

Come Follow Me Class Insights – 46 – Doctrine and Covenants 129-132

I'm Taylor, and I'm Tyler. And I'm Jennifer Reeder but my friends call me Jenny. This is Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today, Doctrine and Covenants sections 129 through 132, and we have our friend, Jenny Reeder with us. She's a historian who works at the Church office building and does incredible work of looking at our glorious past and we've brought her today because we have lots of great things to talk about in these sections. Now just to let you know, these sections, there's some difficult, hard things, but we believe that thoughtful, faithful engagement with the scriptures, with history and the word of God can help all of us learn more about God's covenants and his love for us.

So, so I have to begin this particular episode with a little personal experience that I had. Years ago I was sitting in a class with Brother Richard Holzapfel at BYU and he was talking about section 132, and before he began the class, he handed around a bag with a whole bunch of treats in it – you know, chocolate, and he told all his students to take one. I wondered, what in the world is going on here? What is he doing? And then as everybody had taken out some candy, he said, I wanted to begin today's lesson by putting a sweet taste in your mouth because what we have to talk about today is a very, very difficult topic and if we're not careful, it will leave a very bitter taste in your mouth. And so he said, I wanted to start on a sweet note to prepare us to talk about some really, really difficult things. And I thought that was – that was an insightful beginning.

It is. I hope you all have a piece of candy you can start this with. But I do want to end, Tyler, with a sweet story that I think may make us feel a little bit better.

That would be wonderful, something for you to look forward to at the end of the episode. Now, we are going to spend the majority of our time today in section 132 and talking about the history of plural marriage in Nauvoo, but before we get there, very, very quickly, let me bridge the gap and very quickly cover section 129 and 130 to then set the stage for 131 which is related to section 132.

So you'll notice that in sections 129 through 131, if you look in the heading, in every case it says instructions given. So it's not as if you've got a group of people in a conference or a meeting or a quorum presidency meeting asking for directions, these three sections, 129, 130 and 131 are more – it's almost as if Joseph was saying hmm, I kind of recognize we're getting toward the end and I'm not sure that they understand – that the members of the Church understand this clearly and this and this. And so what you're going to find as we come through here is it feels kind of disconnected. It feels like here's this and then this – oh, and here's this and here's this, and he doesn't spend a lot of time transitioning; there's no common thread here. It's just instructions.

So for instance, section 129, he recognizes, hmm, I don't know if they understand the keys to discern the spirits. And so in section 129 he says there are two kinds of beings in heaven. There are resurrected beings and then there are the spirits of just men made perfect, and when they come to deliver a message as an angelic ministrant, if you offer to shake their hand, you can discern them because you'll either feel a resurrected hand or, a spirit of a just man made perfect won't seek to shake your hand. They'll just say I can't. But a devil, he said, will try and you won't feel anything. And so he gives the Church those keys.

Then in section 130, he – he was in Ramus, Illinois, and he had heard Orson Hyde give a speech at a conference there in Ramus and at lunch had sat down with him and said, um, Orson, I have some – basically, I have some corrections or I have some feedback for you that would help you, and Orson was very open to that, asked for it. And so Joseph gives him some of those corrections and many of that – many of the verses in section 130 are part of Joseph giving those instructions. So you get a variety of things – appropriate things including verse 9 where he says, that the earth when it's sanctified in the immortal state will be made like unto crystal, like a giant Urim and Thummim – you have any question related to any of the kingdoms, you can just look and get the answer. It's an amazing application of what you read in the Revelation of St. John in the New Testament.

In verse 12 and 13 you get this repeat of his prophecy of the Civil War beginning in South Carolina that hearkens back to – to what would later be

put in as section 87 in our Doctrine and Covenants, and then the interesting topic of the Second Coming he introduces in 14 and 15 because keep in mind, William Miller has a pretty big following and they – they have marked the date on the calendar when Jesus is coming and everybody's wondering and thinking about it so Joseph asks the question, verse 14, "I was once praying very earnestly to know the time of the coming of the Son of Man when I heard a voice repeat the following." Now, if you want ambiguity, here's verse 15. "Joseph, my son, if thou livest until thou art eighty-five years old," so the very foundation of the verse – if – it's the premise isn't going to happen, but he continues, "thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man; therefore, let this suffice and trouble me no more on this matter." If I didn't know any better I'd think the Lord didn't want us overly focusing on the date. Notice Joseph's conclusion: "I was left thus, without being able to decide whether his coming referred to the beginning of the millennium or to some previous appearing or whether I should die and then see his face." It gives you three options there and he had no idea which was which.

Isn't that interesting? Sometimes we want the prophet to know everything. We want the prophet to be perfect, and this is a classic example of saying there are lots of things where the prophet says I asked, I got an answer, and I don't even know what the answer means. There are some options, and there's something powerful about that, something powerful about being open and vulnerable to – to allow God to reveal things at the time and in the manner that he sees to reveal them and say okay, well, this is what I got. This is what I'm going to go with, and I move forward anyway.

