



“The Son of Man Shall Come”

Show Notes & Transcripts

Podcast General Description:

Follow Him: A *Come, Follow Me* Podcast with Hank Smith & John Bytheway

Do you ever feel that preparing for your weekly *Come, Follow Me* lesson falls short? Join hosts Hank Smith and John Bytheway as they interview experts to make your study for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ *Come, Follow Me* course not only enjoyable but original and educational. If you are looking for resources to make your study fresh, faithful, and fun--no matter your age--then join us every Friday and Saturday.

Podcast Episode Descriptions:

Part 1:

How do we prepare to receive the Savior? Dr. Avram Shannon examines Joseph Smith–Matthew, the signs of Jesus’s Second Coming, and the power of faith.

Part 2:

Dr. Avram Shannon continues to examine the Gathering of Israel, the building of Zion and preparing for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

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Part 1

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- 10:05 Matthew 24 response to a specific set of questions
- 12:02 Temple stones and the Law
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Part 2

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- 57:36 Jesus is coming back and we should create the world for Him
- 1:02:52 End of Part II–Dr. Avram Shannon

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Biographical Information:



Dr. Shannon was born in Quantico, Virginia, and spent most of his young life in Virginia. He served a mission first in the Oregon Portland Mission and then in the Washington Kennewick Mission after the Oregon Portland Mission was split. Dr. Shannon earned a BA in ancient Near Eastern studies from Brigham Young University (2007), a master of studies in Jewish studies from the University of Oxford (2008), and a PhD in Near Eastern languages and cultures with a graduate interdisciplinary specialization in religions of the ancient Mediterranean from The Ohio State University (2015).

He and his wife, Thora, have seven children.

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Areas of Expertise: Rabbinic Judaism, Ancient Mediterranean Religions, Jewish Studies, Ancient Biblical Interpretation

Areas of Research: Idolatry and Image Worship, Jewish/non-Jewish Interactions, Tribal and Affinity Groups, Kingship and Priesthood in the Ancient World

Research Languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Other Languages for Comparative Purposes

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Hank Smith:	00:01	Welcome to Follow Him, a weekly podcast dedicated to helping individuals and families with their Come Follow Me study. I am Hank Smith.
John Bytheway:	00:09	And I am John Bytheway.
Hank Smith:	00:11	We love to learn.
John Bytheway:	00:11	We love to laugh.
Hank Smith:	00:13	We want to learn and laugh with you.
John Bytheway:	00:15	As together, we follow him.
Hank Smith:	00:19	Hello, my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith and I am your host. And I'm here with my talented co-host, John Bytheway. John, when I was reading the Parable of the Talents and it said that one of the men received five talents, I thought that is John Bytheway. He is a five-talent guy.
John Bytheway:	00:39	What have I done with them though?
Hank Smith:	00:40	Yeah. What have you done with those talents? Hopefully, you've doubled those talents. John, do you remember how old you were when you found out a talent wasn't a talent, but it was an amount of money?
John Bytheway:	00:50	I think I was in seminary. It's like, "Wait a minute. What? What?"
Hank Smith:	00:53	Yeah. Yeah. It was a bag of gold? I was wondering, well, what the guy could do. He could speak Spanish, he could play basketball, he could play the piano.
John Bytheway:	01:01	How did that become the other meaning? That's a fun etymology study someday to figure out how it became-

Hank Smith: 01:08 How it became, yeah, the amount of money became a talent. Maybe our Bible expert can help us out today. Who's joining us today?

John Bytheway: 01:16 Well, Hank, we're excited to have Dr. Avram Shannon back with us again. He's been with us before. And I had an occasion at a followHIM function to sit at the same table. And I could listen to him forever. And I love reading these bios when we hear how far and wide some of our guests have been in studying in their education. So let me share this with our audience.

01:39 Dr. Avram Shannon was born in Quantico, Virginia, spent most of his young life in Virginia. He served a mission first in the Oregon, mission, then in the Washington, mission after the Oregon, Portland mission was split. Dr. Shannon earned a bachelor's in Ancient Near Eastern Studies from Brigham Young University, a Master of Studies in Jewish studies from the University of Oxford, and a PhD in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures with the graduate interdisciplinary specialization in Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean from Ohio State University.

02:14 And he and his wife, Thora, have seven children. Some of his areas of expertise, I just really wanted to read this, Rabbinic Judaism, Ancient Mediterranean Religions, as I just mentioned, Jewish Studies and Ancient Biblical Interpretation. So Avram, we're so glad to have you back again. Thanks for being with us.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 02:32 I'm very happy to be here.

Hank Smith: 02:34 John, Avram is as kind as he is brilliant. He's just a fun person to work with. We have good times in the JSB at BYU, right, Avram?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 02:44 We do, absolutely, have good times.

Hank Smith: 02:46 Yeah. Lots of meetings.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 02:48 Yeah. Lots of meetings.

Hank Smith: 02:49 Lots of meetings.

John Bytheway: 02:51 Every year, we've talked about this before. They have this Sperry Symposium at BYU. And in 2021, they had an old... Their Sperry Symposium was on the Old Testament. And that volume has been published called Covenant and Compassion, Caring for the Marginalized and Disadvantaged in the Old Testament. And

Avram was a contributor to that. So I wanted to mention that because those books are deep and they're wonderful.

- Hank Smith: 03:12 John, the Sperry actually has been changed recently. Avram, you know its name better than I do. What's the new name for the Sperry Symposium?
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 03:21 The new name is the Come, Follow Me Symposium in honor of Sidney B. Sperry. So it's still the same thing, but we're trying just to align it more closely with the Come, Follow Me curriculum.
- Hank Smith: 03:30 Beautiful. Speaking of curriculum, we are going to be in Matthew 24 and 25 today, also in Mark and Luke and in the Pearl of Great Price. So we've got plenty of places to go. Avram, what do you want to do for Come, Follow Me this round?
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 03:45 So, this is, as events by the fact that it's so distinctive and so used here, this is one of the most important discourses in Jesus' mortal ministry. It's both important in terms of what Jesus is doing with it, but it is especially important in terms of Latter-day Saints' self-understanding, i.e. this is one of those passages that becomes incredibly important for us in the restoration as we work through really what it means to be Latter-day Saints. That's kind of one of the key notions here.
- 04:23 These various passages is often called the Olivet discourse because Jesus gives it on the Mount of Olives, but it's really about his second coming. That's actually part of why we have it in the Pearl of Great Price. The Pearl of Great Price is basically stuff from Joseph Smith that doesn't fit really well anywhere else. So we have extracts from the JST.
- 04:46 We have Book of Abraham. We have Joseph Smith History. We have the Articles of Faith in there. So the Joseph Smith translation of Matthew 24, and a little bit of Matthew 23 is the translation of this. And the reason we have it in Pearl of Great Price is it's one of two sections that Joseph Smith published and circulated separately.
- Hank Smith: 05:06 Oh okay.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 05:07 You remember that he didn't publish the entire, just the new... He called it the new translation. We call it the JST. Actually, we call it the JST because of the Bible manuscript. When they're producing the edition of the scriptures in the 1970s, the new one, and they wanted for the first time to really include stuff

