

## Come Follow Me Class Insights – 49 – Doctrine and Covenants 137-138

I'm Taylor, and I'm Tyler. I'm Mary Jane. This is Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today, Doctrine and Covenants sections 137 and 138. So Mary Jane is an expert on church history and doctrine, and particularly has done a lot of research on these sections and a great connection is, Mary Jane is my mom's cousin and it's just great to be with you today. You're just such a fun, delightful person to be around and we're so delighted that you guys will be able to learn from Mary Jane, just the deep knowledge and love that she has for these portions of the Doctrine and Covenants.

You can tell that he's family by how complimentary he is.

You have better hair, and I'm just glad that they would let me come to this family reunion today. So to begin today, let's – let's get the lay of the land with section 137. If you go back to the chronological order of contents which comes before section 1 in the Doctrine and Covenants, you'll see the dates and the locations where the various revelations were received and if you do that, you go to 1836 and you'll notice that section 137 comes in January of 1836. The very next section that's received chronologically is section 109, dedication of the Kirtland Temple, and then 110 right after that with those keys being restored. Isn't it fascinating that the Kirtland Temple's nearly completed when they go into the temple and they're having this experience and this revelation is received, but it wasn't originally included in the Doctrine and Covenants.

I think the reason is all of a sudden, we're not going to do it chronologically, we're going to do it by topic and by discussion, and you'll notice that both 137 – 138, what do they talk about? Redemption of the dead. And so it's (unclear) interesting to me that as the Kirtland Temple becomes that place where we're going to get the ordinances which are going to open up work for the dead. So I think it's – I think it's interesting that the Lord makes exceptions and this is one of those in the Doctrine and Covenants where he's going to say, we're not going to get chronological right here. I'm going to wait, and I also think there's a reason that we wait to canonize these two sections.

Absolutely. Part of the other factor going on here is there are some – some doctrinal differences in the 1836 – in the 1830s. Just really, really briefly, Tony Sweat, our colleague, introduced me to this idea and I've looked into it a little more, it's fascinating to see these three, major differences in the 1830s. You have Calvinism and the various churches and religions that fall under the Calvinist tradition, then you have the Arminian traditions, and then you have the Universalist traditions, and what you have with Calvinism, is this doctrine that there is nothing you can do or not do to determine what's going to happen to you ultimately in the end. God has predetermined who's going to be saved and who's going to be damned and, quite frankly, it doesn't matter what you do or don't do, you're not going to change that.

Well, under that tradition, section 137 and 138 – this work for the dead and the redemption of the dead and progression of the dead, that really flies in the face of the Calvinist tradition. The Arminian tradition is this notion that God has all power, he's sovereign, but you and I have free will, and what you do can actually have an impact. Members of the Church today would clearly fit under more of this – this mindset. And then you have the Universalist tradition that, incidentally, some of Joseph's own family comes out of this – Joseph F. – or Joseph Smith, Sen., clearly coming more from this mindset where God loves everybody and somehow, somehow, he's just going to save everybody, is kind of the general way to look at this. So you can see that when section 137 comes to Joseph, The Vision, there is going to be some hesitancy among many of the members who have come out of Calvinist traditions who are going to kind of choke on this doctrine and so over time, maybe the Lord gives them opportunities to grow into it before we throw it into the – into the canonization.

I think not only philosophically you've got those three, but you've also, within Joseph's family, got some very personal situations that once it is settled it is going to clear up and I would say the first one is, this -and this is the first time that we realize that we can actually accept the gospel and have ordinances done because Alvin's going to be seen in the celestial kingdom. And here you have Alvin who – you know Joseph said a couple of things interesting about him, he said he was one of the most handsome men he'd ever seen besides

Seth and Adam, which is an interesting little side note. But also he was - you know Joseph will say he was just so good from birth, he was just such a good man and he will die of a ruptured appendix, the doctor will give him too much calomel with strychnine, now had gangrene and died and even at that, he'll, you know, it's just been two months since Moroni first came and Joseph [Alvin] will say you make sure you do what you need to do with the record, but they go to the funeral, and the Presbyterian minister says, this guy's damned, he wasn't baptized, it's all over for him.

Joseph Smith, Sen. didn't like that funeral very much.

Oh no, that's one the reasons he says I'm done with - I'm done with formal religion, and so to see Alvin there in the celestial kingdom, can you imagine how they felt?

Yeah, the amazing thing about this Vision, keep in mind, we're in the Kirtland Temple, it's not totally finished yet, it's close, and you've got people in the room including - oh this is amazing. Joseph Smith, Sen. is there and he's having a vision of the celestial kingdom and who does he see? Alvin, Joseph Smith, Sen, his mother, and, of course, they won't, you know, his mother's not going to die for twenty years, but, you know, it's really interesting as you talk about visions and revelation, that Joseph Smith, Sen. is sitting right here and yet he's seen in the celestial kingdom.

So if we just push pause for just a second on that thought, stop and think about this for a minute. When we say we thank thee O God, for a prophet to guide us in these latter days, I love the fact that here's Joseph sitting in real time in a real situation with - with serious concerns about and love for his brother who - who has passed away years before, he loves his mother and father - they have not had an easy life, and in this vision, he's clearly seeing something in the future; he's not seeing a current vision of the celestial kingdom because his parents are still alive, so he's seeing into the future. I love the fact that God grants visions, seership to people on the earth to guide us and to give us something to hope for, to hold onto, because if all we had was what we can see right here, right now, with no guarantees of the past and no guarantees of the future, life would get pretty - pretty hard.

