

Come Follow Me Class Insights 32 D&C Sec. 85 - 87

I'm Taylor and I'm Tyler. This is Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today Doctrine and Covenants sections 85 through 87.

As we dive into sections 85-86 and 87 it's kind of significant to note that section 85 and 87 are a bit of an outlier compared to some of these other sections that are around them.

Yeah, so it turns out that these revelations are given at the time indicated, but they actually don't get put into the canon until under the direction of Brigham Young. Orson Pratt is making – they're making inspired updates to the Doctrine and Covenants in 1876, so sections - portions of section 85 and section 87 get included in 1876, and we should just point out that we have these canonized revelations from Joseph Smith. And yet actually Joseph Smith received lots of revelations, some that never even got canonized.

Yeah, if - for those of you who want to dig deeper along that line, go to josephsmithpapers.org and start looking at some of the references under the revelations received, and you'll notice if you go by year 1820, 1831, '32, '33, you'll notice the long list of documents and letters and papers that we have access to, and then they'll have the section number attached if it ended up in the Doctrine and Covenants, and there are many of those revelations that come that never – never made it into our canon of scripture. So just because we only have these sections as recorded here doesn't mean that Joseph isn't receiving all kinds of answers to his questions and directions and revelations, and again, we would encourage you if you're interested in that to just start looking around at those additional site -- additional sources.

And it's interesting because there's so much going on, that you have this emerging restoration going on, and Joseph Smith is learning line upon line, but he's a human just like the rest of us, and it's not like God tells him everything at once and says, here's all the answers to anything you'd ever need to know, just look it up. He has to – he has to return to God again and again as situations arise, and he's continually to stay engaged in the scriptures. We'll see this in section 86 where he's going back into Matthew 13 with all of these incredible parables, and he's receiving inspired interpretation about how do these parables help us understand the Restoration? So these are great sections to get into today.

Yeah, so to begin with section 85, it's significant to note the date of section 85, that it's November 27, 1832, when this section is received, and it's not as if section 85 is one big revelation. In fact, most of this section is simply Joseph writing a letter to W. W. Phelps in response to some things that the Holy Ghost has impressed upon his mind that he's writing a letter. It feels a little bit different in places than perhaps some of the other revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants because of the fact that he is writing this letter and parts of it are the Lord speaking to W. W. Phelps and part of it is Joseph speaking to him.

The thing that is interesting about the actual date is if you go once again to the josephsmithpapers.org website and you look up or click on journals, that entry, and then you

click on the very first entry there, lo and behold, you're going to find that the very first time that Joseph Smith puts ink on paper for himself in a journal sort of capacity is that day, this very day right here. He makes his first entry. Now, you have to look at this. It's kind of fascinating. The journal, this actual 1832 journal, is in Salt Lake City in the Church History Library. It's quite small. You can see it pictured there on the screen. It looks like a big book but in reality it's a really small book, physically speaking, and then if you click and look at the very first page, let's look at his – his first journal entry ever on November 27, 1832. Now you'll notice it's kind of hard to read the cursive text there, but they have the transcription here. “Joseph Smith, Junior's record book bought for to note all the minute circumstances that comes under my observation.”

Now you'll notice what happened. Isn't it fascinating that Joseph didn't like his first attempt, so he simply crossed it out because he doesn't have any – a back space or an eraser. So he crossed it out and he says, let's try again. Here's attempt number two to write his own story. “Joseph Smith Junior's Book for Record bought on the 27th of November 1832 for the purpose to keep a minute account of all things that come under my observation, etc. Oh, may God grant that I may be directed in all my thoughts. O bless thy servant. Amen.” What do you think? I think he did a much better job the second time around, but here's the fascinating thing. What you're looking at there on that page is Joseph's first effort to keep his own journal, so notice the significance of the date here. This is 1832 November; we're almost finished with 1832. Keep in mind the Book of Mormon was, the manuscript was finished, they were complete by June of 1829, so that was June. This is more than three years ago when the Book of Mormon is complete.

I don't know about you, but there's a significant difference between reading Joseph Smith's journal when he should have been more polished, more refined, more eloquent, more filled with great phrases three years later compared to when he had finished the Book of Mormon, but there is a noticeable difference from my view between Joseph Smith the man, or Joseph Smith the farm boy, and Joseph Smith the prophet and the Seer of our Lord. In fact a researcher Brian Hales has done a lot of work on this topic, this disparity between Joseph's innate intellectual and cognitive abilities and an ability to speak and to be a writer compared to what we see recorded in scripture and in the revelations that come, and there is a noticeable difference. If you put Joseph Smith's journal entry side by side with any passage out of the Book of Mormon, you can see a noticeable – you can feel a noticeable difference here.

