

followHIM Podcast with Hank Smith and John Bytheway

Guest: Dr. Scott Esplin

Episode 7

Transcript

Hank Smith (00:02):

Welcome to followHIM. A weekly podcast, dedicated to helping individuals and families with their *Come, Follow Me* study. I'm Hank Smith

John Bytheway:

and I'm John Bytheway.

Hank Smith:

We love to learn.

John Bytheway:

We love to laugh.

Hank Smith:

We want to learn and laugh with you-

Hank Smith and John Bytheway:

-as together, we followHIM.

Hank Smith:

Hello, my friends. And welcome to another episode of followHIM. We are so excited to be with you. I'm here with my cohost, John Bytheway. Great to be back. Yeah, we learned so much. This is such an incredible opportunity.

John Bytheway (00:34):

It's a pleasure to introduce Scott Esplin. He is a Professor of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University. He's the author of numerous publications on the Doctrine and Covenants, the History of Church Education, and Latter-day Saint Historic Sites, including an award-winning book on the Restoration of Nauvoo. He also serves as the Publications Director for the Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University. Scott is married to the former Janice Garrett. They live in Linden and are the parents of four children. That's the most important part. Isn't it?

Dr. Scott Esplin:

Definitely. Thank, thank you, John.

Hank Smith (01:08):

I just on a personal note, I've known Scott for goodness, over a decade, and he is one of the most genuine, good, kind and, and humble people. I know sometimes that humility thing just, I have been working on it, and it's, but man,

John Bytheway:

I've conquered it.

Hank Smith:

If I can have an ounce of, if I could have announced of the humility Scott Esplin has, I mean, just incredibly brilliant yet. Incredibly humble. It's, it's really a friendship that I treasure.

Dr. Scott Esplin (01:40):

You're kind, Hank. Thank you. It's good. It's good to be with you. I, I feel likewise. I'm grateful for our friendship and look forward to visiting with both of you. Thank you. Yeah.

Hank Smith (01:48):

So let's, let's jump right into the, to *Come, Follow Me* material for this, for this week. We're going to start in Section 12. So as I was, is I was reading and preparing for our interview today. I noticed that we run into a name that, if I'm a first-time reader of the Doctrine and Covenants, I haven't seen this name before in the heading. It says it's May of 1829. And Joseph Knight believed the declaration of Joseph Smith concerning his possession of the Book of Mormon plates and the work of translation of them in progress. So Scott, can you tell us about Joseph Knight, his family, and how they, how they came in contact with Joseph Smith, who these people are?

Dr. Scott Esplin (02:34):

Yeah, thanks. Thanks. So the Knight family lives in Colesville, New York, which is located about 30 miles north of where Joseph and Emma are currently living in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Joseph had become acquainted with the Knight family even prior to marrying Emma. So the story goes . . . back multiple years before the receipt of this revelation as early as 1825. Joseph Smith, he was hired to come work in this area of this area of New York and bordering on Pennsylvania by a man by the name of Josiah Staal. And he, I think previous episodes, have talked a little bit about that. He came to the area under the auspices of Josiah Staal, looking for a Spanish treasure, a supposed rumored Spanish treasure that was reported to be rumored in the area. Joseph eventually persuades Mr. Staal to stop looking for that treasure. But that introduces Joseph to the area of Colesville and Harmony. Whereas some will comment or say he finds a different treasure in, in his future wife, Emma--Emma Hale. But so Joseph remains in the area to court Emma and . . . and in 1826 in the fall of 1826, he hires on with a prosperous farmer by the name of Joseph Knight.

Speaker 3 (03:53):

And so Joseph Knight, Sr. and his wife Polly live in Colesville. They are prominent landholders, wealthy farmers, and . . . and respected citizens in the region. In terms of age, the Knights are

approximately the same age as Joseph's parents. So Joseph Knight Sr. is about a year younger than Joseph Smith, Sr. So these would, these could be somewhat like fatherly or motherly figures for Joseph. And Joseph, at this point, is 24-years-old; or will be 24-years-old later this year in 1829. And so these are our friends that take him in as an employer. And, but maybe more important than just being an employer, they're believers Joseph confided in the Knights, some of the earliest people outside of the Smith family to whom Joseph told the story likely of the visit of the angel Moroni to them and, and the coming of the plates. Actually, because the . . . the encounter with the Knights occurs before Joseph acquires the plates in 1827.

Dr. Scott Esplin (04:55):

So he's working with them in the fall of '26. And . . . and then marries Emma, of course, in, in January of '27. And . . . and it's at the encouragement of the Knights and . . . and Josiah Stool that Joseph and Emma get married and, and . . . and so the Knights are . . . are intrigued. The Knights believe one of their sons later said that we were the first family outside the Smiths to have believed the story of their son, Joseph. So, I think we should keep in mind. The Knights are prominent in early Church History. They aren't what we would consider today, General Authorities or something like that. None of them are, are they're not members of the Three or Eight witnesses, but they are the first believing family outside of, outside of the Smiths themselves. Some . . . some historians call the Smiths, the First Family of the Restoration, and one historian calls the Knights, the Second Family of the Restoration.