And then you get these powerful closures in section 130 talking about intelligence and gaining that intelligence and having an advantage in the world to come depending on how we use our agency here, and then 20 and 21, the law that is irrevocably and decreed and if we get a blessing it's by obedience to the law, we can't make up our own consequences. And then finally in verse 22 and 23 speaking of the Godhead and the nature of the Godhead.

Now, that brings us into section 131. So section 131 is where Joseph reveals this – this additional insight regarding the celestial kingdom, because keep in mind section 76 we got the idea that was quite earth-shattering for many of

the members of the Church when section 76 was given called The Vision back in the John Johnson home, where you have celestial, terrestrial and telestial, and that was mind-blowing. Well what does he do in section 131?

He gives us even more information about what it takes to get into that top tier of the celestial kingdom. He talks about in verse 2, in order to obtain the highest, a man and a woman must enter into this order of the priesthood, meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. So I think that's really interesting and I think if we – if we think about it, back in 1841 when Joseph performed the marriage of Benjamin and Melissa Johnson, and he promised them that they would receive marriage according to the law of the Lord and so two years later, we're getting that law. And I just wanted to share, I love this about Joseph, that he really asked questions as you mentioned, but then he figures things out as time goes on and it's the development, the projectory – a trajectory and so I wanted to share some interesting things about his views of marriage.

When he married Newel, he performed the marriage of Newel knight and Lydia Goldthwaite on November 24, 1835, he told them to covenant to be each other's companion throughout life and then promised upon them the blessings that the Lord conferred upon Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, that is, to multiply and replenish the earth with the addition of long life and prosperity. But then a week later Joseph officiated at the marriage of Warren Parish and Martha Raymond and he pronounced them – now listen to how this sort of builds up of that last week's marriage. He pronounced them husband and wife in the name of God according to the articles and covenants of the Church of Latter Day Saints and then a month later he performs the marriage of John Boynton and Susan Lowell after the order of heaven, and I think that's key, right? He's slowly figuring it out. He says I pronounced upon them the blessings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and such other blessings as the Lord put into my heart. So it's just coming step by step and I think that's really important for us to understand, the trajectory of how this all worked out.

So it's fascinating to me Jenny that in section 131, this new revelation of wait a minute, it's not just the celestial kingdom, there are three degrees within the celestial kingdom, and then he spends all of his time talking about the highest

degree, leaving the rest of us to say what? He gives us no information about those two, and apparently God has decided that we don't need that information yet so he gave what he gave in section 131, that's what we got, we move forward.

That's right. We move forward to section 132. There you go. And again, history tells us that he probably received the ideas of section 132 as early as – the early 1830s and - but it took him quite a while to try to understand how it all works, mainly, the law of polygamy and of plural marriage. Now at the time, he had been translating the Old Testament and he learned about the great patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and here I think we need to understand what that Abrahamic Covenant meant and what the House of Israel was.

So for many years at BYU, I taught world civilization and world history classes. And if anybody's taken any time to look at the past, anybody else's or your own, there's parts of the past that are a little bit embarrassing or discouraging, sometimes downright like I just don't want to have to pay attention to it. And we have to grapple with the past because it did happen and it contributes to where the world is at today. And there are many things that are beautiful, lovely, of good report from the past, but this principle I think matters and I would teach to my students when we encounter difficulties in the past and in history that applies to the past, to the world, and also to ourselves and it's this principle I got the quote from somebody, "Forgiveness is to abandon all hope of a better past." Let me repeat that. "Forgiveness is to abandon all hope of a better past." What does this mean? There are things that have happened in the past that we wish were different. We wish that we could fix it or that somebody would have said things differently, and the reality is, we cannot change the past. All we can do is learn to accept it and to forgive what didn't measure up to our expectations.

With that perspective, let's actually step back and talk of the Abrahamic Covenant which we don't need to forgive because it's one of the most powerful, beautiful principles that saturates the totality of the plan of salvation and this is crucial for understanding what's going on as God reveals truth about the marriage sealing. So let's remind ourselves, Genesis chapter 12, God comes to Abraham and delivers these incredible promises, verses 1, 2

and 3. Abraham essentially is going to have grand posterity and property, priesthood, you might even say prosperity. So let's also lay out that that promise that God gave to Abraham was repeated to Abraham on multiple occasions, and sometimes he came to Abraham and tried to reassure Abraham that God would keep those promises. When he said to Abraham, if you can count the number of stars, that's how much posterity you will have. If you can count the grains of sand on the seashore, that's the size of your posterity because Abraham had not yet seen the fulfillment of those promises.

So God makes these promises to Abraham, we call it the Abrahamic Covenant and it's God offering all the conditional promises to Abraham, things that God will do for Abraham, and it's on account of enormous faith that Abraham had shown God over time, you just see this in the Book of Abraham. Incredible. And so God said, I will give you posterity, land, priesthood and prosperity. Those blessings continue throughout the generations and all of us have access to these.

The other thing about that Abrahamic Covenant is that the Lord wanted everyone to be a part of that. Everyone could join the House of Israel and be a part of the Abrahamic Covenant, and I know that Joseph felt that. He was so eager to welcome everyone into his home, into his family, and into this House of Israel.