from Joseph's new translation. But if you put it in a footnote with NT-

- Hank Smith: 05:31 It sounds like-
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 05:32 ... New Testament.
- Hank Smith: 05:33 ... it sounds like New Testament. Yeah.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 05:35 Our friends at Community of Christ called it the Inspired Version. But you put IV, it looks like four in Roman numerals. And so, the committee, at that point in 1978, basically coins the phrase Joseph Smith Translation, which is why we now call it JST. Joseph would've called it the New Translation. But there are two parts that he circulated. He circulated kind of the Book of Moses stuff, sort of the Enoch material that we have in our book of Moses. From the New Testament, he published separately in a broad sheet.
- 06:05 Actually, it was a single page newspaper. He published what we now have as Joseph Smith Matthew. And so, that's part of why we have it is because it was published separately from the rest of Joseph Smith's new translation. And the reason is because it bears so much on this notion of what it means to be a Latter-day Saint.
- 06:27 In the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we care deeply about the second coming. In some ways, the 19th Century, we cared extremely deeply. It's pretty clear that Joseph Smith and most of his co-religionists thought that the second coming was happening in their lifetime. They were pretty sure that this whole restoration thing was in preparation for Jesus coming back right now. That's part of why it's so important to them and us in many ways.
- Hank Smith: 06:54 Yeah. So do you want to jump in here, Avram? Where do you want to start?
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 06:58 We're going to be jumping around here. We're primarily going to actually be in Matthew 24. We will be just with Matthew. There are some key things that the translation does, but we're going to be in Mark too. But primarily our text is going to be Matthew 24. Matthew has, I feel the most complete and fullest version here. And Joseph Smith really focuses on things for our day.

07:21 We'll get into that point, but one of the things I think is very clear about the Joseph Smith Translation is as we read it, sometimes we talk that the Joseph Smith Translation replaces the texts in the Bible, and it's pretty clear from just his own writings that he did not view it that way.

Hank Smith: 07:39 That wasn't the intention.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 07:41 That was not the intention. As I read this translation, I think God just wants us to have more because he wants us to know more and to see more, we're going to think through things together.

Hank Smith: 07:54 Avram, I think that's a crucial piece of understanding, maybe we've talked about it in the past, John, but Joseph Smith's inspired version of the Bible is not meant to say, "Let's throw out what we have in the Bible and just read this." Because I've had students ask me before, why don't we just use that Bible? And I've said, "No. It's meant to be a supplement. It's meant to be some inspired help for us instead of replacing the Bible." And that's something I think is pretty crucial to understand about the... I call it kind of the Joseph Smith Bible project sometimes.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 08:26 And actually Doctrine and Covenants 128 gives us actually a really clear example of this. So Doctrine and Covenants 128, this of course is the letter about the work of the dead and baptism for the dead in the Doctrine & Covenants there. And in it Joseph Smith quotes from Malachi four, five and six, right? And I'll send the lives of the prophet, the whole thing.

08:44 And then, this is documents 12018. He says, "I might have rendered a plainer translation to this, but it's sufficiently plain to suit my purpose as it stands." So it's very clear of Doctrine and Covenants 128 here that Joseph is okay using the KJV here alongside his own translation, because there is a JST to Malachi here. He says, "This is good enough for my purposes, we're just going to go ahead and use it."

Hank Smith: 09:11 Yeah.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 09:12 Different scriptures can be rendered differently and all of them can be correct.

Hank Smith: 09:17 Yes.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 09:17 Right.

John Bytheway: 09:18 There's levels of meaning. And I think my son was asking me the other day, is it restoring ancient text or is it more of a clarification? Is it more additional revelation? And I was like, "Uh-huh."

Dr. Avram Shannon: 09:32 Yeah. And Ken Jackson and Robert J. Matthews did really good work showing very strongly that it's all of those things all at once. And which means, by the way, in some ways that increases the importance for us as readers of it. Because we can't just read it as a blanket. We have to take each JST change and say, "Oh, what is this doing? How is this working?" And it requires us to think and have the spirit even more strongly as we read scripture.

Hank Smith: 09:57 That's fantastic. And to contrast and compare the different versions.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 10:01 Exactly.

Hank Smith: 10:02 Okay. So we're back in Matthew 24.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 10:05 Yeah. Matthew 24. And the key thing here is the whole thing is in response to a very specific set of questions. This is not just generic Jesus talks about the second coming. The JST does this. It actually includes the last verse of Matthew 23. Remembering that our chapter in verses are recent compared to the, they're from the Middle Ages. But they're not original to the New Testament texts. It is oftentimes you read scripture, you're going to want to read across chapter and verse lines, because sometimes you're going to miss things. And then, we're going to say Joseph Matthew 24 and 25 are the same discourse.

Hank Smith: 10:41 Yeah. So you're saying Matthew 23, verse 39, Joseph Smith-

Dr. Avram Shannon: 10:46 That's right.

Hank Smith: 10:47 ... into Matthew 24? Okay. I didn't know that.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 10:49 And again, JST actually does this. For I say unto you, you shall not see me henceforth. To you shall say bless you that come with the name of the Lord. And so, here Jesus introduces this notion that he's coming, but also he's coming again. Right? This idea, you're not going to see me again until you can say, "Blessed who comes in the name of the Lord." So he pushed it to some future date. And this got the disciples a little confused.

Hank Smith: 11:18 This isn't the resurrection he's talking about. This is a second arrival, second coming.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 11:24 That's what the disciples are going to ask him, basically. They're like, "Well, what are you talking about here? What's going on?" Because then they, they're going out, he's been preaching the temple. Remember this is holy week. So this is Wednesday, Thursday-ish, depending on when you want to date it in there. And his disciples look at him and they point out the temple to him. And Jesus says, "You look at that." This is verse 2 of Matthew 24. "See not all these things verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down."

Hank Smith: 12:02 That's got to be the biggest structure they know of. Right?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 12:05 It's enormous.

Hank Smith: 12:06 Yeah.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 12:06 I mean Herod had made the temple in Jerusalem one of the great temples of the ancient world.

Hank Smith: 12:11 Yeah. Massive, right?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 12:13 Massive. Covered in great stone. Covered in gold. And in ancient Judaism in this period, again, we've talked a lot this year in Come, Follow Me and previously about various Jewish groups, about Pharisees and Sadducees and all these various things. And kind of what we see is kind of things that all Jews agreed on are kind of two things, law and the temple.

12:35 And so, this idea of Jesus saying, look, you think this temple, whatever, it's going to get destroyed. Destroyed, so you won't be able to see it anymore. The two together make the disciples going, "Oh, what does this mean?"

Hank Smith: 12:50 Yeah. I mean when he says one stone not upon another, we're thinking small little stones. No. These are massive, massive. Like these blocks of stone are tons and they're one on top of the other. It would take significant force to move all those and get, and throw them down.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 13:07 So which is why they knew they go out and his disciples are like, "Huh? Tell us more." Right? And it's actually interesting because in Mark's version in Mark 13, like I said we'll be jumping around a fair bit today. It's actually, 13:3 in Mark, it's Peter, James and

John and Andrew who ask him privately. It's not all the disciples in Mark. They're a little bit, "So what do you mean by this, Jesus?" This is a hugely shocking statement that Jesus has made here.