Dr. Scott Esplin (05:50):

And so they, they joined the Church, and they remained loyal to the prophet, the entirety of their lives. So Joseph Knight is a, is a prominent supporter of the prophet. Of course, he facilitates Joseph and helps facilitate Joseph and Emma's marriage. And then interestingly in 1827, when Joseph receives the plates from Moroni and from the Hill Cumorah, Joseph Knight, is there he, he makes the trip up to Palmyra together with Josiah Stool, and the two of them are having a sleepover at the night home or the Smith home, the night of . . . the night of September 22nd or September 22nd when Joseph goes to the Hill. And . . . and so these are people that are believers, followers, supporters, Joseph. Then, of course, moves back down to Harmony. And . . . and working on the translation, the Knights will periodically bring him paper, food, support him in the translation, and money. And so we can't diminish the role that Joseph Knight played in the Restoration. And, and so that's who he is.

Hank Smith (06:54):

I love that Scott. I love that because one of my goals with doing the podcast, I know John and I have talked about this is, is helping our listeners come to a great love for some of these lesser-known names, right? When we think Church History, we think Joseph and Emma, Brigham, Heber C Kimball, Wilford Woodruff, and those are names that we do need to talk about and tell their stories. But there's the . . . there's the Joseph Knight, Sr. and Knight, Joseph Knight, Jr. and new all Knight, you know, the Whitneys, you know, these, some of these lesser-known names that I think this year can be, can be a year that we, that we kind of give them a, I don't know, a big hug from the Church of, you know, 2021.

Dr. Scott Esplin (07:39):

Well, it may have. They have posterity in the Church today. Like I said, the Knights stayed faithful. They came West, and Joseph Knight himself dies in Mount Pisgah, Iowa, on the trail West. His wife Pauly dies shortly after the Saints moved to Independence, Jackson County, Missouri. So the Knights were there. Their little family formed what some call the First Branch of the Church in Colesville, New York. Then, Colesville Branch relocates to Kirtland and then, or Thompson, Ohio, just outside Kirtland. And then eventually took to Independence, Missouri. And so these are, these are some of the most faithful of the faithful and, and I loved your list of people. We think of, you know, Joseph and Emma, of course, but then you mentioned Brigham and, and Wilford or others, the names you listed aren't people who knew Joseph in the 1820s. Those are people who would have known Joseph just a little bit later after the Church is organized. And so that's, I think one thing that makes the Knights unique is these are people who are in, in the Church before there is a Church. They're in association with Joseph Smith before he's married, shortly after he's married, while he's working on the translation. As we'll see in just a minute, while the Priesthood is . . . when the Aaronic Priesthood is restored. These are people who are eyewitnesses to the earliest events of the Restoration.

John Bytheway (08:56):

I was thinking of Oliver Granger too, which I'm sure we'll get to. Because he's mentioned so prominently in one of the sections. Could I read something that Joseph Smith actually wrote? This is August 22nd of 1842. He said, "I am now recording in the book of the law of the Lord of such as have stood by me in every hour of peril for these 15, long years past, say for instance, my aged and beloved brother, Joseph Knight, Sr, who is among the number of the first to administer to my necessities while I was laboring in the commencement of the bringing forth of the work of the Lord and of the laying foundation, the foundation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For 15 years, he has been faithful and true, and even-handed and exemplary and virtuous and kind, never deviating to the right hand or to the left behold. He is a righteous man, may God almighty, lengthen out the old man's days, and may his trembling tortured and broken body be renewed. And in the vigor of health, turn upon him. If it be thy will consistently, Oh God. And it shall be said of him by the sons of Zion while there is one of them remaining that this man was a faithful man in Israel. Therefore his name shall never be forgotten." What a tribute

Dr. Scott Esplin (10:16):

I would. I, and, and I think thank you, John, for sharing that. I've always loved that statement. I, in, in some small measure, maybe we're fulfilling that today. "His name will never be forgotten." I love how that statement ends. The next sentence says, "There is his son Newell Knight and Joseph Knight, Jr.," Hank referred to them, "whose names I record in the Book of the Law of the Lord with unspeakable delight for, they are my friends." And I would love to have the prophet someday say, "these are my friends. "Scott was one of my friends, Hank John, these, they were my friends and to be called a friend of the prophet, Joseph Smith that's . . . that's Joseph Knight and his family and their legacy.

Hank Smith (10:56):

Oh, I love that so much. I think that that home if I remember right, that home is still there. The tales of the home, it's not owned by the Church, But there is a group who keeps it, keeps it up-

Dr. Scott Esplin:

--you can visit it.

Hank Smith:

Yeah. Yeah. And they're some of the original wood and flooring, and everything is still there from the house.

Dr. Scott Esplin (11:17):

It's about 30 miles from Harmony, about 30 miles from Harmony. And yeah, it's the . . . these are important characters. I . . . you will talk about this. If you go into there, the eventual departure out of New York in Sections 37 and 38 of the Doctrine and Covenants. But yeah, but the Knights leave that farm. I . . . there's an ad . . . advertisement in the local newspaper that I think the *Broome County Republican*, it says, "A farm formerly occupied by Joseph Knight available for very liberal terms. Contact Mr. Water." And they just, they follow the prophet. They go West to Kirtland and then eventually Western Missouri, and . . . and do what this section says. So, so Section 12, turning to the revelation, hints at some of those things, in some ways. It outlines what kind of person Joseph Knight is and what kind of person he should be as he serves in God's kingdom.