That's a beautiful insight, that the gospel is for everybody and the Abrahamic Covenant is for everybody. You think about God's chosen people, what were they chosen to do? They're chosen to serve others, not to be served by God, although he does do that, but to serve others and to share all that God has given.

So one thing I think is important to recognize about section 132 or what we know today as 132, is this is actually a private revelation given to Joseph and Emma. It was not meant for public consumption. Now Brigham Young had it read in 1852 when plural marriage was made public and Orson Hyde included it in the 1876 version of the Doctrine and Covenants, but for all intents and purposes, it was written for Joseph and Emma.

One of the things that helps with this – with this particular, difficult topic is to not give in to that easy road of putting on 21st century lenses with all of our 21st century sensitivities and cultural perspectives and then look back through the corridors of – of historical time and then judge them based on our standards today. But rather to go back as you have been trained professionally to do as a historian, to go back as a visitor in that time, that place, that setting, and try to understand what they were interpreting, what they saw, what they understood.

Joseph Smith initially saw it as bringing people into his family, into his priesthood and his social network. Richard Bushman talks a little bit about this in *Rough Stone Rolling*. He talks about how Joseph was so keen on this idea of the House of Israel and bringing in people that didn't have a con – a priesthood connection to share his priesthood connection and then it would expand and it would become as the stars in the heavens and the sands of the seas.

So I love this. I love this whole idea of this new and everlasting covenant. And we see that several times, we see it in verse (a?) section 131 verse 2, we see it in section 132 verse 4, we see it in verse 6 and probably several other places, but I, I sort of have the question what is the new and everlasting covenant, and I think part of it is marriage but I think the other part of it is, the larger part of it is Jesus Christ is the new and everlasting covenant and his ability to bring us back to the Father and to connect us with this power or the priesthood as a house of Israel.

All as one, big family. Yeah, in fact I love the verse in 130, let's just quickly go back to that, verse 2, "And where we're taught that the, "same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy." Now that doesn't necessarily say marriage, but that means our friends. Yes. And I love that. I have such dear friends and I'm so grateful that we can share the sociality that we have now in that larger priesthood network, coupled with eternal glory, (overtalk) and that is even better than what you have here. Way better, as good as it is here. That's a beautiful promise. Well, and I love the way I see Joseph talking with Emma as he's learning these new things and gaining new insight and I

see her influencing him a little bit, so when you start to have all of these orphaned girls move into the Smith house or women whose fathers are dead and they don't really have an opportunity to get married, or women who have less than valiant, stellar, priesthood husbands, I think Joseph sees them, and Emma, I would agree, as part of their family, they're going to bring them into this House of Israel and make them a part of this new and everlasting covenant.

Yes, so I think that there's a distinction that needs to be made here, correct me if I'm wrong Jenny, I don't think many people would have any problems with that covenantal - that beneficent let me - let me reach out and bring you into this - this umbrella of power. I think the problem some people have with this particular topic is when - when there are physical relationships involved in some of those marriages.

Absolutely, I think that - that intimate marital relationship is a huge thing. So I think first of all, maybe we should talk about what is the rule of marriage. That's wise. And we learn that in Jacob chapter 2, do you want to read that?

Yeah, so I don't know of any place in scripture that is clearer as far as establishing what the Lord's rule is, or what his pattern is and then giving the exception. I can't find any better place than Jacob chapter 2 verse 27 through 30, so you'll notice the rule, or we might call it the law, the Lord's law of marriage, right? in verse 27: "Wherefore my brethren, hear me and hearken to the word of the Lord." Did you catch that? It wasn't let me give you my opinion as your prophet, he says, "hearken unto the word of the Lord. there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none." And then he gives some other information but then he gives the exception in verse 30 of Jacob chapter 2: "For if I will," did you notice those three words, conditional on God willing it. "If I will," it's not if you want it, or if you think it's a good idea or if you've been reading the Bible and say hey, I want to apply this, it's "if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things." So you could write law next to verse 27 and exception next to verse 30.

Right and I think even we know section 42 as the law right? And even there the Lord clearly delineates to Joseph in verse 22, "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else." That is the law.

And it's pretty clear right? Yes, and again in section 49 verse 16 again we get this. "Wherefore it is lawful that he should have one wife, and they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation."

Can I – can I just interject here something that I think is interesting and I think it's important, is it seems to me from my perspective, this is my opinion, that God seems to usually begin with the rule or the law and then deal with exceptions down the road as needs arise. So for me it's fascinating to read our earliest accounts in scripture of two people in Eden, Adam and Eve. It wasn't Adam and Eve and Alice, it was Adam and Eve, the rule, the law. Let's begin there, let's get that right, and then we'll deal with exceptions.

Right, yeah, I think that's a really good point, and I actually think in a lot of ways we can see Adam and Eve in Joseph and Emma as they go through their own dreary wilderness and with noxious weeds and thistles, that they have to figure out how to make it all work. It's an incredible metaphor, an amazing metaphor. But I think also each of us has this experience of fall and redemption and we certainly see this with – with Joseph and Emma.

