

EPISODE 28 • PART II



Dr. Steven C. Harper

D&C 76



- John Bytheway: 00:00:03 Welcome to Part II of this week's podcast.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:00:08 Verse 39 can be confusing. I remember a Sunday School lesson years and years ago where there was quite a discussion about verse 39 and what it meant. It says, verse 39, "All the rest should be brought forth by the resurrection of the dead, that the triumph and the glory of the Lamb who was slain, who was in the bosom of the Father before the worlds were made." So I guess the important distinction to make here is those who follow Satan in the beginning, those who never do become embodied are never resurrected, but everyone else is resurrected. So here is one of the first distinctions, there's a resurrection of everyone who was ever embodied and there's no resurrection for those who never are embodied. So remembering that we're trying to chart the answer to.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:00:59 Joseph's question, "What is the difference in the resurrection of the just and the unjust?" Here's a first installment. Here's a first part of an answer to that. "Everyone else is brought forth," verse 39 says, "by the resurrection of the dead through the triumph and the glory of the Lamb who was slain, who was in the bosom of the Father before the worlds were made." And then you hear Joseph and Sidney say, "This is the gospel, the glad tidings." That is Good News. So you asked a bit ago about Universalism, in a sense you remember Alma and the Book of Mormon, a resurrection at all is a form of salvation. So there is a universal salvation for anybody who was ever embodied in the first place. They will come forth in a resurrection, almost all of them, a resurrection to glory.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:52 Okay.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:01:54 Let's notice the testimony in verse 41. As you both know, John Hilton has been doing some really important work drawing our attention to the fact that the scriptures are pervasive in the

teachings of the prophets that Jesus was crucified for the world to bear the sins of the world, and verse 41 is one of the most powerful testimonies of that. He came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world and to bear the sins of the world and to sanctify the world and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We don't want to overreact against Protestantism, Catholicism and become the Christians who don't believe in the crucifixion of Christ. And sometimes we're at risk of doing that just because of cultural shifts, nothing that our scripture say.

- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:02:40 Let's pay particular attention to the fact that our scriptures right here emphatically declare that Jesus Christ was crucified for the sins of the world and to cleanse it from unrighteousness so that all through him, now again, verse 42, notice the word "all." Notice how conspicuously that word shows up throughout this revelation. It tells us that salvation is pretty close to being universal.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:04 Okay.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:03:06 With exceptions, but all through Him might be saved whom the Father had made put into his power.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:12 I'm loving this. I would recommend everybody go back and listen to our interview with Dr. Hilton. We did one over Easter, and he's just fantastic in the way he says, "We love Gethsemane. We love Gethsemane, but we can't love Gethsemane to the point that we don't talk about Calvary." Calvary is, "Oh yeah, that happened too." The Crucifixion is what comes up over and over and over in scripture and we should notice that indeed.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:03:44 Indeed.
- John Bytheway: 00:03:44 I was just going to say, 40 and 41 are a really nice summary statement. "This is the Gospel, this is the glad tidings that Jesus came to be crucified for the sins of the world, to bear the sins of the world, to sanctify the world, and cleanse it from all unrighteousness." That is glad tidings. That is great news.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:04:03 The Good News.
- John Bytheway: 00:04:05 And so I like when the scriptures do a little concise, here's the point?

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:04:11 Yeah, very well said. "His Atonement is the means to the end that through him all might be saved whom the Father has made." 43 continues, and again the word "all" jumps off the page to our attention. "Jesus glorifies the Father and saves all the works of his hands except the Sons of Perdition who deny the Son after the Father has revealed it." So again, salvation is nearly universal. Well, we might ask, "Well, why doesn't he save everyone? Why doesn't he save those few," who as President Packer put it, "defect to perdition?" And President Packer was drawing our attention to the fact that it's an act of agency. God would save them if they wanted to be saved. If there was one shred of them, one particle of them, that wanted his salvation, he has a plan for that and he has a Christ who's capable of it. So the fact that they're not saved is because He revealed the plan to them and they did not want it.

Hank Smith: 00:05:15 Yeah. Righteousness, Steve, is only righteousness if it's chosen, right?

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:05:20 Chosen, yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:05:21 By definition. If I force someone into righteousness, that's not righteousness. That's slavery. That's force. Now, Steve, if there's any moms and dads listening here saying, "Oh, that's my son or daughter," I would say, be careful there, right?

John Bytheway: 00:05:37 Yeah. This is a pretty high level of the Father has to reveal the Son to them and then go against it. And this gets to the idea of, what is the Unpardonable Sin, and the Joseph Smith statement. Is that what you're ... you guys were thinking?

Hank Smith: 00:05:54 Yeah. Well, I just don't want anyone to get discouraged here thinking is their child that is choosing not to be saved. The Lord is going to give ample opportunity.

John Bytheway: 00:06:04 Right.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:06:04 Yeah, President Packer was in panic about that as well. This is relatively few. It's a tiny number of people, relatively speaking, and none of our sons and daughters, I don't think anybody we know probably is at this threshold. I don't know exactly where to draw the line, but the line is way far out there a lot farther than we have fathomed. Notice the emphasis. Another other way to say what we're saying is to notice the emphasis of 44, "Wherefore He saves all except them." The point he wants us to take away is he's going to save just about everybody, unless they absolutely look him in the face and say, "I don't want it."

And even that is not that. When your kids are defiant, what they really want is a great big hug, but there they're calling you names and stuff. That's not who we're talking about here either. Those aren't perdition. They're the ones that the Lord will wrap his arms around and say, "Come on."

- Hank Smith: 00:07:09 Yeah, that's immaturity. That's emotional immaturity. And it happens in this home a little bit. Some from my children and some from their father. Not from their mother. I love that high percentage word there of "all". That makes me happy.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:07:29 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 00:07:30 So this is flying in the face of everything in that current culture and theology, that he's going to save all, and then there's some very few exceptions.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:07:44 You can hear the Lord in conversation with that theology, with that world, with that culture. Is almost universal damnation the case, or is universal salvation the case? And the Lord keeps telling us here in these early verses, "Almost universal salvation is the case and the only ones who will not get it are those who exercise their agency to opt out, knowing thoroughly and fully well what it is that they're choosing.
- John Bytheway: 00:08:12 Pretty hard for us to wrap our heads around why that would happen, but that's the exception there.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:08:17 Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 00:08:18 Steve, is God too merciful to some? Is that why? Is it, "No, I know I don't want everyone to be saved"? Is it the parable of the laborers in the vineyard? "They don't deserve it."
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:08:31 Yeah. I've had that response before, but it's always because I don't understand. It's when I interpret the parables and put myself, I'm the Good Son in the parable, that we have decided to call the Prodigal Son.
- Hank Smith: 00:08:44 Right.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:08:44 That's not what the scripture calls it. Whenever I put myself in the wrong position, I think God's too merciful. Whenever I understand how it really is, I am the Prodigal. When I really understand how things are, I want the most maximum mercy possible.

