

Come Follow Me Class Insights 34 D&C Sec. 89 – 92

I'm Taylor, and I'm Tyler, and I'm Jared Ludlow. This is Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today, Doctrine and Covenants sections 89 through 92. We have our friend and colleague with us today, Jared Ludlow, who is an expert in ancient scripture, with particular expertise in the Apocrypha, or Intertestamental Literature.

So, as section 91 deals with the Apocrypha, we'll spend some time learning with Jared what the Apocrypha is and why it might be of interest to us. So we have lots of great things to talk about today. We'll bring Jared back on when we get to section 91 to learn more about the Apocrypha, but we want to begin first with the Word of Wisdom, section 89--a lot to talk about here.

Yeah, this particular section has such an amazing history in our Church, the foundation obviously being this question that was brought up of, you're in the upstairs room of the Newel K. Whitney store where the School of the Prophets – you've got these men coming together, 21 or 22 men on this particular occasion. And Brigham Young wasn't there on this exact day, but he describes the struggle at the School of the Prophets where Joseph would come into this room to talk about these lofty things of God and building up the kingdom of God on the earth. And he's looking at this room filled with men through a cloud of smoke, tobacco smoke, that was so thick that you could – you had a hard time seeing people, and they're all spitting their tobacco on the floor, and Emma's having to clean that up. And there are a lot of questions about is this, is this really how we should act when we're trying to build up the kingdom of God?

Yeah, is this helping us be prepared to receive revelation? I also find it instructive that the revelation is driven by questions, particularly Emma, like, is this the way it needs to be? And what the invitation is for all of us, is to ask questions. Now, sometimes we hear people saying doubt is a good thing. And we mentioned this last year: doubt comes from the word “duo”, which means “two”, “of forking paths”. We tend to get dammed by getting stuck on not knowing which way to go. God does not tell us to doubt. He tells us it's okay to ask questions, so he says “...ask, and ye shall receive;” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:63). And Emma asks Joseph, and he asks. In fact, one of the people who participated in this said Joseph Smith – Joseph's face glowed, his countenance glowed as he received this revelation. But again, the invitation to all of us is that it's okay to ask good questions that help us to get to better truth.

Absolutely. So, if you look at this section from a 10,000-foot overview perspective, you have some very clear differences going on. So, verse 1 through 3 is a simple introduction of what this is revelation? Then verse 4 gives you some of the reason why this revelation was given. So, then we get to the famous list of the don'ts in the Word of Wisdom, followed by a longer list of the do's in this Word of Wisdom. And then you get this glorious promise at the end, all the way down to verse 21, of what happens if we keep the Word of Wisdom. So that's – that's just kind of an organization structure for section 89. So, let's jump in. These first three verses, what is it and what does it mean when we call it a Word of Wisdom?

I want to just spend some time on this word “wisdom”. So, there are many ways to understand this, but one way that might be fruitful is to look at wisdom literature in scripture. For example, the Book of Proverbs is a literary type of wisdom, where it contains ideas and practices that, if you apply, you’ll have a better life, and let me just share with you some phrases that come from the Proverbs. Proverbs chapter 1 verses 2 through 7 – in fact, verse 7 of Proverbs chapter 1 might be the main thesis statement for the Book of Proverbs. And again, why am I sharing this with you is we think about the Word of Wisdom, wisdom comes from God. He wants us to live happy, flourishing lives. And so, we can look to many sources of God's preserved wisdom, and Proverbs is one of them. Listen to what he says.

The purpose of wisdom, or Proverbs is, "To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise [counsel]: To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings" (Proverbs 1:2-6).

And then verse 7 is the main thesis statement for the entire book of Proverbs, and you might say, even relates to what we're going to talk about today. "The fear [or the respect] of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7). So God, throughout the ages, has delivered wisdom. And he said if you want to show your fear of me – and anciently, the word “fear” actually meant respect and love and reverence, not to fear like I'm super afraid.

And so God, similarly for the early Saints, gives them wisdom, and it's interesting. He’s like, this is not a commandment. I'm giving you instructions that’ll help you live better. And that's what we want to focus on today, is what can we learn about being wise as we listen to God? And you might look at other wisdom literature as some additional context for how God instructs his people.

So, it's "A Word of Wisdom, for the benefit of the council of high priests, assembled in Kirtland, and the church, and also the saints in Zion—" (Doctrine and Covenants 89:1). Now, Zion would be Jackson County, Independence, Missouri. So it's a word to the wise. Notice verse 2: "To be sent greeting; not by commandment or constraint, but by revelation and the word of wisdom, showing forth the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days—". You know, the summation of ‘what is this revelation’, to me, is beautifully encapsulated in verse 3. This word of wisdom is "Given for a principle with promise..." (Doctrine and Covenants 89:3). You'll notice, we're going to lay out some principles, and then we're going to attach some promises. Later on in section 130, we're going to read “There is a law, irrevocably decreed ... before the foundations of [the] world ... and it is by obedience to that law upon which [all blessings] are predicated” (Doctrine and Covenants 130:20-21). That applies to some things we'll talk about in section 130, but it absolutely applies here as well, that if we follow these wise principles, then it comes with a promise as well.

Notice, it is "...adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints, who are or can be called saints" (Doctrine and Covenants 89:3). That's caused some people some frustration at times. If you, or a loved one, or somebody that you know has struggled with an addiction to elements that are contained here in this Word of Wisdom, I don't know that most of those people would say, oh, the weakest of saints can very easily do this. This tabernacle of clay, this body, it has these cravings. There are these neurological responses that take place with certain elements that can be consumed, or taken into our bodies, that can be terribly difficult, painfully difficult for people to overcome these addictions. So, I think it's important that we don't use the Word of Wisdom as a club to beat people over the head, or to condemn them ultimately, but rather have compassion, and work with them, and celebrate any little success, any movement towards the direction of better living the principles contained in this revelation.