Absolutely, which, by the way, this idea of this motif of – of a creation, fall and atonement, kind of being an overlay for this whole story and the difficulties that Emma is facing and that Joseph is trying to figure out, where – where God has given him some commandments, the what, and he didn't give him a handbook. He didn't say here's how to do it effectively, so Joseph is trying some things and quite frankly, I think if Joseph were here today, I think he might say, give me – give me a little bit of a break. I was doing the best I could with what I had at the time.

In fact, look at what he says in verse 56: "And again, verily I say, let mine handmaid forgive my servant Joseph his trespasses." Now why did God need to tell Emma to forgive Joseph his trespasses if he had done everything perfectly? I think that's beautiful that if God is willing to forgive him, then we should cut him some slack and say let's work through the messiness, the

muddiness of the history and try to see what happened, but not hold him hostage to his past.

Well and I think, Tyler, if you keep reading that verse, keep going, we see, "and then shall she be forgiven her trespasses." So I think it's beautiful and the Lord says at the end of that verse, this is verse 56, "I, the Lord thy God, will bless her, and multiply her, and make her heart to rejoice." Wow!

That hearkens a lot back to section 25, doesn't it? It does. So in section 25 she is told that she is a daughter of God and as his daughter she can receive an inheritance. She is told that she needs to lay aside the things of the world and murmur not at the things that she cannot see or understand, but that she should cleave unto her covenant, and I think that's huge, and then at the end of the section she's told that she will receive a crown of righteousness and will be able to enter into the presence of the Lord.

It's beautiful. You know, Jenny, you've probably done as much research on Emma Smith as anyone alive today. My question for you is how do you feel about Emma, the woman, a daughter of God, based on that history and that research that you've done?

You know, I think I want to step back just a little bit. I think she really agreed with Joseph in expanding her house and welcoming people into it, I think the trouble arose when John C. Bennett who had been a confidant of Joseph Smith, started using the idea of spiritual wifery to manipulate young women into sexual encounters that Joseph did not in any way suggest or – or approve, and I think once that gossip started going around, and it certainly came back to Emma, it's this whole idea of marital relationships expanding beyond her own was really hurtful to her. I think she felt betrayed and I think one of the reasons she felt betrayed was because she did not know about some of the marriages that Joseph had been engaged in and some of them were her really good friends. Eliza R. Snow was the secretary of the Relief Society, Sarah Cleveland was the first counselor in the Relief Society, whose husband was not a member of the Church. Elizabeth Ann Whitney's daughter was sealed to Joseph Smith and all of these things did not – were not made known and I think Joseph gets called out for that in this section.

Now Joseph is very concerned about adultery, as we are today. And so as we see in verses 40 through 44, some rules and commandments that the Lord gives about forgiving adultery, and this is exactly what John C. Bennett was doing. In fact, he was committing unadulterated adultery.

Yes, and even committing, because he was a doctor, so he was even performing abortions for some of the women who had become pregnant. Right. And this is something that really hurt Emma, this whole idea of not having the same intimate relationship that she had had and the (unclear) that she had between Joseph and Emma over the years is so beautiful, and they consider themselves eternal companions, they use that word even within their afflictions. And so with that sort of switch into the idea of plural marriage, Emma - and the sense of betrayal, Emma felt very hurt.

So - so let me ask this question. When Emma finds out about it, there's - there are obviously those negative reactions, but Hyrum Smith was convinced - the prophet's brother was convinced - Joseph, I can go and reason with Emma and I can explain. If we just write down the revelation, I'll go and I'll talk her into it, right?

Right. Emma and Hyrum had a really - they were good friends - they were good friends and, of course, it's different with a friend than with a husband. So sweet Hyrum believed that he could help Emma understand this and Joseph even said you do not know Emma like I do. So he - they had the revelation written out and Joseph had received it several years earlier but it's now written out and he takes it to Emma and it's not - it's not approved. It doesn't go well for Hyrum. No, it doesn't. And so later, Joseph and Emma spend a couple of evenings and maybe all night, I would say -

As I understand it, he goes back home and they're in a very heated discussion when William Law, Joseph's counselor has to come in and kind of mediate that discussion. Right. And then the next day, they go out for a carriage ride. Yeah, so their house has a revolving open door and in it they have religious meetings and political meetings and civic meetings and there's people coming in and out so they don't have a lot of private space. So often, Joseph and Emma would ride horseback into the country. Emma was an excellent horsewoman; she learned it from her brothers - I didn't know that - or they

would take a carriage out into the country. And I think one of Emma's – one of Emma's concerns was how she would care for her children if Joseph had other children with other wives and so the next day they went and put some of their property in the names of her children and she received half of the share of the steamboat on the Mississippi River. And this helped her a little bit. So I think – I think it took a lot of talking, and if I can say this, Joseph never had children with any other women and Emma was pregnant when Joseph died, so that tells us something without saying a lot.

