

Follow Him Podcast

Episode 10 Part II

- John Bytheway: 00:00:02 Welcome to part two of this week's podcast.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:06 Well, I had a question about bishops because this isn't something we started to do. Is this added later when we started getting bishops or was bishops an idea on the original, and it's okay if we can't answer that.
- Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:00:19 Yeah. Somebody probably can. I can't. I do know that there are certain things listed here, deacons, for example, that we don't have a record of a deacon being called until 1831. So it's also possible. And of course, Section 18, which we've talked about, Twelve Disciples, but we don't get that until 1835. But we don't get our first bishop until Edward Partridge the next year. So it's certainly possible that it's anticipating that, though I don't think it's added. If it is added later, I don't think it's too much later.
- Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:00:56 So it's probably just more anticipating, but again, I think that's an important point. They might be looking around and being like, "Who's a bishop? We don't have any bishops. What is a bishop?" I guess it says that here a little bit, it gives us some sense, but they don't really find out what that means until you get Edward Partridge called as bishop and you get the Law of Consecration and that's really what becomes his role. [crosstalk 00:01:17].
- Hank Smith: 00:01:17 Wow. I think that's an important point. We've hit this so many times, but the idea that they are... What is that?
- Dr. Jordan Watkins.: 00:01:24 They're figuring it out.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:25 What did he mean by that? That's going to lead to the next revelation. What is that? That's the next revelation. I'm really just fascinated by this. So let's talk.-
- John Bytheway: 00:01:34 Jordan, can I make one more point?
- Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:01:37 Oh, yes, please.
- John Bytheway: 00:01:40 In verse 71, I just thought this is right out of the Book of Mormon too. Really, "no one can be received into the church of Christ unless he has arrived onto the years of accountability

before God and is capable of repentance.” And I thought, “Whoa, that is Mormon's letter to Moroni Chapter 8. And he uses those exact two words,” capable and accountable of committing sin”, which I think was... Here is two adjectives to describe a candidate for baptism has to know what he's doing, has to be capable of committing sin and accountable.

- John Bytheway: 00:02:16 So the footnote's not there, but I wrote Moroni 8, verse 10 next to that verse because I love those two words to describe, you submit to baptism. It means you're capable of sinning and you're accountable for your sins.
- Hank Smith: 00:02:30 John, I can't tell you the ways you've pointed out so far in all the episodes is where the Book of Moroni comes up here. Because sometimes as I've read the Book of Moroni, it almost is an afterthought. Here's a couple of things that you're just, "Oh, here's a couple letters. Here's a sermon. Let's throw that in." And all of a sudden I'm seeing how useful the Book of Moroni was to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.
- John Bytheway: 00:02:54 I'm such a fan of Moroni those last 10 chapters. And he starts out saying, "I'm not supposed to have written anymore, but I have not yet perished. So I'll write a few more things, they may be of benefit to my brother-in-law Lamanites in some future day." And then he gives Oliver Cowdery all of this stuff. In fact, I was marking you won't see this, maybe all of the Moroni footnotes right here on page 39, Moroni 4:1, Moroni 5:1, Moroni 6:4, Moroni 6:7. Because this is exactly what Oliver was told in Section 18. Look at what you've already written and look at this handbook of instructions Moroni already wrote and go there.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:38 I'm excited to teach the Book of Mormon again. And when we get to Moroni include how crucial this book was to the beginnings of the Restoration.
- John Bytheway: 00:03:47 And what I love to say to people is Moroni's best work, this is just by the way talking, but Moroni's best work was accomplished while a single adult. I think that's really cool. And he's up there all alone on the temples and that imagery of Moroni is his best work." I have no kindred, no friends, my father's been killed in battle." And then he writes these extra chapters and what a gift, how useful they became.
- Hank Smith: 00:04:14 I really identified with him in high school. He had no friends nor whether to go.

John Bytheway: 00:04:20 When I was hired at BYU, I was single, which made me pretty rare. I'm no longer single so I can relate to that. I think it's also interesting to note perhaps that Moroni of course would've been the last thing that Cowdery's writing down and copying. So it's on his mind. So perhaps it's not so surprising, but isn't it great and perhaps there's some providence here that those final chapters are there. Just a word of clarification. So Cowdery does not produce this document. He produces the Articles of the Church of Christ, which is comparable to this document. And you can find that on Joseph Smith Papers website.

John Bytheway: 00:05:10 But Joseph is the one who produces, it says, I think, "By the spirit of prophecy and revelation" produces Section 20." And I think one of the things Cowdery's upset about is that this replaces that, or supersedes that document.

Hank Smith: 00:05:31 This has happened now a number of times when we talked about the Preface, it was that way as well that these three guys got together, created a preface and then said, "Okay that was good. Here's mine."

John Bytheway: 00:05:46 I hope he got some benefit from wrestling with it, but now let me show you the real thing.

Hank Smith: 00:05:52 It'd be interesting to do something as a study like that, Jordan is to go and look at the two side-by-side. To look at all the Cowdery's-

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:06:00 It's interesting because there's a lot of similarity there. There are notable differences. One that Cowdery was most insistent that be taken out. But there are some notable differences. But it will be plain that these documents are related to each other. We just don't know exactly how. Joseph doesn't say, "I took Cowdery's Articles of the Church of Christ. And from that I produced this." So we're left to speculate a little bit, but I think it's very clear that they are both thinking about organization of the Church and what should be included.