Well, it's so comforting and not only for Joseph, but it becomes comforting for us. And, of course, this is one of the first times you hear about little children, yes, who have died before the age of accountability, but they are there and before we discount how many that would be, you've got Heber J. Grant saying look, you don't understand. That's only half of Heavenly Father's children who have come to the earth and they're going to be saved where? In the celestial kingdom.

Wow, and Mary Jane, the reality is that sometimes we read stuff like that in a 21<sup>st</sup> century context and we think oh that's nice, that's wonderful. With all of our modern, medical technologies, childbirth is not – is not a life-threatening thing for most, but back in the 1830s and '40s – oh absolutely. In fact, the first thing that the Relief Society ever gave lessons on was maternity and childbirth, because they were losing so many women and so many babies – and children – yeah, so this is wow, this is a – a message of hope and a message of deliverance and redemption and salvation. This is one of the most beautiful visions that we have in all of scripture, sections 136 and 137 and it's not that long.

No, and I think this is the fifth time that we have the Father and the Son and – and even though he had section 76, this is much more a physical description of the celestial kingdom. Yes. And – and when I read through it, what is the main thing that comes through about the visual, that fire and burning and gold, and, of course, Joseph had said, he said about the First Vision, he said when the Father and the Son appeared in the grove, he was afraid the whole forest was going to catch on fire, and then we have him saying they are (unclear) in everlasting burnings. And so you get a physical description of what the celestial kingdom is going to be like. And I think he's, you know, he's trying to describe a celestial place with terrestrial words and he's just, you know, it's like – it's like Ezekiel trying to explain what a car looks like. It's just – it's just amazing and for the first time we kind of get an idea what it's like in that City of Holiness.

So let's jump in and actually look at a couple of these verses. Starting in verse 1, The Vision opens with - with these words: "The heavens were opened upon

us, and I beheld the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof, whether in the body or out I cannot tell." There – there are many times when prophets have had visions. Lehi with his great vision in 1<sup>st</sup> Nephi chapter 1, it's this – it is so profound they can't even tell, wait, was I in the body or out – it's just mind-blowing, what they're experiencing.

Look at verse 2: "I saw the transcendent beauty of the gate through which the heirs of that kingdom will enter, which was like unto," as you mentioned, "circling flames of fire." These, we sometimes call them the pearly gates and the ornate gates; it's that idea of this bright, resplendent gate as if it were fire. There have been a lot of depictions of the gates of heaven and different drawings and different styles of how those gates open. For me, at a very personal level, the gates of heaven aren't made out of wrought iron, or metal, the gates of heaven for me are the open arms of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. That's the gate of heaven for me, the one that opens wide that gate and says, come unto me, and then he circles us in and brings us in. Now I get it, there's probably actually a gate there, but for me, the way I interpret that is to see the Lord of the outstretched arms – he tells us in the New Testament, I am the door.

You know, as you talk about Christ with open arms, I think it's interesting that the uncanonized part of this vision is Joseph will see – before he sees the celestial kingdom - he will see the twelve in a foreign land. Do you remember? Umhum. And that they are in a circle and they're so distraught and downcast and here's with open arms above them, but they don't see him, the Savior. So I love how you've tied that in with the gates of heaven. I love that.

He employeth no servant there. He is the door. Look at verse 3: "Also the blazing throne of God, whereon was seated the Father and the son." So here's another allusion to fire, this blazing throne, and then verse 4: "I saw the beautiful streets of that kingdom, which had the appearance of being paved with gold." We often speak of heaven's streets being paved with gold and yet in our world, in the terrestrial world that we live in, we value gold so much and we think it's so precious, that some people will devote their entire life to trying

to get as much of it as possible and in the end, it's pavement up there. The irony is thick, isn't it? Yeah. Absolutely.

Now, Mary Jane, walk us through what you – what you see in verse 5, these people that he sees. It's interesting who he sees. We've already talked about him seeing his mother, his father, we already talked about Alvin, but then he (unclear)say I saw Adam and I saw Abraham. Now, the thing to me, the question is, how did he recognize those guys? How did he know that's who they were? Were they here (overtalk) say well hello, my name is – I don't think so. I think there's some experience there, but the other thing that we get, for me, that is of such value is that next verse, verse 6 where he says – and this is a totally – this is a totally new doctrine. You know you and I have grown up with it so we don't think anything, we probably breeze over it, but all of a sudden, he says, those who did not receive the gospel in mortality but who would have, are going to be there, and all of a sudden you get the idea of a second chance, after death, that – that there is – there's that possibility, and this is a new thought, and a revolutionary thought.

Yeah, it's – it's actually this – it's as some would say – a theological thunderbolt that – that unfolds on the stage of history, this idea that wait a minute, people who have died that didn't get the opportunity, because the question, the theological debate, the doctrinal debate for thousands of years through the – from the time of Christ forward, was wait, Jesus, when speaking to Nicodemus says except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. It's a pretty, hard, fast rule, and yet how many people have been born and died on this planet who never even knew about Jesus, let alone knew about baptism, and now section 137 gives this idea that if – if you had been given the opportunity you would have accepted it, then you are included in that – in that group.

Yeah, well that's more than amazing, especially when you think of Alvin and what he was told and so this also opens up that the flood of proxy ordinances – beautiful – which we didn't understand until then, without a doubt.