We're also – I think this is really interesting – we know that Emma married a man by the name of Louis Bidaman and interestingly, she married him on Joseph's birthday in 1846. Yes, and all the people at Winter Quarters heard about it and were all up in arms. They were married by a Methodist and people thought that Louis was marrying Emma for her money. Unfortunately, she had incurred all of the Church's debt, so it was at that time \$70,000 and then when people were leaving Nauvoo they would leave her their property that they couldn't sell, which was super nice but then she was responsible for the property taxes. So it wasn't a matter of money.

They actually had a very intimate relationship - a sweet relationship, but interestingly enough, Louis Bidamon while he was married to Emma, had an affair with a woman by the name of Nancy Abercrombie and they had a son named Charley and Nancy wasn't able to care for Charley and so Emma brought Charley into her house and raised him as her own son. And then Nancy wasn't able to find work and so Emma brought her into her house and she became Emma's nurse, and right before Emma died, she brought Louis Bidamon and Nancy Abercrombie to her bedside and made them promise that they would get married after she had died so that Charley would be raised as their legitimate son.

So sometimes I wonder if it took Emma that long to accept polygamy and to accept this idea of plurality. And I really think that may have led to her redemption at the end of her life. I love that Peter denied Christ three times and Emma denied plural marriage several times throughout, to end of her life but I really think that at the end, that she was able to see that the Lord did make a way of escape as it says in verse 50, and in verse 49, "For I am the

Lord thy God, and will be with thee even unto the end of the world and through all eternity."

That's beautiful. That's beautiful - it's redemptive. It is redemptive. I think she has an incredible story of redemption. Absolutely. So Joseph was thought to have received this revelation as early as the 1830s, 1831 even, right, right, and that's early. That's right after the Church was organized a year later and - and I think he struggled with it. I think he really understood and as time went by and he wasn't able to practice that, that he was stuck between a rock and a hard place. He loves his wife and he in no way wanted to betray her. There are rumors and evidence to suggest that he did, in fact, have a relationship with a young woman that was a servant or a maid, Fanny Alger. It's not entirely known, for sure, in fact, that's one of the interesting things about Joseph and polygamy. He did not want to keep a record of it.

Not a lot of journal entries, not a lot of public certificates. No, and so it's hard for us to know exactly how many wives he did marry and what their relationship entailed. So that's tricky. And the other thing I think is important, is that Joseph's practice of polygamy was very different than Brigham Young's practice of polygamy.

Yes. How would you - how would you classify the differences between those two?

Well I think Joseph, being the first, was very timid and scared, especially of his wife, which he should have been. Which he should have been. And he was told by the Lord that this needed to be kept sacred or confidential or private, and it was not to be spoken about publically, and I think that when it was spoken about publically, it was through gossip and that's when this trouble (unclear) came. And it came with a vengeance. It came with a vengeance and the prophet is going to end up in the Carthage jail a year later and this is going to be one of the main trigger points that escalates the martyrdom.

Yeah, so I think that in that sense, I think Emma, perhaps, was keeping her covenant and not talking about polygamy or plural marriage, even with her sons as they grew older, and denied that they had ever practiced that. She was a little distraught about Brigham Young and his practice of polygamy, was

speaking very public in 1852 and she did not want to be caught with that stigma which was huge, culturally, religiously (unclear). I will also say Joseph's approach, like I said, he didn't – he didn't have kids with any of the – babies with any of his other wives where, on the other side, Brigham Young was very about procreation and multiplying and replenishing the earth, particularly in Utah. In fact, I heard someone say that twenty percent of the members of the Church today are descendants of polygamy.

Joseph was very selective about how he invited people, and he was also very careful about encouraging them to get their own witness or testimony of it. And, for example, Sarah Kimball, when Joseph asked her to become his plural wife, she said no way. And she didn't, and she remained a faithful member of the Church and was a very prominent leader in the Relief Society in Salt Lake City. So there's that.

I think another interesting thing, though, that I don't think we can forget, is this – let's look at the timeline, okay? In May of 1843, Joseph and Emma are sealed for eternity. Now they, before that, had considered themselves with an eternal love, but Joseph, like I said, was learning step by step how this all worked and so they were sealed for eternity. In July Emma receives this revelation and reads it and is very upset about it. So things happen between May and July, and then things happen between July and September, and we don't really know much about it. Emma, if she kept a journal; we don't have it.

And those carriage rides, there is not a recorder. Nobody was – the carriage wasn't bugged, unfortunately, but we do know that on September 28th 1843 Emma became the first woman to receive her temple endowment and initiatory, and she then became the woman who provided that, who gave that or led that ordinance for all the other women, and I think that's really significant. By the way, I learned this and I think we all learned this in seminary, that Jesus called abba when he was in the Garden of Gethsemane which means papa or daddy. So we don't often recognize that the Hebrew word for mom or mama, is Emma, and I think that's very significant. And I really think that she had a mother heart and she learned how to expand that mother heart in very significant ways. In fact, I would even go so far to say as the sands of the sea and the stars in the skies.

