

Come Follow Me Class Insights (Doctrine and Covenants 27-28)

I'm Taylor.

And I'm Tyler.

This is Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today, sections 27 through 28.

So, let's begin with the setting. Emma Smith, Joseph's wife, she had been baptized back on the 28th of June, 1830, and she hadn't been confirmed yet, so her and Sally Knight were needing this confirmation ordinance. It's now August of 1830, so Joseph and Emma have come up to Colesville, and he leaves to go and procure some wine for the sacrament, because it was their practice to administer the sacrament before giving the gift of the Holy Ghost.

So, on his way to get this wine, he runs into a heavenly messenger who gives him the beginning part that we have here of Doctrine and Covenants section 27. The original Book of Commandments contains section 27 verse 1 through 4 and then half of verse 5, has all of verse 14, half of verse 15, and then a small part of 18. So all of the rest of this section is going to get added sometime between 1833 and 1835 printing, is when it gets fleshed out to this fuller version that we have today.

So, the critical element for Joseph in his setting there was to understand the significance surrounding the sacrament. Let's pick it up in verse 1: "Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Lord, your God, and your Redeemer, whose word is quick and powerful." Some have wondered about the use of the word "God" when we're teaching, or when we're reading the scriptures, or when we're talking about the gospel. When you say just "God," who are the scriptures referring to? It's interesting to note that

sometimes the scriptures teach it in such a way where it's very clear who they're referring to. Look at verse 1: "...the voice of Jesus Christ, your Lord, your God, and your Redeemer, whose word is quick and powerful." It's very clear that we're referring to Jesus Christ in all three cases here. He introduces it this way. Ironically, it's introduced through an angel who is delivering this to Joseph. So, notice how these are the words coming to Joseph from a heavenly messenger, but they're spoken in first person, directly from Jesus Christ.

You're going to see this throughout the Doctrine and Covenants a lot, this idea that we call "divine investiture of authority"¹. So, it's this power, this ability, this right that is given to somebody to speak, not just in the name of somebody else, but as if they were that somebody else. This is the full power of attorney, if you will. You can act in my name. You can represent me completely and fully. So, you get this idea here of this heavenly messenger has this divine investiture of authority to speak as if he were Jesus himself giving this message, delivering it to Joseph Smith. So, you've got the titles "the Lord", "God", and "Redeemer".

So back to the original question, how do we know, how do we keep this straight? The rule of thumb that I've used as I go through scriptures is, if it's really clear, then it's – and it's obvious in this case we're talking about Jesus Christ, that's wonderful. Other times, it's very clear that it's Heavenly Father that we're talking about when it's God. And many other times, it could be either one, and at that point I think we take Jesus at his word when he says - when he prays to Heavenly Father that all of us may be one as they are one, that we may all become one in them. It's this idea of, "whether by mine own voice or the voice of my servants, it is the same" (Doctrine and Covenants 1:38). I think Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ would say the same, that their words are the same, and so it's sometimes hard to tell a difference. And we could get into long debates about which one it is in some cases. And those debates probably wouldn't be very fruitful – not very productive at the end of the day because regardless of whichever one it was, it's the same message anyway with the same intent.

So, look at verse 2. Here's the message. The introduction has been given in verse 1, now the message: "For, behold, I say unto you, that it mattereth not what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink when ye partake of the sacrament, if it so be that ye do it with an eye single to my glory – remembering unto the Father my body which was laid down for you, and my blood which was shed for the remission of your sins" (Doctrine and Covenants 27:2). Let's take this. Look closely at that phrase in verse 2, when he tells you: "...it mattereth not what [you] eat or [drink]..." as long as - what's the qualifier? "...if it so be that ye do it with an eye single to my glory --".

So, President Nelson used the analogy of binoculars in order to teach this principle. So, you have this set of binoculars here that are connected in the middle and can be focused with a little gear, so we've got this view. You take what you see in one side, and then the other side, and you make those two separate images become one, is how he walked us through this. Now watch how this is instructive when referring to the sacrament, for instance, then we'll apply it to some other things as well.