Now, why in the world do we need a Word of Wisdom regarding what we eat, or what we take into this body of ours? Look at verse 4: "Behold, verily, thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation—". He's giving us this idea that there are going to be evil and conspiring designs in the last days where people are going to try to get you to spend money on things so they get rich, that actually end up becoming addictive, where you become a servant or a slave to these things.

So, if you look at what the evil and conspiring influences might be trying to do, they're trying to build this dependency in people who will then pay money, that they'll benefit from selling whatever it is, whether it's the alcohol, or the tobacco, or the drugs, or other elements. But look at that word for a moment.

Yeah, it's a very interesting word. You might think of the word "dictionary", or "diction", or even the word "dictator", which in ancient Roman period, the dictator was the speaker of the house, the one who got to speak, and whatever they said was law. When we put this in front of it, the "ad-" in front of it, it actually literally means "to speak to". It's an intensifier. Now, you might know in the ancient Roman times, people who had been captured in war or gone into deep debt became slaves. And in the Roman Empire, slaves sometimes were called addicts, because they were spoken to, and they had to do whatever they were told to do. And for any of us who struggle with addiction, we feel like we're slaves to being told what to do by our brain or outside influences. And it's just important to know that addiction can be broken, we can overcome the slavery to addiction. It can be hard, it can be painful, it can be demoralizing, but it is possible. But also importantly, it is deeply important not to put ourselves in a situation where we are being acted upon, and being spoken to, and we simply do whatever we're told to do by conspiring people, that we do not put ourselves in a situation where we become addicted. It's easier to stay out of slavery than it is to get out of slavery.

Good. Now, let's jump into the actual elements that comprise these principles for us to follow, this wisdom, this word to the wise. Verse 5: "...Inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink

among you, behold it is not good, neither meet in the sight of your Father, only in assembling yourselves together to offer up your sacraments before him." Now, it's important to note that in the early days of the Church, you'll notice this revelation is coming to us in February of 1833, but for many years there – it isn't by commandment, it isn't a requirement. And there is a wide variety of application of how different people responded to this command, and it's very common for them to use alcohol or wine when they have stomach issues, or to calm nerves, and for leaders of the Church and members of the Church to occasionally drink beer back in that day. It is being consumed like crazy in the Americas in the 1830s.

Also, we get in the Church that they're using wine or grape juice for sacrament. But as the Church grows and the commandment that you should only use wine that you can make yourself, it becomes harder for the Church as it grows and it expands to always be able to do that and protect the saints. And so, in 1906, they switched to water.

For the sacrament, yeah.

For the sacrament.

Yeah, and so it's important for us to understand the historical unfolding of section 89, that early on, even Joseph and Emma are still going to be occasionally consuming some of these elements that are on our list of don'ts for a variety of reasons, including tea, or some of the wine. People like Joseph F. Smith when he's younger.

Yeah, interesting story there. Joseph F. Smith – again, it wasn't a commandment, stay away from tobacco and alcohol; it was 'we encourage you to be moderate and to avoid them when possible'. But Joseph F. Smith, as a young teenager, got involved with drinking alcohol and smoking, and before he left on his mission, he realized he'd become addicted, and so he gave it up. And I'm so inspired by him because he did the hard work of letting go of something that was taking over his life a bit. And he was reported to have said later in life that it was an addiction that he still felt tempted about even later in life, even though he never went back to it. It goes back to the point that, as much as possible, we want to avoid being enslaved in the first place because it's easier to stay out of slavery than it is to get out of it.

Absolutely. So, it's fascinating for me to put on lenses of historical empathy and historical charity for people in the past, as well as charity and empathy for people in the present who might struggle with these elements, and to work with them and encourage them, rather than condemn them, because keep in mind, as this comes out, it's met by some with gusto. And with others, with ah, yeah, it's a word to the wise, I don't – it doesn't apply to me.

Hyrum Smith, Joseph's brother, seems to have really liked this revelation. He's the one who seems to talk the most about it. On one occasion, if you read the revelation, the historical description in the Joseph Smith Papers for this section, it will give you some examples of how people like even Brigham Young would say, 'yeah, Hyrum Smith could spend an hour and a half talking about the

Word of Wisdom, but for me, I never saw much value in that.’<sup>1</sup> It wasn't a big deal to him. But then, in 1851, Brigham Young has it brought before the conference, and it became a commandment, but it's still kind of loose. If you look at the possessions that many of the Church members brought across the plains on their wagons, you're going to be surprised, maybe, to find that many of them brought a lot of coffee and a lot of tea along, and even some wine on occasion, so it's still this growing thing. And then ironically, it's the prophet after Joseph F. Smith, Heber J. Grant – Heber J. Grant who actually makes the Word of Wisdom – these don'ts, they become part of the temple recommend interview.

1930.

1933.

So here we are in 2021, it actually would have been 91 years that the Word of Wisdom in its current form has been put into the temple recommend interview. And for many members of the Church, this is, like, a key feature of who we are, whereas if you roll the clock back 150 years, there were other things that people in the Church were saying, this represents who we are. It's, like, the Book of Mormon, or modern-day revelation. So, it is important what we're talking about here, but it's also interesting to see how things can change over time as we get more light and knowledge, and attempt to live it.