So many of you maybe are familiar to one degree or another with – with some of these practices of plural marriage in Nauvoo and before. Jenny, what would you say as a Church historian to people who have some serious and valid concerns or valid doubts when they hear things and then find out it's true, that Joseph was sealed to Heber C. Kimball's fourteen year-old-daughter, or that he married – he was sealed to married women.

I first of all – I have to say I'm with you. I don't get it. I don't understand all of it. And one thing I learned in graduate school is that you – we all look through the lens of presentism. We're all looking at 21st century views of marriage and Hollywood has affected us and influenced our views of marriage and so it's really hard to separate ourselves from that. Also we have to recognize that these women received their own testimonies and witnesses of it and because we haven't been asked to live it, we have not received those testimonies or witnesses. So I think that's important. But it's true that Joseph did engage himself, or connect himself to several women that we might not consider proper. The nearly fifteen-year-old daughter of Newel K. Whitney and Elizabeth Ann Whitney, we have a little bit more information about because they did not burn the letter that they were told to burn and the sealing is beautiful. It's really connecting the Smith family with the Whitney family and they were such good friends. In fact, when the – Joseph and Emma moved to Kirtland, Newel K. and Elizabeth Ann invited them into their home and took care of them, and years later when Elizabeth Ann and Newel K. moved to Nauvoo penniless, Joseph and Emma brought them into their home. And so it's a beautiful friendship, a beautiful relationship and so when he is sealed to their nearly fifteen year-old daughter, Sarah, it's really an effort to connect the families. Now I do have to say something else that helps us remove our presentism. This is not an early age for marriage. This is young but it is a marriageable age and it's not weird at that time. So that's something important that (overtalk) – that's very helpful.

Joseph also was sealed to women who had husbands, and that's called polyamory, and it's a little confusing. I don't understand all of it. There was one that he was sealed to, we know Zina Huntington Jacob Young, after Joseph died, she was sealed to Brigham Young and that was another practice

that was common. Heber C. Kimball and Brigham Young married many of Joseph and Hyrum's wives.

There's something interesting about Zina and her first husband Henry. She had two sons with him, so it wasn't necessarily an awful marriage but she later says it was an unhappy marriage. Brigham Young sent Henry on a mission and Henry writes this beautiful letter to Zina, he loves her. And he says – and he knows that she has been sealed to Brigham and he says, there will be twistings and turnings in this life but everything will work out in the next life, and I think that's so beautiful. That gives me a lot of hope and hope, promise, that it will all work out. I think once we've left behind our mortal understanding, our 21st century understanding, our presentism, our limited scope of time and space, that we'll see things a little differently.

Thank you Jenny, that's really helpful and - and the intent of this episode is not to answer every question and every concern and resolve every issue regarding either Joseph's or Brigham's practices with plural marriage and polygamy. The idea is to acknowledge the fact that it's messy, it's muddy. We don't have all the answers, but it is fascinating to note that the people who were the closest to it in Nauvoo, both the men and the women involved, that those people inside the Church were not up in arms against Joseph. It's usually the people who have left the Church – it's the John C. Bennetts, it's - very shortly after this William Law and Wilson Law who had known about it, they're the ones who are coming – but nobody's – nobody's claiming inappropriate or impropriety from Joseph in the – the Nauvoo period that are in the Church.

It was always a step away from Joseph where the trouble came up with people that were unhappy with him and then were able to unravel different pieces of that and they would manipulate it in every way and we know that is always the case. That is like the law of opposition in all things, that you always have that opposition.

Absolutely. Now, let's actually jump into section 132. We've tried to lay - lay out the foundation of some of the historical situation, now let's look at what the Lord actually says through Joseph the prophet, to, once again, look at the very first line in verse 1. "Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph." Now notice he doesn't say, unto everyone, or unto the Church or unto

the quorum of the twelve, it's – this really is a personal revelation to Joseph that is meant to be shared with Emma, "inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants," now notice who he lists, "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," the three great patriarchs, "as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants as touching the principles and doctrines of their having many wives and concubines." It's fascinating to me, Jenny, that he would include that list and when Jacob talks about the struggles with the Nephite men in his time, he doesn't talk about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and he doesn't talk about Moses. The only ones he mentions are the two who messed it up royally, and I mean royally. That pun was intended. As kings they – they take – they take it to a totally different level and those are the two that Jacob mentions because they abused it, which is fascinating to me.

Now notice, many people will read this next part, verse 3, "Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you." Now if I'm honest with myself, I'm saying well for Joseph, in his setting when he first gets this in 1831, '32, whenever it's kind of coming to him originally, we understand the setting, but for us today I think it's important to recognize that this is not for our day and so if you read the first half of this section under the umbrella of the new and everlasting covenant in the Lord's law of marriage that we talked about – one man and one woman – it's really beautiful. It is. It's – it's heart-warming. It makes me love my wife even more than I already do.

And it's very similar to the sealing ordinance that we have in the temple today – yes – between a husband and wife, particularly verse 7, "all covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations." Whoa, did you leave anything off the list there? I don't know. There's a lot in there. But the fact that they are - if they're not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, of him who is anointed," and that's where I think we get the whole idea of the new and everlasting covenant being of Christ, "both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed." And if we skip down to the end, are of no – this is a very long sentence.