So let's look at the actual wording in verse 7: "Thus came the voice of the Lord unto me, saying," the significance there is Joseph not saying, huh, so I'm

drawing a conclusion based on what I'm seeing, I'm just going to make a prophetic statement here – here's my hypothesis – yeah, hey I think this is what it means. It's no, "Thus came the voice of the Lord unto me, saying," so God in this vision is now saying, Joseph, "All who have died," now that would be a hundred percent, "without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God." So that's in the past. Well what about the future? And "all that shall die henceforth without a knowledge of it, who would have received it with all their hearts, shall be heirs of that kingdom." Well we've now covered all time with these two verses, 7 and 8, and verse 9: "For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, and according to the desire of their hearts."

This is another incredible doctrine that is so comforting, because I don't think that desire part was in there before. Now all of a sudden the Lord's saying yeah, I look on your heart, I know your heart, I know your desires. And that's – that's going to be, if you would have had the opportunity to do this or that, or I know what your desires are and I'm going to judge you by those also. Mind blowing. Just so comforting. So amazing.

Comforting especially to those of you who may be spending time looking in the mirror with frustration and thinking you're never going to get this right, are you? You're never going to be that person that you can see in your mind's eye, there's a – there's an ideal version of you running around in your mind somewhere, and it can be so frustrating in life when – when I know what I want to be, and then I know what I do and what I say and how I treat people and think, I did it again. I fell short again, and it's so frustrating. This verse 9, that God's not just going to judge me by my works but by the desire of my heart, that gives me hope to keep trying, and you get that you're going – in section 138 get two categories of people in that Spirit world who - and one is what we're talking here, I'm talking about Spirit prison, but the other one Joseph F. Smith's going to let us know about, and those are the ones that rejected it. So very important that the Lord's going to distinguish here those people of the Spirit prison, and what's the distinguishing factor? The desire. The desire. Yeah.

Beautiful. And then he finishes this section with verse 10: "And I also beheld," so now we're not listening to the voice of the Lord, that was – that was verse 7 through 9 where he's dictating what the Lord has told him, now verse 10, he finishes by saying, "And I also beheld that all children who die before they arrive at the years of accountability are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven." Based on as you mentioned earlier, based on our numbers, that's a goodly portion of the human population through the history of time, has died before the years of accountability.

Now let's- let's shift gears from this vision back in 1836 right before the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, and fast-forward many decades to section 138.

Now I think it's important to say too Tyler, between oh, February and May in the Kirtland Temple, you have more Latter-day Saints having visions than at any other time. So I think it's interesting that this vision comes out of that time period. And then we're going to go how many years? Almost 90 to get this next vision that has to do with the redemption of the dead.

Which, by the way, it's fascinating to me that Joseph F. Smith is going to have this vision in 1918 and he's going to see some things regarding the redemption of the dead and regarding spirits in the Spirit world and Christ's ministry there that apparently, Joseph Smith didn't receive back in 1836, or any other vision that he had. Absolutely, it's this idea that just because we didn't have it before, doesn't mean that God isn't capable of revealing new things to the current prophet and at that time in 1918, it's Joseph F. Smith.

You know it's interesting that three years before Joseph F. Smith has this vision, James E. Talmage writes the incredible Jesus the Christ and what did Elder Talmage say in Jesus the Christ? That Christ personally went to the spirit prison and preached. So that's a first vision.

Yeah, and that, and it's not like that was revolutionary. When Elder Talmage wrote Jesus the Christ, he was – he was writing what any biblical scholar would have said, well yeah, Peter talks about that, he's just quoting Peter here. That is so widely accepted that he's just telling the story.



And the second one, I think would go back to verse 10 in 137, where it says that little children are saved in the celestial kingdom. Well, Joseph F. Smith had researched and Joseph Smith often comforted mothers by saying, if you lose a little one, you will bring that child right out of the grave they will be resurrected as you put them forth. So you lose a five year old, you get a five year old. Well what they didn't understand, was that that child would grow up. They thought that if you lost a child and brought it out of the grave resurrected as a five year old, that child would stay a five year-old forever. So you had this kind of crazy thing going around called baby gods, (unclear) you know, and you know when we're with teenagers and we're going gray, if we can keep a five year-old forever, let's do it, but you know Joseph F. Smith through this vision is very clear that they will not remain children, and the third one is how will people be taught the gospel in the afterlife, most especially, how will women be taught? And I love this quote from President Joseph F. Smith. This is a great quote from Gospel Doctrine page 461 by Joseph F. Smith: "Now among all these millions of spirits that have died on the earth and have passed away, among them we may count that at least half are women. Who's going to preach the gospel to women? Who is going to carry the testimony of Jesus Christ to the hearts of the women who have passed away without a knowledge of the gospel? Well in my mind, it is a simple thing. These good sisters who have been set apart, ordained to the work, called to it, authorized by the authority of the holy priesthood to minister for their sex."

Isn't that interesting? Do you realize what he just said? "by the authority of the holy priesthood to minister for their sex, in the house of God for the living and the dead will be fully authorized and empowered to preach the gospel and minister to women while the elders and prophets are preaching to the men. The things we experience here are typical of the things of God and the life beyond us."

Beautiful, and – and the other thing that we would add from section 138 is that he expands that out to say all faithful missionaries in this life will be able to teach the gospel over there, and as you – as you look at Joseph F. Smith's life, this is – this is an unusual character in church history. Imagine being the son of Hyrum Smith, when your dad rides to Carthage with your Uncle Joseph

and you're never going to see him again and your mother, Mary Fielding Smith, is going to now leave to come to Utah when you're only eight years old or nine years – eight years old when you leave Nauvoo and crossing the plains that next year when he's nine, and he is surrounded by hardship, by – by heart-wrenching things and he – he grows up, he at age fifteen he's sent on a mission to Hawaii. And he doesn't speak Hawaiian. Yeah.