Yeah. So now we jump down to verse 7, and he describes: “...again, strong drinks are not for the belly, but for the washing of your bodies”, to purify your bodies. Verse 8: “...again, tobacco is not for the body, neither for the belly, and is not good for man, but is an herb for bruises and all sick cattle, to be used with judgment and skill.” Then he jumps down to verse 9: “And again, hot drinks are not for the body or belly.” Joseph first interpreted that as tea and coffee, and later on, Hyrum Smith verified that on a couple of occasions. Again, Hyrum seems to be the one who spoke the most about the Word of Wisdom, and he clarifies, this is tea and coffee. There are many herbal teas that are beneficial for the body, but the struggle that many of these early Church members had was, how are you interpreting “hot drinks”? And that struggle has continued down to today, where some people want to argue one side or another. That's why I say, “We thank thee, O God, for a prophet To guide us in these latter days”, to say, okay, for now, this is how that is defined.<sup>2</sup>

Now, what's interesting is to note what the Lord lists as the don'ts versus what humans then add to this list of don'ts. This isn't terribly different from what happened in ancient Israel where the Lord gives the Law of Moses, and so you get this 613 laws that God has specifically commanded them to do or not to do in the Law of Moses. But then you get some who, in their – in their excitement for keeping the Law of Moses, they said, well, if those are the laws, then we're going to set up

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<sup>1</sup> Various Authors. “Revelation, 27 February 1833 [D&C 89], Page 113.” *The Joseph Smith Papers Project*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-27-february-1833-dc-89/1#historical-intro>.

<sup>2</sup> Fowler, William, and Caroline S. Norton. “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/library/hymns/we-thank-thee-o-god-for-a-prophet?lang=eng>.

fences and boundaries that are increasingly further out and away from the actual words of the Lord, and we're going to make that now become the law to prevent us from breaking the actual law that was given.

This happens as much as anything else, as far as commandments are concerned with the Word of Wisdom, where people try to say, 'Okay, this is now terrible. Thou shalt not consume this, or that, or the other', when it's kind of nice to go back and just let the Lord define what those things are through his prophets.

Let's put this up here: missing the mark. And if God says, here's a bullseye, I want you to do these things, he understands, people want to make sure, like, if I don't want to cross these things, well, let's never get inside here. But you start missing the mark, and suddenly you have invented – people have invented a new gospel. God hasn't revealed this. Even though we can understand why people would say, I want to really help God, and so he's gone this far, we're going to go farther just to show how desirous we are to be super righteous in all things.

Now, this is an important concept to understand, and to analyze for just a moment. There's a big difference between what you allow yourself to do, as far as Word of Wisdom is concerned – and you can apply this to other aspects of the gospel as well, but let's talk – let's keep it in the Word of Wisdom context for a moment. There's a difference between what I choose to eat or consume and what I choose to not, and what I tell other people they can or can't eat or consume. I can make all kinds of decisions for my own life, for my own body. I get the idea that when I eat certain types of things, or when I allow certain elements into my body, my body might react to that a little differently than yours, and so it's – now we get into the Word of Wisdom part, the part that wouldn't be commandment, so let's be very clear here so not to be misunderstood.

There are some specific don'ts that are part of what we would consider our temple recommend questions. That question in the temple recommend interview says, "Do you understand and obey the Word of Wisdom?"<sup>3</sup> And the prophets and apostles have helped us understand what those specific elements are, and outside of that list, it now enters the realm described in verse 2, "...not by commandment or constraint, but by revelation and the word of wisdom...". It's a word to the wise. Be smart, be intelligent in how you treat this body and what you allow to come in, and try to avoid addictive substances, things – now we're talking about, not things on the absolute don't list, but things that, for you, might become addictive.

So again, it's a beautiful principle with promise that if you'll – if you'll be wise in how you treat this physical body, then it will actually open doors for you, not just physically, but spiritually. For me, that's at the root of section 89, is it's far less about the cells and the physical structure of my body, and it's far more about the instrumentality of my flesh in working with my spirit as an instrument in the hands of God, to be able to do whatever work he has sent me here to this earth

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<sup>3</sup> Various Authors. "First Presidency Temple Recommend Letter." *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, 6 Oct. 2019, <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/multimedia/file/first-presidency-temple-recommend-letter.pdf>.

to accomplish. And if my body is weak or sick or struggling through addictions, it's going to be harder for me to fulfill those spiritual missions, or those things that God would like me to accomplish. So that's why this section, to me, is so important to tune in, to say, what should I do with this great gift that God has given my spirit, this body, this tabernacle of clay? And how can I put in the right kind of fuel, so to speak, to make it run at its optimal conditions so that I can live as long and as strong as possible, to fulfill as much as God's work as I possibly can?

The point of the Word of Wisdom is you have heaven's light and knowledge, you have the earth, and us, here. What we don't want to do is get between – stand between you and God in trying to understand what to do with your body, and how to wisely take care of your body outside of what the core elements that God has given us to guide that – those decisions. He created my body. Who better to turn to than the manufacturer, so to speak, to get that owner's manual on how to help that body run at an optimal – in an optimal condition? And so, it's interesting when people try to then interpret it for you. It's as if they're saying, look at me. I'll tell you what you need to do, rather than say, you know what? Let me get out of the way. You know the principles. Now read the section, spend more time in the section than you do on the internet seeing what the other people think about the section. And look at how the prophets have used these words, and how they've interpreted them, and go to God and figure out how that directly applies to you today, because there is going to be all kinds of variation.