Hank Smith (12:10):

I gotta say this as we're, as we get into the section I've heard Daniel Peterson say this. I wonder if either of you have heard this, it's kind of funny, Daniel Peterson, we'll . . . he will hopefully be on our podcast one day. And Daniel Peterson's a descendant of the Knights, and he calls them the "Lord's backup plan" because you've got Joseph Knight, Sr. and Joseph Knight, Jr. Who would, if, if he says, "If the Lord finds out Joseph Smith and Joseph Smith, Sr. cant, can't do what he's been asked to do, He can go over, He can go over to the Knights and he can get those two Josephs."

Dr. Scott Esplin (12:44):

The Book of Mormon said something about Joseph's names. So there you go. They would fulfill that prophecy.

Hank Smith (12:48):

Perfectly.

Dr. Scott Esplin (12:51):

Well again, great souls. And so that's, that's who he is. He is in proximity to the prophet. In this case, in May of '29, he visits Joseph. Joseph is now working on the translation. So Oliver Cowdery has come to Harmony, Pennsylvania, about a month earlier, in early April of 1829. And he and Joseph are in earnest working on the translation. We don't have all the details of what

exactly brought Joseph Knight to Harmony on this occasion. It may be that he's bringing him food or paper to continue working on the translation. There are some scholars who wonder if he's coming in in company with . . . with Hyrum. Hyrum has come to Harmony, Pennsylvania, also in the revelation right before this. So there you'll notice it doesn't give an exact date just as May of '29.

Dr. Scott Esplin (13:35):

So we're not exactly sure if they're in . . . in company of each other or if they're separate visits. But in any case, Joseph Knight comes down to Harmony and, and this revelation is received. One thing I like about the revelation, you'll notice, is that it . . . it sounds very similar to some of the other revelations. And so if we could, if you want to talk about why is there repetition in the text? Why do some of these verses mirror those of those that had been received in February of '29 for Joseph Smith, Sr., or, or some of the verses in Section 6 for all of Oliver Cowdery or Section 11 for Hyrum Smith.

John Bytheway:

This is great. We understand a little bit more than who Joseph Knight is--how helpful he's been. And let's talk about what is the Lord's message to Joseph in Section 12, which is similar to some of the others who have asked for a personal message from the Lord.

Dr. Scott Esplin (14:31):

Yeah. John, so, thank you. Then you'll notice that, that some of the phrases and words that are used in this same section mirror those that appeared in, in Section 4 to Joseph Smith, Sr. Section 6. To Oliver Cowdery, Section 11. Two to Hyrum Smith and they will continue in Section 14 to David Whitmer. "A great marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men . . . thrusting in your sickle with all your all your might." And, and so the "God's word is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword." All of those phrases appear in other sections as well. I love the fact that these are repetitious. There's something in the section heading for Section 15 that I've always smiled at. It says in that section, speaking to one of the Whitmers, "The message is intimately and impressively personal."

Dr. Scott Esplin (15:19):

These sections are intimately impressively personal, but they're remarkably redundant. They are . . . they are identical whether your name is Joseph Smith, Sr., or Joseph Knight, Sr., or, or Hyrum Smith or Oliver Cowdery. And there are some things I love that . . . I love that the Lord is no respecter of persons. And if a 56-year-old Joseph Knight asks a question, a 57-year-old Joseph Smith, Sr. asks a question, or a Hyrum Smith in his mid-twenties asks a question. If their question is the same, the Lord who is the same will answer the same. And . . . and I, and I love that. That allows scripture to apply to us. It's the fact that there is repetition that allows scripture to apply to --a revelation (and this bothers people sometimes) in the Doctrine and Covenants. As they study it, they say, "Well, how can I apply that revelation to myself?" I'm not Joseph Knight, or I'm not Oliver Cowdery. Well, but God is the same, and what He said to them, He would say to me. And so the repetition I find helpful.

I also love the fact that Joseph included it originally in *The Book of Commandments* is where this revelation first appears. And then, in the Doctrine and Covenants. Joseph doesn't seem to apologize for the repetition. If it were me putting together a book--I've written books, John, Hank, you've both written books. It doesn't go over well if you repeat yourself multiple times in . . . in the same chapter, tell the same story more than once, or whatever. "Yeah, I've, I've read this somewhere before." Joseph doesn't. I, and that's what I love, the sincerity of Joseph Smith. For him, God said it. And if God said it, he's not going to apologize for the fact that he said it the same way to someone else. It's God's words. And, and, and that to me is a testament of the sincerity of Joseph Smith. And so I, I love the repetition in the text.

Hank Smith (17:15):

I was going to say, I remember President Hinckley used to say that all the time, with that hand up in the air, do you remember, "Repetition is the law of all learning." I remember him saying that repetition . . . "If you want to learn something you repeated over and over," it's almost as if the Lord is aware, not only of these individuals, but he's also aware of his dual audience that he's going to have readers. Yeah, future readers who are going to need to hear the same thing over and over and over.

Dr. Scott Esplin (17:41):

This is not in any way to be inappropriate. I think every Sunday I go somewhere and hear something repeated. I can't remember the last time I've been to church and heard the sacrament prayer is different than what they were the week before. They, they better not be different. And so, in that regard, the Lord knows something about repetition. We do things repetitiously in the Church and don't apologize for it and shouldn't apologize for it. And, and so the sacrament is, is something that's highly repetitive week after week. And yet, I love it.