Hank Smith:	<u>00:09:03</u>	Would some people in Joseph Smith's day say, "I don't like this vision because your God is too merciful?"
Dr. Steve C. Ha...:	<u>00:09:10</u>	Oh yeah. Oh yeah, absolutely.
Hank Smith:	<u>00:09:14</u>	Wow.
Dr. Steve C. Ha...:	<u>00:09:14</u>	Absolutely. It goes too far. That was a common response to that, "That's just too far." And you'll sometimes hear Latter-day Saints do this, we sometimes misunderstand Evangelical Christians and we think, "Oh my gosh, all they have to do is say some trite prayer that they accept Jesus and then they're all in the kingdom. Not us. We have to bake bread for the widows and earn merit badges and all that." We don't understand our brothers and sisters very well. We're really not that far apart, and this revelation is emphasizing to us that loving Heavenly Parents created us because they wanted to save us. They're creating us right now, as we might say it, they want us to inherit all they have. And they are mighty to save. They are capable of saving every single last one of their children. The Infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ can do that. So why will some not be saved? Because they are the ones making that choice.
Hank Smith:	<u>00:10:25</u>	Steve, this is wonderful, honestly. Absolutely wonderful. It's interesting to me that I've seen this in Latter-day Saints today, even those on Twitter. If I say something like, "God loves all of his children," "Well, hold on." And I might go, "That doesn't mean he can bless all of his children because every blessing is tied to a commandment. But God loves all of his children." "But no, well, you're going a little far there. I don't know." It's like, "Come on."
John Bytheway:	<u>00:10:58</u>	"He delights to bless."
Hank Smith:	<u>00:11:00</u>	Yeah. What was that Elder Holland? "Surely the thing God loves most about being God is the thrill of being merciful."
John Bytheway:	<u>00:11:09</u>	We get the parable of the laborers in the vineyard at that point. "But wait a minute, you haven't done nearly as much work as I have and so it seems wrong to us to be so merciful." My dad joined the church when he was 24. And if you wanted to make him mad, just say something like, "Oh, you got to do all this before," which he didn't. He was a good boy, but as if wickedness was happiness. But I just think it's interesting when we suddenly become deciding what's fair and what's not when the greatest unfairness ever was the Savior's sacrifice for us, as Elder Renland just gave that talk. Why shouldn't it bother us?

That's the laborer in the vineyard. "Are you envious because I'm generous?"

- Hank Smith: 00:11:58 And what's interesting is you get exactly what you expected to get. The Lord, in the parable, this is Matthew chapter 18, I think it is, or Matthew 20, one or the other, and the Lord says, "You've got exactly what we agreed to. It's yours. What is the problem?" And that goes back to President Benson's great talk on pride. I don't want the Celestial Kingdom, I want the Celestial Kingdom because I can look down on all a bunch of other people.
- John Bytheway: 00:12:28 I want more than the next guy.
- Hank Smith: 00:12:29 Yeah. I want more, ugh.
- John Bytheway: 00:12:31 And you know what I love about that, to bring in a quick Book of Mormon reference? I'd love to look at the parable of the laborers in the vineyard and then Alma and Ammon when the brother and all get back together and it's like, "My joy was even more because of the joy of my brother," and there's there wasn't that, "Ah man, you guys did better than I did."
- Hank Smith: 00:12:56 Is it the older we get the more merciful we want God to be, just because we start to ...? I don't know. For me, personally, the older I get, the more I'm grateful for his mercy.
- John Bytheway: 00:13:08 I think so. And you just cut people slack and think, "They're doing the best they can."
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:13:13 I don't know if it's a function of the older Joseph Smith, as you know, taught to the Relief Society in 1842, he said, "The nearer, we come to our Heavenly Father, the more merciful we are."
- John Bytheway: 00:13:26 "The more we are disposed to look with compassion on perishing souls."
- Hank Smith: 00:13:30 But that's interesting to me, Steve, that the people of Joseph Smith's day would not go, "This is awesome."
- John Bytheway: 00:13:37 "This is awesome."
- Hank Smith: 00:13:37 "I love how merciful God is."
- John Bytheway: 00:13:39 "This is so great."

Hank Smith: 00:13:40 Instead, "Oh, what did you say, 'That the Saints fly to pieces'?" Is that what he said?

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:13:46 "Fly to pieces like glass." There are some of them who incline to universalism. The Knights do.

John Bytheway: 00:13:54 Interesting.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:13:55 So there are some of them who do, and Joseph's dad likes the Universalist street. The next chunk of the revelation addresses another thing that's in the air, and that is speculation about the nature of Hell and punishment. So the Lord essentially says, "You guys' speculation is all nonsense. None of you have any idea of what you're talking about. And I'm not going to tell." So Joseph, after this, will write a letter to the Saints in Missouri and said, "Tell Brother that, that stuff he's teaching in a meeting or whatever is nonsense. He has no idea what he's talking about."

John Bytheway: 00:14:35 No kidding.

Hank Smith: 00:14:35 Wow. So the Lord, I can see it here, neither was it revealed. Neither is. Neither will be.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:14:43 Yeah. So we still don't know exactly the nature of punishment. Thinking all the way back to Section 19, the Lord says, "Look, I use the words 'eternal punishment', but don't think that you necessarily understand what I mean by that. It can mean more than you might think."

Hank Smith: 00:15:03 I'm so glad I had these verses because students will sometimes ask, "What's Hell like," and the Lord's like, "Just stop." There's almost a, "Don't ask. I'm not going to tell you."

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:15:18 How long it lasts, how hot it is, those things that were the subject of many, many sermons in Joseph's day. Here the Lord says, "You really don't know. And I'm not telling you that stuff. Sometimes I give you a little glimpse of it, but then I shut it up again." Verse 47 says and 48 says, "You really don't know how wide, high, deep, how much the misery is. You really can't understand it unless you actually end up there."

Hank Smith: 00:15:44 Don't speculate.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:15:45 Don't think you can fathom it. And then 49, write this down, guys, this is really spectacular stuff. I used to think that they would stop at this point and write it all down and then envision some more. And that is a live possibility, but it is the case that

the earliest manuscript we have of this vision is the very first entry in what we call *Revelation: Book Two*. They went and bought a new book. They had just sent *Revelation: Book One* to Missouri for printing. So they're in Ohio and they go out and buy a new book and put this revelation in it. And so it might be that these repeated verses like 49 are the Lord saying, "Guys, before this evaporates from your minds, get a book and write it down." So both of those are live possibilities for how it gets recorded.