- Hank Smith: 13:36 Yeah. Peter, James and John and Andrew asked him privately. "Tell us, when shall these things be? What shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?"
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 13:46 In Matthew, that's what shall be the sign of thy coming and end of the world?
- Hank Smith: 13:53 Yeah. A different set of questions.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 13:56 From Matthew what's very much framed in terms of both Jesus Christ coming and also specifically the end of the world. They're also framed as two questions. I'm not sure the disciples think that those are going to be identical events. Jesus will kind of explain this to them. There's one other thing where Joseph Smith, Matthew had something very key here. Joseph in Matthew says, again, in terms of these different questions we get in Mark and Matthew, Joseph, Matthew has what should be sign that you're coming and the end of the world or the destruction of the wicked, which is the end of the world.
- 14:33 So Joseph Smith Matthew does not understand the end of the world as this kind of zombie apocalypse. This kind of everything ends, the total cessation of all society. That's not just Matthew understands end of the world. The end of the world there is world, we're talking about the world versus the church or the world versus wickedness.
- 14:57 So at the end of the world there is the end of wickedness and we'll see that play distinctively in how Matthew understands and how I think we're supposed to understand what happens at the second coming. It is not the total dissolution of all society before or after.
- Hank Smith: 15:12 It's the destruction of the wicked according to Joseph Smith Matthew 1:4.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 15:16 Exactly. Which is the end of the world.
- John Bytheway: 15:18 The end of the world, or the end of the worldly, the end of worldly things because the planet continues and we know that from Article of Faith 10.

Hank Smith: 15:26 Yeah.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 15:27 It's pretty clear from Brigham Young, Joseph Smith on other places, and actually even from here, from Joseph Matthew and Matthew that society continues, partially because it's also very clear that, especially in the gospels, Jesus' primary purpose is to prep the disciples for the destruction of the temple. Remember that that's kind of the first question they asked.

Hank Smith: 15:52 When shall these things be the destruction of the temple?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 15:55 Yes. JST move some things around because that's already happened for us. So Joseph Smith is like, "Let's talk about the second coming because that hasn't happened yet." There is second coming Matthew 24. But one of the things I think as I read scripture that's very clear is the prophet's primary audience is the people hearing it right then. And then, through the Holy Ghost, we can learn other things about it.

Hank Smith: 16:17 Jesus is going to answer both questions and then Joseph Smith is going to say, "Look, the destruction of the temple happened. That was 70 AD so let's kind of clear that out so we can focus on the second question. The sign of thy coming and the end of the world or the destruction of the wicked."

Dr. Avram Shannon: 16:35 That's exactly right. So as you read Joseph Smith Matthew verse Matthew 24, you'll see that Matthew 24 tends to focus much more on the events that it play out in first and second century Judaism/Christianity, while Joseph Matthew was going to really focus on those things that are happening at the second coming.

Hank Smith: 16:51 Got it. That makes perfect sense because of the audience, like you said.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 16:55 Yeah. Exactly. And Jesus answered and said, and this is the very first thing he has answered their question. "Take heed that no man deceive you." At the very outset, and we'll talk about this a little bit later on when we get to the hour and day of the coming. At the outset, please make it very clear. This is a topic about which there is possibility for deception. We need to be aware of that. We need to think through that, because in Christianity broadly throughout the last 2000 years of Christian history, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, because we want Jesus Christ to come back so badly, I'm right there with them, "even so, Lord, come quickly." Right?

17:39 I mean that's it. Come back, please. But because of that, this is a place where sometimes we get too excited and we can be deceived. And I think it's very compelling that Jesus starts the whole thing by saying, "Look, don't let anybody confuse you on this."

Hank Smith: 18:01 So almost a listen closely type message.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 18:05 Yeah. I've got a quote from President Ballard, I think is really helpful on this topic about who knows when Jesus Christ is coming back. We'll get to that when he talks about who knows when he's coming back, which is spoiler alert, nobody, basically.

Hank Smith: 18:17 So...

Dr. Avram Shannon: 18:19 But then he goes through and he talks about, he's like, "Look, people are going to come into my name saying I am Christ." And by the way, in sort of that first century Christian environment, this sometimes means people saying, "I'm Jesus." But it also means other people saying they're the Messiah.

18:35 After the Jewish revolt in AD 70, there was another revolt about 70 years later. This guy named by the name of Bar Kokhba, son of the Star and Bar Kokhba was actually from a tradition of messiah, messianic context, more successful as a Messiah than Jesus was. I mean not successful in sort of salvation from sins. But in terms of driving out the Romans at least momentarily and setting up a Jewish state, Bar Kokhba was pretty successful. He coined his own money, did these things. I mean he also like everybody who fights Rome got crushed in the end.

Hank Smith: 19:09 What is that, 120?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 19:10 Oh 120 to 150-ish. Yeah. Was when that whole thing happens. And that's when the temple gets raised. Jerusalem gets knocked down and rebuilt as a Roman city, Aelia Capitolina. Jew's not allowed to go there anymore. It is a major, major, in some ways the destruction, even worse than the first Jewish revolts.

Hank Smith: 19:29 So there's two Jewish revolts after Jesus.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 19:33 There are two revolts after Jesus. But the reason why the Bar Kokhba is interesting is because Jesus says, "Look..." He's like, "There's going to be other Christs. Don't believe them."

Hank Smith: 19:40 Other Messiahs. Okay.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 19:42 Yeah. Other Messiahs. Exactly. And they shall deceive many. Then he says, "But look, there's going to be fighting." And in some ways, this is something I want to think through as you do this together today, is in some ways eternal applicability of these prophecies. They have specific fulfillment, second temple, Jesus Christ second coming. But there are always wars and always rumors of wars. There's always people fighting. In some ways, in a lot of ways, actually, the world's always ending.

Hank Smith: 20:14 When has there not been a war somewhere on the earth? Right? Sadly.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 20:17 Exactly. And when did people not have to struggle? Part of the whole thing, we're going to get to this, especially when we get to Matthew 25, is that part of his point here is to kind of help change our thinking a little bit. One of the things about life, I call this thinking cosmically, thinking of the end.

20:37 You and I can go through our life every day, eating, drinking, getting dressed, getting other people dressed, getting other people fed, doing our work, doing every day what Korihor calls the management of the creature. We can spend every day just living without a thought for our eternal nature, our destiny.

20:59 And of course, that's not what God wants. He wants us thinking about higher and more eternal things. Part of the purpose of this discourse, with all these things is to sort of shock us out of our everyday doing things the way we've always been doing them so we can think again about something bigger and more than ourselves.

Hank Smith: 21:20 That's great. Look around.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 21:22 Look around. Exactly.

Hank Smith: 21:24 See what's happening. See the world around you. Do you guys know what would Clayton Christensen call that? Disruptive. It's disruptive innovation.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 21:34 That's a good thing. Because part of the point is that, and this is something that we don't always think about, but the presence of God is disruptive. It changes things. It moves things. It makes things different. It disrupts. And so, Jesus is saying, "If you think things are going to go on the way they're going, they're not." So we have to move past the management of the creature.

Hank Smith: 21:55 This is verse six and seven, which is moved by Joseph Smith to a different part of the chapter. You shall hear of wars and rumors of wars so that you'd be not troubled for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. So you're hearing all this and you don't need to be troubled, but don't think it's right around the corner.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 22:16 Right. So that's a key thing. We'll talk about that a little bit because he moves things around quite a bit.

Hank Smith: 22:21 Joseph Smith.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 22:22 And in many ways that's his hinge verse though. As Joseph Smith does it sort of 26... Sorry. Well, honestly, sort of 30 and back is referencing Jesus' first coming and the destruction of the temple and things like that. And then, 31 forward he says, "All right, now we're going to start talking about the second coming in earnest."

22:41 So he says, "Because it's not yet guys, it's not here. We're not ready. More rumors." There's some things he does with that that are pretty key in terms of how he rearranges it for it. All the way nine through 21, very much this notion of the disruption that's happening in the Jewish revolts, the destruction of the temple. Abomination of desolation.

