgive us. He, through his infinite goodness and his infinite power, he cleanses us, but then he doesn't instantly just take us off to heaven and say, there, now you don't have to worry about this again. He then brings us back down to the earth with him, and we come back down to the earth, in this sense, changed, or different. Repentance changes us, and we walk with him more fully.

Now, that analogy breaks down at that point, but it's this beautiful idea of the gathering of Israel, let God prevail. What we're trying to do is get people to turn upward and ascend symbolically to him, so that when they then re-enter this earth, it's different. It doesn't have the same pull and the same draw that it used to have to them, because he purifies not just them, but the earth around them.

Then you get the second trump for the terrestrial candidates, the third trump for the celestial candidates, the fourth trump for those in outer darkness. And then you get the fifth trump, where we're now going to spread out over the four corners of the earth to gather people. And then the sixth, where Babylon has fallen, and the seventh, where the Lamb of God can say, "It is finished ... [and I have] trodden the wine-press alone, even the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:106). It's one of only two places in the Doctrine and Covenants where Jesus is going to use that phrase to describe his infinite agonies of his Atonement being encapsulated in suffering the wrath – the fierceness of the wrath of an Almighty God. That's pretty sobering.

Then you get the angels sounding again in the ears of all living, one through seven, the trumps repeat again as we prepare for the very last battle between Michael, the archangel, and the devil, both of which who have gathered together their armies. I hope that next to verse 112, you can put your own name included in that army, that you say, I'm going to sing, and I'm going to "shout with the armies of heaven," I'm going to fight for the right.<sup>4</sup>

Now, it's one thing to look forward and think, man, I hope I'm in that group. Guess what? You don't have to wait for this day to be in that group. Why not – why not say today? Wait, I'm in that group today, I'm going to – I'm going to do exactly what we've been talking about starting today, better than I ever have before. I'm going to be on this side today, rather than always looking to the end. Why not look to the means, to the path, rather than the destination and say, yeah, I'm going to do those things. It's a battle. There is a battle going on right now. We don't have to wait for the end of the millennium for this big, epoch battle to take place to actually be a part of verse 114: "...then cometh the battle of the great God; and the devil and his armies shall be cast away

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<sup>4</sup> Phelps, William W. "The Spirit of God." *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/library/hymns/the-spirit-of-god?lang=eng>.

into their own place...". What a great opportunity for each of us to pull "the sword of the Spirit" out today, clothed with power and with the light of truth from heaven, and to go and engage in that battle today (Ephesians 6:17).

Now, verse 117 starts with the word "therefore ... call your solemn assembly...". So now we're going to get really practical. He tells them verse 118: "...as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith." Taylor talked about this. God doesn't just want you fasting and praying and reading your scriptures. He wants you learning "...by study and also by faith", whatever that looks like for you, to use all of your mind and all of your heart (Doctrine and Covenants 88:118). Think about that for a minute. When you get all the education you can, that is a means whereby you can show your love for God. The command is love the Lord your God with all of your heart, might, mind, and strength. You expand your mind with light and truth. You try to fill it with truth, not just your heart, but your mind as well. You think deeply. You study deeply, whatever that looks like for you. That's a beautiful way to fulfill this.

Now look at verse 119: "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God;". There you go! That's the command for them to build a temple. They don't at this stage know exactly what this is going to end up at. In 1836, we're going to dedicate that Kirtland temple, but at this phase they think they're building this house to describe all of these things, kind of the School of the Prophets is going to be building this incredible structure, right? This house that fulfills all these things.

I wonder, huh, I wonder if you and I could read verse 119 through symbolic lenses and use Paul's phrase where he says, what? "Know ye not that ye are the temple of [our] God...?" (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). I wonder if we could read verse 119 and say, huh, he could – I could replace the word "house" with the word "soul", or "life", or "family", or "ward", or "stake", or "Church", or fill in the blank. Think about what would happen if, collectively, all members of the Church took section 119 personally to heart and said, wow, I need to build a life of prayer, a life of fasting, a life of faith, a life of learning, "a [life] of glory, a [life] of order, a [life] of God" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:119). Then when you and I go to the temple, we would no longer be going to a brick-and-mortar structure alone. We would actually be going to a house that fits all these descriptions as a physical, outward manifestation of what God's trying to do with me, and with you. Hmm, in that case, we wouldn't be trying to go through the temple; we would be trying to allow the temple to go through us. We would – we would let that symbolic experience become internalized, and we would take it home with us and try to spread that light, and that truth, and that goodness to our families and those around us.