Some people might tell you, oh, the best thing in the world, based on what it says here in verse 17, "...wheat for man," and you're going to say, man, we should be eating wheat like crazy. And some of you who are watching have a gluten intolerance, you can't – your body doesn't digest gluten, so it would be a very unwise thing for you to eat lots of wheat products. Others of you love milk, but some of you are lactose intolerant. It would not be wise for you to drink milk.

I love the freedom that section 89 gives me and my family to not live our life according to the dictates of other people's conscience, or other people's physical body chemistry and makeup, but rather go to God and ask him, help me, help me understand what foods and what drinks are good for me, and which ones I should probably try to eliminate, and which ones I should try to limit, and which ones I should try to consume more of. It's a beautiful principle.

Now, what's the promise? Look at verse 18: "...all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;".

You can look this up in Proverbs as well, Proverbs chapter 3 verse 8, which is interesting that we talked earlier that this is a word of wisdom. Where else do you find wisdom literature in the scriptures? Proverbs is one of the prime examples, and there's some interesting words here, like the word for "healing" that's used there in Hebrew also can mean "to restore back to favor", or even offer forgiveness, some interesting connections. The word for "marrow to [the] bones", that one's interesting, because the word "marrow" comes from this Hebrew word that means "to drink", like to drink in moisture and water (Doctrine and Covenants 89:18). I think about Ezekiel, he sees

that valley of dry bones. What does that mean? Death. So, what does “marrow” mean when you're drinking in water, the water of life? It means “life”, and so it's a fancy phrase that God is saying shall be “...health in [thy] navel ... marrow to [thy] bones”, meaning you're going to have temporal and spiritual life (Doctrine and Covenants 89:18).

So isn't it fascinating that the Lord brings in this connection, now, of the soul? The Doctrine and Covenant's definition of the soul, the spirit and the body, that when your spirit can help your body be healthy, your body can actually enhance your spirit's ability to grow and flourish and be more healthy. Look at verse 19: "And [ye] shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;". Interesting, the way – the way we take care of our body can actually enhance the way that our mind and our spirit can flourish and grow in knowledge, even gaining these “great treasures of knowledge”, which then brings us back to the physical in verse 20: "And [they] shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint" (Doctrine and Covenants 89:19-20).

I love the story that President Dieter F. Uchtdorf shared in General Conference years ago where he was in the Air Force and they just ran, ran, ran, ran. And he was struggling, thinking, wait, I know what all of these other guys are doing with their bodies, and the substances they're smoking and drinking, and they're running and I'm having a hard time. I love his approach when he shares with us that sometimes these blessings and promises are spiritual in nature, this idea that it doesn't always equate to a physical body, because there are some of you who are extremely careful with everything that you allow to come into your body, and all the substances, and the amount of rest and exercise you get, and you still live your life in pain, or with a disability of one form or another. And he doesn't promise you here that if you'll just do all of this, it's formulaic, just do X, Y, and Z, and then you're not going to have any physical problems. He doesn't say that, and I love the fact that President Uchtdorf pointed out in that particular talk that sometimes these promises are going to be ultimately fulfilled in the resurrection, so it gives hope for any who might be wrestling with some added physical or emotional or mental challenges in their mortal tabernacle.

One of my favorite verses here in section 89 is how it ends: "And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them. Amen" (Doctrine and Covenants 89:21). So, it ties us right back into that great founding faith story of the Israelites being taken out of captivity. And during the time period of Easter, the Jews are celebrating, usually, Passover. And literally, that means the destroying angel passed over those who had marked their houses with the blood of the lamb. And I think about what do we do today to mark ourselves with the blood of the lamb? And in my opinion, it's sacrament.

In fact, I think we have a good case for this, because the Passover meal was celebrated every single year by the Jews. And when Jesus, his last supper was Passover where they're remembering how God saved his people, and then the Last Supper becomes the emblematic sacrament that Christians partake of every single week. So, every week that you go to partake of the sacrament, it symbolically is a reminder of the Passover, and connects you here to D&C 89, that if you are seeking to be wise, seeking to have God in your life, seeking to be following his instructions, you

will have the promise of the destroying angel passing over you and being protected by the blood of the lamb, even Jesus Christ.

Now, as we turn over to section 90, this is – this is a section that's kind of critical for the organization of the Church where, previously, we had the elements of a First Presidency kind of set up in a previous revelation. Now, in section 90, it becomes more official; the First Presidency becomes an official entity of the Church with the prophet and his two counselors. Notice they are told, verse 1: "Thus saith the Lord, verily, verily I say unto you my son..." so Joseph, who's asking these questions, "...thy sins are forgiven thee, according to thy petition, and for thy prayers and the prayers of thy brethren have come up into my ears." Just a note there, it's interesting how the Lord says, I'm forgiving your sins because you've – "according to thy petition," you've asked me (Doctrine and Covenants 90:1).

I love the idea that when he tells us to ask, it's not just 'ask curiosity questions'. It's, ask for things that we really want, and what I really want is to be clean. And I know I'm not my own Savior, but I know who my Savior is, and so it's a beautiful thing to ask God to forgive us, to cleanse us from sin as we move forward. So, if it's been a while in your prayers since you have asked him to forgive you your debts, that might be something that you could implement today, starting today, is more frequently asking him to actually forgive us.

Then he talks about the keys in verse 3, "...the keys of [the] kingdom shall never be taken from you, while thou art in the world, neither in the world to come;". Joseph is told, you hold the keys of this dispensation, and they're never going to be taken from you in this world, or in the world to come. It's a pretty powerful promise given to him.