John Bytheway (18:18):

We've talked about this before. I think in an earlier podcast, we mentioned the Whitmers that both asked, "What does the Lord have for me?" And it was like identical. And what I love about Section 12 is, and of course, you know this, but section or verse seven, "Behold, I speak unto you. And also to all those who have desires to bring forth and establish this work." So there's that repetition consistency of the message. And I like also the the Isaiah phrase of "a marvelous work." It just sounds like that's code for, "Oh, that's the Restoration."

Dr. Scott Esplin(18:56):

Yeah, no, that's great. John. I think that's that very phrase is why it's in your Doctrine and Covenants. This is not just for Joseph Knight, Sr. This is "to all who desire to bring forth and establish this work." And that, that is not limited to people who were in the earliest days of the Church that, that still goes on today. Other phrases that I love in the section I've . . . I'm intrigued by this one and the end of verse three, of course at the beginning of verse three, "The field is wide already to harvest." That would have been an image with which he and other farmers are familiar. But at the end of verse three is an interesting one, "That he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation to the kingdom of God." Joseph Knight is using his treasure to forward this work. He's bringing money to the prophet.

Dr. Scott Esplin (19:38):

He's bringing food to the prophet. He's bringing paper to the prophet. And the Lord has something to say about what real treasure is here. Also, you all remember it was treasure-seeking that brought Joseph Smith, Jr. to this area in the first place. It was Joseph Smith looking for treasure with Josiah Stool. And, and so I love that the Lord may be, and again, this verse is also in Section 6, it's also in Section 11, but . . . but I love the fact that treasure is discussed with Joseph Knight because that is what brought Joseph to the region. Joseph Smith, Jr. . . . to the Joseph Smith Jr. to the region . . . and Joseph Smith. And Joseph Knight is using his treasure to forward the work. There's another one at the end of verse six. And again, this is in some of the other sections, but it talks about establishing the cause of Zion.

Dr. Scott Esplin (20:23):

And at this point, Zion is a cause. That's how it's described in Section 6 and 12 and others. Very quickly, it'll switch over to Zion being a place. In Section 25 and Emma Smith will be told that she will receive an inheritance in Zion. You don't typically get an inheritance in a cause. We're switching over to something else. And I think we're setting the stage possibly for . . . then a year or so later, when Joseph will learn where Zion is, and then the Knight family will be among the first to have moved there. And so maybe this reference to Zion might be foreshadowing also the role that the Knights would play in trying to establish Zion in this dispensation.

Hank Smith (21:06):

And it also shows that the Lord is kind of holding back all the information at first, right. We're just going to build here for a little while. Yeah.

Dr. Scott Esplin (21:13):

Yeah, you're not ready for the city yet. Let's just call it a cause.

Hank Smith (21:15):

For now, it's a cause. It's a cause. Yeah, that is . . . that is excellent. I like when I read Section 12, this idea of "If you want to be called, whosoever will thrust into sickle and reap the same is called of God." So the Presbyterian idea is to wait until you feel God calling. You wait until you feel God's saving you. This is God saying, "No, if you, if you, you know, use your agency come forward. And you'll, you'll be part of the team." It kind of flies in the face of, or maybe a mainstream Presbyterianism, which maybe a lot of these people practiced. I don't know about the Knights, but I know the Smiths had been . . . the Smiths had been Presbyterian at least a portion of the family portion of them.

Dr. Scott Esplin (22:08):

Yeah, no, that's an interesting comment, Hank, because it's almost as if the initiative is, is up to you. Joseph Knight, the agency is yours and, and the reason I, I find that your comment intriguing, thank you, is in Section 23 of the Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Knight will appear again. And, and this is now after the Church has organized. And Joseph Knight seems to be dragging his feet a little bit. He, others in the, in Section 23--section 23 has given to five different

individuals--it's given to Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Samuel Smith, Joseph Smith, Sr., and Joseph Knight. And each of the four previous individuals, it says, "You're not under condemnation. All four of them have been baptized, they've joined the Church. "But for Joseph Knight, that phrase is conspicuously missing. And, and it says "his duty" in verse six of Section 23 is "to unite to take up the cross to pray vocally." And in verse seven, "It is your duty to unite with the true church." It's what you're getting at that, that if you want to be involved, it's up to you, Joseph Knight. Don't wait to be called to make a commitment. And, and, and he does. He joins the Church and then remains faithful for the rest of his life. But I think you're hitting on an important principle, that's in both of these sections about Joseph Knight.

Speaker 1 (23:26):

I'm always thinking, "Okay, how am I going to help my, my kids?" With this and my students. And I like this idea of helping my teenagers understand the Lord likes a little, a little gumption--a little self-initiative. A little, "Hey, let's . . ." It is almost like the Lord is saying, "I'd rather have to hold you back then get you started."

John Bytheway (23:47):

But it's like that idea of never suppress in an impulse to do good, to be kind, to do the right thing. And, and I was thinking, as Scott was talking, that he mentioned Section 4, that also has the field, you know, ready to harvest, but also has, if you have desires to serve, you're called to the work. And there's that idea of desires and being called again, which is interesting because sometimes you might be tempted, "Well, I don't have to talk to that person. I haven't been giving a calling to do that." But an application for our families, yeah. It doesn't have to be your ministering brother or sister for you to go over and say, "I really enjoyed what you said today in Sunday School," or whatever, you know.

Hank Smith:

The Lord is watching, saying, "Hey, who's, who wants to, who wants, who wants a calling? Who wants to be part of the work? I'm going to wait to see who jumps in."