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When you're sitting in a sacrament setting, you can see a tray come down the line with some pieces of bread in it, or some little cups of water. You can see that. But if you want your eye single to the glory of God, you've got to be able to see the emblems of the Savior's infinite sacrifice, his life, his infinite Atonement, his perfection, his mercy. So you take what you see, what God wants us to see, and you pull them together, and no longer is it just eating a little piece of bread or drinking a little cup of water. It's this connecting point to really see the glory of God.

You can apply this same principle to people. You can see them the way your earthly perspective can visualize them, with all of their struggles, with all of their weakness, and even addictions or sins, or where they fall short. But if you can see them the way God sees that person, if you can see them for their eternal identity, who they – if you were able to see them better who they were in the pre-mortal realm, not just who they are right now, and more importantly, who they have the capacity and the potential to become in the post-mortal eternal realms in the future. And you bring those two images, what we see and what God sees together, and have our eye single to God's glory, quite frankly, it will change the way we interact with people, and stop judging or condemning for what we see right here, right now, and create this eye single to the glory of God forever. And that's true when you look in the mirror, as well, to be able to see more closely through heaven's eyes, and let God's view, or vision of identity and who we are rule the day, rather than what we see with all of the flaws.

Now we go back to the sacrament. There comes this idea that it doesn't matter what you eat or drink as long as you "...do it with an eye single to my glory", and remembering that my body was laid down for you, and my blood was shed for the remission of your sins (Doctrine and Covenants 27:2). That's the "eye single to the glory of God" is to see not just the tray, but to see mercy, to see grace, to see this covenant connection being established over and over and over again every week as we renew those covenants with him (Doctrine and Covenants 82:19).

Look at verse 3: "Wherefore, a commandment I give unto you, that you shall not purchase wine neither strong drink of your enemies...". Joseph was on his way to go to buy wine from someone in Colesville. A lot of the neighbors in Colesville haven't been very friendly to the Saints in those early years, and he's told in a command form, don't do that. Verse 4: "Wherefore, you shall partake of none except it is made new among you...". So that's the new direction for the churches, that they're not going to buy from anybody else, unless they make it new among themselves.

Now look at verse 5: "Behold, this is wisdom in me; wherefore, marvel not, for the hour cometh...". Now, here it is: it's this prophecy of a super sacrament meeting, if you will. This is going to be the most amazing sacrament meeting. He promises that the day will come when "...I will drink of the fruit of the vine with you on the earth...".

And now he begins this long list of who's going to be there with them in this setting. So before we give you this long list of specific names that are given in this revelation, look at verse 14. Let's begin at the end: "...also with all those whom my Father hath given me out of the world" (Doctrine and Covenants 27:14). If you like marking your scriptures, you could circle all those.

That's a big group, and that involves a lot of people. Notice the phrase: “all those whom my father hath given me...” (Doctrine and Covenants 27:14). That idea, that sentiment, it comes up in John 15:27, John 16:4, John 17:6, verse 15 as well, this idea where Jesus keeps referring to his disciples as those whom God has given to him, the elect, if you will, that Heavenly Father has given into the hands of Jesus. I love that, that “all those whom the Father [has] given me...” are going to get to participate in this incredible sacrament meeting (Doctrine and Covenants 27:14).

Now let's go back to the middle part of verse 5, where we started with Moroni as the first person that is specifically mentioned. Why would Moroni be there? It's "...Moroni, whom I have sent unto you to reveal the Book of Mormon, containing the fulness of my everlasting gospel, to whom I have committed the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim;" (Doctrine and Covenants 27:5). As the priesthood was restored to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and to these early church members, the Aaronic priesthood was fairly simple: May 15, 1829, John the Baptist came and gave them the Aaronic priesthood. Later, we get Peter, James, and John, who came to restore the Melchizedek priesthood. But it's as if they just started the process. They gave the keys of the apostleship to Joseph and Oliver. It's as if they gave them the apostolic key ring, and maybe the initial key of being apostles. So, you have this big key ring, and they get their first key on it. But now they have to wait, because over time, they're going to get more and more and more keys attached to that framework that has been granted to them.