- Hank Smith: 00:16:43 Steve, can I just jump in?
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:16:44 Of course.
- Hank Smith: 00:16:46 I have felt this before, how about both of you, that when something divine happened to me, I have, there's that prompting, write it down. It reminds me of President Eyring, his talk. The Lord said, "I'm not giving these experiences just for you. Write them down. Write them down." And I have noticed in my personal life, and I would love to hear from both of you, that if I do write them down, it's almost as if I'm showing the Lord I'm serious and I want more. I'm not a journal keeper of epic proportions, I've got to say that, but when something happens to me that I know is clearly the hand of God, I have just even a little note on my phone that I say, "I'm going to make a couple of notes here about this. Write it down. It's important."
- John Bytheway: 00:17:38 I think that President Eyring, you referred to that talk, and I think we're talking about the same talk and I won't get the words right. But it was, "Oh", a paradigm shift for me. I thought a journal was, "I went on this trip and I won this trophy," and he was like, "Document the hand of God in your life." It was a totally different reason and it dawned on me, that's a lot of what the scriptures are. It's people documenting the hand of God in their life and putting their testimony down.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:18:09 You guys have made me feel a little better. I'm the world's worst journal keeper.
- Hank Smith: 00:18:13 And you're a historian.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:18:15 Yeah, well, I do believe that everyone else should keep a journal.
- Hank Smith: 00:18:18 So you can study it.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:18:23 But Joseph Smith was not too far on the list above me. He started a journal in November of 1832. It's not started yet at the

time of Section 76. And it was only after the Lord really got on him in Section 85 for the second time and told him, "You've got to keep a record." So he bought a journal. He wrote in it dutifully for 10 days. Then he quit for 10 months and it was on and off like that for the rest of his life. We have about 1,500 plus pages of his journals, but only about 30 or 35 of them. I think 33 are in his hand. And when they are, they are about the role-

- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:19:03 And when they are there about the role of God, the hand of God in his life, when they're not, it's his clerk saying today, "He read this or went there or had this meeting," so even bad journal keepers like me can obey the instruction we've received from our prophets and from the Lord to keep a record in which people will be able to see the evidence of God's hand. Imagine what would have happened if they had not obeyed the command to write this vision. We wouldn't be sitting here today talking about the Good News of the Restoration.
- Hank Smith: 00:19:45 I think one reason is, and this might be a silly example, I looked into a new car the other day called the Honda Crosstour, I'd never even seen it before, right? I'd never seen a Honda Crosstour before, but I was like, "Hey, that's a good looking car. I like that car, maybe I'll buy one." I looked on the Classifieds and said, "Oh," and then I started seeing that car everywhere. I had never seen it before and yet there it is in that intersection, in that parking lot and there it is there again. There's something about when you're recording things, I don't know, your mind is looking for them. You're paying attention to them. They've been there the whole time, right? It's not like everybody just started buying Crosstours, unless of course they were like, "Well, hang on a second, he's a trendsetter, right? He's interested, we're all going to be interested." I started to see it more.
- Hank Smith: 00:20:36 And I think that's one of the reasons I think the Lord says write these things down because then you're going to see more of it. And it's there, it's already there. The hand of God is already around you, but you're just not seeing it because perhaps you're not writing it down, you're not taking notes. Anyway, thanks for letting me stop there on verse 49, write The Vision.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:21:02 You bet. Verse 50 tells us, okay, now we're going to launch into the Resurrection of the Just, right? This was Joseph's question. "Lord, help me understand the difference between the Resurrection of the Just and the Unjust. Is it that simple or is there more complexity to it? Are there more layers, more

levels?" Joseph and Sidney said, "We're going to bear record now of what we saw and heard the Lord show us about the Resurrection of the Just." And so it's a good exercise to do with students here to have them pay close attention and see when we transition to the Resurrection of the Unjust. And what we notice is there's not a clear line, there's not a black and white line. That is, we go from here to a variety of kinds of resurrection, some of the more just, some of the last just and some of the unjust.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:22:01 And that's how Section 76 complexifies or complicates Heaven. I don't mean those in negative terms, right? The diversity of Heaven, let's use that word since it's a better word. There is a Heaven beyond Heaven, there are more levels of Heaven than we've thought. By the time we're done reading the revelation, we almost have the idea that there are as many heavens as there are people to inhabit the heavens. And we simplify it in a Celestial Heaven, a Terrestrial Heaven and a Telestial. But even as we read along, there are reasons to think that it's even more complex or diverse than that.

John Bytheway: 00:22:40 There appears to be plenty of room. When I look up in the night sky, it's like, there's a lot of space.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:22:47 So verse 50 starts the conversation of The Vision, the description of the resurrection of the just, these are the ones who received the testimony of Christ, they are those who are baptized with him, baptized in the image of his burial, the manner of his burial, it says, buried in the water in his name. These are people who live making and keep covenants. My family has very short come follow me discussions usually and they're usually pretty one-sided. And the other day, while we were feeding our mouths at the counter, I said, "What's the most important thing we will ever do? I want you to pick one word, you can just pick one word. What's the most important thing we will ever do?" And my 16 year old son said, "Covenant," and he was right. The most important thing any of us will ever do is covenant. And that's what we're reading here. If we could sum up everything that the people who come forth in the Resurrection of the Just do, it is that they make and keep covenants.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:23:59 If I understand, they're not necessarily superior quality people in any other way, right? They're not smarter than other people, they're not morally superior, they're not necessarily more righteous. They make and keep covenants. Covenants become the guiding determinant of their lives in Christ. And they're therefore overcome by faith. They are sealed by the Holy Spirit

of Promise, which the Father sheds forth on all of those who are just and true. They become members of The Church of the Firstborn, the which in this section, Section 88, others will talk about the church, I'm not sure I have a good handle on what that church is.

- Hank Smith: [00:24:42](#) This is what he says in, this is Doctrine and Covenants 10:67, "This is my doctrine, whosoever repenteth and cometh under me the same as my church." I really like that statement. It's very inclusionary. And it makes it sound like a group of people that believe one thing versus they get together in a church.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: [00:25:05](#) Yeah. I think what we could say safely, and I, I don't mean to be too definitive about The Church of the Firstborn. It's a mystery to me, but Section 88 weighs in on it too, and what we can notice is that both Sections 76 and 88, especially in these passages are temple related. We're starting to use temple terms and thinking in temple concepts, we might even think of them as somewhat esoteric, that is sort of teachings and concepts that haven't been fully elaborated by this point in the Restoration and that only are elaborated the further and further we go in temple teachings, in temple doctrine.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: [00:25:52](#) So for example, notice the close proximity in both Section 76 and Section 88 to make and keep covenants that are sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, right? I think we could safely say that those who are sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise or the Holy Ghost in its role of being a verifier and a validator of covenant faithfulness, those are the ones who are members of The Church of the Firstborn. It's not the same as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, this is a heavenly church for those who are faithful to their covenants and who receive all the promised blessings of their covenants. I think we could say that another way to say it is verse 55, "They into whose hands the father has given all things." We could read that in terms of temple.
- Hank Smith: [00:26:46](#) You mentioned Section 138 already, do you think 76, it was received in 1832 and you've got 138 not received until 19: 18, right? But do you see them as working together because some people won't be able to make covenants in this life, right?
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: [00:27:13](#) Yeah. Certainly.
- Hank Smith: [00:27:14](#) So I would see these two in our day in 2021, we have the blessing of having them both and so let them kind of work together as in this life or the next.

- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:27:26 Yeah, certainly we do. With only 76, we don't understand how vast this plan of salvation is. And with Section 88, our minds are blown again when we realize that God is a spectacular planner for happiness, salvation and exaltation.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:27:47 Okay. Verses 56 and seven with their emphasis on priesthood and kings and priests emphasized to us again that we're talking about temple, ultimately here, we're talking about temple covenants making and keeping temple covenants and the promises of exaltation that come with. These folks dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever. These are the ones that come with him when he comes again in the clouds of Heaven, these are the ones who have part in the first resurrection. So clearly the First Resurrection is the Resurrection of the Just, that's what verse 65 says.
- Hank Smith: 00:28:28 I want to know what you would say to someone who, we have this idea in the Church of like, well, Celestial Kingdom, celestial glory, that's kind of out of my reach, I'm shooting for Terrestrial Kingdom. And there's nothing in these two columns that I see that says, yeah, you're probably not going to make it. I see a lot of invitations here of repentance, fill your life with the Spirit if you want to be part of this.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:29:01 Makes me think of the late great scholar, Stephen Robinson, right? In his book, *Believing Christ*, which begins with the story of his wife who has an all-wonderful Latter-day Saint woman in every way who gives up and says, "I just can't do this. I'm not celestial material." And they have a conversation where they realize there's no such thing as celestial material, there's just fallen mortals, imperfect people who get to choose what they want. This is not a list of inherent qualities, this is a list of people who choose one thing over another. You're faced with a choice to covenant or not, to be baptized or not, to keep the baptismal covenant or not, to make and keep the temple covenants or not. It really has very little to do with inherent qualifications. It all depends on an exercise of agency.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:30:10 Gaining the Celestial Kingdom has nothing to do with being particularly inherently great, it has everything to do with what you really want. Look at verse 69, the people who get the Resurrection of the Just are imperfect people who were made perfect through Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant. He's the one who did the hard work through the shedding of his own blood. Our job is just to choose.
- Hank Smith: 00:30:40 Choose Him.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...:	<u>00:30:41</u>	Choose you this day.
Hank Smith:	<u>00:30:43</u>	Verse 52, "Washed and cleansed from all their sins," that means they had sins to be washed and cleansed from, right?
Dr. Steve C. Ha...:	<u>00:30:50</u>	Absolutely.
Hank Smith:	<u>00:30:51</u>	They were repenting.
Dr. Steve C. Ha...:	<u>00:30:52</u>	Yeah. And as sinful as other folks, but they just decided they want the blessings that got offered. And they opted for that.
John Bytheway:	<u>00:31:01</u>	I really like that idea. It's not a list of qualifications that you're trying to attain, but it's, where's your heart? And Stephen Robinson's second book after <i>Believing Christ</i> was called <i>Following Christ</i> and he had a phrase in there that I just love. He said, "The question is not, am I going to make it? The question is, do I want to stay?" Which I thought was such a good way to put it. And your 16-year-old son who gave that answer about making a covenant, yeah, you're in the covenant so the question isn't, am I going to make it? The question is, ""Do I want to stay?" That book blessed me a lot. Both of those.
Hank Smith:	<u>00:31:42</u>	I remember Dr. Robinson saying, "Mercy is only mercy if you don't deserve it. The moment you earn it, it's not mercy. It's justice, you earned it. So let God be merciful. Let him give you things you don't deserve." So would I be correct in saying, "Steve, that if someone is feeling this section and they're like, 'Oh, I'm just not celestial material,'" Hey, if you're repenting, if you are sincerely repenting and God has your heart, you are on the right path, you are headed?
Dr. Steve C. Ha...:	<u>00:32:09</u>	Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. And the way I sometimes talk about it is to repent relentlessly.
Hank Smith:	<u>00:32:17</u>	Ooh, I like that.
Dr. Steve C. Ha...:	<u>00:32:19</u>	It's not that if you repent and then you're flawless from then on out. I don't know anybody like that. So a relentless repenter, somebody who every day or maybe every other day, or maybe once a year manifests that sincere, sincerity is crucial, you can't fake it, you can't repent if you don't mean to repent. But everybody who sincerely repents and comes to Christ is a candidate for the Celestial Kingdom. Everybody.
Hank Smith:	<u>00:32:52</u>	Repent relentlessly. I love that.

John Bytheway: 00:32:54 Well, that's a great phrase there.

Hank Smith: 00:32:55 It is.

John Bytheway: 00:32:56 The new Young Women Theme has a phrase in there, "I cherish the gift of repentance," and as they have gone around and interviewed young women about their favorite parts, at least Sister Becky Craven said that that's one that has come up again and again, the young women appreciate that phrase, "We cherish the gift of repentance." And I'm glad we're talking about this because it can sound like it's this one-time thing and then if you sin again, it all comes back and you're toast. To me, it sounds to me like most of the scriptures are what we're talking about, you keep repenting every day. You make course corrections every day. And the fact that the Lord has the sacrament table there every Sunday kind of tells us, yeah, you're probably going to mess up again.

Hank Smith: 00:33:44 That's powerful.

John Bytheway: 00:33:47 So come on back and we'll do this again next week and we'll do it the week and we'll do it the next week. Yeah.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:33:54 Yeah. Well said, I wish everybody could know Steve Robinson, right? I wish everybody had to read *Believing Christ* and then they got to know him because I love his soul. He is a curmudgeon, he's passed now, wonderful, delightful, but sort of grouchy, didn't feel well, very much struggled with some serious health problems. And if they could realize that that guy knows very well that he's going to have celestial heaven because that's what he really wants. And then say, "Yeah, but he's not Mr. Rogers, he's sarcastic," or whatever, then they would really get what he's saying in the book, right? And I feel when I realize that, I think, well, then I'm going to make it too. I'm going to be all right, because whatever flaws I have, whatever sins I commit, I am sincere. I love Christ and I want to love him better. And I am sincere in my repentance, and those are the criteria that qualify us for him saying that I will make you perfect.

Hank Smith: 00:35:09 I think I'm going to repent relentlessly for the rest of my life.

John Bytheway: 00:35:14 Well, if you don't mind an airplane reference, I have airplanes behind me on my desk but you can't see them, but President Uchtdorf, I love that idea of an airliner is off course most of the time, but it relentlessly corrects itself. It's constantly correcting itself until it touches down on the runway, but the whole time the autopilot is fixing the winds and everything else that's going

on. So I like that metaphor. And it's not a one-time course correction, it's a daily, hourly and minutely.

- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: [00:35:57](#) Well, gentleman, notice that we make a transition between verse 69 and 71 from the Resurrection of the Just, and we learned in verse 70 that these people will be resurrected into celestial bodies. People who are made perfect through the Atonement of Christ, resurrected into celestial bodies and the glory of the sun is sort of the type for that. And then in verse 71, the visionaries, Joseph and Sidney Rigdon see a terrestrial world, and these are people who are resurrected into terrestrial bodies, and the moon is typical of that.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: [00:36:34](#) But what we don't see here is any clear indication that we have stopped talking about the Resurrection of the Just and are now talking about the Resurrection of the Unjust. Remember the text in John 5 that we with that we're curious about said the Resurrection of the Just, they go to Heaven, the Resurrection of the Unjust, they're condemned. And here we're getting a nuance, a layer, a whole different way of thinking about a resurrection to glory.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: [00:37:08](#) So this is added, this is all new materials, not even in the Book of Mormon and the Bible only hints at it. So this wonderful section that follows is a restoration of knowledge that was missing until February of 1832. These are people who die without the law, and this is where, as Hank was saying earlier, one Section 138 really helps us because if all we had was 76, we would be led to the conclusion that people who die without knowing the Restored Gospel and having accepted it can do no better than terrestrial heaven. But when we read Section 76 in combination with 138, we realize that everyone who ever lived regardless of when they died can receive all the blessings of a celestial heaven. So we can qualify these verses and say...
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: [00:38:02](#) So we can qualify these verses and say, these are people who don't accept the law on either side of death. Verse 73. These are folks who go to the Spirit Prison, the Savior visits and preaches to them there. So they can be judged just as if they were living in the flesh. "They received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but they afterwards received it." And I think when we put this in combination with Section 138, what we're learning here is these are people who knew better, who knew they should have received the gospel earlier, who didn't, for one reason or another.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:38:44 I don't know what that threshold is. I was uncomfortable on my mission when one of my companions would reject people... to set the door and he'd say, "You're going to hell then." And I don't know for sure, but I think the threshold is higher than that. I think our loving Heavenly Father will make awfully sure that everybody knows the gospel and what they can do with it. And your agency's not fully activated until you know, and I'm not sure a couple of kids showing up on your doorstep and making one door approach is enough knowledge.

Hank Smith: 00:39:29 Let's come back to the opening, verse five. "I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious and delight in this."

John Bytheway: 00:39:36 I want to just tell you as a teenager, when I read this, I needed a better definition of the word receive because it didn't sound fair to me. Well, they didn't get it. That's not fair. And receive is choosing to receive, choosing to accept it.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:39:52 Good, John.

John Bytheway: 00:39:52 And so I think you use the word accept. And I think if anybody's reading it the way I did, when I was a teenager, they received it not the testimony of Jesus. Well, what it means is they refused it. They refused to accept it. And that helped me make sense of it.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:40:08 I like that insight, John, and in 74, you could replace received not with rejected.

John Bytheway: 00:40:14 Exactly. It's not that they didn't get a chance. It's that they willfully refuse it. They reject it. Thank you.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:40:22 And what they did next was say, "I regret that, I should have done better, I'm happy to accept." So these are folks who wanted some, but not all of the glory that was available to them. And that's exactly what they're going to get. They want some, but oh, these are good people. These are fine people. There's nothing in the revelation that indicates that heirs of celestial heaven are somehow superior to these people. It just tells us that they want celestial heaven, whereas these people really don't. I'm guessing you know people like this, I do. I know people who are really terrific, wonderful people. And I say, "Well, would you like all these blessings of the gospel?" They say, "No, not really. That terrestrial stuff, that sounds great to me, perfectly content there. Happy as can be. So if I get that, that's all I'll ever ask."

Hank Smith: 00:41:18 I like what you said, people who want, who choose. Am I wrong in saying, I don't think anybody's going to go to the Terrestrial Kingdom who doesn't want the Terrestrial Kingdom. I don't think anybody's going to the Celestial Kingdom who doesn't want the Celestial Kingdom.

John Bytheway: 00:41:34 There is a Book of Mormon phrase about you would be more miserable to dwell. There's this idea of you're going to go where you feel comfortable.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:41:42 And happy.

John Bytheway: 00:41:43 And as we're talking about, where you want.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:41:47 Joseph taught that for sure. That same principle.

Hank Smith: 00:41:51 It seems as Latter-day Saints, we've moved the line between heaven and hell to it's now between the Celestial Kingdom and the Terrestrial Kingdom. Heaven is the Celestial Kingdom. And anything below that could be considered hell because I've heard that before. Oh, you believe that I'm going to hell. That's not this revelation.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:42:14 No, you don't find that here. This revelation is about heaven. All of the things it talks about are heaven: Celestial, Terrestrial, Telestial, these are heaven, these are degrees of heavenly glory. All of them. So you could think of Perdition as Hell. And Joseph will teach also that hell is a quality. It's what we put ourselves through. When we realized we didn't act as we should have acted, we didn't exercise our agency in the way we really wish we had. Hell is also a description for that state between death and resurrection. Even for the righteous, Section 45 teaches us they consider it a time of bondage. They're damned in a sense, they cannot make progress until the Resurrection comes. So there's a state there of hell. But what this revelation shows us is that there's a whole lot more heaven than there is hell and in some ways, it's a reversal of the notion that we start with where Hell's very, very big and Heaven's very tiny. When we come through Section 76, we realize Hell is pretty tiny and Heaven is, not only big, but it's quite diverse.

John Bytheway: 00:43:33 Steve, you mentioned at the very beginning about, and maybe this is a good place to fit this in, maybe not. But you mentioned at the beginning about some can say that we are saved and damned at the same time. Would this be one of those places to say that, that if I'm in the Terrestrial Kingdom, do I think I'm damned or do I think I've been saved?