You know, Donl Peterson once said, in the Church Administration Building and went past the door of Joseph Fielding Smith who is Joseph F. Smith's son and he was in tears and Donl Peterson went in and said, oh, Elder Smith, what can I do to help you? And he said, I was just reading my dad's journals and he said no boy, no boy should have ever gone through what my dad went through.

Now keep in mind that once Joseph F. Smith then gets married, that first marriage isn't exactly family life that you would look for. No. They couldn't have children, it was during the days of polygamy and it just was tragic that his first wife will leave him and they become divorced.

So after that divorce with the first marriage Joseph F. Smith is eventually going to marry four other women during the time of plural marriage and you would think – you would think okay, he's paid a big enough price. He's had enough heartache in his life that now God is going to make his life really easy and he's not going to lose any children or a wife to death from here on out. But that is not the case.

I think it's so interesting, I often say that death was stalking the prophet during 1918 and not only globally, you've got – you know you've got 15,000 young LDS in World War I and those body bags are coming back with those young men and then you've got the influenza epidemic and you know, it was – it was a battle worse than COVID, we have no idea, but also it was stalking him personally and you shouldn't have favorites but I think that oldest son, Hyrum Mack Smith was a favorite and he certainly was among – among the congregations of Latter-day Saints, they just hung on – I don't know if you have a favorite apostle, but it was Hyrum Mack during those years, and here he is, a young man forty-five years old, he's got four children, one on the way, and he dies of something that doesn't happen in our age of a ruptured

appendix in February. And then Joseph F. just could not be reconciled to that. I mean here's an apostle's son and he loses him. With great promise. Yeah. Incredible promise, I mean they always said. You know, if anybody will become a prophet, it will be Hyrum Mack. And then Hyrum Mack Smith's wife, the widow, will die in childbirth. The baby lives but not her. And so, you know, this is what brings Joseph F. Smith to pondering, Heavenly Father, what, you know, what's going on? I need to know more about that spirit world and – and he turns to the scriptures for solace and ponders of course, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter.

Yeah, this is – just for context, it's the day before general conference, October 1918 and it opens up in verse 1: "On the third of October, in the year nineteen hundred and eighteen, I sat in my room pondering over the scriptures." Let's just stop for a minute and look at the verbs. I sat in my room pondering over the scriptures. You'll notice Joseph F. Smith in this context doesn't seem to be doing his check box scripture reading for the day to say, uh, I read my scriptures. He's sitting, which implies he's not in the middle of doing something else or falling asleep or just waking up, he's sitting. He's set aside some time to ponder over the scriptures. Now watch what happens, "And reflecting upon the great atoning sacrifice that was made by the Son of God for the redemption of the world." So he's not stuck on the scripture page, he's allowing the scriptures to be a portal for his mind and heart to now ponder and reflect deeply upon what it is that they're even talking about, the actual events of Jesus' infinite atoning sacrifice, when, verse 3, he describes, "And the great and wonderful love made manifest by the Father and the Son in the coming of the Redeemer into the world; that through his atonement, and by obedience to the principles of the gospel, mankind might be saved." So that's the context. He's sitting there pondering over the scriptures, reflecting on the atonement and the goodness of God and all of this when, look at verse 5, "While I was thus engaged, my mind reverted to the writings of the apostle Peter," when he was writing in his book. So verse 6, "I opened the Bible and read the third and fourth chapters of the first epistle of Peter, and as I read I was greatly impressed, more than I have ever been before, with the following passages."

That tells you something, he's read this before but this time he's impressed, more impressed than before. So it tells you something about his scripture study.

Isn't that beautiful? This - this process, and, by the way, Mary Jane's already mentioned, Joseph F. Smith has experienced all of this personal tragedy in 1918 and worldwide tragedy with World War 1 and the flu outbreak and he's - he's in that mindset to where God is now going to take his mind and his heart to a whole new level of understand with things that have been there all along in the scriptures. But he didn't have eyes to see them before. He hadn't had the experience to maybe soften his heart or cause him to ask the right questions or be ready to receive these particular answers, so God waits and now six weeks from now, he's, Joseph F. Smith is actually going to pass away on - on November 19<sup>th</sup>, shortly after this.

And you come to the time - I always think of that statement that we learn of God in our extremities. He's in extremity, and that's when he's the most teachable, I believe.

He's there, and ironically, he's the prophet of the Church and tomorrow is general conference and I have to give a talk, what am I going to say? I don't know that they had the teleprompters and the long, before-prepared talks back in that day. Absolutely. Absolutely. Look at verse 7, here's what he's reading. This is the section out of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter chapter 3 verse 18 and 20 and then he follows up with 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4 verse 6, that's in verse 7 through 10 here in our section. And it speaks about Christ, after he had suffered for our sins, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit," and then verse 8, "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison." And then it talks about how they were disobedient. Verse 10, "For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." That whole idea that we can actually go and preach to spirits who are dead, it's in the Bible, but it is not widely accepted among all Christian congregations that the dead can actually grow and learn and progress and repent.

And, in fact, that's another incredible doctrine we get that you can repent in the spirit world and you also get that second group. Joseph Smith gives us the first group, those who didn't have the opportunity and would accept it, and here's the second group, those who did have the opportunity and rejected it and rebelled.