So, you'll notice a key comes from verse 5: Moroni held “the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim”. Now many of you probably know where this is coming from, but some of you may not. Let's get on the same page. In Ezekiel chapter 37, this is a great chapter about a vision that Ezekiel, the Old Testament prophet, has of a valley filled with dry bones, right? And it's deeply rooted in the House of Israel basically turning their back on God, on the covenant that he has established with them through Abraham and later on through Moses to reestablish this connection with the people, and they're carried away captive. The northern ten tribes – so here's a quick overview – here's Jerusalem here, keep in mind that after Saul, David, and Solomon have all of the tribes of Israel combined, there was a great divide, so you have two kingdoms, the ten tribes up north and two tribes down south.

The kingdom up north is the kingdom of Israel, but in the Old Testament and in other scriptures you're going to see often the northern kingdom is referred to as Ephraim, one of the tribes who happens to kind of be at the center and maybe the leader of the group up north. The kingdom to the south is called the kingdom of Judah. So in Ezekiel chapter 37, this vision of the valley of the dry bones, you get Israel who has been divided into two kingdoms, separate, and then this kingdom gets carried away captive – Ephraim gets carried away by Assyria in 721 BC, and then later on this kingdom in 587-586, culminating in 586, is carried away captive by Babylon, they come back and then ultimately after Jesus's time period in 70 they're going to be carried away captive again by the Romans that time.

But we're talking about this time when the kingdoms have divided, they've been carried away captive – both of them scattered, and it's as if it's a valley of dry bones as far as the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah are concerned. So, in that chapter, chapter 37, you get the verse

that talks about Ezekiel being commanded to write on a stick for Judah and write on a stick for Joseph, or for Ephraim, and then bring those two sticks together so they can become one in your hand.

There are a lot of people who have a lot of ideas about what that means. In a purely Jewish context, they see that as literally Ezekiel, object lesson time, take two sticks, write on the name the stick of Judah and write on the other the stick for Ephraim, or Israel, where the kingdom has become divided, the family has become split or no longer together or no longer unified. And it's a valley of dry bones, and God then restores those bones to life; they stand up, they get skin and sinew and muscle and then the wind comes through and breathes, and now he's supposed to take these two sticks with two names, bring them together, and many people will see that in a Jewish context as him bringing these two groups that have been split back together. If I'm holding two sticks like this it looks like one in your hand. That's a simple application or even interpretation of what might be happening in Ezekiel 37.

So, what's happening here? God, you will notice, uses this technique of helping prophets in each dispensation to liken the scriptures to their day, these applications that fit for their day and time. You get a beautiful application in the bottom of 5 saying, "...to whom I have committed the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim;". Now it's the record of the stick of Ephraim, so others would see the stick as the literal stick that you would put inside of and then roll up a scroll. So, you would have the record of the Jews, the Bible, being from this group in Judah and you would have the records of like the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants representing the stick of Joseph through Ephraim.

And some would say, but Lehi is of the tribe of Manasseh, not Ephraim. Keep in mind, the title Ephraim, two layers here, it could represent all of these northern ten tribes of which Manasseh is part, because somebody came down to Jerusalem in Lehi's family, because that's where his family would have lived, and then he becomes part of the kingdom of Israel, also referred to as Ephraim, but then you also have Franklin Richards and others in the early years of the Church saying that Joseph Smith taught that when Nephi and his brothers went back to Jerusalem to get Ishmael and his family, he said that Ishmael was from the tribe of Ephraim, so you get Ephraim and Manasseh groups come together and we don't know which tribe Zoram is from, and so it becomes these two records from two separate people, two different scrolls or books that now become one in our hand.

That is an application or a likening of this Ezekiel chapter 37, and the fact that the Lord through Joseph Smith makes that connection means that we can't disregard that application. That's really important when it's in a restoration scripture context like that. We say, wow, Jesus is saying to Joseph that he's given to Moroni the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim, so the Lord himself is referring to this prophecy as two records that are coming together, is one of the ways that you can interpret that verse.