Dr. Steve C. Ha...:	<u>00:43:56</u>	Both, right. You're going to be in heaven, it surpasses understanding the glory of telestial heaven, even surpasses understanding the revelation says, and at the same time, I think we'll probably be aware that there was more we could have had if that's what we really wanted.
John Bytheway:	<u>00:44:14</u>	So in that way then would I consider it being damned because there could have been more?
Dr. Steve C. Ha...:	<u>00:44:21</u>	There's an ongoing conversation to which we don't have a good answer about whether there's progression between the kingdoms. Some of your listeners will say absolutely there isn't because so-and-so said so, and others will say absolutely there is because so-and-so said so. Frankly, it's an unsettled question. We really don't know the answer to that at this point. What we've been talking about makes me think of the line from Jonathan Edwards, the great Reverend Edwards Presbyterian minister in the 18th century, New England who used the words, "God's arbitrary, sovereign will." Why will some people go to heaven and some people go to hell? Because of God's arbitrary, sovereign will. And that's not what Section 76 is teaching us. These destinations are our choosing. Every child of God had the option of choosing any of them they wanted. And the reason we end up where we do is because of what we wanted, what we chose. It's not arbitrary. God is sovereign, but he uses his sovereign power to put that power to choose, in us. We get to decide.
Hank Smith:	<u>00:45:30</u>	I think maybe it's our education system because I want to get an A. I tried really hard, I got my score back, and I got a C. I really wanted the Celestial Kingdom, but I got the Telestial Kingdom and I did my best and I just didn't get it. And we've got to throw that out the window and say, these are all choices. This is what you want. I just wish, one thing if I could help my fellow Latter-day Saints is this idea of the anxiety over I've got to be good enough. I've got to be good enough. I've got to be good enough. And I'm saying just repent enough. Just keep repenting, just keep repenting and you're on the right path.
Dr. Steve C. Ha...:	<u>00:46:17</u>	What we really have to do is want the right thing.
Hank Smith:	<u>00:46:21</u>	What's your desire?
Dr. Steve C. Ha...:	<u>00:46:22</u>	"What do we love? What is your desire? What do you love? Do you love me?" Jesus asks Peter and Peter, "Of course I do." No, I mean it. I'm really asking, do you love... And as you know, this is in the context of these wonderful fat fish. Peter's just caught the biggest catch of his life. And those fish are money. It would

be like looking at a pile of 1,000 dollar bills and having a life choice to make. I've been called to the full-time ministry of the Savior, or I could go fishing and I could make a lot of money. And I just had the biggest jackpot of my life. And now I'm having breakfast with the Savior and he's saying, "Do you love me?"

- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:47:12 "Do you love me more than that pile of 1,000 dollar bills?" Yeah, of course I do. No, I mean it, think about it. I'm serious. Do you love me? Of course, I do. Do you love me? Yes. Well then, do the right things. "Feed my sheep. Show that you love me." That's the question that's really being asked of us. Not, "Do you check all the boxes for a celestial heir?" He takes care of that part. He makes us perfect through the shedding of his own blood. The question he's asking us is, do you love me? And Elder Holland says that so much more beautifully than I possibly can, but that's the question. We get to answer that question for ourselves.
- Hank Smith: 00:47:56 "Comes ringing down through the halls of time," he said. "Do you love me?" And we get to answer that question every day.
- John Bytheway: 00:48:04 I love the symmetry elegance of Peter's three denials and then Jesus giving him a chance to answer, "Thou knowest, I love thee." Three times and feed my sheep three times and how that he just gave him a chance to reverse course. And I was going to say that we need the Savior to help us want the right things. I think Joseph Smith talked about the nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer his views, the greater his enjoyments, till he has lost desire for sin, but he says, but we, what's the word? We expect this is a station which no man ever arrived in a moment. And so that's another thing we ask for is for the Lord to help us want the right things.
- Hank Smith: 00:48:49 That's part of the grace of the Atonement.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:48:52 Absolutely.
- John Bytheway: 00:48:53 To actually lose desire for sin and to not want sin, but to want the best things.
- Hank Smith: 00:48:57 That's Mosiah 5. "The Spirit hath wrought a mighty change in us. We have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually."
- John Bytheway: 00:49:10 Used to think, "Where's the order form for that? How do I sign up for that?" And I used to wonder, were they done forever? And then right after that, King Benjamin gives them a name to

put on themselves. And I think, I don't think they were done. I think, at that moment. And I think we've all had moments where conference is over and the last amen and we're so fired up and that was awesome. And we have no desire to sin. And then we go back to work and school the next day.

Hank Smith: 00:49:36

We got to lose it again.

John Bytheway: 00:49:38

Relentless repenter.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:49:40

So to sum up, terrestrial heirs are the ones who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus. They have it, they just don't endure faithfully in it. They show that it's not what they ultimately really want most and that's fine. They get what they really want most. And verse 81 sums that part of The Vision up. And again, verse 80, they're told to write that before they forget it, while they're still in the spirit, while it's still clear in their minds. We transitioned from the Terrestrial to the Celestial Kingdom in verse 89. The two seers here are seeing the celestial heaven, which surpasses all understanding. We have a folk doctrine in the Church that we might dispel here. I heard it taught in my youth, that Joseph had said that if you could just see the Celestial Kingdom, you'd be willing to kill yourself just to get there. And that's not what he taught, that misses the mark. What he apparently taught, according to Wilford Woodruff, is that it's important for us to fulfill our mission on the earth.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:50:53

It's important for us to have a probation here, at least for many of us. And so God endowed us with fear of death. Even if we know the plan of salvation, none of us are eager to die. And we do just about all we can to prevent it. And only folks who are in utter despair get over that to the point of that extreme. So what Joseph taught is because we're supposed to finish our mortal probation on the earth, God implanted in us a fear of death. And if we could see what awaits us, that fear would go away. Joseph didn't say Celestial Kingdom. He said the other side of the veil. If you could see what's beyond this earth, there's no reason to be scared of death. So we don't want to misstate that. I made a wonderful student cry one day when I said, that's a bunch of crap.

John Bytheway: 00:51:52

Don't sugarcoat it.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:51:53

Utterly and sensitively. And I've felt bad ever since and I've wondered if that made me a celestial heir.

John Bytheway:	<u>00:52:04</u>	I'm really glad you brought that up though, and I'm glad you called it a folk doctrine.
Dr. Steve C. Ha...:	<u>00:52:09</u>	So the terrestrial glory is pretty spectacular compared to the telestial and the celestial is exponentially more spectacular than that, like the sun is more glorious than the moon and the moon more glorious than the star. Then we launch into a section here where we review and we go back through all three kingdoms again. And the most striking thing about the heirs of the Celestial Kingdom in this passage is that God makes them equal, verse 95, equal to him in power and in might and in dominion. This is one of the things that is repugnant to most of the rest of Christianity. If the early converts had a hard time with it, this might be one reason why. And there are lots of our Christian sisters and brothers today who will say, "Oh, I was with you when you said that we're saved through the perfect Atonement of Christ that he worked out with the shedding of his own blood."
Dr. Steve C. Ha...:	<u>00:53:13</u>	But when you're telling me that he's going to make us equal to God in power and might dominion. They just think that is so objectionable because it's blasphemous to consider ourselves as of the same species as God, where we can't become like God. And of course, this is what I love about the plan of salvation. It's the very thing that repulses many of our brothers and sisters about the restored gospel is one of the things that's most beautiful about it to me. So we're going to have to disagree there. I love that the purpose of the plan is for God to raise his children to be like him, to be in his presence, to see as they are seen as verse 94 says that, "Know as they are known." That's going to be so great to be in God's presence and see and know how we fit in his family and to receive the fullness of his grace and to be made equal to him.
Dr. Steve C. Ha...:	<u>00:54:15</u>	We're not claiming that we can do that on our own. That's one of the objections is that sometimes Latter-day Saints misunderstand or are perceived to think that they earn their way up to be like God. Nothing in this revelation says that. It's him who's making us equal to him. It's him who's giving us this power and might dominion. It's him who wants to endow his children with all of the blessings he has, with all the happiness he has. And so I love that truth. I'm very grateful that it's been restored in the latter days.
Hank Smith:	<u>00:54:52</u>	And you can see hints of it with Paul. We're made heirs, joint heirs with Christ. C.S. Lewis started to see it towards the end of his writing. He said, you see mere mortals, but these are potential gods and goddesses.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:55:11 And there's not a thing in the Bible that objects to it or refutes it, it's only if you read the Bible through the lenses of some Christian philosophical ideas that you come to that conclusion. And this is my contention about traditional Christianity is that it's based too much on Greek philosophical ideas for its orientation to the Bible. And that's why we get ideas that make us so inferior that we could never become like our Heavenly Father.