Dr. Scott Esplin (24:41):

We're obviously not talking about going up to your Bishop and volunteering to be the Young Men's President or anything we're talking about as you're describing John and Hank. There are lots of ways to serve. You and I, we shouldn't suppress the prompting to do good. I've never felt a tinge of regret for being a little too kind. There's lots of things I can do. Love another one in this same section in Section 12. In verse six, "As you have asked," apparently he's asked, "What can I do to help with the work?" And the Lord's response is, "I say it to you, keep my commandments."

If you don't have a formal calling, I serve, I've served on campus here at BYU, in a variety of capacities. And, and sometimes our students, especially, as you're reorganizing award early in the semester . . . and, and trying to get all the callings in place. People say, "Well, I'm not getting a calling fast enough. What can I do?" Well, you can keep the commandments. All of us can do that. Even while we're waiting for a formal calling to serve in some capacity, keep the

commandments. Really. Elder Maxwell once said, "That's it. There really is nothing more important. Callings in a formal sense will come and go, but not the calling or the commandment to keep the commands."

John Bytheway (25:53):

I liked it. This verse we've been looking at about verse seven, "If you have desires to bring forth," well, it comes right after that, "Seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion." That's very, very broad and very general. And I like what President Nelson has said about, you know, the work of salvation. "Anytime you do anything that helps anyone take a step closer to making covenants with Christ, you know, you're, you're doing, you're gathering Israel. You're doing the work of salvation." "And so it can be that broad of keeping the commandments and bring forth the cause of Zion.

Hank Smith:

That's interesting because it seems like, you know, Joseph Knight is like any of us, "What, what calling am I going to get? I'm ready. What calling am I going to get?" "I want you to keep the commandments and bring forth the cause of Zion." And if that's almost as if the Lord is anticipating, "If that's not what you were looking for, you can't," verse eight, "No one can assist in this work, except he shall be humble."

Dr. Scott Esplin:

We were talking about humility at the start of the podcast, weren't we, Hank? Hey, there you go.

Hank Smith:

I'm so grateful that I have the gift of humility that I think I've conquered that. So I, I like what the Lord says here. "Humble, full of love, faith, hope, and charity." If I'm at a time in my life where I'm like, "Well, I wanna, I want, I'm ready to jump in and, and be the leader of a ward--the leader of a Stake." I think this might be a good reminder. "Why don't you work on this first: humility, being full of love, work on increasing your faith temperance in all things." So to me, that's, that's the Lord saying, "Yes, I want you. Yes, yes. I want you, too. I'm going to use your gifts and part of this work, but you've, this is where we start: humility, love, faith, charity." That's where our focus should be.

Dr. Scott Esplin (27:43):

And if you think back to the quote that John read, the tribute that Joseph Smith wrote in 1842 to this man, these are the qualities he had . . . he remembers. It's not, "Joseph Knight, he was a great Young Men's President, a great scout leader. He took the kids on every camp out," or whatever it was. It was "Joseph Knight had these qualities. He took to heart these attributes, and he was true to them. And I love him." That's why I love the Knights. They are fabulous, fabulous people in the Restoration.

John Bytheway (28:15):

One of the things that kind of makes me, "Gosh, I hope if someone writes about me, they won't mention 'my tortured, trembling, broken body.' " Pretty bad, but you know, he's, he's in 1842. So how old is Joseph Knight then? Oh, he's 56-

Dr. Scott Esplin (28:34):
And 1829. So what is that? 13 years later. So, 69. Mid-

Hank Smith:
Yeah, late sixties, late sixties, almost 70.

Dr. Scott Esplin (28:45):
He'll live another five years after that. I think he dies in 1847 if I remember right.

Hank Smith (28:48):
-On his way West. Still going, yeah-

Dr. Scott Esplin:
-His, his face pointed towards Zion. He's . . . he's headed West.

Hank Smith:
When I think about establishing the cause of Zion, from verse six, and I read the manual, this question pops up. "What does it mean to you to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion?" And, and in essence, how do we do that today? I wonder if the people in 1829, Joseph Smith and the Knights, what they would think of the tools I have at my hands to establish the cause of Zion? Just think of what we have at our hands when it even just comes to technology from family history, work to social media that can establish the cause of Zion. They'd probably say, "You know what we would give for those resources and those tools." I think it's absolutely beautiful. What, what we can do to establish the cause of Zion. There's, there's more available to us than we could possibly use.

Dr. Scott Esplin (29:54):
And Joseph Knight was bringing paper and potatoes and money. And I think he brings mackerel down to the prophet, Joseph. And, and, and man, what do we have available that we could use to establish the cause of Zion.

John Bytheway (30:05):
Well, I just think a lot of things we take for granted and just the availability of paper--being those supplies. And what else did you say, Scott? Paper, potatoes-

Dr. Scott Esplin (30:15):
-Money. There are times where he clearly indicates he's helping Joseph pay his bills, which I think is really important in terms of an application in this setting. This allows Joseph and Oliver to do what they only can do. And, and that might have an application to our lives. I served for a long period of time as an Executive Secretary to a Stake. And then, in other capacities, I had

someone teach me this principle. They said, "Scott, your role as a secretary, or as a counselor, is to take all of the burden you can off of the person who, who, who has responsibility--keys in this case--because there are certain things that only he can do, that that if you will take the burden off (the paper, the potatoes, the mackerel, the, the paying of the bills, whatever it is), if you will take all of those things away, you free up the person who's right and responsibility it is to receive revelation. To be able to do so."