You might also consider that the word "stick" we could replace with the word "canon". Anciently, a canon was a reed or a stick that was used to measure, and today we call scripture

canonized scripture, it's the measuring stick that we use by which to measure truth. And what's beautiful about this verse is that God is saying, I have revealed the fullness of my everlasting gospel through the canon of the Book of Mormon. We learn in Ezekiel that God wants to combine the canon of the Old Testament and the New Testament with the canon of the Book of Mormon.

So in your personal study you might ask yourself, how am I measuring truth? How am I using the canon or the sticks that God has provided for me? And what's beautiful here is the simplicity of the gospel. When Jesus says, I revealed the fullness of my gospel, my everlasting gospel, we might remember how often in the Book of Mormon, it's very simple: it's faith, repentance, baptism, the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end. There's no need to complicate it beyond that. God wants us to measure our lives around those things, and that is, in part, what these sticks are referring to. It's measuring on a daily basis, expressing faith, and showing that by repenting, and showing that repentance, by getting baptized, or by partaking of the sacrament, and then having the Holy Ghost endure with us as we pursue the covenant path.

Good. Now let's quickly go through some of these other names and what the keys are in verse 6: "And also with Elias, to whom I have committed the keys of the bringing to pass the restoration of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began, concerning the last days;". So, there's another key that's going to allow them to unlock the door that they're calling "the restoration of all things [that have been] spoken by the mouth of these prophets..." (Doctrine and Covenants 27:6).

Now who is that Elias? Look at verse 7: "And also John...", this would be John the Baptist, "...the son of Zacharias, which Zacharias he [Elias] visited and gave promise that he should have a son." So now all of a sudden we've connected the dots that Elias here in this context is the angel Gabriel, who appeared to Zacharias as well as to Mary and Joseph, surrounding the birth events of John the Baptist and Jesus in Luke chapters 1 and 2 and Matthew chapter 1.

Notice verse 8: "Which John I have sent unto you, my servants, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Oliver Cowdery, to ordain you unto the first priesthood which you have received, that you might be called and ordained even as Aaron;". So, you saw him already, he's reminding them, and verse 9: "And also Elijah, unto whom I have committed the keys of the power of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children...". So, you just keep adding to this apostolic key ring different keys that open different doors for different purposes and brothers and sisters, this is the beautiful thing about the dispensation of the fulness of times. All of these keys are coming to Joseph Smith from other dispensations and from other prophets who had different callings when they were on the earth, and they're all coming together in a fulness. We're not going to have a key ring that's lacking. They're going to keep coming line upon line here.

Look at verse 10: "And also with Joseph and Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham, your fathers, by whom the promises remain." So all of the Abrahamic covenant associated promises, covenant blessings, and keys are going to be present there.²

Verse 11: "And also with Michael, or Adam, the father of all, the prince of all, the ancient of days." Verse 12: "And also with Peter and James, and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles, and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry and of the same things which I revealed unto them." So the things I gave to them they've now given to you. It's a fulness of times.

And then verse 13: "Unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fulness of times, in the which I will gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth." And then he adds the verse 14 to include, "all those whom my Father hath given me out of the world." This is a beautiful, beautiful promise that we're all going to get to gather, if we're in that group described in verse 14. What's the conclusion? Verse 15: "Wherefore, lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins, and take upon you my whole armor³, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all, that ye may be able to stand." Now that's interesting because now, he's going to take us into this beautiful symbolism of putting on the whole armor of God that Paul talks about when he's addressing the Ephesian saints in Ephesians chapter 6. He's connecting putting on the whole armor of God with this sacrament ordinance that is going to be performed with this big group. It's as if he's saying, let me teach you how to come properly clothed to this meeting.

Now for us today, we don't need to wait for some big, huge, future meeting and this enormous prophecy to be fulfilled to find application or to liken this scripture to us right here right now, because you have a sacrament meeting coming up that you're going to get to attend within a few days or within a week and a half if you have a stake conference coming up.