And now they get a chance to repent. Now some of you might be thinking, that's all fine and good for the prophet, Joseph F. Smith in 1918 sitting in his room with the Bible open in front of him receiving revelation. The fact is, there's a pattern that he's following here and we see it in all kinds of other situations throughout time in the scriptures. For instance, if you go to 1<sup>st</sup> Nephi chapter 10 and chapter 11, if you go to the very ending of 10 and the very beginning of chapter 11, you're going to see that Nephi is doing a very similar thing. He'll say as I sat pondering, then these – these words are deep in his heart and he's desiring to know and he's turning to God for answers, and the Lord opens up to him chapters 11, 12 and 13, the vision, this panoptic vision of Nephi that is amazing on every level.

Well, look at section 76. We call it The Vision. Joseph and Sidney are upstairs in the – in the John Johnson home with a group of people and they're talking about and reflecting on and pondering the words from the gospel of John that talk about these various resurrections, resurrection of the just and they're asking questions as they take time to quietly ponder and reflect on doctrine as found in the scriptures. Look at Joseph Smith's First Vision in Joseph Smith History. He's reflecting on James 1-5 and its principles and reflects again and again. He's pondering this, what do I do with this? And now, here you get in section 138, all of those words, pondering, reflecting, my mind was engaged, I reverted to the writings of Peter, I open the Bible, I read, I was impressed, and then verse 11, "As I pondered over these things which were written, the eyes of my understanding were opened." There's a pattern there for us.

If you feel like you aren't receiving as much revelation as you would like, I think – I think the invitation here from all of these prophets might be set aside some more time in your life, wherever possible, and I get it – it doesn't – that's not easy for a young mother with – with children or for certain people with

health concerns or other things going on. I get it, but if we do the best we can to set aside whatever time we can to ponder the words of prophets either past or present and ask questions and reflect upon these doctrines, that opens our mind and our heart to receive more inspiration and revelation.

But unfortunately, you and I live in a – live in an age with so many resources, technologically, that if we have a question or if we wonder, if we're not careful, we're going to lose the art of quiet reflection and pondering again and again over the process of time because we've been spoiled by being able to carry an internet in our pocket in – in many cases. If we have a question, we just pull it out and find the answer and we don't spend that quiet, reflection time, so for me, that's one of the significant lessons that I learn from Joseph F. Smith's vision isn't just the incredible mind-blowing vision itself, but the process that this man went through and to be in a state of mind and a state of heart to actually be able to see and comprehend and receive those glorious truths that God had not yet revealed to anyone we have record of in all of scripture up to this point.

So Tyler, what you're talking about is an important principle; you might summarize it as distraction is destruction. Distraction literally means, think about what a tractor does, it pulls things around. To be distracted means you're pulled somewhere else. Destruction means things are just strewn everywhere. How do you really expect to build your life if everything's strewn everywhere if you're pulled out of the construction mode of spiritual enlightenment and so we do live in a day, incredible day with so much overwhelming amount of knowledge and information, but we're getting pinged and emails and phone calls and lots of exciting things going on in the world. Some of it's good but we have to design time in our lives. We have to purposely choose to have time where we're not distracted. Otherwise, we have the destruction of a lack of revelation, a lack of insight, a lack of centeredness of who I am and who God is and who I am becoming because of him.

So as we, as we – as we conclude the introduction part of this vision, it's fascinating to me that we've spent this time focusing on the verbs, the – what you might call the action words that lead to revelation and if you look at all the

verbs on page 287 in our English Doctrine and Covenants, most of those action words imply be still and know that I am God. It's this don't – don't always be in high gear. Occasionally, slow down. Slow down and create space, whatever that looks like for you in your life, and connect with heaven. There's – there's a lot to like about that idea of not relying on other people telling you how to live your life. Return to God and find those answers in revelation, which now gets us into the actual vision that unfolds for Joseph F. Smith on this – on this beautiful day of October 3<sup>rd</sup> starting in verse 12.

Well at verse 12 he sees all the faithful saints gathered in one place. Now what's the timing? He's actually written in that little, tiny time of three days between crucifixion and the resurrection and they're gathered in one place and they're so happy and they're so joyful and why? Because they know that Christ is coming, that he had done the atonement and that the bondage that they are feeling will be over. Now I think it's rather interesting that Joseph F. makes such a point and that Christ makes such a point to tell him I didn't go to spirit prison. Why? Why is that such an important thing that we know he didn't go? James E. Talmage didn't know three years before, and Joseph Smith didn't reveal that he didn't know, and Brigham Young and - yeah, we've read Peter and just thought that's what happened. Why is that so important?

It's a great question Mary Jane, and to be able to answer that question you - you actually have to jump forward skipping quite a few verses here to let's cut to the chase at the end to answer that question then we'll come back and fill in some of the blanks in between. Verse 25 he says: "I marveled, for I understood that the Savior spent about three years in his ministry among the Jews and those of the house of Israel, endeavoring to teach them the everlasting gospel and call them unto repentance; and yet, notwithstanding his mighty works, and miracles, and proclamation of the truth, in great power and authority, there were but few who hearkened to his voice, and rejoiced in his presence, and received salvation at his hands. But his ministry among those who were dead was limited to the brief time intervening between the crucifixion and his resurrection," which we always say is three days. In our mind we would think oh that's 72 hours. The reality is, it's right at the end of that Friday, so it's just a few hours of the Friday, it's all day Saturday in the

tomb and then it's a few hours on the Sunday. I don't know. Probably 30 or 40 – somewhere between 30 and 40 hours is all he's got to now preach the gospel to the spirits in prison when he had three years in a very small, minute, geographic area with a small, specific group of people. Look at verse 28: "And I wondered at the words of Peter – wherein he said that the Son of God preached unto the spirits in prison," and down towards the bottom of that verse, "and how it was possible for him to preach to those spirits and perform the necessary labor among them in so short a time."