23:05 And actually this is kind of fun. In verse 16. He says, "Let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." Lesson in the first Jewish revolt, but during the Bar Kokhba revolt, there were Christians who had Matthew 24, who actually when the Romans coming down fled from Jerusalem and were spared some of the reprisals that happened against there by the Romans.

Hank Smith: 23:30 Is this where they fled to Pella?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 23:32 Yes. That's exactly. And they did so explicitly because they were reading their scriptures and saw that as a fulfillment of the prophecy, which I think is really cool.

Hank Smith: 23:44 I mean it saved their lives.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 23:45 Exactly. Well, verse 19. Woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days. And there's something the scriptures are concerned very deeply with is that these kinds of calamities tend to be hardest on those who are most vulnerable. Nursing mothers, pregnant mothers.

Hank Smith:	24:05	Children. Yeah.
Dr. Avram Shannon:	24:06	Children. And he says, "This is going to be hardest on them." We're going to see when we get to the parables in Matthew 25, Jesus is going to say, "We've got to do something about this." But part of the warning he is just like, "This is, it's going to be hard guys." And recognize that the being hardness of it is in some ways part of the point, but it's also just part of the world we live in.
Hank Smith:	24:27	It does sound like he's trying to get them to think more globally than just about themselves.
Dr. Avram Shannon:	24:33	Yes. Absolutely.
Hank Smith:	24:33	Famines, pestilence, earthquakes in diverse places. Nations rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom. Kind of think about the world as a whole instead of just our area, our little area.
Dr. Avram Shannon:	24:44	Yeah.
John Bytheway:	24:44	And wouldn't you say perhaps knowing that this text is going to outlast those that he's talking to and will be a benefit to us? Yeah.
Dr. Avram Shannon:	24:54	Absolutely. And has been a benefit to Christians for millennia. This is one of those things where we have specific examples of early Christians and medieval Christians reading this text and actually following its advice and using it to help them.
	25:10	One of these fun big words is eschatology. Eschatology comes from Greek, the end, eschaton. But it's that part of sort of doctrinal and theological discourse that's concerned with the end of the world and the afterlife. We can also talk about groups that care about these things. And those groups are eschatological. Among world religions, Christianity is an eschatological religion.
Hank Smith:	25:36	It's concerned with the end.
Dr. Avram Shannon:	25:38	We're concerned with the end deeply, deeply about the end. Partially because Christianity is as we're talking about earlier. It's an inherently disruptive message. Jesus comes and says, "I'm going to change everything." We've seen that extensively in the gospels this year in Come, Follow Me.

- 25:53 He comes and says, "Look, you thought things were this way, I'm going to change it all. For the better guys, but I am going to change it all." And actually, even within Christianity, the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is an eschatological religion within those confines. Because as Elder Holland said in the devotional once that he was talking about this and somebody asked him about end times whatever. Elder Holland said, "What do you think the Latter-day part in Latter-day Saint means?"
- Hank Smith: 26:26 I know the story. It's a missionary who says, "Elder Holland, are these the last days?" And he said, "I'm not the sharpest knife in the drawer, but even I know the name of the church, right?" Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Yes. These are the last days.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 26:43 It's been the last days for at least a hundred years now. All right. And we want to think through that because that's one of the key, we can say difficulties that may be too strong a word. One of the key things to talk about in this particular discourse is this nature of why is Jesus talking about his second coming so early in human history?
- 27:07 Again, the whole thing begs this question is Jesus Christ says, "I'm coming back." And we'll get there when he says that. But you're like, "Been a really long time, Jesus." And that's one of the great questions we need to think through as we read and teach and think about this particular passage, because it's not easy and we'll talk about that.
- Hank Smith: 27:25 I mean Matthew 24, he talks about false prophets shall rise. That's verse 11. Iniquity shall abound. Love of many shall wax cold. I look around and I think we are definitely living during these times. Specifically the abomination of desolation of Daniel the prophet. Is that the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem?
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 27:47 Yes. That's going to be its primary initial focus. This idea of, again, you'll see it. It's actually probably Roman individual, something like that. Somebody coming who's desecrating the temple, stands in the temple and then destroys it. That's exactly what it is.
- Hank Smith: 28:02 Now you mentioned that the temple is destroyed in 70 AD, but then it's raised in 120 AD. what's the difference there?
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 28:09 So the destruction of the temple, I mean they burn it down. The sacrifices ceased. Really we're talking about the destruction of the temple in AD 70, we're talking about the cessation of the

sacrificial system, i.e. that no longer is there an operative Jewish sacrificial system. Actually, somebody once called Titus Vespasian, the greatest religious reformers in history, because they pushed Judaism in very distinctive directions, and Christianity, as we're going to read in the book of Acts.

28:35 The early Christians continue to sacrifice throughout their testament period, Peter, Paul. Like Paul gets arrested because he is going back to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice, to fulfill a vow that he made according to the law of Moses. It's very clear that Christianity and the earliest Christians continue to offer sacrifice up until the point it's destroyed.

Hank Smith: 28:56 They hang on to their Judaism.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 28:59 Yes. And my friend and colleague, Jeff Chadwick, he's done some good work on this. He postulates that that's what God intended. That is actually a different situation than what we see in the Book of Mormon where Jesus says, "Look, we're done with this now." He thinks that there's two different things happening in the old world, the new world with this.

29:16 But the point is, suddenly everything ceases and suddenly you've got a chain circumstance. But there's always still a hope that, again, with Bar Kokhba and things like that, we can get these things back, which is why after Bar Kokhba Rome says, "Nope. We're done. It's all over. We're going to take it all the way down to the ground."

29:35 Although, again, Julian Apostate, at least talks about... He's a Roman emperor, after the Roman Emperors have Christianized, Julian converts back to Paganism and basically writes a letter where he says, "I ain't going to let the Jews rebuild the temple because I hate Christians." But he never gets... He gets killed in battle with the Persians.

Hank Smith: 29:54 So it never happens?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 29:55 Dude, it never happens.

Hank Smith: 29:56 Oh, okay. I didn't know that. That's really interesting. So 70 AD would be the destruction of the temple on top of the platform, the actual temple itself.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 30:06 Do you see he's talks about burning and things like that and-

Hank Smith: 30:09 Yeah. And then, the 120 is the let's pull down the entire platform.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 30:13 Let's put on the whole city, basically. They refound Jerusalem as a new city, as a pagan city dedicated to Zeus.

Hank Smith: 30:20 Okay.

John Bytheway: 30:21 I had people ask, how do you tear down stone? And one of the things I've heard, and correct me if I'm wrong, is they could paint these huge blocks that we talked about with pitch or tar or something, and then light it on fire, which they get so hot they would crack and fissure and that's how they would fall.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 30:38 Exactly. And of course Romans had siege materials and you get enough people dedicated to taking something down, and you can take it down. Just sheer manpower in certain levels.

John Bytheway: 30:50 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 30:50 If you go to Jerusalem today, you can see where some of those rocks were pulled down and they destroyed the road when these stones hit it, just blows to pieces. But some of the original stones are still there so they didn't take all of them.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 31:05 Some of the original stones of the platform.

Hank Smith: 31:08 Of the platform. Yeah.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 31:09 That's important because sometimes you hear people say, "Oh, the western wall of the temple..." No. No. No. The temple's gone. But there are still some of the platform, and again, those apparently were buried, forgotten. Occasionally we see some reuse of some of these things. Secondary usage in places.