How is this clothing that's described here, how does this help us better understand the sacrament? Now we've talked about this before, last year when we were covering some of the sacrament symbolism in the Book of Moroni in the Book of Mormon. It's worth repeating here. When in the scriptures of the New Testament it uses this phrase, put on, it's from the Greek word "enduo", which means to endow, it just means to put on a garment, put on a sacred garment. An endowment is the process or product of putting something on. That's what the "ment" does to endow. It's the process that you go through to become clothed, to be wrapped in the robe of righteousness.

In one place Paul is going to say, put on Christ, which tells us that the symbolism of this clothing is directly tied to the Lamb of God giving his life. Do any of you find it odd that the very first thing that happens to Adam and Eve after they partake of the fruit and discover their nakedness, their exposure to the law and to justice and to the consequences, one of the first things that happens is the Lord, Jesus Christ, prepares for them a sacred garment to put on. They're being

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clothed in – they go through an endowment, the “ment” the process or product of what comes before, which is endowment, it's endowing them, it's clothing them in something. Well, what do they get clothed in? It was a coat of skins, which means it's not cotton or silk or satin. It's a leather. It's a coat of skins from an animal, which means that something had to die in order for Adam and Eve to be covered in that animal's skin. Something had to die and give its skin up in order for Adam and Eve to have a covering, in order to put something on.

So here they are right after the fall, and it's likely that that's where they watch for the first time death occur for an animal or two animals that did no wrong. The animal made no wrong decision but the animal is going to shed its blood and die and its skin is going to now be used to cover Adam and Eve so they can put on that coat of skins to cover their nakedness, their exposure to the law, to justice. They've just barely partaken of the fruit and they're already learning about the redemption that comes through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God and being able to put on this sacred covering – put on Christ.

Now we look at Paul in Ephesians 6 when he talks about put on the whole armor of God, he's saying, get endowed, put on the whole armor of God. What is it? The very first thing he mentions, verse 16, that you have your loins girt about with truth. The very first thing that you put on is something to cover your loins and you gird the loins with truth because there's a lot of untruth regarding the procreative powers in the world's perspective. So the first thing we start with is, gird about your loins with truth, then put on the breastplate of righteousness, this breastplate that covers our heart, our lungs, our center part of our body, the core of our body. It needs to be – our heart needs to be filled with righteousness.

Third, we have our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, so we put on something on our feet that helps us be able to move forward in this covenant path that is the preparation of the gospel of peace which I have sent mine angels to commit unto you. It's my feet are going to take me the direction I need to go on the covenant path, because there are a lot of forbidden roads or forbidden paths and strange roads that I could take, but I need to stay on the straight and narrow way.

Brothers and sisters, it's so straight and narrow because it's so well defined by Jesus: faith in Christ, repentance, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and endure to the end in Christ, in that covenant connection. We can't change any one of those steps and create something else and end up in the same place. You can't. There's only one path forward. It's very straight and it's very narrow, and our feet shod with the preparation the gospel of peace helps us to stay on that straight and narrow way.

Verse 17: "Taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." So you have this shield that is very, very dynamic in a battle, because if I have a shield, it's not stuck to one part of my body. I can use it to quench all the fiery darts of the adversary that may come from any direction. Beautiful symbolism, and then he takes us to verse 18: "And take the helmet of salvation," so we want our head, our mind, our thoughts to be rooted

in that which is focused on salvation. This brings us back to that idea at the beginning of our eye single to the glory of God, our mind and our thoughts focused on salvation.

And then you'll notice he doesn't leave you just standing there with a whole bunch of defensive armor alone, he puts something else in your hand, hanging there at the side of this armor of God, this endowment that he's giving you – this gift is the sword of the Spirit. He gives you one offensive weapon. It's a "sword of my Spirit which I will pour out upon you and my word which I reveal unto you" (Doctrine and Covenants 27:18). So this sword which allows us to go and thrash the nations, he'll use the phrase later on, which is to not be a victim where we have to sit back and wait for the devil to do what he does, but we're fully defended, personally. No, that's not enough. He gives you a sword of the Spirit to go out and appropriately, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost, use that sword of the Spirit to build up his work and his kingdom.