I'm going to give you some opinion here – this isn't doctrine, but I don't think he could go to spirit prison. It's the same reason that you can't go to the temple and be in his presence in the temple unless you can answer those temple recommend questions correctly. They wouldn't feel comfortable and so he's going to organize this (unclear) force. Now I think it's very interesting, all the people that Joseph F. lists, and what I think is even more interesting is that he knows who they are. How could he say there's Abraham and there's Ezekiel and there's Elijah? How did he know who they were? As we said earlier, I don't think they had nametags, but, of course, one of the most comforting things also is that he saw Eve, and then he lists, and I saw many faithful daughters there also.

Now one other little interesting thing is who's missing? He said, and I saw – he describes prophets and then he says I saw my dad and I saw Joseph Smith and I saw Brigham Young and I saw John Taylor and I saw Wilford Woodruff and who's missing? Lorenzo Snow. Snow is his predecessor. So I'm going to give you another opinion. I think, I could be wrong, but maybe we do get a little time off when we go across the veil; you don't get called on a mission right away. I could be wrong, but that's my – that's my opinion.

That's fascinating. Now you can picture – you can picture this, the actual advent of Jesus coming into the spirit paradise, what we - what we now call spirit paradise to spirits of the faithful to spend time with them and they are gathered together, as we're told here, and they are so excited. They are waiting for his coming, they know he's coming. Now, just as a side note, the forerunner for Jesus is John the Baptist. You'll notice he came into mortality



about six months before Jesus and his whole mission is to prepare the way for the Lord, repent, make his paths straight, he's coming. Well, you'll notice when you read in – in the gospel of Matthew that John the Baptist is killed by Herod a short time before Jesus is going to be killed and enter the spirit world – makes you wonder what John the Baptist's message was when he came into the spirit world (overtalk) I love that. I think John the Baptist did there what his divine calling is, which is prepare the way of the Lord. Can you picture him coming saying some of you spirits here have been waiting for thousands of years. Guess what? He's almost here. He's going to be coming very shortly. Prepare yourselves, gather together, repent, get ready, 'cause he's coming. Now you can picture that moment when – I don't know how he actually comes into the spirit world as he dies on the cross, but I can picture that moment where these – these faithful people, some of them who – like I said, have been dead for thousands of years, waiting to be delivered from this death, and now all of a sudden here he is. I can picture every knee bowing and I can picture those tears of joy to see Jesus in the spirit world knowing that here he is, and it's just a matter of a few days and he is going to be resurrected and when he resurrects, the promise is, I get redemption from the death as well.

And I think we come upon another important truth and that is, even though they are in paradise, you know, when we think about paradise, it's pretty great, we learn that not to have a body is bondage there and – and so that's one thing we learn. It truly is a big deal, the body that we have.

You know Mary Jane, that's a beautiful insight, the fact that sometimes you and I, when we look at this body of ours with all of its struggles, its pains, its diseases, its imperfections, its inabilities, and we can get pretty down on the flesh and get pretty frustrated with – with what it can't do or with what it should be able to do but it doesn't do it well, but based on this context of spirits, they're saying you know what? Be so grateful for that body filled with its mental, physical, emotional, psychological struggles, it is an incredible gift of God that we shouldn't hate or despise the flesh and look at it as if it's unnecessary baggage for our spirit.

And even though we learn such an important truth that we can repent in the afterlife, it's a lot harder without that body, and, of course, President Nelson said at one point that the spirit takes on the characteristics of the body and so being able to repent of those things that are bodily, without a body, has got to be tough. Really hard, but it is possible and that's – that's a wonderful concept that we receive from this section also.

So look at verse 18: "While this vast multitude waited and conversed, rejoicing in the hour of their deliverance from the chains of death," now these are good people.

Oh yeah, these are the faithful, these are – but they're saying whoa, death, it's these chains of death, "the Son of God appeared declaring liberty to the captives who had been faithful; and there he preached to them the everlasting gospel, the doctrine of the resurrection and the redemption of mankind from the fall, and from individual sins on conditions of repentance."

If you look at what is taught and it's just those first four principles of the gospel like we teach – we teach on the earth and it just goes completely as we're used to, what we're doing here. I also look at the timing of Joseph F. Smith. You do have all those boys who died in World War 1 who hadn't known any other prophet. We – we've never had a prophet who lasted as long as Joseph F. Smith. From 1901 to 1918, he keeps – they've grown up with him, it's the only prophet they've ever known. That's right. And here, for me, in the Lord's great mercy, he ends up in the spirit world to, you know, to greet those wonderful young men. And it's interesting, you have the same, exact thing happen with Heber G. Grant. Yes. I mean Heber J. Grant, you know, the longest tenure except for Brigham Young, and when does he die? He dies between Germany surrendering and Japan surrendering and I think of all those young men that died in World War!! He was the only prophet they had known. Yes, and here he is in the spirit world. I just - I think the Lord's timing is pretty amazing.

Boy, this is an expansive concept, this – this work of God on both sides of the veil. It's just – it's beautiful. Look at verse 30: "For behold, from among the righteous, he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with

power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men and thus was the gospel preached to the dead." And so what do they do? Verse 31: "And the chosen messengers went forth to declare the acceptable day of the Lord and proclaim liberty to the captives who were bound, even unto all who would repent of their sins and receive the gospel." That's just – that's just beautiful.