Now look at verse 6: "...again, verily I say unto thy brethren, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, their sins are forgiven them also, and they are accounted as equal with thee in holding the keys of this last kingdom;". So, they become – from this time forward, they become standing presidents in the Church, and Joseph refers to them by that title, President Rigdon and President Williams, moving forward.

So, let's go down to verse 9: "That through your administration they may receive the word, and through their administration the word may go forth unto the ends of the earth, unto the Gentiles first, and then, behold, and lo, they shall turn unto the Jews." It's beautiful to see this progression that you have Jesus who was in the house of Israel, directly. He taught his gospel to the Jews in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and then from there, they send out missionaries to teach scattered Israel. This is through the Book of Acts, where they start taking the gospel into Samaria, and into other areas where formerly Israelite people have been scattered, or have had other influences introduced. So, we take it to scattered Israel and then from there out to the Gentiles, those Gentile nations in the Greco-Roman Empire of that 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century, so Paul's missions, and Peter baptizing Cornelius as we open up the work among the gentiles.

You'll note just what happened in verse 9, the First Presidency is going to take this message out to the world, "...[to] the ends of the earth, unto the Gentiles first, and then, behold and lo, they shall turn unto the Jews." So, the group that was last is, in the latter days, going to get the gospel first, and then we're going to work in reverse until we get the gospel spread to where it originally had begun as it goes out.

Now, look at verse 11: "...it shall come to pass in that day, that every man..." 100 percent, "...shall hear the fullness of the gospel in his own tongue ... in his own language, through those who are ordained unto this power, by the administration of the Comforter, shed forth upon them for the revelation of Jesus Christ." I love our missionary effort, and I love the fact that we spend all this effort training 18-, 19-, 20-, 21-year-old young men and young women to learn all these languages of the world. and we send them out so that people can hear the gospel in their own language, in their own tongue. There's something beautiful about that, speaking in a way that you could be understood.

Now look at verse 15. Here's the command to this First Presidency: "...set in order the churches, and study and learn, and become acquainted with all good books, and with languages, tongues, and people" (Doctrine and Covenants 90:15). Verse 17: "Be not ashamed, neither confounded; but be admonished in all your high-mindedness and pride, for it bringeth a snare upon your souls."

So, do any of you find this interesting that they've got this calling, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, and with the calling comes these cautions to say, just because you're called and you've got this title of president in the First Presidency doesn't mean that you're not going to overcome some challenges and some difficulties. And keep in mind, none of these men have been in the Church longer than three years. Joseph hasn't even been in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for three years at this time. Now, of course, its name isn't officially the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as described there; that won't come until we get to section 115, but it's beautiful to note that God is working with these people. They're very young in the gospel, and quite young, comparatively speaking, to leadership in the Church today, and he's giving them these warnings of things that they need to fix and they need to repent of.

Look at verse 18: "Set in order your houses; keep slothfulness and uncleanness far from you." Then jumping down to verse 24: "Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk uprightly and remember the covenant wherewith ye have covenanted with one another." I love that, that he's giving them these commands to do things, that the general Church membership is getting those same commands today, because it's not the church of Joseph Smith, it's not the church of Sidney Rigdon or Frederick G. Williams. It's the Church of Jesus Christ, and he's going to guide his Church through the ministries of these men as the Holy Ghost gives those directions and those guiding commands along the way. That gives me hope in my calling in the Church, or as a husband, or as a father, that I can say, hmm, I need help. There are some things I need to not do, there are some things I need to do, that I can liken this

scripture unto me, and I can plead with God to help me move forward in greater faith, so that my life becomes a greater reflection of his perfection and less of my imperfections as I move forward.

Then, here at the end, you get introduced to this beautiful character in Church history, Vienna Jaques, or Vienna Jaques, however you prefer to pronounce her name. She comes from Boston, she's fairly wealthy, and she comes to Kirtland. She's had a Book of Mormon, she's read parts of it, she comes to Kirtland to meet the prophet, and she is baptized. And Joseph encourages her to consecrate her money to the building up of the kingdom of God on the earth, and she donates over \$1400 to the – to this consecrated effort, and then she heads west to Independence. Interestingly, she arrives in Independence right before the huge mob disturbance begins to really ramp up and speed up. Here's this woman who's going to die in her 90s, here in Utah, eventually. She consecrates everything, and she stays so faithful and so pure to the end.

I think if Vienna were here today to share her thoughts with us, I don't think she would say, let me tell you about how much my discipleship cost me financially, or let me tell you about the physical struggles and the abuses that I had to witness, and the mobs that I had to watch destroy so many lives around me and inflict pain on me as well. I don't know if she would do that. I think Vienna would come, look at verse 29: "...the residue of the money may be consecrated unto me, and she," Vienna, shall "...be rewarded in mine own due time." Very clear, looking at the history, that the rewards weren't in – solely in this life. She was able to do some amazing things, and stay faithful to the very end, and prosper in quite a few ways in mortal aspects. But I think if Vienna were here today, I think she would encourage all of us to consecrate whatever we have been given to the work of the Lord, and to the building up of the kingdom of God. Her story is one of those that often gets overlooked, but if you want to read more about her and search about her, her story is worth exploring. She was truly a saint.

Look at verse 34 now: "Behold, I say unto you that your brethren in Zion begin to repent, and the angels rejoice over them. Nevertheless, I am not well pleased with many things;" (Doctrine and Covenants 90:34-35). So, here we are in Kirtland, and Joseph's being told by the Lord, they're beginning to repent over in Jackson County, Missouri, but there are still some things that they're struggling with. And he lists a couple of people here and says he's going to keep working with them.