John Bytheway: 00:55:45 And I think too, the last word you said, our Heavenly Father. We take that not as a metaphor. This is all about family. And of course we're going to become like our Father. Of course our Father wants to reward his children and it's not a metaphor. He's our father.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:56:05 Indeed. Begotten sons and daughters unto God.

John Bytheway: 00:56:08 That phrase back there, we are all called begotten sons and daughters. And that Greek philosophy took that away too. We're a creation, we're metaphorically his children, but not really.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:56:22 Absolutely. There can't be anything other than God originally. So we have to be created out of nothing by God and the restored gospel rejects that. And there are lots of implications either way, depending on what you decide to do with that original idea about who God is.

Hank Smith: 00:56:46 Section 76. Tell me if I'm right here, Steve, I think it was Richard Bushman who said "In swipes, Joseph Smith cut Gordian knots." Section 76 seems to be one of those. How can God be both merciful and just?

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:57:02 It certainly does.

Hank Smith: 00:57:03 God can be both merciful and just.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 00:57:03 It certainly does, and other revelations too. I've heard that same phrase was used in Section 93. Truman Madsen used it in terms of Section 93, which describes how we can be both created by God and free? What's the nature of our agency, of our independence from God if we are extensions of God? That's an old and problematic question and Section 93 answers it really brilliantly. Section 76 similarly cuts through lots of arguments in

Christianity and sets forth a much more diverse and generous copious heaven than traditional Christianity has ever imagined.

- Hank Smith: [00:57:55](#) I mean, I've always thought and I could be wrong, but I've always thought that Latter-day Saints, among all the theologies on the earth, have a very liberal view of Heaven and who will go.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: [00:58:12](#) Let me tell you in practical terms what that means to me. There's a lot of people I love generally and specifically people I know in different Christianities, different denominations, and people I look to as examples of Christ-like love and behavior and devotion to God and so forth. According to some of their soteriology, I'm not going to make it. I'm not going to make it because I have chosen the wrong version of Christ in whom to put my faith. For them, salvation is a matter of propositionally choosing the right philosophy of who Christ is. Well, in the version of Section 76, I'm going to make it and so are they. This is what I love about it. This is a more generous view of salvation. It's hard for me to believe in a God who does save and damn people by his arbitrary sovereign will. Or even by saying, "If you believe the right exact ideas about Christ, you can get in." You could be Mother Teresa and spend your life serving, but if you believe the wrong ideas about Christ, you're not getting in. That doesn't work for me. That's not a God of mercy. That's not the God we were introduced to in the beginning of this section.
- John Bytheway: [00:59:42](#) I hope I end up with Mother Teresa.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: [00:59:45](#) I'll be so fortunate if it ever works out that way. Here we have in Section 76 a version of God's plan and plans for us that is worthy of a God who wants us to have all the blessings that are possibly available to us. Not because we deserve them. We don't deserve them. We don't earn them, but we get to choose them. We get to have them if we want them, because Jesus Christ, the Mediator of this plan, worked it out through the shedding of his own blood and he is capable of making us perfect. Even if I don't have exactly the right ideas about exactly who He is, I can make it. What I need to do is covenant. Covenant with God and grow by degrees and by grace that He gives me. If I'll do that, I'm going to make it in. I'm going to make it to whatever level of heaven I want. I want the one where I get to be with Jenny Sebring for all eternity. That's the motivation for me.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: [01:00:59](#) Otherwise, I'm an introverted guy. I'd take it less to heaven if it surpassed all understanding and had an ESPN place that I could watch. That'd be okay with me. But it sounds satisfying now

because I want to be with my family forever and the way to get there is through the New and Everlasting Covenant of marriage and the highest of the heavenly glories.

- John Bytheway: [01:01:24](#) I'm glad you said that, because that takes us to another section and this is being revealed right now yet about eternal families. Would you?
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: [01:01:34](#) We talked in the beginning about how everything we've had on salvation before 76 is sort of like Third Grade Math. We've advanced up to that level and we have an understanding of the basic concepts of addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and then Section 76 says let's learn algebra and some trigonometry. Then, later sections are going to say, now there's some more beyond that. There's some calculus. Section 131 says, "In the celestial heaven, there are even degrees beyond that and the highest and holiest of all salvation is exaltation," where we get to be with our families forever. And so, that's the goal for me. That's the great prize to be with my people I cherish most for eternity is the greatest motivator of my life.
- Hank Smith: [01:02:33](#) I love what you said there about it's Him. It's Him. He made it possible. He wants to give us everything that we want, that we choose. I think it kind of gives us that in 107, the end of the plan, the Savior says I have overcome. "I have overcome and have trodden the wine press alone. Even the wine press of the fairness of the wrath of the almighty God. Then shall He be crowned with the crown of glory, to sit on the throne of His power to reign forever and ever." If we realize that he overcomes, he is the one who does, that fear we have of, "Oh, can I earn it? Can I earn it?" He did earn it and now he has the right to give you what you want.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: [01:03:22](#) Jesus Christ is the protagonist of Section 76. He is the main character. He is the hero. In Act 1, we met Him in the premortal life. We saw Him there and we've watched throughout. In the midpoint of the revelation, He worked out this perfect Atonement through the shedding of His own blood. Here at the end, he says, "I did it all by myself. I trod the winepress alone and I will be crowned, you'll be crowned there with me." We see the culmination, the climactic fulfillment of Christ's redeeming work and the plans of salvation that He has brought to pass here in the verses that you were just referring to. It's really a Christ-centered revelation.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: [01:04:14](#) For people who say Latter-day Saints aren't Christians, really they're just saying, "We don't believe in the same philosophical

premises about Christ that they do." But it's hard to read Section 76 and say a believer in that is not a believer in Christ.