Hank Smith: 31:24 If you go to Jerusalem today, you can see Jews going to that wall and worshipping, I would say, or praying at that wall.

John Bytheway: 31:32 Last remnant of the outside wall of the temple area. Think of it like Temple Square kind of, where there's a wall around it.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 31:40 Very much so. You've got the sacred precinct and then you have divided space in various levels of sacredness inside the temple grounds itself. Even like Temple Square, and then got the gate around the temple proper, grounds proper. They've got the temple itself and they've got even inside the temple there.

Hank Smith: 31:58 Wow. Rome was sure dedicated to getting rid of that temple. In their mind, is that the end of Judaism if they can destroy that temple?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 32:06 It's the end of their problems. I don't think they care about Judaism as a religious system, in many ways. They'll actually create in the fiscus Iudaicus where they will make Jews pay to Rome, the redemption, the temple tax that they used to pay to the Jerusalem temple.

Hank Smith: 32:26 Okay.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 32:27 They'll actually extract tribute from, and they just took throughout the diaspora. So Jews all over the Roman Empire have to pay this tax for it. So it's not Judaism as such, because again, there are Jews all over the world. Remember that religion in antiquity, even in this period is fairly locative. By which I mean it's fairly focused on place.

32:51 I'll give you an example of this. Remember naming the Syrian? The Syrian, remember he's healed by Elisha, dips in the water. He's like, "Take these gifts." He says, "No." And he is like, "All right. But let your servant take two bags of dirt from Israel so that I can worship Jehovah."

33:08 The idea here is that Jehovah is the God of the land of Israel. And so, you need the land of Israel to worship Jehovah.

Hank Smith: 33:16 He's taking a little bit of the land.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 33:18 So even though that's already had to break down in this period, this idea that the temple is Jehovah's house is huge, because temples are often associated with a polity. It's the symbol of the polity and basically the idea here is if we can destroy the temple, then we can root out the polity. They will no longer have anything to rally around and they will no longer be able to revolt. Because that's all Rome really cares about.

Hank Smith: 33:44 Are the revolts.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 33:45 All Rome cares about are the taxes coming in and is everything fine?

Hank Smith: 33:50 Are they loyal to death?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 33:52 Loyal to the emperor, in the case of being obedient to what we want them to do?

John Bytheway: 33:56 I've had students ask, "Well, what happened to Judaism? Do they still offer sacrifices?" And I love your insight on this. They kind of adopted a post-temple way to worship. Is that what we call that?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 34:08 Well, yeah. I mean you see elements of it already even before the destruction of the temple. Their synagogues are already there. Prayer houses is what they're called in Hebrew. Their gathering places, places where you come together. So there's already in place there worship and ideas and prayers that are already extent before the destruction of the temple.

34:31 In many ways what the temple does is accelerate that process, partially because... And again, my friend Matthew Gray, who's also teaches with us over there in the JSB. Matt Gray has done some really good work on the priests don't go away, but they're sort of incorporated. And actually, the famous Jewish scholar, Jacob Neusner, once basically wrote this thing, who talked about the temple in Rabbinic Judaism.

34:55 And he says, "Basically, the temple is everywhere absent." It's not so much that it's post-temple, it's that it's taking the temple and applying it in ways that do not involve animal sacrifice. For example, there are prayers in the Jewish prayer book to this day that have the names of the sacrificial system. Like specific names of the sacrifices and part of the idea is, is that when you say these prayers, you are still participating in the sacrifice.

35:29 But even there, this idea of it's almost Passover time, Pesach here is in a couple of weeks and the way the Passover ends, we eat the Passover here and now, but next year, next year we're going to eat it in Jerusalem. This idea that even as we're doing it here, we're doing it, we've got, we've adapted it, but this isn't the end of the story. There's still what we would call an eschatological perhaps, hope for that return.

35:58 And so, that's why I like to think of it as everywhere absent in it. Judaism is still very much a temple focused system, but a temple focused system where there's a temple shaped hole in their religious discourse. The Mishna is the earnest codification of Jewish law, and they are a huge track dates. [inaudible 00:36:17] divide up Mishna concerned with how the sacrifices are run and concerned with how you keep purity laws, and concerned with all these temple concerns because it is still central to their conception of what law is.

Hank Smith: 36:31 Even though it's no longer there.

John Bytheway: 36:32 Wow.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 36:33 Even though it's no longer standing. Exactly.

Hank Smith: 36:35 Got it. And some might be asking, why don't they rebuild it? And there's a kind of simple answer to that is the property is not theirs anymore.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 36:45 Yes. I mean in some ways the answer to that question is, so why don't we build the temple in Missouri?

Hank Smith: 36:51 Go back to Independence. We could-

Dr. Avram Shannon: 36:52 Go back to Independence. Why don't we move headquarters back to Independence? There is nothing to stop us from moving church headquarters to Kansas City. What are we waiting for? We're waiting for God to tell us to. And for our Jewish friends, they're also waiting for the Messiah to come back. There are lots of different opinions on how this works out, but many of them, the whole point is redemption of the temple is the same thing as redemption of the world.

Hank Smith: 37:16 Got it. And right now there is an Islamic mosque, right?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 37:20 Yes. There are actually two. But yeah, so the dome of the rock is where Mohammed goes up to heaven to have his great vision. He's taken up there. And then, Al-Aqsa is actually the one that represents the temple, the temple spot. And it's where presumably the [inaudible 00:37:37] is. The [inaudible 00:37:40] is the stone at the center of the temple where Ark of the Covenant would have played out. According to one tradition in Judaism, it's the center of the universe.

Hank Smith: 37:52 So it would be very difficult for the Jews today to build a temple where there are now two Muslim mosques.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 38:00 Although there is that fun anecdote from President Hunter. President Hunter was up on the al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf. He was up on Temple Mount and somebody asked him, "How are we going to build a temple here? Our temple or their temple, what temple's going to be here?" And President Hunter kind of looked around, paced off a little bit and he said, "I think there's space."

Hank Smith: 38:21 And there is some space up there. Yeah.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 38:22 Yeah. So his idea was that we'll have a Jewish temple, our temple. We'll just have all of it up there.

Hank Smith: 38:28 Yeah. Have the Muslim mosques. Yeah. Let's have them all up there. That's great. Let's jump back to Matthew 24 here. How can I tell which verses are meant to be about the second coming and which verses are meant to be about the destructions of 70 AD and 120 AS or do you think maybe I can apply them universally?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 38:49 I would apply them as broadly as you possibly can. That's my general policy. There are some that pretty clearly seem to speak to the second coming like when he says, "You'll see me coming, in power and great glory." Right? Things like that pretty clearly apply to a second coming. But generally speaking, I think, and I think it's true, basically all scripture. The more applicability you see, I think the more we're kind of thinking the way that God wants us to see them.

39:19 Now again, Joseph Smith Matthew does make a stronger distinction and that's one of its great blessings about it. It actually right about verse 23. The end is not yet. Then 24. Joseph Matthew 24, I've told you they won't go. They talked about the gathering, so shall the coming of the son of man be. So in Joseph Matthew, there's a clear sort of before 23, it's mostly talking about the Jewish revolts, about destruction of the temple. 24 and following is mostly about the second coming.

Hank Smith: 39:51 So Joseph Smith kind of rearranged the verses and the signs to make it clear in two clear categories.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 39:58 That's right.

Hank Smith: 39:58 Okay.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 39:59 Because again, for him and then also for us, the destruction of the temple, that's ancient, ancient history. But the second coming is still in the future. So he's making it relevant to us right now as he works through his inspired translation.