John Bytheway: 00:06:41 I think I was just going to reiterate again, Moroni when he first took over for his father Mormon, he said, "I have no kin . . . or I have or have I none. I don't know what I'm going to do. I don't know how long the Lord will suffer that I live." And then he finds his mission. Apparently he finds some or, and as you know Hank you can take this part out, David, in fact, please do. But I wrote this book about Moroni because I love that he found his voice and said, "Here's what I'm going to do." And there was nobody to impress by writing a book, but he left those last chapters and

the Book of Ether, "Here's how nations fall when they reject Christ," and put that all in there.

- John Bytheway: 00:07:27 That's amazing that this became so useful. And I confess, I hadn't noticed Oliver Cowdery being told in Section 18, "Look, you've already written it." And it just blew my mind. I wish I'd stuck that in the book.
- Hank Smith: 00:07:42 The things we find out later.
- John Bytheway: 00:07:44 Yeah.
- Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:07:45 Yeah. I think it's also worth noting that scholars have pointed out that the Book of Mormon in the early Church functions as sign or symbol. In other words, more than as a document from which you teach.
- John Bytheway: 00:08:00 It's just a sign of the Restoration.
- Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:08:02 Right. When Joseph Smith gives sermons, he's not usually using the Book of Mormon, he's using the Bible. But what we see here, so the Book of Mormon, the idea is that the Book of Mormon functions as a symbol yes--that God has called a new prophet through an angel. And this is a symbol of that call. But it's very clear in these early revelations, and this one in particular Section 20, that the Book of Mormon is informing much of the content.
- John Bytheway: 00:08:33 Yes. And that's why I love underlining these Moroni references. I'm like, "Attaboy, attaboy." You already told us that." And that's awesome.
- Hank Smith: 00:08:44 Let's talk about, I often call it the day of days, April 6th, 1830. Who knew we were going to have so many meetings and this is our first one. Jordan, what can you tell us about the preparation for that day, what's happening before that day, and then that day itself?
- Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:09:03 Yeah. So this is spring of 1830, and well, Joseph is still in Harmony but he's going to be traveling up to Fayette. In fact, Joseph Knight, Sr., one of these familiar faces in the early days of the Restoration. He picks comes down from Colesville picks up Joseph from Harmony and then travels that three to four day journey up to Fayette. Joseph Knight in his reminiscences says that as they're traveling, Joseph tells him, "Lord has commanded me to organize a church and He's told me to do it on April 6th."

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:09:51 So on that day, they get up there, April 6th is what, a Tuesday in 1830. And I didn't just calculate that somehow in my head, I'm just remembering it. And a small group of between 30 to 60, we're not exactly sure individuals assembled in the Peter Whitmer home. Even if it's 30, that's a lot of people in the Peter Whitmer home. By the way, there are a number of other sources that say Manchester, and there's been some confusion about that. But most scholars and historians at this point are pretty clear on this being Fayette and it being the Peter Whitmer home despite some confusion from other sources.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:10:36 But then what do they do? Well, they follow point by point, the direction that they're given in June of 1829 in the chamber of Father Whitmer, which incidentally would've been upstairs. So now they're meeting and doing exactly what the voice of the Lord had told them to do in June of 1829. So they have a prayer, Joseph and Oliver ask if the group gathered accepts them as their teachers and the things of the kingdom of God. There's a unanimous vote in the affirmative. After the vote, Joseph again, following the command they'd been given in June of 1829. Joseph ordains Oliver Cowdery as an elder, Oliver Cowdery then ordains Joseph Smith as an elder. And that's our church structure right now. It's pretty simple and it makes sense given how small it is, but there's no First Presidency in 1830. There's no Quorum of the Twelve. All of that will come in time.

Dr. Jordan Watkins.: 00:11:42 And then after these ordinations, they administer the sacrament again, as they had been told to do. Now, there is some question as to whether or not maybe they had participated in the Lord's Supper before the Church's organization. And we wonder about that because Lucy Mack's history suggests perhaps that that was the case. All of Oliver Cowdery's Articles of the Church of Christ have the direction to participate in the sacraments. So it's possible. But nonetheless, they do it on this occasion. And then they give the Holy Ghost to those who have been baptized. David Whitmer says that, and this is a reminiscent account, but he says that around 70 people had been baptized before April 6th.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:12:25 Now, that strikes me as maybe a little bit high, but there had been a number of people baptized. Those who are present are given the Holy Ghost, and again, as the Articles and Covenants have indicated that has to be done by certain people. So authority's becoming important. Original six members of the Church: Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Peter Whitmer, Jr., Samuel Smith and David Whitmer. And then after they're given the Holy Ghost, they are confirmed as members of the Church of Christ. And that's the meeting.

- Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:13:05 Now that doesn't conclude the day though. Incidentally we don't have minutes for this meeting, which in some ways makes Section 21 a revelation given on the day the Church's organized even more important. Because it at least gives us some insight, a contemporary document that gives us some insight into what is taking place. Why don't we have minutes for that account, for that day? Maybe because the Lord hasn't given this first command to the Church yet, which is, "There shall be a record kept among us." And I guess maybe somebody should've grabbed a pen and paper at that moment. And I suppose that bears noting too. They're not always great at doing this. And sometimes we as historians or just people who are interested in the Church, we look back and think, "Why did you not come out of the grove, Joseph and write an account? Or why did you guys not write an account in 1829 when John the Baptist came?" Well, that's not necessarily something that was in their cultural practice. We're told in General Conference again and again to do it and we don't, or at least lots of us don't.
- Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:14:23 So it's no surprise that we don't have a lot of documents from the early period. What might be surprising is how many documents we do have. And much of that, I think owes to this command, God saying, "Keep a record. This stuff is important." This goes to your earlier point about thinking ahead, this thing is going to last and it's going to grow, and you're going to want to keep records of this. Now, in some ways they're a record, people of the book. They have the Bible, which is a Book of Books, and they've got the Book of Mormon. Is there any book more obsessed with record keeping than the Book of Mormon?
- Hank Smith: 00:15:04 Every year, has to be.
- Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:15:06 Yeah. So there's already some sense of record keeping as important because of those texts. But now the Lord is saying, "You people in these latter days, you keep a record. You be a record-keeping people." And really, as a historian and again, I thank the Lord for this commandment because we have so many records.
- John Bytheway: 00:15:32 I'm remembering Wilford Woodruff. I think it's in that movie, he Church made, let's call it the *Mountain of the Lord* where he says, "Well, Joseph admonished the Saints to be a record-keeping people." And ever since I heard him say that I couldn't let my head hit the pillow before I'd written down the events of the day. And the journals of Wilford Woodruff are huge, aren't they to historians?

- Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:15:57 They are probably the single best source that we have. In fact, the Church actually has all of the digitized copies of his journals on the Church History library. So you can go read them and [crosstalk 00:16:13] sometimes he doodles. But actually there's a press, Benchmark Books that has just published all of Wilford Woodruff's journals with annotations and it's seven, eight volumes. So yes it's not much of a stretch to say that Wilford Woodruff's record keeping is also tied to this command.
- John Bytheway: 00:16:46 Yeah. He heard that. I just remember him really taking to heart this idea of being a record keeping people. And parenthetically, it's just funny, when I went to get my marriage recommend to marry Kim, my wife, I had to go see her Stake President whose name was Bruce. His middle name is Bruce, but his real name is Wilford B. Woodruff. And he had access to all those original journals because he's a great grandson or a great, great grandson or something. And boy, that was fun to talk to him about his ancestor. And he's like, "Yeah, here's a letter from Vincenzo Di Francesca." You've all seen that that movie, what's it called? *How Rare a Possession* and beautiful handwriting and everything. But thankfully people like Wilford wrote everything down.
- Hank Smith: 00:17:39 Yeah. I was going to say in all my interviews with these historians, Jordan, one thing I noticed is we don't have a lot of record of what happened then. It's almost this frustration of, "They didn't write it down. They didn't..." And they're always saying, "Well, our best record of this is Lucy Mack Smith. Our best record of this is..." Because they didn't write stuff down. And to be fair, neither do I. I think it was Dr. Scott Esplin, didn't he say on the podcast, "If you read my journal, you just think I went from breakup to breakup because that's the only time I wrote in my journal." So it's got to be frustrating, Jordan, as a historian to go, "Write it down."
- Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:18:20 It's frustrating. But again, we do have an abundance of material. Because of this relative to other church organizations, relative to other organizations from this period, we now have shelves of books. Joseph Smith Papers is a perfect example or maybe the perfect fulfillment of this command. So yeah, we get frustrated because we don't have documents about events that we really like. And then we look in Joseph Smith Papers and we have documents for events we don't care about like when cows got lost in the street in Nauvoo. But there is really an abundance of material available.
- John Bytheway: 00:19:04 Thank you for saying that because I've had students, "Okay. Peter, James, and John comes and nobody wrote down the

date?" And stuff like that. So you're saying, "Well, look, we don't keep journals either, even though we've been told to."

- Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:19:19 Yeah. It's just not part of their culture. And Joseph's First Vision, including from his 1832 Account, we know that it's a very personal thing. We don't have anything from Joseph Smith at this period. I don't know if he knows how to write very well in 1820 at all. Well, I'll tell you this, I know he doesn't know how to write very well in 1832 because we have that account. So it's not in their mind to, "Oh, I had a spiritual experience. I'm going to go write in my journal about it."
- Hank Smith: 00:19:55 Just one small thing is the availability of paper and pencil.
- John Bytheway: 00:19:59 Yeah. You know what it costs to get yourself a journal these days?
- Hank Smith: 00:20:03 The abundance of supplies we have and we still don't do it. They didn't have the supplies readily available and they didn't do it. And here we are thinking, "Well, why didn't you?"
- John Bytheway: 00:20:12 Yeah. And even remember that Joseph Knight had to provide them paper for the translation process at a certain point. Another thing to note here is, so the Lord says, "Keep a record." And then He tells them how Joseph will be known in the record. Joseph will be known as "a seer, a translator, a prophet, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, and an elder of the church." So that's what Joseph will be known. And a couple of decades later, well, actually 17 years later, Oliver Cowdery writes that on this occasion, he ordained Joseph Smith as "prophet, seer, and revelator" in relationship to Section 21. Then the revelation goes on to say, "Okay, this is how Joseph will be known. The church needs to give heed unto all his words and commandments and receive those words as from my own mouth." Now, once again, this is an idea that the members have to get used to. What does it mean to have a prophet? After this is when Oliver Cowdery writes to Joseph Smith and commands him in the name of the Lord to remove that passage.
- John Bytheway: 00:21:24 So we're so formalized right now. We're so set up that we understand how these things work or at least the ways in which they do work. And that's taking time here for these early members of the Church. But the part that I love most about this is what follows the Lord's statement to receive this as if from my own mouth, "Receive it as if from my own mouth, in all patience and faith." I think that is crucial. You've talked about section one, the preface. In Section 1, I think the Lord gives us a key of how to understand the revelations by saying, "I speak

unto my prophets according to, in their weakness, after the manner of their language." I think that's a key to understanding the revelations. I think He's giving us another key here in saying, "To receive Joseph's words in all patience and faith." That's a really crucial message for early members of the Church. The Lord is going to ask them through Joseph Smith to do some very hard things. He's going to ask them to leave their homes, some of them multiple times. He's going to ask them to endure persecution. He's going to ask them to endure failing, to build Zion.