So, we're now looking forward to bringing Jared Ludlow on, and we'll spend time in section 91 and discuss the Apocrypha, and we invite you to learn with us. You'll notice on the dating, the timing for this section, it's March 9th of 1833. Joseph began translating or adapting passages in the Bible starting June of 1830, so this is the time when he has now completed it. How does this work? He started originally in the Old Testament, back in June of 1830, and as he was working his way through the Old Testament, the Lord inspired him to stop in the Old Testament and jump over to the New Testament. He completed the New Testament, then he leaps back around and completes the Old Testament.

Now, if you open up your King James Version of the Bible, what you'll notice is you have the Old Testament ends in Malachi 4, and then at the very bottom in the KJV it says, "The end of the prophets" (Malachi 4). That's an interesting phrase. And then you have this little page right here that you turn over, and then you get the gospel according to St. Matthew. This little page, it represents about 400-450 years of time. That's a lot. Now, in Joseph Smith's Bible, the Finney Bible that he's using, at the end of the Old Testament, between the Old and the New Testaments, there's an entire section called...

The Apocrypha.

The Apocrypha.

And this is the capital A Apocrypha, and that's where it can be confusing, because "apocrypha" can just be used as a word for anything that is – we use it often for "apocryphal", so things that we're not sure of their origin. If they're dubious, we call them apocryphal. But when we're talking about the Apocrypha, capital A, we're talking about this section the Protestants put between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Yeah, so you've got this section in Joseph Smith's Bible here between these two books, and he has now come all the way around, finished the New Testament, now and he finished the Old Testament, he comes to this section and he scratches his head and says, should I interpret with this? Should I give the same treatment to the Apocrypha as I have the Old and the New Testament? And that is where section 91 comes in. He asked the Lord, and this is the Lord's answer.

So really quickly, "apocrypha" comes from two Greek words: "apo", which is "away", and "cryptine" which is "to hide or conceal". It's this "hide or conceal away". And quite frankly, there's a lot that happens in this 400- to 450-year period that is hidden away, and now we get these books that Joseph is going to ask about. Look at the description that God gives him in section 91. Verse 1: "Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you concerning the..." as Jared says, capital A "...Apocrypha – There are many things contained therein that are true, and it is mostly translated correctly;". Did you catch that? It's not – it's not half, or less than half, it's mostly translated correctly. But then verse 2 is the caution there: "There are many things contained therein that are not true, which are interpolations by the hands of men."

What's a little frustrating is it doesn't say which is which. It leaves it up to us to try to figure out, and that's kind of what the rest of the section also deals with.

Very good. So, he basically tells Joseph in verse 3, "...it is not needful that the Apocrypha should be translated." So, at this point, March of 1833, Joseph is saying okay, I've made my way all the way through the Old and the New Testament. We're finished with that particular project, so what can we gain from any time spent studying this intertestamental period, or these books in this Apocrypha? Verse 4: "Therefore...". The "therefore" is this cause and effect, because of everything that's come before in verse 1 through 3, the outcome is or the effect is, "Therefore, whoso readeth it, let him understand, for the Spirit manifesteth truth; And whoso is enlightened by the Spirit shall

obtain benefit therefrom;" (Doctrine and Covenants 91:4-5). So, Jared, would you recommend that somebody go on a rigorous study of the Apocrypha and replace their study of the Bible, or the Book of Mormon, or the Doctrine and Covenants with the Apocrypha?

Well, certainly not replace it, but you know, it does promise us that if we are "enlightened by the Spirit, [we] shall obtain benefit therefrom", and so there could be stories, accounts that can be inspirational and edifying, and can help us understand other contexts better (Doctrine and Covenants 91:5).

So, let's talk about, what is the Apocrypha? Why don't you walk us through what those books are, and a basic overview, what we might learn from the Apocrypha if we chose to read it?

Okay. So, the short answer is, you know, these are a collection of texts of books that were found primarily in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, but weren't found in the Hebrew Bible. There is one or two texts that are found in Latin versions, but primarily, it's those additional books that are in the Septuagint that aren't in the Hebrew Bible. So naturally, the question arises, well, where did they come from? Why are they here now?

Also, we should mention just briefly what happened. There was a conqueror named Alexander the Great, who kind of took over the Middle East and Persia, and brought Greek culture. And the Jews that were living there, many of them adopted Greek culture, Greek speaking, they learned the language of Greece, and they then eventually, many of them don't know Hebrew. And so there was a translation of the Hebrew records into Greek, and that translation is called the Septuagint that Jared was telling us about – kind of a fancy word. And it actually, this Greek version of the Old Testament becomes the source for many of the New Testament writers. In fact, a lot of what we have in the New Testament are New Testament writers quoting from a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.

And the word "apocrypha" we've already talked a little bit about, but it's interesting, because it can have a positive sense or a negative sense. These are texts that are hidden away. Well, you could consider them sacred if you believe in them, and you don't want to throw the pearls before the swine, so to speak. Or, these are texts that need to be forgotten, and buried, and just left behind. And so throughout history, you'll see this term used both pejoratively, or positively, depending on how people felt about these texts and their authority for them.

So what are some of the books that show up in the Apocrypha? What's some of the things we might find if we read them?

Well, quite a few of them are connected to Old Testament figures and settings. We have additional stories about the prophet Daniel; we have another version of the Book of Esther; we have stories taking place in Assyrian exile when the Babylonians are coming. And so those are kind of expansions, I would say, of biblical traditions and stories and figures. Then we have a few examples of wisdom literature that were prevalent around the ancient Near East, just texts of, you know, encouraging teachings, how to raise a family, how to be a good person, you know.