Now next time you find yourself in a sacrament setting, see if in your mind you can connect those two images of being clothed in the armor of God, the whole armor of God with all of the sacrament symbol that comes, the symbolism of looking to the past and remembering all that Jesus has done for you, analyzing your present and looking forward to the future with thoughts of salvation and righteousness and truth and preparation and filled with the Spirit. Bring those two elements together and see if it helps deepen or enhance that ordinance of the sacrament so that you can start seeing it more as a literal connection, a connecting point with Christ, where he's filling you with light and truth and power and sharpening that sword and strengthening that shield of faith that consequently President Boyd K. Packer⁴ said, the shield of faith is best manufactured in a cottage industry. In other words, he's saying there's nowhere better suited to shaping and building shields of faith, no one's better equipped to do that than a mother and a father in a home in a family setting. And we get that that isn't always possible and the Church has structure in place to help in those situations, but the greatest application of all these principles we've been talking about today actually is in the home and secondarily in the congregations of the Church.

All right, now in section 28 we're introduced to some additional growing pains in this young church. It's roughly six months old. We're going into another conference, and there is one of these new members named Hiram Page who is part of the Whitmer group, the Whitmer family there in Colesville, and he has a stone and he's been receiving revelation through that stone, and he has been writing it down and having it written down, and he produced a lot of writing, and not all of that writing matches up with the things that Joseph has had revealed to him. And you've got people like the Whitmer family, you've got people like Oliver Cowdery who are being persuaded by the things that Hiram Page is writing and receiving, and they're thinking, this is wonderful, look at these great revelations, and they show some of them to Joseph Smith who reads them and gets a really opposite feeling, and says, this isn't right, and he talks to them about it not being right and they don't agree; they think it's good. They've got all of these wonderful revelations that are coming.

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Joseph spent an entire sleepless night worrying about this and wondering, what do I do? Is it my role to shut him down? He's receiving revelation. The revelation doesn't sound right; it doesn't taste good, if you will. It's – something's off, but he didn't know what. So, the Lord then gives him a revelation that is intended to be given to Oliver, the second elder of the Church who is a part of this group who's been taken in by Hiram Page's revelations on his stone, and so notice how God speaks to Oliver who is the second elder. So you have the prophet Joseph who is the first elder, and Oliver who is the second elder.

Look at the opening: "Behold, I say unto thee, Oliver, that it shall be given unto thee that thou shalt be heard by the church in all things whatsoever thou shalt teach them by the Comforter," there's the qualifier, "by the Comforter, concerning the revelations and commandments, which I have given." So here's Jesus speaking through Joseph to Oliver, and he's saying, Oliver, I'm going to give you the Comforter to help you know the things which I have given to you to speak to all the church.

Notice in verse 2 how it opens. This word right here is extremely important, because you've got this power, but here's the caution, here's the qualifier: "But, behold, verily, verily, I say unto thee, no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses." Moses in the Book of Exodus, it talks about Moses speaking with God face to face, and you remember that Miriam and Aaron and others in the group of Israel being brought out of Egypt, they're complaining that they can't have more power and authority to speak for God more, and he teaches them some pretty strong lessons saying, most prophets in the past, they get visions and dreams and revelations from the Spirit, but not Moses. I come and talk face to face with Moses. He is my direct servant. And now we're tying this in here saying, excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth even as Moses. He's got a direct line. I'm the one who called him, and I'm giving him revelation, Oliver, and nobody else is going to receive commandments and revelations for the whole church when I've got my appointed servant.