- Hank Smith: 01:04:29 Is there anything to the story, Steve, of The Vision closing and Sydney collapsing or some sort?
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 01:04:38 I think there is. No reason to disbelieve it. Again, we've got Philo Dibble who throughout the 1870s, '80s and early 90s gives us a few different accounts of having been present for at least part of this. As I remember, if I remember, he's our source for saying Sydney was sort of fatigued when it was over and Joseph said he's not as used to the design.
- Hank Smith: 01:05:03 That's a great moment.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 01:05:05 Which I think is really cool.
- Hank Smith: 01:05:06 Yeah, that's a great moment.
- John Bytheway: 01:05:08 I think it's consistent too. I always think of Joseph Smith saying, "When I came to, I was lying on my back." Apparently it wears you out or something. Maybe he grew a stronger process, but I liked that Sidney Rigdon had to be carried.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 01:05:29 That's a cool one. We ought to come out of this revelation realizing that we still don't know the celestial math.
- John Bytheway: 01:05:39 These last verses, 1:15.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 01:05:41 1:15, 1:16. They say, "You guys make sure you write all that down, but trust me, you still, you don't know anything." I have more to tell you about that. He told us at the beginning of the Revelation, He would very generously tell us all about this just as soon as we could internalize it.
- Hank Smith: 01:06:01 That is good leadership style is giving people assignments that they're capable of, that are just a little outside their reach and letting them get there. Then, give them a little more just outside their reach, but don't give them, don't overwhelm them to the point that now they're now discouraged because they can't comprehend it all. By trying to do that as a parent, not try to overwhelm a child with so much that they're overloaded and can't move at all but just push a little bit further every time. A little bit further, let's reach a little bit more, every time. I can see the Lord doing that with these sections. To me, it's another testimony to the prophet Joseph Smith that he's including little tiny hints at future revelations. He would have to have the

whole plan set out in his mind to be making this up, to throw in little hints there, here and there.

- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 01:06:55 In his history, there's an entry right after this revelation that is one of the key things I think about when I realized he's not the inventor of these ideas. Because he sits back after he sees these series of visions and he marvels at it. The next passage in this history says, "That is so far beyond the narrow mindedness of man, that all of us are constrained to exclaim it came from God." He couldn't have conceived of this.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 01:07:28 There were other people, Alex Campbell, who we mentioned early on, he's playing with the idea of three kingdoms but nothing like this, nothing so sophisticated. He says the first two, you kind of experience on earth, and then there's the kingdom of glory after this. Emanuel Swedenborg a hundred years or so earlier is he's tapping into Pauline phrases in Corinthians and talking about three kingdoms of heaven and so on. But nobody, none of them come anywhere close to this. I wouldn't be surprised if Swedenborg had some inspired ideas, but then you get this text and you think that just blew the roof off of everything. That's Joseph himself says, "Dang, that is so far beyond me and everybody else. It came from God."
- John Bytheway: 01:08:17 Because of what happened after this, did it have a big impact on the persecution? Because it was published in the paper or whatever?
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 01:08:26 I don't know anything about that. I don't think it had anything specific to do with the March beating and tar and feathers. But I do know that Joseph told the missionaries, "Keep that on the down low. Do not start with, 'Hey, did you guys know that?'" Let's get to that calculus after we do addition and subtraction. Brigham Young had a hard time internalizing it. Wilford would have said it was the coolest thing I'd ever seen. I loved it.
- John Bytheway: 01:08:54 A kind of a favorite statement of mine of Joseph Smith was the, "Could you gaze into heaven for five minutes, you would know more than by reading everything ever written on the subject." And here is all of this and then even at the end, and there's more which were commanded not to write. There's even more that it's not lawful to write and neither are men capable of writing them. I love that God is greater and grander than we have imagined. There's a good section for that, that statement about if you could gaze into heaven for five minutes, and he and Sidney did.

Hank Smith: 01:09:33 The ending does seem to say that. It just says, "We're not even coming close to telling you what we saw."

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 01:09:43 He wrote a letter where he said, "Lord, deliver me from the narrow prison of paper, pen and ink, and a crooked, broken, scattered, and imperfect language." Notice that some of this text is dictated. Some of it's in the first person voice of the Savior, but most of it is, "You guys describe what you've seen." I can imagine thinking, I don't have words for that. Neither is man capable of making them known. I don't know how to describe what we just saw.

Hank Smith: 01:10:13 I love it. Of anyone on the planet Earth today, there's a handful of people who know Joseph's life like you, who understand him like you do. I know that there are some of your mentors who you would give full credit to. At knowing Joseph Smith as well as you do, as well as can be from what's left, right? The documents, the evidence that's left. How do you feel about him and this Restoration?

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 01:10:48 I love Joseph Smith because he opened the door to Jesus Christ. He is utterly inconsequential unless he receives these revelations that we've been reading about and talking about. There were literally lots of other people named Joseph Smith who farmed in upstate New York and other places and we are not having a podcast about them. They weren't the greatest revelators in the history of the world. They didn't commune with Jehovah, not in the way he did. I don't love Joseph Smith because he was handsome. I don't care. I don't love him because he was a good wrestler. I don't care. I don't love him because he was some sort of idealized perfect prophet. He wasn't. I know that he wasn't. He knew that he wasn't. The Lord knew that he wasn't as he's told us a few times in the Doctrine and Covenants.

Dr. Steve C. Ha...: 01:11:51 What is it about him? Why do we care? We care because he cracked the heavens open and revealed Jesus Christ. He heard him as he was commanded and he documented that unbelievably well. Those documents are now in our hands. I mean, would you revere somebody who gave you the greatest possible gifts? Who answered the terrible questions of existence? That's why I revere him. It's not some sort of ... I don't think I have misconceptions about who he is. He's a real guy and I don't expect him to be more than that. It's not remarkable to me that he's sort of ordinary in many aspects. What's remarkable to me is that an ordinary guy revealed all that he did about, from through, by the Lord Jesus Christ. The

Savior is my subject of study and I get to him through the texts that he gave to Joseph Smith.

- John Bytheway: [01:13:10](#) Steve, we can't thank you enough for coming again to our podcast, right, John? When people come back, it gives us a boost of confidence.
- Dr. Steve C. Ha...: [01:13:19](#) You guys are doing an immensely important work. Fifteen people are going to read making sense of the Doctrine and Covenants, but a million people are going to watch what you guys are doing. It wouldn't matter if it was me on here doing it with you or not, but I am pleased and thankful to be able to talk about these wonderful revelations.
- John Bytheway: [01:13:39](#) That testimony was beautiful. I don't care if he was handsome and a good wrestler. I mean, that was beautiful. He opened the door to Christ. Thank you for that.
- Hank Smith: [01:13:47](#) Well, everyone, we want to thank Dr. Steven Harper for being with us. We want to thank all of you for listening. We're grateful for your support. We couldn't do it without listeners. We're thankful to our executive producers, Steve and Shannon Sorenson. Our production crew, we have just an awesome crew that helps us. David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Neilson, Kyle Nelson, Will Stoughton, and Maria Hilton. Please join us on our next episode of followHIM.