Now I was just going to point out verse 7 is one sentence. It is – for those of you who in the past when you went to school learned how to diagram sentences, this would be your final exam. I want you to diagram verse 7 appropriately. Good luck!

So all of these promises "are of no efficacy, virtue or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead." And I actually think this is important because we see in the Book of Mormon when Nephi is given this promise, that what – what is sealed on earth shall be sealed in heaven with his authority and with his power. So I think this is something that we see select prophets holding in – throughout the scriptures.

Beautiful. Beautiful. Now you'll notice then you get this next part of section 132 where the Lord walks Joseph through four different marriage scenarios. So as you turn the page over and you pick it up in verse 15, let's take number one, verse 15 through 17. So he says in the beginning of 15, "Therefore if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world," the words we use today are as long as you both shall live or until death do you part, right? So if you've got that marriage then the Lord gives the outcome. Verse 16 says, "Therefore when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but they are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister to those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory."

Then the second marriage type starts in verse 18, well, it's just in verse 18. It's what if somebody says, you know, I don't like that phrase 'til death do you part so I'm going to have my Justice of the Peace say I'm going to marry you for time and all of eternity – he has no authority to say that or she has no – no authority to make that claim. Well, verse 18 says without the authority it doesn't matter, it's of - it cannot exist in the next life.

And then the next one, verse 19 is the good example. You'll notice partway down - halfway down in 19 he says, "Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit," now notice the list: "thrones, kingdoms, principalities" –

notice these are all plural – "and powers, dominions, all heights and depths – and then shall it be written in the Lamb's Book of Life," these other things that come in the rest of the verse.

And then you get the fourth marriage type in verse 26 through 27 which is a good marriage but the covenants aren't kept and the Holy Spirit of Promise doesn't seal that marriage up and what happens there?

Now we shift from – from just general marriage to some of the specifics regarding plural marriage. In verse 29 he talks about Abraham receiving all things and he gives this interesting little – little detail there at the end that Abraham had entered into his exaltation and sitteth upon his throne. I think, is it safe to just say from a Church history perspective that we have a bit of a what you might call a pronoun problem in scriptures where it just focuses on the masculine, the man all the time.

But you can't assume that if Abraham is exalted and sitteth upon his throne, based on our doctrine, there is no such thing as an exalted bachelor, so if Abraham is exalted, that's great – yeah – the implication is Sarah is exalted. So Jenny, from - from your perspective, what is that – what is that idea of Abraham and Sarah have entered into their exaltation. How do you see that?

You know I see it the same way that I see it in the temple. I was privileged to be an ordinance worker in the Salt Lake Temple before it closed and I realized how vital it was to have both the patriarch and the matriarch, the man and the woman, and that they are sealed in the new and everlasting covenant and that share these obligations and responsibilities but also these blessings and I think we often give that short shrift to Sarah or to Emma or to Hagar. You know, they all received these - these keys and these powers and these ordinances and they're all a part of the (overtalk). Sometimes we leave Hagar out of the story in the Genesis account and it comes up here in verse 34. "God commanded Abraham and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife." Why did she do it? Because this was the law. It's important to note, this is not the law for us today.

But I think it's also important for us to note that she had agency, that she had a part of it. And I think that part of what Joseph – or the Lord is telling Joseph

that Emma needs to be a part of this and when she's not a part of it, there's a problem.

Yeah, it creates major, major issues. Right. Do you find it interesting that here we are in this discussion of plural marriage and the – the various struggles that different people face and the Lord throws in verse 36. Abraham was commanded – so you'll notice verse 34 said, "God commanded Abraham" now verse 36, Abraham was commanded to offer his son Isaac, nevertheless it was written thou shalt not kill. Abraham, however, did not refuse and it was accounted unto him for righteousness. There's this, what we always call, in the Church we generally refer to this as the Abrahamic sacrifice, the Abrahamic trial, the Abrahamic test. This was the ultimate test. I think it's interesting that it's thrown in here right in line with this discussion of Sarah and Hagar, lest we overlook the fact that that was probably part of - a major part of Abraham and Sarah's test as well, and now Isaac's sacrifice comes into that mix. Almost, to me what that says is life on earth is intended to test us and to try us. It's not intended to be simple with easy answers from – from sunbeams all the way to the grave. But there are going to be some things that are really difficult; you have to wrestle with and work through. And I love the fact that in verse 37 he now includes Isaac, Jacob and Rebekah and I don't know how it works with Rachel and Leah and Bilhah and Zilpah, the two handmaids there, but notice how he says because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation according to the promises and sit upon thrones and are not angels, but are Gods.

Now I think this is probably a good place to – to mention what do we know, what don't we know about plural marriage in the eternities, in the heavens.