- John Bytheway: [00:22:48](#) He's going to ask them to give up all of their properties and become stewards. That is a counter-cultural revelation, right when you have the emergence of capitalism. He is going to ask them to try and accept some really radical new teachings like Joseph Smith's vision, Section 76. He's going to ask them to do some hard things and He's telling them, "You need to have patience and faith." And I think he's also saying, "That's okay if you struggle with these things. That's okay if you don't immediately feel excitement when Joseph tells you we're going to leave New York and go to Ohio." And of course that applies to us today. We sustain imperfect prophets and apostles, and sometimes they teach us to do hard things or they teach us things that require patience and faith. What if we're sitting in general conference and we don't just love everything that's being said. I think the Lord in some sense is going, "That's okay."
- Hank Smith: [00:23:56](#) He anticipated that here.
- Dr. Jordan Watkins: [00:23:58](#) He's anticipating that and He's saying, "But exercise some patience and exercise some faith." This also applies to our conversation about records. So the Lord gives us command to keep records. The Lord knows that those records are going to contain beautiful truths and inspiring stories. The Lord also knows that those records are going to highlight Joseph Smith's and the Saints' imperfections. And he knows that someday people are going to have access to these documents. And we're in that day now more than ever. And I think he knows that we're going to need patience and faith in approaching the words that they contain, including Joseph Smith's revelations.
- Dr. Jordan Watkins: [00:24:44](#) Maybe that even applies to, "I have to learn a little bit of history to understand some of these revelations?" That requires some patience and faith for a lot of us. So I think that phrase is so crucial. And I imagine Joseph dictating it and thinking, "Oh, yes, yes. Thank you for that."

Hank Smith: 00:25:08 Because it doesn't need to be said, "For His word you shall receive if from my own mouth." Period, stop right there. But the word in all patience and faith, let's cut everybody some slack here.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:25:20 Yeah. Another message there too, I think the Lord is saying, "I'm the source of these revelations, but I am delivering them through this imperfect person. And his language is imperfect." You're not getting the revelations in God's language.

John Bytheway: 00:25:38 It's not the fax machine.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:25:40 Yeah. It's not the fax machine. It's through Joseph. So not only is Joseph going to ask you to do hard things, or I'm going to ask you to do hard things through Joseph. The language he uses to ask you those things you might sometimes trip up on and go, "Is that revelation? Is that scripture?" And of course, this is what leads to the conversations about the preface, which you've talked about. And in Section 67, the Lord actually delivers a revelation in which He says, "You've seen his imperfection." And that's the Lord acknowledging them. And then He says, "And you have sought in your heart's language to express beyond what he has expressed." The language isn't good enough for some of you. And then of course the Lord challenges them to try and produce something better and they don't. And it requires patience in multiple ways here.

John Bytheway: 00:26:33 I have a quotation from Harold B. Lee in October, 1970, "There will be some things that take patience and faith. You may not like what comes from the authority of the church. It may contradict your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. But if you listen to these things as if from the mouth of the Lord Himself with patience and faith. The promises that the gates of hell shall not prevail against you and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you and cause that heavens to shake for your good and His name's glory." So me too, I underlined that idea of patience and that the Lord would say that, I'm so thankful that he would say that. And I hope we can apply that today, as you just pointed out, Jordan, thank you.

Hank Smith: 00:27:23 And there's a promise that comes with it in verse six, "Do these things and here's a promise that comes that the gates of hell..." What does he say? "The gates of hell shall not prevail against you and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you and cause the heavens to shake for your good and His name's glory." I've seen that happen in my own life as I followed the counsel of the prophet in patience and faith.

Jordan, what does it mean when He talks about Joseph and He says, "I've inspired him to move the cause of Zion in mighty power," which is an interesting phrase that has popped up here and there so far yet again,

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:28:02 Yet again an idea that develops over time. Right here it's pretty vague, called to the work of God in some way, the cause of Zion. Pretty quickly they'll have an idea of what Zion is supposed to be through the Bible revision when you get discussion of Zion of Enoch, but it remains pretty vague here. Pretty quickly you will start to get discussions about, I'm thinking of Section 28, Zion seems to be a place. And then Sections 52 and 57, Zion is a place, it's in Jackson County, Missouri, that's the center spot. But here they're not working with that. So it is a bit more vague. But it becomes more defined in the early years of the Church. And then actually they have to continue to adapt to their understandings when they fail to build Zion. When they are removed from Missouri and they start to internalize what does it mean to be a Zion-like people a bit more. So it's another concept that develops over time.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:29:12 I think that passage in Doctrine and Covenants 21 is interesting. I actually don't really know what to make of it, "His weeping for Zion, I have seen. And I will cause that he will mourn for her no longer." He mourned again after this. Just think of Liberty Jail. So I don't know what's going on here. Maybe some of you have some thoughts, but is it possible? We've talked about how the revelations come through Joseph the prophet. They partake of his language. They are informed by his mindset. Maybe this is Joseph hoping that that day is over. Or maybe it's just what he needs to hear right now. He's been through a lot. And maybe just right now, he needs to hear this from the Lord, "I've seen your tears and we're good right now." So I don't know exactly what to do with it, but those are a few thoughts.