The grand irony to me is if you look at pages of scripture in our canon and you can do your own research on this if you prefer, but if you add up all the pages of our Book of Mormon and all the pages of the Doctrine and Covenants minus those sections that didn't come to us through Joseph Smith or the official declarations and then you add the Pearl of Great Price, you come up with about 877 pages of scripture. Now if you add the lost manuscript, the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon, and those are on foolscap pages, they're bigger than our scripture pages, it would come out to be roughly 145 of our pages here. Once you add that, Joseph is well over a thousand pages of scripture. You'll notice if you start looking through the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, their next closest is Mormon, who produced 339 pages of scripture by

my count. Moses would be number three at 308, and then Paul at 122, and then Nephi at 112. You have to add those four prophets together to finally get up to 877 pages like Joseph did all by himself. Isn't that interesting that here's this farm boy, a poor farm boy in frontier America in those 18 – late 1820s when he first begins his work on the Book of Mormon, and something else that Brian Hales has pointed out is most famous authors produce their big work, their best work closer towards the end of their life. Isn't it interesting that Joseph is producing most of his incredible work very early in life as far as the canon of scripture is concerned, and then it peters out from there as far as the canon is concerned, because he's doing other things in building up the kingdom of God. If you add this all up, what we currently have in our scriptures page count-wise, Joseph Smith is responsible for over 35% of our current canon of scripture.

This is a fascinating insight that you have brought up, Tyler. It just shows that God specifically chose Joseph Smith as the vessel to reveal all this truth, and it wasn't like Joseph woke up one morning and decided I want to go launch a church. I want to go become a famous scriptorian. God chose him, and it's evident to us that God can do his work with the weak things of the earth, and I love the fact that there's all this beautiful truth, that God was willing to give us so much and that we are invited now to use these tremendous resources to find peace and comfort and guidance perspective in the latter days. And we should expect to receive more.

Now, I love that, Taylor. So to me there is a distinct difference between Joseph the man, and Joseph the Seer, and when I open that Book of Mormon, I feel connected to heaven. I feel connected to the Lord Jesus Christ, and I am so grateful that he used that farm boy as his instrument to produce this work.

So if we look at the historical context that produced D&C 85, we're looking at late November 1832, and Joseph Smith had been off on a mission just briefly out there, Albany, New York City, Boston, he's gotten back on November 6, and then he's seeing all these letters from Missouri, from Zion. Now remember, there are two Church centers. There is Kirtland, Ohio, and then there's Zion, or Independence, Missouri, and the intention is to build up Zion, to live in this society where everyone has consecrated everything they have, and then the bishop, who's Edward Partridge, is supposed to deliver back to people their needs and some of their wants. And earlier there had been revelations that only those who'd been called and chosen were supposed to go to Zion, not everyone's supposed to gather there. And you need to realize most of us get excited about like, new things. We want to go see all the great stuff, and unfortunately, some members of the Church went without being called, and they were actually quite destitute and they had nothing to consecrate, so suddenly the storehouse was being called upon to give out far beyond it had means, and not everybody was consecrating as much as they were supposed to, and you know, we're human. People were like, well, let me give this much and maybe I'll hide this over here and nobody will know and it sowed all this conflict, and so Joseph, he didn't have the internet and email and phones, so he's getting this letters now weeks after the fact and hearing about the very normal chaos that happens in human relationships as they try to perceive

truth and live the Zion lifestyle, and so he has to continue to address the problems of how do we live in a Zion society? It's a great question.

Part of the other issue there is you do have some people who have means that they could have helped greatly. They went early. William McLellin is a classic example of this. He's pretty wealthy, but he shows up in Independence; he hadn't been called to go there, but instead of consecrating, he goes and he buys two lots right on Main Street in Independence in his own name. He doesn't consecrate any of it. So you've got all of these issues that are all coming together in section 85.

And Joseph is in part trying to – well he's trying to address these issues, and we also get the message to Edward Partridge that you need to step up your game, like, you've committed sin. Now sometimes we think sin is a terrible thing, it can keep you out of the Kingdom of God. It is true any sin can, but Edward Partridge is one of these people, you'd really want him as a neighbor, you'd want him in your ward. He's an incredible guy, and here he is, how do I manage all these people and competing interests and we're out on the frontier, and basically Edward gets called to repentance, a pretty stern warning, and we get this phrase that shows up about if he doesn't do what he's supposed to, he will be replaced by a mighty and a strong one, and we hear later – a couple of years later that actually God had totally forgiven Edward, and so it seems that Edward actually had resolved some of the core issues that he was working through, but it turns out that the people struggle to actually live this full law of consecration, and eventually it was abandoned. They tried later in other times to do it, even when they moved out to Utah. In fact, you have some towns here that actually had the name like Circleville where they actually had – and Orderville – and it's been very hard for humans to live God's full law of consecration.

So it's no surprise that God was addressing a need. So let's take a look at what we learn here from God's inspiration to Joseph Smith about how to build up Zion in the latter days. So you'll notice that he begins with kind of this rebuke voice, because there had been so many people who had not kept the commandments or gotten their direction from the Lord through the appointed means of the Lord. They became disorderly – disorderly, they didn't follow the order that God had revealed. There you go. And so he describes what will happen to them in verse 2, 3, 4, and 5 where he says, we're not going to keep their genealogy, their names aren't going to be found - names of their fathers, they're going to be taken out of the Book of the Law of God.