Verse 33: These were taught what? What is the message that our missionary force in the spirit world – what is their – their lesson material? "These were taught faith in God, repentance from sin, vicarious baptism for the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands," and then 34, "And all other principles of the gospel that were necessary for them to know in order to qualify themselves that they might be judged." You've got the article of faith right there. Right there. First four principles of the gospel. I mean it's just so clear.

Yeah, he's not making up some new doctrines or new gospel for people who are dead. They're preaching the same things our missionaries are teaching today – absolutely – in the flesh, and it's beautiful and simple.

You won't have - I don't think you'll have to have an MTC there. You've already got it, you've already got it.

Very good. And then a Mary Jane has already mentioned earlier, he starts to describe some of the people and lists them off. Starting in verse 38: "Among the great and mighty ones who were assembled in this vast congregation of the righteous were Father Adam, the Ancient of Days, and father of all," and notice how he talks about Eve in 39: "And our glorious Mother Eve." Can I just say that in a – in an early 19 -1900s context, kind of like in a Joseph Smith era of 19<sup>th</sup> century context, if you – if you start studying what most preachers and what most writers are saying about Eve (overtalk) it's not glorious. They want to condemn her and vilify her and I love the fact that here in this vision Joseph F. Smith is getting closer to the veil himself and he's starting to see things as they really are, it is the role of a prophet to reveal truth and line upon line, precept on precept God gives us more truth as we're ready for it and capable

of receiving it, and I love the fact that here, verse 39, he says, "And our glorious Mother Eve, with many of her faithful daughters." You can picture this motherly, matriarchal view that he has. There's our glorious Mother Eve and many of her faithful daughters gathered around her "who had lived through the ages and worshiped the true and living God." It's revolutionary in many ways.

Well this is pre-suffrage. Yes. When you look at the timing, it's amazing. And then verse 40: like we already said, Abel, Seth, 41: Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and then we get into these Old Testament prophets, verse 42: Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Elias, Malachi, and then verse 47: the prophet Elijah whose job it is to "plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to their fathers." Can I just say that section 138 is for me one of the greatest fulfillments of those keys that Elijah restored to the earth. (overtalk) if you want to turn the hearts of the children – I think they're key bearers, I think that's why he's mentioning them, because they are key bearers.

Absolutely. And here's Elijah who has turned the hearts of the children to the fathers. Joseph F. Smith would say my heart is fully turned. I - I am engaged with all of the father's and in this case, the mothers as well, going back to Eve, and then verse 49: "And all these and many more, even the prophets who dwelt among the Nephites and testified of the coming of the Son of God, mingled in the vast assembly and waited for their deliverance." So now you can picture this – this glorious scene of all these people he's listed, and they're waiting, and then Jesus comes to them, teaches them, loves them, ministers to them, and then organizes them to say, you know what? salvation, Mary Jane mentioned this earlier, sometimes our images of heaven and what it's like floating on clouds, eating grapes, playing harps, being fanned, that's not heaven. Heaven is to minister to people and to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life to as many people as possible. That's what they're organized to do.

And I think it's a family – salvation is a family affair and if I could just interject an experience that I had, I had found my great, great grandmother, she was 82 years old, she was living in a work house. She had been a widow for over forty years. She had outlived all her children and she was in a workhouse at 82 and

my heart just went out to her and it's interesting, when I did the sealing, the sealer said to me, you know, that when you start to look for someone, it's like a referral card goes out in the spirit prison and they get to be taught, and so as I knelt there, it came very clear to me who taught her. It was my dad. So here I was, I'd found her name, she was being taught by my father who brought me into mortality and I – I really think it's a family situation on the other side, as he organizes, we're organized in families down here on the earth. How did he organize on the other side? I believe in families.

In families. It's – it's like that statement like the phrase we sometimes hear, salvation is an individual endeavor but exaltation is a family endeavor. We – we are exalted in – in families as we move forward.

Now notice that verse 53 is where he shifts gears, and so 52 was all of this vision of what's going on back during that 30 to 40 hour time period between the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ, and then in 53 he says: "The Prophet Joseph Smith, and my father, Hyrum Smith," which, by the way, had to be a sweet experience – oh absolutely – at age six seeing his father ride off and never seeing him again until the body is brought back to Nauvoo.

But Tyler, I don't think there's even a shift because time is only for us. It's true. It's one eternal round so, you know, 30 hours with Christ, Joseph Smith dying and Joseph F. Smith seeing this, it's all today, it's alright today. It's all right now for God. It's all right now.

That's beautiful. So he sees Joseph, Hyrum, Brigham young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and as you said, missing Lorenzo Snow who's passed away, maybe he – he hasn't received his specific assignment yet, and then notice verse 54: "Including the building of the temples and the performance of ordinances therein for the redemption of the dead, were also in the spirit world." We live in an age where temples are being announced and built at an unprecedented rate. It's – it's just exploding, the number. And we get excited about that here and we only imagine what it's like with each temple announced over in the spirit worlds?

Yeah. I think that it's also, can you imagine how excited they get when we have a breakthrough in family history. Oh yes, absolutely. Now watch what happens, we actually make a bit of a transition, it's like a scene change in 56 but as you said Mary Jane, all things are present unto the Lord, they're right now – one eternal round. Exactly, so we've talked about the time of Christ's crucifixion, about now at Joseph F. Smith's time period in 1918, look what happens in 56: "Even before they were born, they, with many others, received their first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to come forth in the due time of the Lord to labor in his vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men." So now we're going back to the pre-earth life, the pre-mortal experience in the spirit, and, "I beheld that the faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption, through the sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God, among those who are in darkness and under the bondage of sin in the great world of the spirits of the dead."