Hank Smith: 00:30:22 Yeah. And it just seems that we think of Joseph Smith as confident, I know what I'm doing. And it seems here he's showing some vulnerability that he's weeping, doesn't know exactly what to do. He still feels condemned for his sins because the day will come unto the remission of his sins. So this is something that constantly is on his mind, his own sin.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:30:44 And I think that's fair to say. Again, this is Joseph's language and it's informed by him. That is to say if it's another person it's going to sound differently. So I think you can see Joseph's guilt in Section 3 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Is that the exact thing that the Lord wanted to say? Would He have said it precisely that way? What if He had said it through somebody

else to Joseph, would it have been as harsh? Maybe not. I think it's filtered through his mind and I think you're right. He's constantly interested in as we all should be a remission of his sins. So it's not surprising. I don't think that that shows up. And I think this does give him a great amount.

- Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:31:31 Remember when he comes after the Three Witnesses, to see the plates and the angel and he comes to his father and his mother and he says, "I am not the only one now." And he is so thrilled, it's like a huge weight has been lifted off his shoulder. He's an emotional person and with good reason. He's dealing with a lot. And he's 24-years-old right now.
- Hank Smith: 00:31:59 He's 24. I know 24-year-olds, I teach them at BYU and they're great people, but would I put them in charge? I don't know.
- Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:32:09 I know a 38-year-old who couldn't do anything like this.
- Hank Smith: 00:32:17 Yeah. Well, you're 38, I remember when I hit 38 and thought, "This is as far as Joseph got. He got to 38. That was it." And I don't feel like I had even started by that point. And yet he was done at 38 and look at what he did accomplish at such a young age. Sometimes we forget what a miracle that is.
- John Bytheway: 00:32:43 I hope at some point when we get to the organization of the first Quorum of the Twelve is that 1835 February 14th to... I need to do the research, but I want to put an age on each one of them. Because I think that except for Joseph Smith, Sr., you would feel like you're walking into a Young Adult activity. And that's amazing with what we're talking about.
- Hank Smith: 00:33:09 I want to know what else do we know about this day? So they gather in the Whitmer farm or the Whitmer home, they have the meeting. Is Section 21 received right then? Is it received that evening? Do we know?
- Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:33:22 I think the record says before they had dispersed. So again, guess I don't know exactly when they first met. So I don't know if that's morning, afternoon, or evening. So it's before the group leaves and that would've been profound, because some of these individuals had seen Joseph dictate revelation, but most of them had not. So that probably also makes this revelation fairly unique. I'm thinking of Section 76, which is a very different experience where it's a vision and you have a group of men watching Joseph and Sidney watch the vision. So that's a strange one or a different one. But this one, I don't know, I haven't really thought about this. But I don't know that there's

another occasion where there's that many people present when Joseph dictates a revelation. So that must've been pretty exciting stuff, "Oh, we know this is the prophet. We believe this is the prophet. We've read some of his revelations. But I have not seen him actually dictate a revelation." I don't know who writes this by the way. But they would have people on hand to do so.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:34:34

So yeah, it makes it quite interesting. I think we do know that after Joseph's, at least one version, so there are multiple drafts of Joseph's History in 1839. One of the drafts does say that they proceeded to enjoy the gifts of the Spirit. After this meeting, the Spirits poured out upon them. I think it's also that same day that Joseph Smith, Sr. is baptized and this is Lucy Mack Smith's History. Joseph says, "Oh, my God, I have lived to see my father baptized in the true church of Jesus Christ." There's also an account he says, "My own father and mother were baptized to my great joy and consolation." And about the same time Martin Harris and Porter Rockwell. So it appears that there are other baptisms that take place along with a general spiritual outpouring.

Dr. Jordan Watkins.: 00:35:34

This is Joseph Knight reminiscence account, that Joseph, then at some point during the day or after this has occurred, he went out into the woods and prayed which is quite fitting. He had done that 10 years earlier. And Joseph Knight said that his joy seemed to be full. Now, Joseph probably had no clue of what else he was going to do or have to do and that's probably a good thing at that stage. But his joy was full on April 6th, 1830.

Hank Smith: 00:36:06

Wow. That is beautiful. And that name Porter Rockwell, he's going to become famous in the Church. He's just 16-years-old on this day, April 6th, 1830. And he probably also has no idea what's in front of him. But at this time I think he constitutes almost the entire Young Men's program of the Church, is Porter Rockwell on that one day. Probably the youngest, maybe the youngest person baptized that day, I would think at 16.

John Bytheway: 00:36:32

Hey, can I ask another question about the April 6th date. There's a feeling that that is the exact day, the birthday of the Savior. When did that-

Hank Smith: 00:36:46

Do we really want to get into this? Elder Bednar says, "We know, we know." I'm like, "Oh, wow. We know." Jordan, what do you think?

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:36:55

What I would say is we don't know from these documents.

John Bytheway: 00:36:58 From these documents, that's a good way to put it.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:37:02 I could see how somebody would read Section 20, is it the first verse, that way. But this is just a way of speaking. The rise of the Church of Christ in these last days being 1,830 years, since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, you can find that kind of language in other documents from this period. I don't think it's saying anything about the birth of Christ. That's not how I read it.

John Bytheway: 00:37:29 Yeah. I could've said, "I met Hank 16 years ago," and it doesn't mean it was February 19th. But I've always wondered about that because I think when did we take that so literally?

Hank Smith: 00:37:43 I will say that April 6th seems to be, well, at least it becomes a very important day for us. President Hinckley loved doing things on anniversaries. And didn't we dedicate the Conference Center? I want to say the Conference Center was dedicated on April 6th.

John Bytheway: 00:38:00 Wasn't the Salt Lake Temple dedicated on April 6th?