Like the Book of Proverbs. The Book of Proverbs is probably one of the best examples in the Old Testament of wisdom literature, and it is very popular literature. People want to be inspired by good principles that worked, and so we get other versions, not necessarily the Proverbs, but other wise sayings in the Apocrypha. And I've read these, and some of them are extremely encouraging and inspiring, and still work today if you actually try to live those principles.

And then there's some other texts that I would say are just kind of stories or tales. And you know, the Book of Tobit is a well-known story that comes out of this collection that tells the story of a family living in Assyrian exile, and then they, you know, go through the ups and downs of life and trying to resolve things, but the point being always that God is there to help them and to answer some of the trials that they're going through. And so it, I think a lot of this literature was, you know, to strengthen them in a time that they're either living away from the covenant land and they maybe yearn to be back there, or they're under a lot of outside influence. You mentioned the Greek influence that becomes really strong, and there's this pull, and we kind of can relate to.

We use the phrase being in the world but not of the world, and so they're trying to say, well, shall we – we're in this Greek world now, how much of it should we be? Should we adopt it, adapt to it, or reject it? And you see all different kinds, and that's where probably the most historical part of the Apocrypha is the Book of the Maccabees, and that tells the story of one group who decides they want to push back against this influence and reject it. And they have basically a revolt, the Hasmonean Maccabean revolt, and – against the Greek rulers around 160 BC. The Jews, they want their freedom. They're, like, we don't like being ruled by foreign entities, and they went after them for about 100 years. You get this incredible story of them finally retaking the temple mount and cleansing the temple. Many of you know about Hanukkah. That comes right out of the Apocrypha, the Maccabee stuff. It's a great story.

Yeah, this is where we get the institution of Hanukkah and this festival that the Jews still today observe. It's not in the Old Testament, it's here in the Apocrypha, which is somewhat interesting, because the Jewish writers who preserved these stories and tales, eventually the Jews decide, because this was all written in Greek, it may be corrupt and so forth. And so they just went back to the Hebrew Bible book and they rejected a lot of these books as part of their canon. And so you don't see it in their Tanakh, their Hebrew Bible, their equivalent of what we call the Old Testament. But they can't fully reject it because they celebrate Hanukkah and retell the story there, and so it's still literature that's a part of their religion and culture, but it's not part of their canon specifically.

So besides what we find in the Apocrypha, we have these additional texts that come from the same time period that often are lumped together called the Pseudepigrapha, and “pseudo” meaning false, and “pigrapha”, “scribed” or “writing”. So, they're falsely ascribed to Old Testament figures when they probably were written much later, and so, like, texts about Enoch, and Abraham, and Isaiah and things form part of the Pseudepigrapha. I've done a lot of work on the Testament of Abraham, one of these texts that comes from this time period.

And so it's -- the main character is about Abraham, but we're not sure, it probably wasn't Abraham who wrote this story. It's ascribed to him. And as you were saying earlier, we don't know how much of this really is authentic to Abraham's life, as these were stories that were told orally over time, and then finally preserved hundreds of years after the time of Abraham. So-

-Or they were just created in this later time period.

Or, somebody just came and invented and said, I really like Abraham, and let's make up a story about him. Sort of like fan literature, right?

Yes, exactly. Yeah, these are people that admired them and maybe wanted to tap into their authority, and so they use their name and tell stories about them, but they maybe have their own agenda or things they're trying to teach. And so, you know, we've heard often of the Dead Sea Scrolls that come from this Second Temple Period, and they include all of these texts that we've been talking about. They have Hebrew Bible texts, they have texts from the Pseudepigrapha, they have texts from the Apocrypha. And so, it shows that in this time period, they were reading and copying all of these texts and treating them as if they had some type of authority. But obviously for them, the first five books of Moses had the primary authority, and then they determined probably that other prophetic books and things had secondary, and then maybe below that, were some of these other texts that still were edifying and that they still found value in reading, but that they didn't include in their actual scripture text or canon.

And it's not that different from today. We have a canon, we know what these standard works are, and yet we're also invited to seek after good books. In fact, we will read that in some of these sections that are on the reading list for today, that God wants us to learn from a variety of good sources. It just may be those other sources never become part of the canon that becomes expected for us.

So, for many of you, you're probably sitting there wondering, okay, so this is all fine and good, but therefore, what? What should I do with this, sitting here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? The reality is, is you can access the Apocrypha for free online. There are a couple of places: Bible Gateway; there's a KJV version of the Apocrypha that you can get for free if you Google it.<sup>4</sup> We'll put some links in the header of this episode below.

But I want to go back to something that you said earlier that I think is really applicable to us, right here, right now, is you have this group of Israelites who had some questions. Are they going to adopt the traditions that are surrounding them? Are they going to adapt those traditions to fit them? Or are they going to reject those traditions? I think that's a really interesting framework to look at this culture that Jared and Taylor were talking about a little bit earlier that you and I live in today. It's how do I stay a faithful, covenant member of the Church of Jesus Christ moving forward on that covenant path, surrounded by all kinds of cultural influences like these early Israelites were

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<sup>4</sup> Various Authors. "Access Your Bible from Anywhere." *BibleGateway.com: A Searchable Online Bible in over 150 Versions and 50 Languages.*, <https://www.biblegateway.com/>.

surrounded by Assyrian, and Babylonian, and previous to that, Egyptian, and eventually Greek, and then Roman at different phases, all of these influences coming in upon them. It's fascinating when you go in with that perspective, then you open up the Apocrypha and say, how did these people make that decision? How did they navigate those waters? Because then we can learn today how to perhaps better understand elements that we should adopt, things that we should adapt, and things that we should absolutely reject. Could you give us a couple of examples out of the actual text of the Apocrypha?