And maybe that's what Joseph Knight is doing. He's taking away all of the things that Joseph Smith Jr. doesn't absolutely have to do so that Joseph Smith can do the thing that only he can do. Only Joseph can translate the plates. Only Joseph can bring forth the Book of Mormon. Anybody can bring the fish and the potatoes and the paper. I think in our wards, sometimes there are certain things that only a Bishop can do, but we've all been in wards, where the Bishop got tied down doing a lot of things that other people easily could have done. And he wasn't free to get the revelation he needed. And that applies to a Bishop or Relief Society President, a State President, and others. If we give them the freedom to do the things that only they can do by way of keys and revelation, we'll be blessed because of it. Wow.

Hank Smith (32:04):

That is that's, that's an important principle and comes back in verse eight, to humility that, to be a . . . a background worker helping the, you know, the one that can do this in this important work, that takes humility. But it's . . . it's a beautiful, a beautiful idea. I am, well, I was really . . . I was really touched by that.

John Bytheway:

Anytime we can relieve the burdens of somebody's responsibility for another, what a blessing to them that can be.

Dr. Scott Esplin (32:34):

I think we've . . . I think we've seen some of that in our wards recently. I think they've almost empowered Elders Quorum Presidents, Ward Councils, Elders Quorum Presidents, Relief Society Presidents. There's a lot of things that they can do that frees up the Bishop to be able to do what only he can do. And by association, we can assist in that regard as well. I probably don't need to call the Bishop to get the phone number of someone in my ward. There are other people I can ask for that information, thereby . . . not thereby allowing the Bishop to do the things that are essential in his calling.

John Bytheway:

I love that. I want just to say that listening to Elder Bednar at RootsTech, talking about the new Youth Program that he says, "Imagine what's going to happen." I'll paraphrase Elder Bednar as best I can, "When the Relief Society Presidency and the Elder's Quorum Presidency, and the Aaronic Priesthood Quorums, and the Young Women's classes are all focused on the work of salvation." And it was, it's a stunning moment when he talks about that. What if all of us are doing what we can to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion? Not just saying, "Let the Bishop and the Ward Mission Leader do that, you know.

Hank Smith (33:47):

And it's, and it can be little things as well. I want my children to know that the creating a little more unity in their quorum or class is bringing forth the cause of Zion.

John Bytheway (33:58):

Anytime you do anything that helps anyone.

Hank Smith (34:02):

Posting something about your family or the gospel or the temple on your social media accounts that's bringing forth the cause of Zion.

Dr. Scott Esplin (34:12):

Well, you know, it isn't that what Zion is defined as in the book of Moses, "And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart, one mind, they dwelt in righteousness. There was no poor among them." Any time I do those things. Any time I'm united. Any time I'm righteous. Any time I'm helping and caring for the poor and the needy, I'm establishing Zion.

John Bytheway:

So, this is great. Because we've got Zion as a cause--a Zion later becomes a place. What you just mentioned, Scott is where the Lord called his people Zion. There are a few definitions of that, and I suppose that we'd like to be in all of those at one time or another.

Hank Smith (34:54)

I'm going to teach my kids that cleaning your room establishes the cause of Zion.

Dr. Scott Esplin (34:58):

-Bring more unity in the home.

John Bytheway (35:05):

Do you think there's garbage in Zion? Take out the garbage, son.

Hank Smith (35:10):

All right. My friends, let's move into Section 13. And the last, what a few verses of Joseph Smith History, Scott. So you can take us wherever you want to go. We come to one of the more . . . most important events in Joseph Smith's life and in the History of the Church is the Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood. So what can you tell us? What leads up to this? What can you give me the background that'll help me help a Section 13 this event?

Dr. Scott Esplin (35:39):

It'll help me understand its significance for the prophet and for Oliver. Thanks. Hank. I think . . . I liked your reference to Joseph Smith History. We need to keep that in mind. Unfortunately, sometimes we read Section 13 and forget that there are verses at the back of the Pearl of Great Price that give the historical context of the section. So I would probably start in Joseph Smith

History. Joseph and Oliver are working on the translation. It's now mid-May of 1829, and they're making good progress by all accounts. They have been working since the first week or so of April. Oliver, I think, arrived on the 5th of April and they start two days later. And so they're, they're moving along doing well. And I sometimes ask my classes here on campus, "Does anyone know what sparked Section 13?"

Dr. Scott Esplin (36:26):

And it's . . . it's clearly a question about baptism, but unless you've read the Joseph Smith History, and then the account by Oliver that follows it my students will speculate all, maybe they were in Alma because Alma talks about or Mosiah talks about baptism or, or maybe they were in a 2 Nephi 31, which of course talks about baptism. Oliver Cowdery tells us in his account of this instance the . . . the right answer. So all of Oliver Cowdery says, "No man in their sober census could translate and write the directions given to the Nephites from the mouth of the Savior or the precise manner in which mentioned build up his church, and especially when corruption had spread in uncertainty over all forms and systems practiced among men." He says here in the account that follows Joseph Smith History. It says, "After writing the account, given of the Savior's ministry to the remnant of the seed of Jacob upon this continent," that's in paragraph one, two, three, four.