Hank Smith: 00:38:04 April 6th. Yeah. So I think that it becomes a significant day. And I'll just say, I've always been jealous of people who are born on April 6th. I don't know. I feel like the Lord's putting the stamp of approval on all of you who were born on April 6th.

John Bytheway: 00:38:16 My son, Matthew was born on April 5th. And I pled with Kim to just... No, I'm just kidding.

Hank Smith: 00:38:23 Come on.

John Bytheway: 00:38:25 Well, lastly what can you tell us about Section 22? It's a short one, I've read that 20 and 22 were sometimes put together. And how is this significant and important?

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:38:38 Yeah, that's correct. Some of the earliest versions we have of the articles and covenants included the revelation contained in Section 22. So I mentioned *The Painesville Telegraph* version which might be our earliest version also contains section 20. Which suggests to us that early members of the church are reading these texts as being very much related. Now the obvious relationship is the conversation about baptism and the instruction given about baptism in section 20 and section 22 follows up on that. Now, the question that arises here, according to the documents is what do we do with individuals who seem to meet all of the requirements for baptism? Have

been baptized by immersion in another denomination, this would've applied to a number of Baptists. What do we do with them? Do they need rebaptism? In fact, a couple of decades later, Orson Pratt, and Orson Pratt was not present.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:39:44

So he would've heard this secondhand. But he says that in the early days of the Church, there were certain persons belonging to the Baptist denomination. Very moral and no doubt as good people as you could find anywhere who came saying they believed in the Book of Mormon. And that they had been baptized in the Baptist Church and they wished to come into our church. The prophet Joseph had not at that time, particularly inquired in relation to this matter, but he did inquire and received a revelation from the Lord.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:40:16

Now, of course, this goes back to John the Baptist appearing in May of 1829 conferring the Priesthood of Aaron and saying that one of the things that the Priesthood Aaron allows for is baptism. So the question of authority in baptism had been present earlier on, at least a year earlier. But what does that tell us again? That Joseph doesn't just have this all figured out, like, "Oh, I know exactly what we need to do here, and I don't need to go to the Lord about it." But he does. He goes to the Lord. And I guess we should say perhaps that there are other Baptists in particular had emphasized immersion and accountability.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:41:06

So that is related to what we've seen in Book of Mormon passages and in Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants. So it wouldn't be a surprise that it's them who are asking the question. I am accountable. I was baptized when I was accountable and I was baptized by immersion. So the answer given by the Lord is this revelation that the date is 10 days after the organization of the Church. And the revelation given is that all old covenants have I caused to be done away. And this is a new and everlasting covenant.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:41:42

Now that would've been a bit of a departure for other Christian denominations. And this of course relates to the emerging concept of priesthood. But yet again, another indication of them gradually understanding what priesthood is, what its function is, how it relates to the ordinances. I think that's important. The earliest conversations we have in the documents and in the revelations about priesthood are tied to ordinances. And think of Section, what is it? 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the power of godliness is manifest in the ordinances. So there's a very close tie between authority and ordinances, but that is something that they're figuring out over time. Alexander Campbell, a minister in Ohio, Campbellites had

rejected infant baptism like Baptists. But whereas Baptists viewed baptism as a sign of a remission of sins that had already taken place. Campbellites believed that baptism actually affected the remission of sins. In the act itself, the remission of sins comes, which is the position of the Church of Christ.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:43:03

When Baptist Minister, Sidney Rigdon meets Alexander Campbell, Rigdon adopts Campbell's view of baptism. But Rigdon wants a more complete and full restoration. So Campbell is a Restorationist of a sort, he's interested in restoring primitive understandings of New Testament interactions. But Campbellites move away from organization. This is part of what is called the Democratization of religion in this period, where they're trying to get more and more people involved in religion. And Campbell takes it to the extreme of saying, "We don't need an organization. There should be no church." So he's got a different view of Restoration. But one of the things that he doesn't believe in is a restoration of spiritual gifts or communal living. And Sidney Rigdon is interested in a restoration of spiritual gifts and communal living. And he'll get evidence of spiritual gifts and he'll get a call to Communal Living through the Law of Consecration.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:44:06

Well, I mentioned Campbell and Rigdon because Rigdon's preaching convinces another minister, Parley P. Pratt, but Pratt had questions about authority. For people like Campbell, you can be baptized if you, as an individual have decided to accept the grace of Christ. That you don't need some sort of external authority. Again, he's moving away from this idea of authority. Some Protestants are suspicious of priesthood because they tie it to Catholics. So he's moving away from that, but Pratt's thinking, "I think there should be somebody who has authority to perform baptism."

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:44:51

So summer of 1830, he's on a canal boat returning home with his wife, thankful he feels impressed to disembark. And upon doing so he meets this Baptist Deacon who has this book and he wants to read it because it sounds interesting. And it's the Book of Mormon, of course, he reads it all night and then he travels to Palmyra where he meets Hyrum Smith and then they travel to Fayette. And Parley P. Pratt is baptized by somebody with authority. And not long after that, he's ordained as an elder. So his quest for authority is fulfilled. And this revelation in Section 22 is articulating the importance of that authority.

Hank Smith: 00:45:42

That is a beautiful story. And I love that it's happening at the same time Joseph is over here organizing these... It's almost like a chess game where the Lord is moving these separate pieces to

come together. The Church is organized in April and when is Pratt baptized?