Okay, I think probably we could start with the Book of Maccabees, where they face this head on, and particularly when it came to issues of their sacrifices and keeping the Sabbath. And you know, we can maybe adapt some things from the world around us and still keep our traditions, but what if you completely adopt everything else and decide, well, I don't need to observe a Sabbath day anymore, you know? And so, you reject these influences so that you can preserve some of these things. And as a result, some of these who rejected what was being thrust upon them become persecuted, they become mocked, and even violently persecuted, and so they have to decide, you know, what are we going to do? And so, in 1<sup>st</sup> Maccabees, the end of chapter 1 verse 62, it says, "But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die" (1 Maccabees 1:62-63).

And you know, I'm not encouraging us to run out and die, but it shows how important it was for them that they were willing to stand by their covenants even at the risk of these heavy persecutions. And thankfully we're not in that time period of heavy persecutions, but that's what Maccabees goes on and says, as it relates some of the stories of those who remained faithful, who decided reject the culture around them. And so again, we have to decide what is okay, that won't change what we fundamentally know we need to be doing to preserve – to be faithful to our covenants and other things.

Maybe another example here: this comes from the Book, the Wisdom of Ben Sira, that again encourages us to seek good, to be good. It says, this is in chapter 33 verse 14 and 15: "Good is the opposite of evil ... life the opposite of death; so the sinner is the opposite of the godly. Look at all the works of the Most High; they come in pairs, one the opposite of the other" (Sirach 33:14-15). And for Latter-day Saint readers, this should ring the bell of Lehi's teachings in 2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 2 and so forth, that there is going to be opposition in all things. And we need to decide, you know, which side are we going to end up on, and you know, good is the opposite of evil, there is good and there is evil, and what is – you know, which side are we going to be on?

And maybe just one other last example, in the story of Judith. She becomes this heroic figure because she wants to withstand this army that's coming in and trust in God that he can preserve them, while the elders of the community, who supposedly should be stronger and have more faith in God, are kind of becoming cowardly. And she has to kind of step in and remind them that they need to put God first.

And so, she says in chapter 8, starting in verse – starting in verse 12: “Who are you to put God to the test today, and to set yourselves up in the place of God in human affairs? You are putting the Lord Almighty to the test, but you will never learn anything! You cannot plumb the depths of the human heart or understand the workings of the human mind; how do you expect to search out God, who made all these things, and find out his mind or comprehend his thought? No, my brothers, do not anger the Lord our God. For if he does not choose to help us within these five days...” And that was the test of their trying to say, well, if he helps us in five days then we'll do it. But she says, you know, you can't test him like that. “He has power to protect us within any time he pleases, or even to destroy us in the presence of our enemies. Do not try to bind the purposes of the Lord our God;” (Judith 8:12-16).

And so, she steps forward and tries to remind them of the true characteristics of God, and how they should trust and rely on him. So, there are some great examples of faithfulness I see throughout these stories, again, in the midst of a lot of trials, influence, persecutions. And so, yeah, I think we can learn from some of their examples and try to be faithful in our own way.

That's beautiful. Thank you, Jared. It brings us right back to where we started in section 91: "...There are many things contained therein that are true, and it is mostly translated correctly", and so thank you for helping us understand this Apocrypha and the setting there in that 400, 450-year period (Doctrine and Covenants 91:1).

To finish up, it's two verses long. It's given to Frederick G. Williams, it's regarding this United Order, and it's telling him that “[he] shall be a lively member in this order; and inasmuch as you are faithful in keeping all former commandments you shall be blessed forever. Amen” (Doctrine and Covenants 92:1). We could go into more detail about the United Order here, and about Frederick G. Williams in this context, but the part that is relevant to you and me today is, for me, this idea that God is asking him to be a lively member, because I can look at my membership in the kingdom of God as either lively or stagnant. If I go to church, for instance, on Sunday, and I don't try to be a lively member, I become more slothful. I sit back. I wait to be wowed. I wait to be acted upon. I'm now a victim of the circumstance. I'm a victim of my environment, versus if I choose to be a lively member in whatever way that works for you in your setting, it means that I'm no longer sitting back waiting for good things to happen to me. I'm lively. I'm actively going about trying to do good. I love that phrase in the New Testament: “[Jesus] went about doing good...” (Acts 10:38). To me, that's all it is to be a lively member, is go about doing good. And it's going to look differently for you than it does for me, than it does for Taylor, and that's wonderful as we all strive to be lively members.

Now, as we come to the close of this long episode of section 89 all the way through 92, just know that God is in his heavens, and he will give us revelation to guide us, whether it's in what we eat and consume, or how we take care of our body with exercise and sleep and other things, or the way we approach the organization of the Church and the First Presidency, and the way we see prophets and apostles in their roles in our life, or whether it be in how we choose to study or not

study the Apocrypha and other scriptures, or be a lively member. The point is, let's try to get things and people and ideas out of the way that would hinder us from turning to God and getting specific revelation, asking him, seeking for his wisdom, not the wisdom of the world, or in some cases influences of the world, but seeking his wisdom, and then pleading with him for the strength to apply that, and for him to forgive us as we struggle to apply those things as we move forward. Just know that he lives, know that he loves you, and we leave that with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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