Now this is – this is a fascinating concept that comes up in a couple of instances here in this section. The Book of the Law of God is something that Joseph takes – he lets this kind of distill on his soul, and in 1841, so this is nine years later, Joseph is going to buy an additional book, a journal, and he's going to start writing down names of people in that book. It's – in other places in scriptures it would be called the Book of the Lamb or it's this book with all of the names of the faithful that will be presented. So Joseph, at least in 1841 he takes section 85's description, he takes it literally, and he starts writing in this book. He writes an entry for Emma, his wife, and extols some of her virtues. For Newel K. Whitney, for Hyrum Smith, for others, and you can tell

that he gets to the point where he's thinking, wow, I can't write everybody's name, and so he just kind of does a generic and many others whose names also belong in here. And so you get this contrast of those whose names should be in the book and those whose names should not be recorded and that their name's kind of blotted out.

Part of this is a practical measure, so if you look at verse 1 it talks about "It is the duty of the Lord's clerk whom he has appointed". We're actually talking to Church historian here, John Whitmer. And the idea is let's keep regular Church records. So, for example, if you move from ward to ward, there is actually a transfer of records, and your membership clerk in one of those wards will make sure that those records end up on the right books, in the right ward. And this is actually part of the starting of that where before that, there wasn't a full understanding of how to keep those records, so again if you have a group of members who come down to Zion and they actually weren't called to go to that ward, and they show up and there's not like a record that they were supposed to be there, and now they're calling upon the bishop's storehouse. So imagine, if you're bishop and somebody moves in and they say, hey, I need support from the ward and I need support from the bishop's storehouse. Now a good bishop would say let's consider your circumstances, but if they're not a member of that ward but a different ward, you might say, well actually your records are in this other ward, we should have that bishop make sure it comes from that storehouse.

So it's mostly just, there's in addition to the very spiritual lessons here, there's a deep practicality and pragmatism that let's keep order and there has been quite a bit of disorder in trying to build up Zion. And, of course, God uses some pretty strident language about here's what's going to happen if you who are in Zion are not consecrating your properties and receive in return, you don't get to participate in this grand dream of Zion, and so yeah, you won't be on the rolls of the Church. If you choose to leave, you're off. You don't get access to all the resources I have to offer. So as we look at it, if you're going to peel back some of the language and look at just the historical circumstances, that makes a lot of sense, why God is organizing things in this life.

A house of order. Now look at verse 6. You can sense a little bit of a shifting of gears here: "Yea, thus saith the still small voice." So Joseph is making something clear here that, look, this isn't just Joseph Smith writing in this personal letter to you, W. W. Phelps, this is "the still small voice whispering through and piercing all things", which, by the way, I think it's worth noting here yet again, because it comes up in the text, it is a still and a small voice. I believe that there are many members of the Church who sit in congregations and listen to people speak from the pulpit or in classrooms and listen to lessons and stories told where people talk about fantastic experiences they've had with an outpouring of the Spirit guiding them or directing them, and I believe there are far too many members of the Church who sit there and think, huh, I guess I don't receive the Holy Ghost because I don't have those kinds of experiences the way that you're describing.

I love this wording here. It is a still, small voice. It will come through your own thoughts, using your own thought patterns and your own vocabulary and your own words most of the time and your own feelings, and instead of waiting for some huge, angelic manifestation kind of revelation, expect that God is speaking to you if you're trying your hardest to be on the covenant path and striving to keep the covenants that you've made, trust that he is speaking to you and pay more attention to those thoughts and feelings that come in those still, small moments, instead of expecting these big, huge moments to come.

And I do like how it says the still, small voice, it causes his bones to quake, so you kind of have this paradox that it is so quiet and so beautiful and piercing, and yet when you know it's there, it's undeniable, even if it's not like this overwhelming outpouring that just shatters windows or whatever it might be.

I love it. Now verse 7 is the verse that Taylor spoke about earlier, "...it shall come to pass that I the Lord God, will send one mighty and strong, holding the scepter of power in his hand, clothed with light for a covering." Why will this person be sent? This one mighty and strong will only be sent if Edward Partridge doesn't fix his struggle in Independence. Well, the fact is, is Edward did fix his struggle so the conclusion doesn't need to happen, the consequence in that if-then doesn't need to become a reality. There have been people in the history of our Church who have set themselves up as the fulfillment of verse 7 trying to call people to themselves saying, I am the one mighty and strong, come, I will now lead you as a fulfillment of this prophecy. That just strikes me as really odd because of what comes in verse 8 right after it. You'll notice "while that man, who was called of God and appointed, that putteth forth his hand to steady the ark of God, shall fall by the shaft of death." And he's referring to that story out of 2 Samuel 6 and 1 Chronicles 13 where it describes David who is now moving the ark of the covenant that contains the two tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments written by the finger of God as well as Aaron's rod and a pot of manna, this most sacred artifact of the ancient Israelites. David has it on ox cart and they're now moving it. He's going to be taking it to his house in the City of David in Jerusalem, and along the way the ox cart starts to tip and what happens to Uzzah?

Uzzah's like, I'm going to help but he just puts his hand out to steady the ark and, you know, he's thinking, I can do God's work. I can do it for him without being asked to do it, I'm just going to go jump in and do God's work for himself. But God had actually already made it pretty clear, like this ark is mine, my presence is here and I own it and there's only a few people that I've ordained to actually touch this. And Uzzah wasn't one of them. It was outside of the order, outside of his obligation.