Dr. Scott Esplin (37:21):

So the start, top of paragraph four, "After writing the account, given to the Savior's ministry to the remnant of the seed of Jacob upon this continent." And so he tells us I got to 3 Nephi. So that, that is an important marker because it tells us where they are in mid-May in the translation. But they're already into 3 Nephi. And as you know, as we all know, in 3 Nephi 11, one of the first messages, the Savior says upon speaking to the Nephites, he calls Nephi forward and "Gives him authority and instruction concerning the manner of baptism." And so it really isn't 2 Nephi 31, it isn't Mosiah 18. It isn't any of these other places we think talk about baptism. Oliver Cowdery tells us it was 3 Nephi. "And when we read about the Savior's ministry, we knew we had to be baptized. We realized we weren't and we knew we needed the authority to do it."

Dr. Scott Esplin (38:10):

So, I would always start there in terms of the context. "And so, they retired to the woods." The Church has done some really good work on this lately, helping us understand what the farm was like in Harmony, Pennsylvania, at the time that Joseph and Emma were living there. And so, and frankly, what was going on on the river at the time. So the Church has done some really good work in helping us understand the frequency of riverboat traffic. There are one-person estimates may be as often as, you know, every seven minutes, someone passing on that river on a boat on the Susquehanna. And so Joseph and, and Oliver, likely not kneeling down at river's edge praying and visiting . . . be visited by John the Baptist. They, they probably went to a wooded area away from the river.

Dr. Scott Esplin (38:57):

There is a wooded section of the farm away from the river, away from the home that . . . that would be more secluded. And so they, they, they go to a secluded place to pray. "And on an

instant," I think is how all of Oliver Cowdery says it. "And an angel appeared from heaven." And, and I, I've always wondered about this and smiled what is this like for Oliver? We always, and rightly so, focused on Joseph Smith, but at this point, is seeing an angel become old hat for Joseph? How many times has he seen Moroni and what's . . . but what is this like for all Oliver? Is this his first time seeing an angel? There is, he's had some revelatory experiences in Palmyra that caused him to even come to Harmony. And we don't know all of those details, but, but wow.

Dr. Scott Esplin (39:42):

He clearly is impressed by the angel. And again, think about how Joseph Smith described his verse visit with Moroni, and he goes into description of the clothing he's wearing and . . . and all of that. And, and, and maybe Oliver's doing the same, Hey, that was an angel. Like, and we're not just talking any angel now. We, we should pause and recognize this is John the Baptist. I mean, that's of all the people, the Lord could have sent the individual who baptized the Son of God. And . . . and to have him appear from the heavens is, is spectacular.

John Bytheway:

I love that. I love that when you teach, you know, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, just the preeminence of John the Baptist. Every account and how important he is, and then to have him here also is consistent. Isn't it?

Hank Smith (40:32):

Yeah. I think the Bible Dictionary said, "He is one of the few prophets who has had a role in multiple dispensations." He was, they call him in the Bible Dictionary calls him, "The last of the Old Testament prophets," which is interesting. We often think of Malachi, but the Bible Dictionary says, "No, John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets." He obviously is baptized as the Savior and then takes part in the Latter-day Dispensation. He's bridging dispensations here. I think, what did Jesus say about John the Baptist? "Among them that are born of women," which I think that's everyone. "Among them that are born of women, there is none greater than John the Baptist, the outstanding . . ." What the Bible Dictionary calls him the "Most outstanding Aaronic Priesthood bearer in all history." John, I would give you second place--second, most outstanding Aaronic Priesthood holder in all history. But imagine being first, first place, "the most outstanding Aaronic Priesthood holder in all history."

John Bytheway (41:31):

I just think, you know, when you think about the Restoration and how it could have happened, you know, and it . . . it's so fun to it, the First Vision --theophany--incredible, but then the list of others who began to come incredible and in the Kirtland Temple. And I think if you, if you have a hard time believing the First Vision, oh, wait till you hear the rest. Listen to who else came, one after another. And then you kind of see the elegance, the symmetry. And they also know they would need to who had keys for the Gathering of Israel. Who had keys to, for sealing? Who . . . and you put it all together and said, "Well, of course they would come." And what I love is that after the First Vision, so many were shared visions, other people were there, witnessed it, and testified of it.

Dr. Scott Esplin (42:26):

Yeah. And, and yeah, to have that be John the Baptist is just can you think of anyone better to bring back the authority to baptize them than someone who has it in his name? I mean, I, I know that's not his last name. I know his middle name isn't the, but he is always associated with that ordinance. And, and like you said, John, who else would you send?

You're going to send Moses with the key to gather Israel. You're going to send Elijah with the sealing power. Well, of course, you're going to send John the Baptist with the authority to baptize. But then back to this humility discussion we've had, I love how John the Baptist draws Joseph and Oliver in, "Upon you, my fellow-servant in the name of Messiah to be called a fellow servant," with as you said, Hank, one of the greatest, "The greatest among those born to women." None greater. And to have him call you a "fellow servant." Well, I feel a long, a far way away from being a fellow servant of John the Baptist and to have him encircle me and take me in. What would that have been like?

John Bytheway (43:34):

Wasn't it, John the Baptist who said, you know about Jesus, "He must increase, and I must decrease."

Dr. Scott Esplin:

Yeah.