We don't know anything. All we know is what Henry Jacob said to Zina that there are twisting and turnings in this life and everything will be worked out in the next life. So I have a lot of friends who are married to men who lost their first wives and this has been troublesome to them, and I think the most basic answer is something that President Oaks said, is that we don't know, and it is hard to not know something. It is hard to not know everything's going to fit into a specific slot or place but I believe in a loving God and a loving Heavenly

Father and a loving Heavenly Mother and I think it's going to all work out. I believe it was elder Quentin L. Cook in a – in a broadcast from Nauvoo where Elder Cook said, basically, plural marriage fulfilled its purpose, it's done. We don't need to worry that maybe it's going to come back.

So in summary, in spite of what we don't know about what's going to happen in the next life, I think it's fair to say that it's okay if you have questions. It's okay if you have concerns. It's okay if you have even doubts about aspects of plural marriage whether it be in Joseph's time period or Brigham's or up to 1890 or after or in the eternities, it's – it's okay for us individually and collectively to wrestle with this and try to find peace – not from the world, but from God.

You know and I love that you say that because I find myself that I kind of go in waves. You know, sometimes I'm like this is good, everything's great, it's going to be fine, and other times I'm like, Oh shoot, I don't know how this is going to work out. But it's like a wave, like it comes and goes, and I think that is completely fair. I think that is why we experience mortality.

And perhaps if you have loved ones or members of your ward who are struggling with this, rather than – rather than dismissing them or – or patting them on the head, perhaps a better approach would be to say, it's okay. It's okay to wrestle with this. It's okay to struggle with this, and it will likely come from those (overtalk) waves and provide a safe space for them to actually wrestle with it rather than almost pushing them out of the wrestle.

Right. I think it's important to not try to resolve everything. I think some of the most powerful words we can say are I hear you. There you go. I hear you and stop, full stop right there. Not fix it. Absolutely. Until God's prophets, those who are authorized to declare doctrine and to give absolute answers, until they do that, it's not very helpful when we try to be too dogmatic in – in telling people who are struggling with their faith regarding aspects of poly – or any aspects of their faith (overtalk) arms out to comfort them.

I think sometimes we're working with a puzzle and we see it in 3-D, right? and you have to put these pieces together but I think that we are limited in our mortal understanding and we are limited by time and space and once we get

past those limitations, things are going to shift into all sorts of dimensions, that we can't see right now.

Beautiful. It's beautiful. You'll notice in verse 49, this to me, based on your insight at the very beginning, that this was not intended to be a revelation for everybody; this was for Joseph specifically and to Emma as well. Verse 49, "For I am the Lord thy God and will be with thee even unto the end of the world and through all eternity, for verily I seal upon you your exaltation and prepare a throne for you in the kingdom of my Father with Abraham, your father. Behold, I have seen your sacrifices" that Taylor was talking about earlier. It's this lifelong diligence of keeping those covenants. I've seen your sacrifices and will forgive all your sins." I have seen your sacrifices and obedience to that which I have told you. Go, therefore, and I make a way for your escape as accepted the offering of Abraham, of his son Isaac." That's interesting because it's a year later when Joseph's going to be killed. Some would say, wait, he didn't escape and I would say back to your analogy Jenny of our earthly perspective versus the more full, eternal perspective, I think God prepared a way for his escape. Yeah.

So Jenny as we finish off this important discussion, not having answered every question or resolved every issue, what would you say to people out in the world about Joseph and Emma and their story? There's another phrase that really occurs often in this section and that is that the Lord is a God of order and I think that's significant and I think it's significant that Joseph and Emma did come to a unity but how hard was it? They were torn apart literally before they were able to come to that ultimate unity and I think that is so beautiful and I think that the Lord requires us to pay the price.

Absolutely. And that process, that price along the way that sometimes comes in waves is never pleasant. We don't love those struggles in relationships in trying to become one, but oh, how worth it is in the end. Now Jenny, at the very beginning you promised to end this episode with a sweet note.

I really want to end on this story. And this is the story that just days before Emma died, she had a dream and her nurse who was Nancy Abercrombie, recorded this dream. She dreamed that Joseph came for her and brought her to a beautiful mansion and in the mansion was a nursery and in a crib in the

nursery was her son Don Carlos who had died in 1841 at the age of 14 months and she scooped him up into her arms and was so excited and she turned to Joseph and said, where are the rest of them? And he said, ye shall have all of them, every one, and then she turned and sees the Lord and I take that to mean that Emma has experienced an incredible redemption. She did not follow the saints to Utah to the west, she remained in Nauvoo, she stayed with her husband's body, she took care of her children, she cleaved unto her covenant and as a result, she received those blessings that she had been promised.

That's beautiful. And I really believe that she was, in fact, entering his presence and receiving that crown of righteousness that was promised her in 1830 in what we have as section 2 and receiving his inheritance which was those principalities and powers and dominions and posterity as the stars in the sky and the sands of the seas. I also find it interesting that Emma's last words before she died were Joseph, Joseph, Joseph. He had come for her and they were once again together and I love that. I love the way that Emma actually achieved a type of redemption that is so sacred and so holy and so beautiful that it could only come through the atonement of Jesus Christ and I believe that. I believe that each of us can achieve that kind of atonement from our own Abrahamic sacrifices, and I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Amen.