And this story doesn't end well. And it's for 21st century sensitivities, that story doesn't – it's not usually people's favorite story because it's that – it's a God of justice and a feeling of wrath, teaching a lesson, and perhaps we don't have the full story and all of the background information, but the principle is clear. When God authorizes servants to do something, he doesn't want other people that aren't authorized to come in and say, no, I can do it better, which is what some

people, ironically, have done with verse 7 saying, I'm not authorized by God but I'm going to step forward and I'm going to be the one – the mighty and great one and the strong one to fulfill this promise in section 85, which to me I would say to any of those individuals in history or currently who have that feeling of I'm going to be that guy for the future - for the future, I'd say keep reading. Read one more verse, because God has an order with which he does these things, and we sustain our First Presidency and our Quorum of the Twelve apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators, and the president of the Church as the only person on the earth who is authorized to exercise all priesthood keys. There's an order to that that I don't need to – I don't need to wonder if I should go to Google because I don't think the Bible tells me surely the Lord God will do nothing except he revealeth his secrets unto his servants the bloggers? the Facebookers? the YouTubers? He didn't say that. His order, his authorized channel is through the prophets, and unfortunately in our world today it's that there are so many competing voices stepping up, trying to say in one form or another, look at me, I've got these answers and I've got some things figured out that the prophets and apostles haven't yet taught us about. That's a red flag of warning.

I think -- this is my personal opinion about the mighty and strong and it's based on the Hebrew. Many of you are familiar with the word Elohim, this nice Hebrew word. The base word in Hebrew is actually El and it means God, and it turns out that this is the plural of God, but this word in its most ancient Hebrew meaning literally means mighty and strong. So if we wanted to actually read this in Hebrew it would say, and it shall come to pass that I, the Lord God, will send God, like I'm sending myself, holding the scepter of power in my hand clothed with light for a covering. I cannot think of any human I've ever known who actually fits this reference, and so, now again, this is just my personal opinion, I think God essentially is saying to Edward Partridge, I need my work done well and I will come and replace you if you don't do it well. And frankly, that's how God always does his work. He invites all of us, we are all called to the work but only those who actually are diligently involved and purposely repenting and changing through the atonement of Jesus Christ are chosen. That's how I understand mighty and strong.

That's beautiful because I like this concept that even if it is a human being who ends up doing the work in your ward or in your stake or in the Church, that human being, as we've demonstrated earlier with Joseph Smith, the farm boy, that human being isn't the one actually doing the work. That human being is an instrument in the hands of he who is mighty and strong to do all these things. We simply become instruments for him to do his work which is kind of liberating. When you get a Church calling, it's not this feeling of the God in heaven who has all this power saying, go, good luck, I hope you accomplish what I've asked you to do. Our God never does that with callings, whether they be in the Church or whether they be in the family setting. Our God is a God of come, walk with me, assist me in my work and helping me to build the glory of the kingdom of God. Assist me. It's my work but I'm inviting you to help me with it whether it be in the Church or in the home. And that's liberating, but we don't have to own it in its entirety. We can let the ultimate mighty and strong one own it and just walk with him and labor with him in the vineyard. That's – that's liberating for me.

Okay, now as we shift gears into section 86, this is where Joseph Smith in the spring of 1831 – so look at the timeline here. Sometime in spring 1831, he has gone through the – what he calls, once again, the New Translation of the Bible, the NT, but we call it the JST, the Joseph Smith Translation, so in spring of 1831 he's already come through the book of Matthew, specifically today, section or chapter 13, so he's already – he's already done that. But notice the date on the page: it's December 6, 1832, now. So some time has passed, and we're now in December of 1832, and Joseph has experienced some things that he sees as connected back to those parables in Matthew 13. There are eight of them, so eight parables here.

Now, he asks the Lord some specific questions about some of those parables, gets an answer, and because of this answer which is section 86, Joseph now goes back to his Joseph Smith – or the New Translation manuscript and he's going to make some adjustments in the Matthew 13 section. So here we are a year and a half later and he's tweaking it. Now some people would say, ah, well some prophet he is, he should have gotten it right the first time he went through or he's not really a prophet. I love the fact that God is a patient and merciful and a long-suffering God, that he allows us to learn lessons line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little, and that in the beginning of the Restoration he doesn't have to give this huge, exhaustive blueprint to the Prophet Joseph from day one. I love the fact that he's letting Joseph learn from his own experience and, by default, letting us learn along with the prophet as these revelations come out, that he got some adjustments back in 1831, but now he gets additional ones, and what a beautiful thing to have a living prophet, seer, and revelator or in the plural, fifteen of them on the earth today, whose right it is to be able to help us understand scriptures at – in this case – deeper and deeper levels of meaning.