Oh I think there's one important thing there too, we've blended, it's the pre-mortal and the post-mortal – the same place, the same place. No. And he answers that, he does answer that. Yeah, and then he summarizes the whole concept of God's work – verse 58: "The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God." That's revolutionary doctrine.

Oh absolutely, absolutely, by proxy. By proxy, exactly, and just because, just to clarify, some people who hear about our work for the dead, they think that we're somehow taking away agency. That – that is never ever, ever the intent. No, it's the opportunity. We're opening a door and allowing people on the other side to walk through that door should they choose, but nobody, and I mean nobody will get to come before the judgment bar of God and say, but I didn't have a chance. You didn't give me an opportunity, because everybody will have an opportunity. I know of no other doctrine in all the world that is more inclusive than this- this doctrine that entails the work for the dead (overtalk) and more merciful.

Absolutely. And now, Mary Jane, as we finish up section 138, I think it would be really helpful for context, why is it section 138? Well I think the question here, why did it take them so long to include these scriptures? You have Joseph F. Smith in that October conference say I haven't read the (unclear) I received this vision and it is read by his son to the quorum of the twelve, the Church patriarch, the presiding bishopric, and they accept it and say yeah, this is scripture, and then you have it published it in everything that they possibly publish it in. It's in the Deseret News, it's in the Memorial Star, it's in the Relief Society Magazine, it's in the Juvenile Instructor, it was everywhere, and then it kind of disappears. And people forget about it and they don't quote from it. They don't quote from it at all. You have a slight mentioning, you have a Bishop Worthlin, the presiding bishop talked about it in 1945 which is interesting, World War 11, but then you don't have anything until 1975 and all of a sudden Boyd K. Packer in general conference starts referring to it, and not only referring to it, quoting from it a lot.

So why didn't they canonize it in 1918? And why didn't they canonize Joseph Smith's vision of the celestial kingdom? For me, it is a great sign of the Lord's love and his mercy, because the minute you canonize scripture, it becomes binding and you have to do it. Do you know how hard it was, I tell my students this, do you have any idea how hard it was to do genealogy, family history work before a computer? People didn't do it because it was so hard and we actually had situations in the Salt Lake Temple where people would go to do an endowment, and because the temple bureau index didn't have any cards, they couldn't go to the temple that day. It was so difficult, but look at the Lord's timing. Here he – he kinds of puts it on the back burner and says there will be a time when you can redeem the dead and then – I'm just amazed how many more times they're recording, then in 1976 here we have, okay, we're going to include it.

It's going to become part of our scriptures, it gets canonized in 1976. Yeah, and it's first, of course, part of the Pearl of Great Price and then the Doctrine and Covenants which it doesn't matter where it goes, but it's interesting that he very next year, the Church will send Boyd K. Packer to I think it's San Diego for a crash course with IBM about computers. So President Packer goes, he

comes home and he goes, that's how we're going to do family history work, the computer. And then look, five years later, you have the IGI which is the International Genealogical Index where you can find people, you can find your family on a computer, and then look where we are. I can do it from my phone. We have our family history centers in our pocket now. You can – you can find more names than you're going to have time to work on in the temple right in your pocket. For sure, it is for me the Lord's great mercy that he didn't make it binding on us until technology could catch up and we could do it, and the timing is not happenstance. It's not like President Kimball and Elder McConkie went, well, we're going to do a new set of scriptures, we'll put it in and President Kimball goes, no, the timing of the Lord is always at the best time.

Perfect, that's such a beautiful, beautiful perspective Mary Jane. Now as we – as we finalize this incredible lesson on – on the work of redemption for the dead, our focus has been on this – these glorious visions of what Joseph Smith and Joseph F. Smith saw. To bring it home to us now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we believe in the ministering of angels and we believe in the power of family connections and every one of you have loved ones who, on the other side of the veil who have great interest in you and in your life and in what you're experiencing and in what you're doing and accomplishing. Regardless of what your story looks like, regardless of what your family situation right now looks like, we all have an extensive family tree on the other side of the veil and they're interested in you, and what an amazing thing it is to do what we can to help them, and I think the promises are pretty sure that as – (overtalk they're going to do -

And the promise isn't just that they'll help you find their names. The promise is they will help you in every other aspect of your life. I don't know about you, but I can use some angelic help in a whole bunch areas - so, what – you want to have angels in your life? You do family history.

You do family history and temple work and spend time learning their story and you're probably going to find that their story becomes a little more clear as you see your own story unfolding in life. Just know that God lives. He's in his heavens and his work and glory is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal



life of all that are willing to use their agency to accept his Son Jesus Christ as their Savior and to have faith in him and to repent of their sins and to accept those ordinances whether in the flesh or vicariously, and what a glorious message that we have to share with the world.

I just um – more than any other vision or dream, in the scriptures, this one connects with me and I think it connects with me because of that knowledge that I have of family, of loved ones, of those I haven't met but know on the other side, and what a wonderful thing as we are sealed together, I would just testify that Joseph F. Smith was a prophet of God, this vision is real. I testify that Joseph Smith saw what he saw, even the celestial kingdom, and I bear that witness that our loved ones do live after they die and because of the great atonement of Jesus Christ, making all of it possible for them also to be able to progress and I bear that witness in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Amen. Know that you're loved.