Look at verse 121, in order to accomplish this: "Therefore, cease from all your light speeches, from all laughter, [and] from all your lustful desires, from all your pride and [your] light-mindedness, and from all your wicked doings. Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not

all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all, and that every man may have an equal privilege" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:121-122).

I love that idea of in a classroom that 'revelation is scattered among us', in a council meeting, 'revelation is scattered among us', in a family, 'revelation is scattered among us', and that one speaks at a time, but we allow all to become edified of all. It's a powerful principle.

What a beautiful word this is. "Teach" actually also is related to the word "touch", and "to point" or to demonstrate, like "to point to". So, imagine if Tyler and I are both standing at the same time, both talking to all of you and pointing in different directions. Now, both – what we have to say might be useful, we might have things that would be useful for you to look at, but it's very hard for the human brain to have – even though you get two eyes, you can usually only focus on one thing at a time. What God is pointing out is that you touch people one by one, and you only have one person pointing to something one at a time. And as you take turns, it allows people to focus, instead of everybody else standing up, and all talking at the same time, and pointing at 15 different things, and thereby it's just a mass of confusion. But this is just a very simple principle of teaching is taking an opportunity for everybody to teach one another, one by one. Very powerful, and as Tyler reminded us, there is truth and 'revelation scattered among us'. And there is deep power and deep joy in hearing from every individual and the things that they have learned that they can point to.

Now, these next couple of verses are some of the most practical, down-to-earth principles that we could apply at an individual level, at a marriage level, at a family level, at a ward level, at any level you prefer. This is beautiful. Verse 123: "See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous;". The implication here is you're covetous, so if Elder Uchtdorf were here, he'd probably say "stop it!"<sup>5</sup> Right? Stop being covetous. "...Learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires. Cease to be idle..." (Doctrine and Covenants 88:123-124). In other words, you've got to struggle with being idle. Stop. Stop it. "...Cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another; cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated. And above all things, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace. Pray always, that ye may not faint, until I come. Behold, and lo, I will come quickly, and receive you unto myself. Amen" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:124-126). And that ends the revelation on December 28.

It's a week later, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, where he picks up with verse 127 with some more direction that's come over that week about what this incredible olive leaf, this message of peace to the Church, what it should look like. They are commanded in 127 to establish the School of the Prophets, this place where we can fulfill everything we've been talking about in the first 126 verses. And then it

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<sup>5</sup> Uchtdorf, Dieter F. "The Merciful Obtain Mercy." *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, Apr. 2012, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2012/04/the-merciful-obtain-mercy?lang=eng>.

gives them some directions as to how to run that school, even so specific as to how to admit people into the school. And then there, at the very, very end, you have the ordinance of the washing of feet reintroduced into this dispensation with a few instructions as to how it is to be performed.

Now, as we close this incredible section that is mind-blowingly beautiful on so many levels, both macro as well as micro, external and internal, I want to finish where we started, back with this – the great seal that we talked about, with this eagle and holding those thirteen olives and olive leaves on that branch, this message of peace. As we strive to move forward collectively in these latter days, and try to gather Israel, I love the idea that from many, “E Pluribus Unum”, from many, we become one. Over time, we cease doing all these other things that are described in section 88 that are leading us in different directions, and we come to become unified in our peace and in our declaration of peace as we try to encourage people and invite people to come into the arms of safety of the Prince of Peace, that we can be still unique, we're still – we're still ourselves, but we become unified in the cause of Christ, looking to the heavens for that light and truth that he gives to us.

Brothers and sisters, this work is true. It was not established by men and women; it was established by God, and he has given to the world all the degrees of light and covenantal connections that the world is willing and able to accept from him. And our message to the world today is ‘bring all of that wonderful goodness that you have and see if we can add to it’, to quote President Hinckley.<sup>6</sup> And to invite people into those arms of safety is our goal, and our desire, and our hope. We know that he lives. We know that he loves, and we trust him and pray that we'll all be able to move forward in greater faith on that covenant path. We leave that with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen. Know that you're loved.

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<sup>6</sup> Hinckley, Gordon B. “The BYU Experience.” *BYU Speeches*, 15 Mar. 2021, <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/gordon-b-hinckley/byu-experience/>.

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