Hank Smith: 40:12 All right. Where do you want to go next, Avram?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 40:14 So he talks about, again, we've got all these false Christs, false prophets. The key thing here to remember, we started from the beginning here. Part of Jesus' point is because when things get hard, that's when we tend to be, using our term here, more

eschatological. That's when we tend to look for answers. It's most likely for us to be deceived. Latter-day Saints, we're of course spoiled for answers. We have so many good answers about so many questions.

- Hank Smith: 40:42 We want to have these answers.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 40:44 We want to have these answers. We want it to be clear and laid out. And so, part of, he's like, "You've got to be careful. There's going to be false people talking about this. You need to be careful. Deceive if were possible, even the very elect."
- Hank Smith: 40:57 Yeah. That's verse 24.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 40:59 And this is a key thing for you and I, just being a faithful Latter-day Saint is not sufficient guard against deception. Deceive if it were possible the very elect. He says, "You got to be careful, guys, be careful."
- John Bytheway: 41:14 This may be jumping ahead too far, but in Joseph Smith Matthew 1:37, whoso treasureth up my word shall not be deceived. That's I guess what this is all about, we're trying to be familiar enough with this, and then to learn to hear him, to learn to let God prevail, to be inspired and at peace if possible.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 41:36 It's why when my students ask basically any question. They'll ask me and they'll say, "How do I know anything?" Right? How do I know if I'm right? How do I know if this is the right thing? How do I know? And I say, "Well, the short answer is have the Holy Ghost with you."
- 41:49 I mean the long answer, we can talk about ways to think through and then tools and things for that. But the short answer is always have the Holy Ghost with you.
- John Bytheway: 41:57 Because he speaks to us in real time.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 42:00 Exactly. Matthew's been dead for 2000 years. He needed help then, we need help now.
- Hank Smith: 42:07 So that addition, John, is great. That verse 37, whoso treasureth up my word shall not be deceived. To my knowledge, that's not found in Matthew 24. That phrase.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 42:18 No. That's not. Part of it is I think he's also telling the saints in the latter-days because we also get really, really excited because we want Jesus to come back so much. Again, I want

him back so much. But because of that, sometimes we say, "Oh, this is it. We've got it. We've figured it out now." And Jesus is like, "Be careful. Be careful. Don't let anybody deceive you."

- Hank Smith: 42:44 Yeah. It's almost like Jesus is saying, "Stay in the text." Whoso treasureth up my word shall not be deceived, as in there's other people's words you could be deceived by. So treasure up my words, stay in the scriptures.
- John Bytheway: 42:56 I love that phrase. Treasure up. They are treasured words. And there's something we can hold that treasure inside of us, and then be guided in real time by the Holy Ghost.
- Hank Smith: 43:09 Yeah. That is a great phrase, treasure up.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 43:12 It's not unusual to have lots of different things in the synoptic gospels and even sometimes John agree with what we've got. But I think part of the reason why we have four gospels is the Lords said, "Okay. Don't you get it this time? Let's try again. Let's give you a little more treasure here. Let's give you something else to treasure up here so we have more chances to find and read and think about all of these things."
- Hank Smith: 43:35 I've noticed in both Joseph Smith Matthew, and in Matthew 24, 28, you get some interesting analogies. You get for wheresoever the carcass is there will the eagles be gathered together. Joseph Smith Matthew says, "Now you learn the parable of the fig tree when its branches are yet tender, begins to put forth leaves. And you know summer is nigh at hand." That's also what we found in Matthew 24.
- 44:00 Avram, what do you think of all these symbols? And should I take the sun being darkened, the moon not giving light, stars fall from heaven, should I take that literally, or do you take that more figuratively?
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 44:09 The answer to that of course as always is yes.
- Hank Smith: 44:11 Yeah.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 44:12 We'll start with the Eagles first just to point out that that's actually not a very good translation. Something like buzzards is better. The whole idea here is that this is vultures where the carcasses, that's where the buzzards go. Where the action is, is where you want to gather to, is kind of the point of the symbolism.

- 44:27 And of course, Joseph Smith, Joseph Smith Matthew 27. So likewise shall mine elect be gathered from the four corners of the earth. So Joseph Matthew makes explicitly about the gathering of Israel. And the idea behind it is, is that. It's actually not a very lovely phrase in terms of on the imagery of it, but the idea is you want to go where the action is. You want to go where what you need is there.
- 44:52 The image is almost like the gradual nature of this too. You've got an animal carcass and birds just start coming and they start kind of gathering around it. So they all get there, share for it. It's not like everybody comes together. So I think part of the point of this imagery is this gradual nature of the gathering. This idea that they're coming a little bit here, a little bit there, here. And they know there's a place to be because that's where the carcass is.
- Hank Smith: 45:17 So if when you see a gathering happening, that's where you want to be?
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 45:21 In Matthew, it's right after the same thing of the deception thing. He says, "Don't go to the secret chambers. See, he's in the desert. Don't go. He's in the secret chambers. Don't go. Go where the eagles are. Believe it not." He says, "Go where the gathering is."
- 45:39 And so, part of the point of this is, again, because we want Jesus to come back so badly, he's giving us clues here. He says, "If you want to do this the way that, or you want to find it, go where the people are. Go where Zion is. That's where you're going to find me. You're going to find me in God's covenant community." That's where the carcass is.
- Hank Smith: 46:00 And you could tell because that's where the vultures are going. Is it something they would see often? They're like, "Well, when you see a bunch of vultures, you know there's a dead carcass over there. So just like if you see a bunch of people gathering, you know that's where I am."
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 46:14 Exactly. And of course, even in the American West, I've seen plenty of my fair share of carcasses and there are a bunch of vultures who roosted one of the trees by my house. And it's always little disconcerting to wake up in the morning-
- Hank Smith: 46:24 And they're watching.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 46:25 ... and you've got like 12 vultures staring in your window.

Hank Smith:	46:28	Right.
John Bytheway:	46:28	Do they know something I don't know?
Dr. Avram Shannon:	46:29	Exactly. Exactly.
John Bytheway:	46:32	I like that it uses those words gathering too. And that has been so emphasized. Can I say it this way, also, it's what are the first presidency and the 12 talking about? Those are the topics we can be concerned with. Another way of gathering, I'm going to go find YouTubes about the second coming or we could go where the 12 and the first presidency are and see what they're admonishing us to do right now. Is that possible way to look at that?
Dr. Avram Shannon:	46:57	Yeah. Absolutely. But as I read it, this is part of what Jesus is saying because, again, the very first thing he says is take heed that no one deceives you. And then, he comes here and he says, "Here's a way to help avoid deception. If you stay with your community, if you stay in the covenant community, then this will be a guard for you against deception." And I think that's very important.
John Bytheway:	47:24	Please join us for part two of this podcast.



John Bytheway: 00:00:00 Welcome to part two of Dr. Avram Shannon, Joseph Smith-Matthew, Chapter one, Matthew 24 and 25, Mark 12 and 13, and Luke 21.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:00:12 I've said before, and I'll say it again, this idea that the gathering of Israel and the cause of Zion are basically the same thing, where we all come together to be God's covenant people. Should we read it literally? Yeah, probably. Figuratively? Yeah, probably.

John Bytheway: 00:00:25 Okay.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:00:26 I mean, part of it, do we need to look for a specific, "Jesus Christ will only come after a lunar and solar eclipse"? I'd be careful about that. Part of it is, "Lunar and solar eclipse, where?"