- Dr. Jordan Watkins: [00:45:58](#) So Pratt seems to be baptized about September 1st, 1830. So just a couple of months after churches organization.
- Hank Smith: [00:46:06](#) Man, I love this, that all these separate pieces are coming together.
- John Bytheway: [00:46:09](#) I think if people would like to see a movie that's not in high definition, they might see if they can find *How Rare a Possession*, because it starts with the story of Parley P. Pratt, and it's really well done. And the things that Jordan was talking about, how he meets Hyrum and they are up half the night talking about the Book of Mormon, he gives him a copy. The deacon... What was the guy's name? Hamblin that had the Book of Mormon that he borrowed from him. Anyway, I agree Hank that this is being orchestrated from somewhere else. In spite of our human frailties, the Lord is putting things in place and putting things in motion.
- Hank Smith: [00:46:50](#) I love to hear these names that have become household names for members of the Church. And all of a sudden we're saying, "Oh, all of a sudden, this person heard about this person." When I first heard Parley P. Pratt, I really didn't like that he said, "Eating was a burden." He'd rather read the Book of Mormon than eat. And I thought, "Oh, if that's required. I am going to be in trouble."
- John Bytheway: [00:47:12](#) It's like, "Can we do both? Doritos in here, Alma over here?"
- Dr. Jordan Watkins: [00:47:17](#) I think one other thing to mention about Section 22, because here's one where we can go, "What's the application for me?" I guess the application is we needed authority. Okay. But isn't there another application there? I think much of it is about being humble enough to set aside outdated beliefs and practices. So this is a way for early members of the Church, "I have been baptized. I'm fine." Well, this is going to show your investment in this new faith. And I think that's something that all new members had to do to some extent. But I wonder if we too, in our lives have to step back and say, "Are there things as an individual, as a family, as a church that maybe we could set aside?" I think we live in the full, brilliant light of the Restoration and perhaps we can become complacent. That comes with many blessings, but maybe it also blinds us to some extent to necessary personal and societal development.

- Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:48:21 So the question would be, what are our dead works? What are our old covenants? And we can look to a prophet to help us with some of that. Recently we've had President Nelson call upon us to abandon attitudes of prejudice and racism. Are we bound up in that in some way? Are there some dead works there that we need to investigate and set aside? I also think maybe another thing related here is these Baptist individuals who show up and want to be part of the Church. It took somebody in a different organization to say, "Hey, there's something else that perhaps you can do."
- Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:49:07 We can also look to the outside world. And President Nelson, I think to some extent is modeling this in the relationship the church has established with the NAACP. Maybe we don't fully understand all of the issues of racism and prejudice. Now that we're in a pretty firm place, our identity's, I mentioned at the start is pretty firmly established. I think we should feel pretty comfortable and willing to learn from others on matters that will allow us to identify and set aside our own dead works and dead beliefs.
- Hank Smith: 00:49:44 I love that because the Lord just flat out tells him in verse three, "I don't love dead works. That's why we have a church. That's why I did this, is I want you to learn and grow and be able to..." What did you say, I love that, "To leave behind outdated practices or beliefs that are not benefiting us. Let's move forward." Man, that was really well said.
- John Bytheway: 00:50:14 Yeah. The humility that you mentioned, I just love the very last phrase, "Seek not to counsel your God." Let's make sure we understand who's the counselor and who's the listener here.
- Hank Smith: 00:50:29 I really like that. I wonder how often I try to counsel God. Like, "I know that You can answer this any way You'd like to. But I think this would be best. I really don't see a better alternative. So let's do this my way." Don't counsel your God.
- Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:50:48 So John pointed out that early versions of the Articles and Covenants sometimes also included the revelation now contained in Section 22. Some of them also included a revelation that you'll talk about in the future, which is Section 27. And I think that's really interesting, the obvious connection there is the sacrament. The occasion there is August of 1830, Newel and Sally Knight have come down to Harmony from Colesville. They're partaking of the sacrament. Joseph goes to procure wine and an angel stops him. And what are the angel's instruction? I say, as if that's how it goes. And what's the instruction, "It matters not what you shall eat or what you shall

drink when you partake of the sacrament. If it so be that you do with the [inaudible 00:51:40] to my glory, remembering under the Father my body, which was laid down for you and my blood, which was shed for the remission of your sins."

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:51:46 Now we've been discussing the Restoration of certain powers, ordinances, and institution. I think it bears emphasizing that like those emblems of the sacrament, all of these are means. They are means meant to foster our use of Christ, the atoning sacrifice, which I guess in some ways is the ultimate means. So that, that which is of most worth our souls, souls of God's children might be saved and exalted. So I say that because I think sometimes we get too focused on the means. It has to be bread and water or even we can extend that to the Church. It has to function in precisely this way. And it should always function in that way. Well, all of this, including the Church is a means, ultimately. I don't think there's going to be a church in the Celestial Kingdom. I don't know, maybe there will be, but I don't think so. I think it's a means by which we are to become like Christ and become a Zion people.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:52:53 And I think remembering that these things are ultimately means, now they're really important means the sacrament, the emblems are important. But they're only important to the extent that they lead us to reflect upon Christ and lead us to be more Christ-like. So I think that perspective perhaps can help us better keep those first two great commandments.

Hank Smith: 00:53:15 Oh, I'm so glad that you brought this up. I was a younger Elder's Quorum President in a college board. And I got to hear Elder Packer tell a story. He came to visit a big regional meeting and I was in a priesthood leadership meeting and he was talking about the sacrament prayers. And he said that he was in a ward recently. And the priest was really struggling with the sacrament prayers, just could not, I think it President Packer was there maybe. And he was just so nervous and he had messed up once and the Bishop said, "Do it again." And he had messed up a second time. And on the third time, the Bishop was actually going to stand up and go over and talk to him. And Present Packer, put his hand on the Bishop's knee, he told the story himself. He put his hand on the Bishop's knee and said, "Don't you think the Lord knows what he's trying to do?" Like, "It's okay. Let's move on."