This is an important point because we are told in the church that we all should be seeking revelation, that we should expect it, that we live in a time where we know that all of us through the Holy Ghost can receive truth and inspiration. Now there's something significant here and Joseph Smith taught and as recorded in church history, he said, if any person has a vision or a visitation from a heavenly messenger, it must be for his own benefit and instruction. So you should expect to have personal revelation. What you should not expect to do is to be teaching your personal revelation as instruction for the church. That is the role of those who are in authority as we see with Joseph and our current leaders. We encourage all of those who are watching today to stay focused on the canon, on what has been revealed, on what the brethren are teaching because there are many, many voices out there in the world, and some of those are claiming that their revelations should matter to you, and we encourage you when God has so much truth, that you stick to those that God has offered directly from his authorized servants.

Let's pick up in verse 3 now: "And thou shalt be obedient unto the things which I shall give unto him, even as Aaron, to declare faithfully the commandments and the revelations, with power and

authority unto the church." Have you noticed this? Have you noticed that through the history of time you can see these powerful examples of leadership from various leaders through the history of time? Have you noticed the common thread among them, that the greatest leaders in the scriptures first are disciples? To be a great leader, you have to learn to be an obedient servant, if you will, an obedient disciple.

I wonder if that applies to the greatest leader of all time in infinite proportions, Jesus Christ. I don't think there was ever a better follower, a more perfect follower in the history of the universe than Jesus Christ, who was so meek and so willing to defer to whatever his Father asked him to do or wanted him to do, that I'd suggest to you that if you want to be a better leader, try to become more like Jesus in his not my will but thine be done mode of living his life every single moment, and that's what makes you a great leader.

You look at some of our wonderful prophets that we've had in the dispensation of the fulness of times and most recently now President Russell M. Nelson. I think one of the reasons he is such an amazing and beloved prophet for us, this leader for the work, is because he's so good at listening to God, receiving revelation and acting on it and doing God's will rather than his own will, and this pattern shows up all over the place in scripture, and here Oliver is being taught that principle. Be obedient to the things. You're the second elder and you'll have this power to teach the church, but before you can be really effective as a teacher, you have to be a really effective learner, a really effective follower of Christ.

Verse 4: "And if thou art led at any time by the Comforter to speak or teach, or at all times by the way of commandment unto the church, thou mayest do it." There will be times when the Holy Ghost gives you that right and that authority as the second elder of the church to do that.

Notice verse 5. It opens with the word but again. "But," there's a qualifier, be careful, "thou shalt not write by way of commandment but by wisdom." You're not going to be the one who takes over. I have an appointed person who is in charge. Isn't it interesting that in the temple recommend interview questions the fourth question says, do you sustain the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the prophet, seer, and revelator and as the only person on earth who is authorized to exercise all priesthood keys? It is a house of order. There's going to be one person who is authorized to exercise all priesthood keys that have been given, and that's basically what he's being told here. You can write to the church but you can't govern the church, you don't have that key. Only one person holds that key.

Look at verse 6: "And thou shalt not command him who is at thy head, and at the head of the church; For I have given him the keys of the mysteries, and the revelations which are sealed, until I shall appoint unto them another in his stead." So it's this beautiful house of order that you have in this kingdom of God, that it's not a kingdom of confusion, the revelations that come by way of commandment are going to come through the head.

So let's diagram this out visually. It's Joseph's right to receive commandments and revelations for the whole church from heaven. Oliver, you can receive revelation, you can speak in wisdom; you just can't write to the church in command form. You don't hold those keys like Joseph does. Now

let's bring that down to us at other levels. You've got people at different places here who have different roles, different responsibilities, different callings. So let's say that this is a stake president, for instance, it's his right to take the revelation that comes through those proper channels and then receive revelation specifically for his stake; that's his right, that's his authority. Those are his keys as a president. And perhaps you have a bishop here or let's say this is a Relief Society president. She has a right to receive revelation for those whom she is responsible to serve and to bless and to work among as this role of president, she can take all of these directions that keep coming and share them.