John Bytheway: 00:00:39 Right. Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:00:39 Yeah.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:00:42 Right? In Jerusalem? In Missouri? In Salt Lake? In Bolivia? But I would say Jesus' point is, this is part of the disruption we talked about earlier, things are going to be in the sky, things are going to be disrupted. And by the way, he's actually alluding to Joel here. Joel prophesies also about the sun being darkened and the moon being turned to blood. And of course, make a big deal about that too, but what does a lunar eclipse look like? It looks like a red moon. The moon being turned to blood is just a lunar eclipse there in Joel as well, and like with here in Matthew, I think, again, I could be wrong. Any of these things, where I'm giving here, I reserve the right to be totally wrong, and if Jesus Christ comes immediately after a solar eclipse, lunar eclipse, I'll be like-

Hank Smith: 00:01:31 "I was right."

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:01:32 ... "I guess I was more right than I thought I was." Exactly, but reserve it 100%, the right to be wrong about that, but as I read it, the point is that there's going to be disruption in the sky.

Hank Smith: 00:01:43 Okay. Changes.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:01:45 Changes, and that's how I read it. Then, it'll be the sign and sound of man in heaven. Joseph Smith, of course, taught that that was actually Jesus appearing and nobody recognizing him, like Moses and Joseph Smith. Whenever Joseph Smith undertook to answer a question, he usually made it more complex than the question he was actually answering the first time. Joseph answers a question, and you're like, "Can you explain that now?" But part of his point with this, and again, this is the whole thing about, back in 24, 25, 26, right? This idea of, "He's in secret chambers in the desert. Don't believe it."

00:02:17 He's like, "Look, guys. When it happens, you're going to know, because when it happens, everybody's going to know."

Hank Smith: 00:02:28 Okay. All the tribes of the earth shall mourn. They shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:02:35 When it happens, this is it. There's not going to be any, "Oh. It happened here." He is like, "It's going to come clouds of glory. It's going to be it."

Hank Smith: 00:02:43 Sending angels with the sound of a trumpet, and the gathering again happens Verse 31, "Gathering together, the elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other."

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:02:54 So that's really a key thing. He says, "When you know, you're going to know." Then, in many ways, the balance of this, the end of Matthew 24 into Matthew 25, is Jesus's discussion on how you wait, because we looked at this a little bit earlier. One of the interesting things about this passage is how early Jesus professed about the second coming. He's not even dead yet. We haven't even finished the first coming, and we're already talking about the second coming. Now, there are a couple of key reasons for this, I think.

00:03:30 One is in terms of Messianic expectations, Jesus is not a particularly successful Messiah. It's not like they're dumb readers of scripture. Scripture says the Messiah's going to come. I mean, again, Messiah is a word that just means king. The scripture says, "The king's going to come, and he's going to rescue us," as part of the Luke 24, which is not part of this discourse. It's between the crucifixion and the resurrection. Disciples on the road to Emmaus, and I find it very, very

compelling. So the disciples meet him. Jesus says, "What are you guys so sad about?" Luke 24:18.

- 00:04:10 And they say, "Where are you from? You never heard these things?"
- 00:04:13 He's like, "What are you guys talking about?"
- Hank Smith: 00:04:15 Yeah. He acts totally clueless. What things? Yeah.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:04:18 What things? And this is key, and they said, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth," this is verse 19, which is a prophet mighty in deed and word before the God and all the people. "Now, the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, crucified him," this is verse 21, "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel, and besides all this is the third day since these things are done," and he talks about the empty tomb. Disciples here think the crucifixion was a failure.
- Hank Smith: 00:04:47 Yeah. That he's not the Messiah.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:04:49 We presumed that he was going to be the Messiah. He was going to save us, and now he's dead. Of course, Jesus then says, why are you guys so dumb? and explains that the Messiah had to die. But the point is that, even to Jesus' immediate disciples, it was not immediately and obviously clear what he meant by Messiah. We talk about this. Why are Jewish friends, to this day, don't think Jesus was the Messiah? It's because he didn't do everything the scripture says he's going to do, the Messiah's supposed to do. And of course, our response to that is, "Well, he's going to."
- Hank Smith: 00:05:27 Some of those Old Testament passages we would say are concerning his second coming.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:05:31 That's right, so because of that, the second coming is necessary to our understanding of Jesus Christ to the Messiah. It is a necessary part of what it means to be a Christian and to accept Jesus as the Messiah, because that's how he fulfills all the prophecies. Because he did not fulfill them all in mortality.
- Hank Smith: 00:05:49 In his first coming.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:05:50 In his first coming, but he's going to in his second coming. So in some ways, part of what Jesus is doing is he is preparing his disciples, and on some levels, us, by saying, "Look, I know it's

going to be hard." Again, this is days before the crucifixion here. We know from Luke that it's really hard for the disciples. It's not like, "Oh. He's crucified. This is what we're all waiting for. They're like, what happened?" And Jesus, in some ways, is primed with the prompt to be able to say, Look, I told you about this already. It's pretty clear. I'm going to come back.

00:06:25 Because a lot of what we see, actually all throughout the latter half of the gospels, is Jesus preparing them and saying, Look, things are going to get harder before they get easier. I often describe the whole thing, especially in Luke and other gospels, it's all a push towards consecration, towards, if you're not dedicated to this, you're not going to be able to keep with me. And I think it's sort of compelling to think about how this plays out. You read the feeding the 5,000/ Jesus feeds 5,000 people, not including women and children, and then you turn to acts, and there are about 300 people meeting after the crucifixion and the resurrection. In some ways, that number in Acts gets you a real sense of who stuck with Jesus after. It's not 5,000 people. It's 300 people.

John Bytheway: 00:07:12 Good point. As we read it, it seems that some of the women understood what was coming. She did it for my burial. They kind of knew it, and some didn't. That's always interesting to me, that some had it figured out.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:07:24 Or certainly had it figured out more. Part of it, even the disciples, even the apostles, it's pretty clear. Thomas is there, and he is like, "Wait, what? Jesus came back to life?" As we read our passages here in terms of this, this is in many ways Jesus saying, "You've got to be ready for it, and so here's some tools for helping you to wait," because the other part of this is he's not going to tell us when it's going to be.

Hank Smith: 00:07:49 Yeah. He talks about a couple other things at the end of Matthew 24, is he says, "It's like the days of Noah." People were eating, drinking, and had no thought for a flood that's coming. Noah was getting prepared, but nobody else was.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:08:04 And it's a key thing, because what it means is that life will go on, right up to the second coming. Again, sometimes we kind of view it as this almost apocalypse, and then Jesus comes and whatever, and he says, "Look, life's just got to keep going."

Hank Smith: 00:08:19 Yeah. It's going to be every day. They're eating and drinking, marrying, and given in marriage, and then the day happened that Noah entered the arc.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:08:26 And part of it with that is this idea for you and I, one, to not just be caught in the thick of thin things, to be just be eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, but also to recognize this is why it's, part of his point, why it's so key for us to be watching, that there's not going to be some kind of immediate event we could say, "Oh, yes. Now we know. Now it's time to get ready."

Hank Smith: 00:08:51 I'm kind of hoping for a Samuel the Lamanite. In five years comes the sun, right?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:08:58 Get out your calendar and put that in your Google calendar.

Hank Smith: 00:09:01 Yeah. Like, "Okay. Five years."

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:09:02 What he was telling us, he's like, "There's not going to be. There's not going to be a Samuel the Lamanite. You're not going to get total disruption of society," and part of it is humans are incredibly resilient.