So let's talk about this just briefly. The word parable, actually another word related to this is the word problem, you might not imagine these two words are connected. It actually comes from the word that forms the word problem and parable actually comes from the word ball. Imagine a game. Para means in front of, so if you want to throw a ball in front of somebody, a problem is something you put in front of somebody, a situation we have to resolve. Para means alongside. So what you're doing is putting two ideas side by side to compare and contrast, so again, it's almost like you're throwing something like, I've put the word ball as that same root word, throwing it out there so you can see and learn and, God is a great teacher, and it's beautiful how Jesus uses comparison and contrast to teach people, and that was a very common tactic anciently, and we're going to see some interesting things about what Joseph learned from these parables, particularly one of the wheat and tares that actually is relevant to the Restoration today.

So Joseph Smith is fascinated with these eight parables in Matthew 13, possibly because of the fact that he says that there is no better place in the entire Bible than Matthew 13, these eight parables, to describe the gathering. Now I don't know about you, but if I read Matthew 13 from start to finish on my own, I don't know that on my own learning I would come away from that chapter with these eight parables saying, wow, this is the most incredible description of the gathering of Israel anywhere in all of the Bible. But Joseph Smith read it and studied it and says

these parables are all related. So he then, in this letter that you can go and read in greater detail, he's going to show you that that first parable of the sower and those seeds and the soils, the different types of soils, he shows how this is a description of Jesus and his apostles spreading the gospel and the different responses that people have to those seeds of the gospel that get planted by the Lord and the apostles.

Then you get into the second parable of Matthew 13 of the wheat and the tares. So this is Joseph's description of this, is given here in section 86 by the Lord, telling him exactly how to interpret it, which, if you open up Matthew 13, the parable of the sower will start at verse 3 and end in verse 8, and then it's afterwards that those apostles come to him, kind of like Taylor's description of what the word parable means, this setting side by side, this comparison, and they're understanding what he's said in the parable but they're not making the connection to what the lesson was, so they come to him and say, what did you mean by that?

The parable becomes a problem for their understanding, and it's not supposed to be a problem for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear as he described in verse 9. I love the disciples – Joseph Smith does the same thing – seek understanding. We should all - I love that lesson that it's okay if you feel confused, seek understanding from the Lord – from the right source, from the Lord. So notice what he does, verse 18 of Matthew 13 he says “Hear ye therefore, the parable of the sower”, and then starting in verse 19 all the way down through 23 Jesus himself gives them the interpretation of what he meant by it. We don't have to guess, we don't have to speculate. He told us exactly what that parable means from his perspective. Then he started into the parable of the wheat and the tares, and so what section 86 becomes is this prophetic insert back into Matthew 13, very similar to what Jesus did with his apostles in verse 19 through 23 where he's giving an interpretation of that first parable. Well, here's the interpretation of the second parable, the wheat and the tares.

And there's some interesting things that are different or changed or updated that should help us to understand the Restoration, which is why God gave Joseph this inspired interpretation, because back in, you know, the time of the disciples 2000 years ago, they wouldn't need to understand the intricacies of the Restoration that was going to happen 1800 or 1900 years into the future. But today, this inspired interpretation from Jesus helps us see the context for why this parable helps us to see what his work is today with us.

So if you combine this, so the sower has planted these seeds and any farmer, any good sower doesn't go out and throw out weed seed, they throw out seed that will produce fruit, food, sustenance, life-giving, and so the wheat has been planted by the Lord Jesus Christ and all of those whom he has called to assist him in his work. So that part's very clear here, but then an enemy comes along.

It actually turns out in the ancient world, we have stories of farmers getting in fights with each other, and one farmer goes out at night and literally throws weed seed into his neighbor's yard or into his farm and the problem with tares and wheat is early on, you cannot distinguish between

what is what. Now when they're fully ripe it is absolutely clear which is which, but when they're young, you can't. And so if you want to survive as a farmer, the only way to do it is to let both develop at the same time.

Exactly, and so section 86, the Lord tells Joseph, verse 1: "Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servants, concerning the parable of the wheat and of the tares; behold, verily I say, the field was the world,...the apostles were the sowers of the seed; and after they have fallen asleep the great persecutor of the church, the apostate, the whore, even Babylon, ...behold he soweth the tares; wherefore, the tares choke the wheat and drive the church into the wilderness." Joseph is giving us this beautiful analogy in 1835 in the letter that he writes out to the elders, he takes this one step further and he says this parable clearly teaches this great apostasy where the Church is driven into the wilderness by the enemy who hath done this.

So notice verse 4, "But behold, in the last days, even now while the Lord is beginning to bring forth the word, and the blade is springing up and is yet tender...and the angels are crying unto the Lord day and night, they're ready, come down to reap the fields, as Taylor said, verse 6: "...the Lord saith unto them, pluck not up the tares while the blade is yet tender (for verily your faith is weak), lest you destroy the wheat also." Interesting the section 86 analogy between the wheat and the tares that the saints and the servants of the enemy are going to grow side by side, seemingly independent of each other, competing for the light and the soil and the moisture and the nutrients in the soil. They're going to grow independent because you can't pull up the one without negatively affecting the other.