It wouldn't be right for this person right here to then say, last night, I had a dream and in my dream I got an answer for how this stake president over here in this neighboring stake really needs to introduce this new program and go to him and say, this is what you need to do, or worse yet, go to members of that stake or somebody else's Relief Society and say, this is what you need to do. It's a house of order. It's not a house of confusion, and so you get this idea. Now that's at the church's hierarchical level. You also have families where it is absolutely the right of this husband and this wife – not just right – but commandment to seek revelation for their marriage, for their family, for their setting, and for those who they have responsibility to care for or to teach or to minister to in whatever way that flows. So they need to do that.

Here's where the problem comes. When somebody gets revelation or when somebody has a patriarchal blessing that teaches some things to them, when they then go to other families and say, this is the way to live your life, or, this is the way to govern your family moving forward. You can share by way of wisdom. You can share – hey, this is what works for us, but not by way of commandment, and that principle is being shown very clearly here in this six-month-old church, this growing pain of how does this work? And God is allowing this really rough situation to become the seedbed for learning these really, really important truths to move forward in building a worldwide, global church that becomes the kingdom of God on the earth.

If you think it was a problem six months ago, can you imagine what would happen if today in a global church, if people are receiving revelation for all of the church membership rather than through the proper channels -- this house of order. And so it's nice that we get that lesson learned early on.

Notice in verse 9: "And now, behold, I say unto you that it is not revealed, and no man knoweth where the city of Zion shall be built, but it shall be given hereafter." Apparently, Hiram Page in his revelations off of his seer stone had declared where the city of Zion is going to built, and Joseph said, nope, that hasn't been revealed yet. We don't know. It will shortly, we'll get to that. Then he tells Oliver in verse 11: "And again, thou shalt take thy brother, Hiram Page, between him and thee alone, and tell him that those things which he hath written from that stone are not of me and that Satan deceiveth him." So Oliver is given this command from the Lord to go and correct Hiram Page because Hiram trusts Oliver, but do it one on one, don't do it in front of everybody.

The best place to correct is one on one. Have you noticed how sometimes in organizations when there's a problem with one or two individuals or a small handful of individuals in a bigger group, our tendency is to want to correct that problem by telling everybody about the problem and then everybody feels guilty and everybody's trying to figure out what they did wrong as opposed to this approach. Take your brother, one by one, counsel with him, share with him this thought and help him see the correct order here.

Verse 13: "For all things must be done in order." That's the key word for this section for me. It's by order "and by common consent in the church, by the prayer of faith." And you're going to assist in settling all of these things, Oliver. It's going to be okay.

Verse 15: "And it shall be given thee from the time thou shalt go, until the time thou shalt return, what thou shalt do." And this whole issue with Hiram Page is resolved. He agrees. Finally he sees the differences between what he was trying to do, what Joseph was trying to do, comparing the revelations saying, okay, I have been deceived. And so they stop using that seer stone and people get back in line to say, let's move forward.

So, to conclude. We've talked about the sacrament. We've talked about being clothed in the whole armor of God. We've talked about the order of God's kingdom on the earth and receiving revelation and inspiration for ourselves and for our stewardships, whatever those may be, both hierarchically in the church as well as familial revelation for the home.

At the end of the day, brothers and sisters, just know it's our testimony God is in his heavens, Jesus is the Christ. He's offering us a fulness of his mercy and of his grace and of his power to do his work as it rolls forth, not just into the world, but into our own heart and mind and family and circle of influence surrounding us today. And we leave that with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

- 1) The First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. “Gospel Classics: The Father and the Son.” Edited by Improvement Era, Aug. 1916, *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, Apr. 2002, www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2002/04/the-father-and-the-son?lang=eng.
- 2) “The Abrahamic Covenant.” Translated by Joseph Smith, *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, The Pearl of Great Price Study Manual, 2018, www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/the-pearl-of-great-price-student-manual-2018/the-abrahamic-covenant?lang=eng.
- 3) Packer, Boyd K. *The Shield of Faith*. Bookcraft, 1998.
- 4) Tanner, N. Eldon, et al. ““Take upon You My Whole Armor.”” *Doctrine and Covenants Instructor’s Guide: Religion 324–325*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints, 2021, www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2002/04/the-father-and-the-son?lang=eng.