Hank Smith: 00:54:14 And I think that what you said there is, yes, these means are important. Yes, what we're doing is important, but only if we understand why we're doing these things. And I think that is absolutely crucial. We are doing these, Section 27, verse two,

"Remembering my body, which was laid down for you and my blood which was shed for the remission of your sins." That's the overall why, don't you think? This is why we're doing these things, man. So good. Dr. Watkins, you are a historian and a scholar and it is obvious you know your stuff. Man, I am just so impressed. You know Church History, you know Joseph Smith as well as any Church Historian. And I know you're going to say, "Well, there's people who know more than me."

Hank Smith: 00:55:04

But you know these documents and this history, as well as any critic of the church. And yet there's a myth out there that, "Hey, if you know too much you want to be careful, you'll end up leaving the Church." But here's someone who knows a lot. And here you are a believer, faithful. So I love asking historians and scholars this question, how do you feel personally about the Restoration of Joseph Smith? What has it done for you in your life as Jordan, the husband, Jordan, the Church member?

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:55:41

Yeah. That's a really good question. And I hope it's okay that I'm still working on that question. I assume I will be throughout my life for the answer to the question. But I suppose one thing that we've emphasized is that these ideas continue to develop and evolve over time. What does it mean to have a church? What is authority? What are these offices? My feelings have also changed over time. As a child, I was pretty interested in Church History. And at that time, that meant that I was reading things like *The Work and the Glory*. And that provided me with one perspective of Church History. And it was a meaningful perspective. I'm not going to say that it doesn't have meaning, it did have a lot of meaning for me. I remember my first trip to Navuoo, I went with my family and I think my older sister was there.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:56:47

And I remember we pulled in and I was so excited. I was maybe 15, 16, or something like that. I was so excited and we just drove directly to the grave site of Joseph and Emma and Hyrum. And I just broke down. It was a profoundly moving experience. I think it was just the accumulation of feelings about Joseph and about all that he had done. And I cherish that experience. I now have a very different or more nuanced or more complicated or complex understanding of the history.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:57:34

I studied History at BYU. Then I went and studied History at Claremont with Richard Bushman. And I've continued to study these things in a, I would say much more rigorous way than I did when I was younger. And that has shaped and reshaped my view of the restoration. It's made me see it as a more complex process, something that's ongoing rather than an event through

which God revealed seamlessly divine truth through an almost perfect person. To an understanding of a God who was willing to condescend and work with His imperfect people to gradually restore truth over time despite, or maybe because of their imperfections. That has been a journey of understanding. And in the journey, the question arises, what do you believe or do you believe, or do you still believe? And I guess I would want to emphasize that that's a choice. Belief is something we choose. Now, we're informed by our experiences, by what we read, what we study, our interactions with the divine, our culture, our nurture.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:59:16

I lived in Alpine, Utah. I'm informed by all of that, but ultimately at the end of the day, I've got to choose, do I believe, or do I not believe? And I make the choice to believe because of experiences that I've had. Because this more complex understanding of the history of the Church actually aligns better with my life, than did that more naive understanding. God to the extent that He works in and through me, He does it in ways that I don't even always notice. Or when I notice it, I think maybe He's working through me, but sometimes that's hard to really grasp for sure. But that to me aligns better with this more nuanced understanding of the History of the Church and the restoration. So at the end of the day, it's a choice I make because living the life of a Latter-day Saint brings me joy and happiness. I'll also say from the perspective of somebody who's interested in the life of the mind. I think our theology is fascinating and interesting and requires that we be thoughtful people.

Dr. Jordan Watkins.: 01:00:50

Think of Section 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord is very clear that He wants us to study by learning and by faith. We have a very robust theology in terms of the Lord asking us to try and obtain all the knowledge that we can. And to me, that's really exciting that we're commanded to seek knowledge of history, to seek knowledge of all of God's work really. And why should we not? If it's all God's work, why should we not seek understanding in it? So that theology, I find really moving and inspiring. And I think is one of the reasons, it's not the only reason, but it's another reason that I choose to believe because this theology is so beautiful.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 01:01:50

And I think at its best or when I understand it best, it demands a lot of me. I don't always live up to that, but it's okay. I can go read section three of the Doctrine and Covenants and see that Joseph didn't either. And that's a comforting thing to the extent that I've felt the divine in my life, it's been in my efforts to be better in my failures to be better. And when I read through the

restoration and the life of Joseph Smith, I see that going on with him as well.

Hank Smith: 01:02:22 To me, I know when I have felt an increase of the Spirit is I just don't want it to end. I want to stay here and just keep learning and keep listening. And John, we are very lucky to be here.

John Bytheway: 01:02:38 Yeah. That was just beautiful. In the end, it is a choice, but for me, sometimes it's such an easy choice because I taste those fruits and I feel that. And I love that it's Section 88, that it's rigorous, it's study wars and the perplexities of nations and look at all of it. We're not hiding anything. I love that. So Jordan, what a privilege to be with you today. Thank you so much for everything you've shared and your knowledge and testimony today. Thank you.

Hank Smith: 01:03:09 Absolutely.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 01:03:10 Thank you both.

Hank Smith: 01:03:12 Dr. Jordan Watkins everyone. Thank you so much. And we want to thank our listeners. Those of you who've been with us this whole time, thank you for listening. Thank you for supporting this podcast. We want to thank our producer Shannon Sorenson and our production crew, David Perry and Lisa Spice. We hope you'll join us on our next episode of followHIM.