Now you'll notice a major change in verse 7. This is – this is a significant adjustment from what you read in the biblical account in Matthew 13: "Therefore, let the wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest is fully ripe; and then ye shall first gather out the wheat from among the tares, and after the gathering of the wheat, behold and lo, the tares are bound in bundles, and the field remaineth to be burned." Did you notice the order of operations there? If you read in the Matthew account of this parable it says in verse 30 of Matthew 13, let both grow together until the harvest and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn. Now this isn't a huge difference as far as the words, they're just switched, the order of operations, but if you think about it in the context of the building up of the kingdom of God on the earth in the latter days, the gathering of Israel, this is profound. The gathering first, the correction that comes from the Lord in section 86 is no, we're going to first gather out the wheat.

Now when wheat is growing, like Taylor said, you can't tell the difference between wheat and the tares; they look similar. It's only once the wheat finally starts ripening and those grains of wheat start getting more and more full that this whole plant, the heads of the wheat weigh down – they are bowed down with the weight of all of that fruit that's inside of the grain, right? Not the tares. The tares are still very haughty, so to speak, very, very lifted up. There's no – there's nothing weighing them down, nothing that we can benefit from so the gatherers, the people who

God has asked to assist him in this work are supposed to go out into the field, out into the world, and find the wheat, find the humble, the receptive, the ones who have taken in the nutrients that God has provided for them and turned them into a fruitful production. Find those, gather those out first into the barns. We could say into the covenant fold, into the temple, into these eternal family relationships that are so significant. Gather those first, leave the tares out in the field, and then at that point, they can be gathered in bundles and we know that at the Lord's coming the earth will be burned; if whatever hasn't been gathered into the barns is going to be burned which is a very typical 1st century practice. At the end of the harvest you want to burn and destroy any of those seeds that are bad so they don't ruin your fields next year.

I find a personal application here that in our own lives there are wheat and tares. We have difficulty, and at some point God will gather the good and burn the bad in our own lives and that then becomes the nutrients for the next season of planting. So all of us are going to experience weeds in our lives, and we can complain about them, or we can see them as the opportunity for those to be the nourishment for future experiences and growth, because the very next year when we plant the wheat, all the ash that's left over from these dead weeds makes it possible for the next crop to grow, so just a perspective in our suffering that good can come of what's hard.

Love that. Love that personal application. Now look at verse 7 in the context of living in the world that we have today: "...let the wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest is fully ripe." We live in the dispensation of fullness of times. It's not just a fullness of times for the wheat; it's a fullness of times for the tares as well. There was never a better day to be on the covenant path. There were never more resources given to disciples of Christ than right now to be good and to be able to do temple and family history work, to be able to do missionary work, to be able to gather Israel, to be able to connect with loved ones. There was never a better day where that fullness of times is fuller than ever before. But at the same time, there was never an easier time to engage in sinful behavior, in deceptive practices, in terrible things that exist in this world. It is truly a fullness of times, and they're growing together. I believe it was Elder Maxwell who said something along the lines of we shouldn't be surprised as time goes on that the tares start looking more and more like tares with each passing day. Now this ties back into the previous sections that we've talked about of signs of the times and looking towards the Second Coming.

When Jesus comes, he won't come into a period of great peace and contentment for the world. He'll come when there's great turmoil and great wickedness, abounding on the earth, and hence, our urgency to accelerate our gathering efforts, and it's not the tares we're trying to gather as we would read in Matthew 13, it's the wheat that we're trying to find and seek and gather safely into the barns in preparation for that day.

So since we talked about this, earlier as we were preparing, we were talking about there's so much misinformation and falsehood in the world on many different topics, and in some ways it's almost like people are consuming tares and becoming addicted to this and feeling like this is

what I need for my regular diet, and they're misunderstanding what it feels like to taste the wheat of God, and there's such a need for us to be grounded in truth, both the truth of God and also the truth about the world, because there's salvific truth, right? Faith, repentance, baptism, Holy Ghost; there's also truth about how the world works and how science works, and God is a God of total truth. Now ultimately it's only the salvific truth that will save you, but I think God also loves and embraces, actually I know he loves and embraces all truth and we should do the same and learn to distinguish. We shouldn't be planting weeds, we shouldn't becoming addicted to the taste of the tares.

Yeah, there is no – there is no benefit in leaving a place in your heart or in your soul for falsehoods or for lies or deceptions or for even half-truths that aren't ultimately going to produce fruit for us. That's why I love – I love the concept we thank thee O God for a prophet to guide us in these latter days, to help distinguish especially in those salvific things, but also in scripture and personal revelation ways to start distinguishing between truth and error, between wheat and tares when it comes to things that don't have to do with our salvation, that have to do with the physical world in which we live. There's no benefit that comes from believing a falsehood or from following a half-truth or some made up theory that turns out to be wrong or some prediction that doesn't happen.

Yeah, we could actually use the example of the enemy who sows tares. We live in a world where it's easier than ever for anyone of us to have a voice that gets amplified to the world, and all of us are spreading seeds of information. And are we planting wheat or are we planting tares? And so before you click a like or click share, I know I've struggled with this. I see something and oh, I've got to share that, without even making sure I understand what even – what seed I'm casting out to the world. So there's a real opportunity for us to understand the wheat and only be sharing that and to not be sharing the tares or to encourage people, use the wheat that makes the difference.