John Bytheway:

And yeah, in an insight into the character of John the Baptist, and then this, I love thank you for saying that Scott, "You are my fellow servants." And this is a question I've always had down on Temple Square. I think it's all been parts being excavated right now. Yeah, it was Arvarde Fairbank's, I mean gorgeous statue with both hands simultaneously . . . Because Section 13 sounds like if these are the actual words, he said, "Upon you, my fellow servants," sounds like he's ordaining both at the same time. Other paintings I've seen are John the Baptist, one at a time, which seems more like the order of things. Did you have a comment on that?

Dr. Scott Esplin (44:24):

You know, I, that's a great question. And, and there was another beautiful painting also, or, sorry, a beautiful statue at the site itself, now. The Church has restored the Priesthood Restoration site in recent years, and there's a stunning statue there, too.

Hank Smith:

I like how you said that they restored the rest of the restorations.

Dr. Scott Esplin:

Yes, and it was President Nelson, I think, who dedicated it. But I think that's artistic license, John, I really do. I . . . I'm not sure that we know for sure. Is it one hand on one, and which one got the right hand? Which one got the left? I don't . . . I don't know that we know. I joke that I have a son who is left-handed, and so he's the oddball in our family. I don't know. And then I've seen, of course, both the same way. I do know that in Oliver Cowdery's account, he says, "Who

would not have been to the knee to such a blessing as this?" It seems like they bendt the knee. If that's literal, they, they, they knelt in John's presence. And again, "You're my fellow servants." But man, who wouldn't kneel in the presence of John the Baptist when you think about all that he did and, and all that, he is in, across dispensations. And that is the closest I can get.

Hank Smith (45:28):

I'm looking at Joseph Smith History here and this little section afterwards, most people probably never read because-

John Bytheway (45:37):

It's in such a small font, but you've got to read it!

Hank Smith (45:40):

Well, that's why I don't need to read that.

Dr. Scott Esplin (45:42):

That's why I'm wearing glasses. That's, that's why I think I-

John Bytheway (45:45):

I did once, and now I can't remember, is it seven exclamation points or I can't because you don't count, encounter those very often. And it's so fun to see how excited Oliver was.

Hank Smith (45:56):

I never thought about this, but it almost, as you read Joseph's History, it's almost like he is describing it as kind of like something that happens all the time to him. Yeah. And then you get Oliver's account, and he's like, "This is amazing! This is incredible!" So I would encourage everyone to sit down and read, what is it just like two pages here--page and a half of Oliver's account of this. It really expands, expands your view.

John Bytheway (46:23):

Get your glasses and read it. I had one of my professors, you both know Joseph Fielding McConkie, and he would say, "Joseph always under-told a story." And so here's Section 13. Now let's hear Oliver describe the same thing. And Oliver, it wasn't just John the Baptist. You listen to Oliver, and what else is going on in there? They heard the voice of the Almighty.

Hank Smith (46:50):

Listen to this phrase here, "Uncertainty had fled, doubt had sunk no more to rise." I mean, that is, that is beautiful language. And it is . . . it's, it gets you excited to read Oliver's words here. He says, "I can't even attempt to paint to you the feelings of this heart."

John Bytheway (47:14):

Yeah. It's beautiful. If you've never read it, for our listeners, boy, please read it because it is, yeah, like you said, Hank, "You can't help it." But in fact, it reminds me of a quick story. I just love this. Elder Glenn Pace said when he was a missionary, I think this was in his book called

Spiritual Plateaus. He said they . . . it was a college student. They were teaching . . . my memory as it was back East. And after hearing the story of the First Vision, this investigator said, "Wow, that is the most incredible story I've ever heard. If I really believed that, I don't think I'd be able to sleep. I'd be running up and down the streets, telling it to everybody. How come you guys aren't more excited about it?" And, and Elder Pace's like, "That was a penetrating question." And I just love the account because Oliver cannot hide his excitement here. And so, yeah, I hope people will read it if they haven't had a chance.

Hank Smith (48:10):

And to me personally, I have heard from critics who say, "Oh, Joseph and Oliver made this up years later. They made it up years later. You read these paragraphs, and you tell me if you think Oliver Cowdery . . . If you think the character of this man is to describe this, in this way, and have it be an absolute fabrication . . . I . . . you just . . . it . . . once you read it in his own words, you realize he--you can't fake this kind of excitement. This kind of this, he just, he can't. He tells us over and over. He cannot, he cannot describe--

John Bytheway (48:47):

Right? Yeah. That's --

Hank Smith (48:51):

Yeah. Right. I, I just think it's instead of, you know, jumping on Google and seeing what other people think about this event? Why don't you just read it from the people who were there and decide for yourself? If you think they're describing something that, that actually happened--that really did happen. It is beautiful. Well, I think-

Dr. Scott Esplin (49:12):

You should keep in mind, Hank and John, well done. We should keep in mind when these were recorded does influence how they're telling it. So the Oliver Cowdery account is 1834 in *The Messenger and Advocate*, which is a Church-owned newspaper. And, and the other one is 1838. So, that's four years later. And, and it's a very different time in 1838 for the Prophet Joseph Smith, as, as some of your other presenters have mentioned. That's the most difficult year for the Prophet Joseph. And there's a reason why there's a defensive tone to Joseph Smith History that doesn't quite exist in the 1834 *Messenger and Advocate*, Oliver Cowdery version. So part of it is personal and their own feelings and ways, ways of using words. But part of it also is time and, and influence and impact and, and how, and what their purposes are in telling it. So that's, that's two differences.

Narrator (50:06):

Please join us for Part II of this podcast.