Since Joseph Smith made this statement in that 1835 letter to the elders of the Church, that there is no better place in all of the Bible that describes the gathering than in these eight parables of Matthew 13, we've already covered the first two. Let me just very, very quickly walk you through the rest of some of the things that he shared in that letter, and you can read that letter yourself on the Joseph Smith Papers website.

So the next parable is the grain of the mustard seed, which is the smallest of seeds that when you plant it then it becomes this biggest of herbs as it's described here, where the birds of the air can come and lodge. Joseph Smith compared that to the Book of Mormon. This little tiny thing that was planted by a man named Moroni in a hill and it germinates, symbolically, and eventually it comes out of the hill and it grows and it gets bigger and bigger and bigger, and this is the means whereby the angels, the birds, can come down and manifest truth to the world.

The Church could also apply to that little grain of mustard seed, this little teeny, insignificant seed being planted and then growing to become the largest and the greatest.

The next parable is the parable of the leaven, where a woman took three measures of meal, and she leavens the whole lump with these three parts of leaven. Joseph Smith compared that to the Three Witnesses in this letter. I would have never made that connection, but it's beautiful. Their testimony leavened the whole lump, being spread to the whole world, and keep in mind, it's the Three Witnesses who are going to be tasked with the job of calling our original twelve apostles. That's going to have this global effect that will affect the whole world moving forward for the rest of history, in our moving forward into the future.

The next parable is the treasure hid in a field. Joseph Smith compared that to discovering the land of Zion. And then the man, a merchant man seeking goodly pearls, and he talks about finding the gospel, this greatest pearl of great price. And then the parable of the net, talking about how it's not the missionaries' job to decide who is worthy of being saved and who isn't. We cast out the gospel net; we bring in all kinds and judgment rests with the Lord. And then the last parable, the scribe who brings out of the treasure things new and old, compared to Joseph Smith himself bringing scriptures and scriptural truth, spiritual truth both old and new. You've got the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Doctrine and Covenants. Of course Pearl of Great Price isn't going to be a canonized scripture until the 1870s, but you've got the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and then old treasures as well, the Joseph Smith Translation, this new translation, some additional treasures coming out. So just wanted to walk through some of those – you see this unfolding gathering effort and what is required for that work to actually be accomplished coming through those parables in Matthew 13.

Now let's finish with section 87. It's Christmas day in 1832, and there is a lot happening in the world near the end of 1832. So in 1832 there's been this huge outbreak of cholera, I believe, and it's catching the global attention. Even in that day the word is spreading across the globe and great concern. There are major struggles in those young United States at the time where the federal government had been making some, passing some decrees, some laws, some tariffs that were very negatively affecting the southern states, from their perspective, and they were starting to really ramp up in their opposition, especially South Carolina. Notice section 87 verse 1: "Verily, thus saith the Lord concerning the wars," notice, that's plural, "that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls." Steve Harper pointed out in his book Making Sense of the Doctrine and Covenants that nobody – this revelation that Joseph Smith received about the war, the Civil War, as this beginning point of multiple wars, that because it wasn't put in the Doctrine and Covenants, it wasn't completely known to everybody, but there were copies of it that were spread around, and Steve Harper points out that it was a newspaper in Philadelphia after the war breaks out, those first shots are fired in April – early in April of 1861, so if you do the math, what - we're talking 29 years later when the war actually does break out, and Steve Harper points out this newspaper in Philadelphia says, is there not a prophet among us? And then they include Joseph Smith's prophecy to say this war was prophesied, very clearly and why it would happen and where.

Look at verse 2: "And the time will come that war will be poured out upon all nations, beginning at this place." Now I'm not an expert in war history and I've not mapped this out, but based on this revelation, the way the wording comes out is there will have been many conflicts and many wars previous to the U. S. Civil War, beginning in 1861, but the way this is described here is that war is going to be poured out upon all nations – that's worldwide – beginning at this place. "For behold, the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States, and the Southern States will call on other nations, even the nation of Great Britain, as it is called, and they shall call upon other nations, in order to defend themselves against other nations; and then war shall be poured out upon all nations." It seems like there's this prediction of an increasing wars and rumors of wars that really starts ramping up, beginning with the Civil War, with some very specific prophecies coming from Joseph Smith on this Christmas day 1832.

He's also describing the slaves rising up against their masters, and verse 5: "...it shall come to pass also that the remnants who are left of the land will marshal themselves, and shall become exceedingly angry, and shall vex the Gentiles with a sore vexation." So there's going to be this turmoil and this conflict. Wow! Merry Christmas, indeed, right? This is not a joyous thing, and you thought it was bad up to that point? Well, verse 6: "...thus, with the sword and by bloodshed the inhabitants of the earth shall mourn; and with famine and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven, and the fierce and vivid lightning also, shall the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed hath made a full end of all nations."

Now at this point you're thinking, my goodness, this is really a downer. Look at verse 7: "That the cry of the saints, and of the blood of the saints, shall cease to come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, from the earth, to be avenged of their enemies." He's saying, I'm not going to let these injustices, whether they be because of racism or because of domination and domineering of rich and ruling classes of the people grinding upon the faces of the poor classes of the people over time, he's not going to keep letting these injustices happen.

This is a really powerful verse for a couple of reasons. If you think back to the time of Noah, it was actually the blood of the righteous that are crying unto God, because there's so much violence going on and people are killing one another, and God's, like, people have lost their humanity, and he decides to reset creation and make Noah a new Adam, he's, like, let's just start over, let's just flood the earth and let's start with kind of a blank slate and start over with Noah. Also the phrase the Lord of Sabaoth – the word Sabaoth is actually a transliteration of a Hebrew word that literally means host, so you'll see this phrase throughout scripture either Lord of Sabaoth or Lord of hosts. They both mean the same thing. This one's the Hebrew version, this is the English translation. What host are we talking about?

In the ancient Israelite worldview and what they taught in the Bible is that God, the God of heaven, had all these angelic hosts, and it's actually, it's a military host that will do God's bidding to cleanse the earth of wickedness. And in the context of what's going on here, is that there is all

this war among humans, and God's, like, listen, ultimately, I'm the God of war. No. He's the God of love. He's the God of many things. But he's, like, humans should not be warring against one another, and if there's a need to cleanse the earth through war, only God should be doing it and it's to cleanse out the wicked. And that's what we see going on here; it's the cry of the saints that are righteous, they're saying, Lord, it is time for justice. In the real war then, God brings upon all of those who will not be humble, all of those who refuse to love their neighbor. Again, I think most of us would say, yeah, I can love God 'cause he's so good to me. In my own life I think the most difficult challenge I face in the two great commandments - loving God, loving my neighbor - is probably loving my neighbor, and this prophecy lays out how difficult it has been for humans to do this. So when you see this phrase in scripture, we just all hope that we can be on the side of the saints and not on the side of the tares that are getting mowed down by the military hosts of heaven.

Isn't that remarkable to picture in your mind's eye these hosts of heaven marshaled in their strength, ready to bring the battle against ultimate evil, whether it be in a pre-mortal context or in a mortal context or a post-mortal setting. Fascinating to me that the Civil War that's being prophesied here for the United States of America, as the beginning point of all of these wars being poured out as we pull in this war analogy from heaven as well. That war is fought with the essence being centered on agency. Hmm. I wonder if there's any connection to the war in heaven? Satan, who sought to destroy the agency of all of us and so we were willing to stand up and fight against that before we came to the earth. Now you see these attacks on agency in our world, whether it be over race, whether it be over gender, whether it be over political differences, or all of the ideologies that exist out there, you peel back enough of the layers on war and you're going to find somewhere down there at the very core, the root is somebody is trying to take away agency to one degree or another on one side or another, or maybe both parties are trying to do that, but it's usually a war of agency which brings us back to the original war that Satan started.

Or one group tried to create more agency for others, versus what God did, Jesus who comes down and says, I want to help more people have more agency. Think about that. What does Ammon do? Does Ammon go in like a typical Nephite, like, let's go war against the Lamanites and take away their agency? No. Let me go in and serve them according to their needs.

Now, the closing verse of 87 is verse 8, which, after all these difficult prophecies and painful things that are being laid out in their future, look at verse 8: "Wherefore," notice the word wherefore is a cause and effect qualifier, so because of everything that I've just told you, verse 1 through 7, because of all that, here's the outcome, here's the effect: "...stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come; for behold, it comes quickly, saith the Lord. Amen."

I love the insight that Steve Harper also shared where he said the Lord didn't say, stand by. He said, stand ye in holy places. It's not this passive sit back and let the world do whatever the world's going to do. It's no, we take a proactive stand and we stand in holy places, places where

wheat can grow beautifully and freely and we be not moved. Those holy places like the temple, like a Christ-centered home, like a stake of Zion that we're seeking to establish and strengthen and build up those around us, that we don't just dress in the armor of God and then go whimper over in the corner, hoping that nothing bad happens to us. We stand up in these holy places and we don't need to be afraid of all of these prophecies that have been given.

So as we finish off section 85, 86, and 87, it's these sections about gathering to Zion, consecrating our lives to him, and in spite of prophets looking down the road and saying, whoa, there are a lot of bad things that are going to happen and that are going to come our way, we don't need to be moved. We can stand in holy places. There are safe places that God has given us in this earth where we don't need to feel terror and fear about what's going to happen in destructive ways. God is the Lord of the outstretched arms, and there is nothing happening on this earth right now that is causing the heavens or the angels to panic and to wring their hands in fear and anxiety wondering, oh no, what are we going to do now? Everything that you see happening has long been foretold and foreseen and prepared for far in advance, and part of the solution for all of the struggles we see out there happens to be you. It happens to be us collectively working to gather Zion. Be part of the solution rather than sitting back passively looking at all of the problems. Let's stand in holy places and assist the Lord in his greatest of all works, the gathering of the elect out of the four corners of the earth in these latter days. Know that he lives. Know that this is his work, that we do have prophets, seers, and revelators who stand at the head of the Church today, guiding us as the Lord guides them to move forward and to know how to build up the kingdom. And we leave that with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen. Know that you're loved. Spread light and goodness.