Hank Smith: 00:09:11 Wars, rumors of wars, all these terrible things in there.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:09:15 The world ended for Jews in the first century. I mean, the earthquake in Turkey and Syria, the world ended. Let's keep going, and some of these are preparation events for when it's going to end. Matthew 24:36 is really, really important.

Hank Smith: 00:09:33 "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:09:35 And Mark is even more explicit, and this is Mark 13:32. "But of that day and that hour, knoweth no man, no, not the angels in which are in heaven, neither the son but the father." Jesus tells to disciples, "Even I don't know when I'm coming back," and now I presume now that he has all the Father hath, he knows everything the Father knows, I presume he knows now, but what he is saying, he's like, "Here in mortality, the Father hasn't told me when I'm coming back."

John Bytheway: 00:10:10 I have a friend, Brother Marsh, who teaches, I think, personal finance at BYU. Strange question in finance class, but he quizzes his students, "If you could ask the Savior anything you wanted to, what would you ask him?"

00:10:21 And most of them ask, "When is the second coming?" And hearing these verses, that would be a real waste of a question,

because you already know this verse. I don't know. The father knows.

- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:10:33 Joseph Smith says, "When are you coming?"
- 00:10:35 Jesus says, "If you live be 85, you'll see me. Then, I'll come. You'll see me."
- 00:10:41 Joseph was like, "So did he mean I'm going to die?"
- Hank Smith: 00:10:45 Yeah.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:10:46 So M. Russell Ballard, President Ballard gave this great BYU devotional back in 1996 about the second coming, and he has, I think, a really compelling point to make about who knows and know the knowledge of the second coming. In this devotional, he says, "So can we use," various scientific data he has been talking about, "... To extract that the second coming is likely to occur during the next few years, the next decade of the next century?"
- 00:11:10 "Not really. I am called as one of the apostles to be a special witness of Jesus Christ in these exciting, trying times. And I do not know when he is going to come again. As far as I know, none of my brethren counsel of the 12 or even the first presidency know, and I would tell to suggest to you that if we do not know, then nobody knows, no matter how compelling their arguments or how reasonable their calculations." And then he quotes Matthew 24:32 what he's talking about, and he says, "I believe when the Lord says, 'No man knows,' it really means no man knows. You should be extremely wary of anyone who claims to be an exception to that divine decree.
- John Bytheway: 00:11:54 I like to tell my students as we talk about this that, "Don't worry about the wrong things. Don't worry about when Christ will come. Just come to Christ right now. Just be on the covenant path. Where the Eagles are gathered, be there, and then when he comes, it'll be okay, because you'll be in the right place.
- Hank Smith: 00:12:12 He even says that. "Blessed is the servant," verse 46, "Whom, when his Lord comes, finds him so doing."
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:12:19 And really, the whole balance of Matthew 24 and 25 is precisely that. It's precisely about, "Here's how we wait." Back to this question of why prophesies it so soon, so early in human history?" Because as I see it, one of the distinctive things about

being a Christian is that we wait for Jesus. Jesus wants us on the edge of our seats.

- Hank Smith: 00:12:47 Nicely put. That's interesting. Jesus wants us on the edge of our seats all the time, every day,
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:12:52 Every point of it. He talks about the servants. He talks about the thief.
- Hank Smith: 00:12:57 The thief. Yeah, that's an interesting point.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:12:59 If you know your house is going to be robbed at four o'clock in the morning, what do you do at four o'clock in the morning? You're going to have police there. You're going to have whatever for it.
- Hank Smith: 00:13:10 You're going to be all ready for it. Yeah, but the point is you don't know.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:13:13 You don't know, so what you do, you sit by that window.
- John Bytheway: 00:13:16 You stand in holy places and be not moved.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:13:19 You know you're being robbed. You don't know when he is coming, but you know it's coming, so you're going to sit there and you're going to wait.
- John Bytheway: 00:13:27 And you're going to have your alarm system put in. You're going to do a bunch to prepare, because you know it's coming.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:13:32 Everything you can, because you know it's coming. Everything you can to have that expectation, and the same thing, the servant. He's like, "You don't know when your boss is coming back, and because you don't know when your boss is coming back, you just work hard in the meantime."
- Hank Smith: 00:13:44 And when he comes, he'll find you working hard.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:13:46 I want to make very clear, 25 is a single piece of 24. Obliterates the chapter division, but in your heads, totally blew that chapter division. He's just still talking about the second coming. So all of these parables are articulating this notion of, "How do I wait? What does it look like?" I want to talk through those, so as you've got the first one there, and this is what? 25, 1 through 13, you've got the 10 virgins. I mean, of course this is the marriage, and people will tell you this is all about ancient marriage feast and things like that. What they never tell you is,

actually, about 70% of our information about that comes from this parable. We need to be careful, a little bit, in terms of this is what all ancient marriages were like, because this is a huge portion of our evidence for it.

00:14:34 You've got the wise virgin, and one thing that President Oaks points out is that this is all about members of the church. They've all been added to the wedding feast. This isn't about non-members versus whatever. And the point of it, as I read it, is not that we should be hoarders. Well, it's not that we should buy all the toilet paper and not share it with anybody. It's about those things that can't be shared. There are some things in our preparation that can't be shared. There's plenty of preparation that can be shared, right? Remember, according to Doctrine & Covenants, in the second coming, before Jesus Christ can come back, we've got to build Zion, which means that we've got to have everything shared already anyway.

Hank Smith: 00:15:11 Yeah. The law of consecration. Yeah.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:15:11 Law of consecration. Exactly. This is not about, "I have more toilet paper than you, ha-ha-ha, because you didn't prepare." I felt keenly a little bit of that during some of the pandemic issues, where we had those sorts of toilet paper, and I did come away from the pandemic saying, "Ha. I should have more food storage than I have." Again, that wasn't [inaudible 00:15:31]. That was just pragmatic, but the point of this parable is, as I read it, there are things like testimony. There are things like preparation, spiritual preparation. There are things that you can't rely on somebody else to have. When the day comes and it's a problem, I can't rely on Hank Smith's testimony. As great as it is...

Hank Smith: 00:15:52 You've got to have your own.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:15:53 I can't. I've got to have my own, and so it's not that the wise virgins are mean. The purpose of the parable is like, "We can't share it. You've got to have this for yourself."

Hank Smith: 00:16:05 You've got to do this for yourself, and be ready for the wedding.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:16:09 Exactly. You can't, when it comes, say, "Oh. I'll get it then," because again, remember the bridegroom delays his coming. He's later than they expect him. You can't say, and this is the idea of God, when you just lay on the edge of our seats, you can never say, "I'll do it later." Part of the point of this is there is no later.

Hank Smith: 00:16:32 Yeah. Do it now. Act now.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:16:35 Do it now. It's immediate, partially because, and this is kind of what God told Joseph Smith there in the Doctrine & Covenants. It's like, "Look, you live, you die. You're going to see me at some point anyway," and that's true for each of us. In many ways, our lives should be a constant preparation for Jesus Christ's second coming, because he's going to come for the whole world and fix everything. It's going to be beautiful, but in the meantime, he can come in our lives. He can come, and he can visit us. We can be with him. We can build it and do it right now.

Hank Smith: 00:17:08 You might meet the Lord. That's one of Elder Oak's points, and his talk is, "You might meet him tomorrow, because something might happen."

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:17:16 And you've always got to be ready. And so that's part of the point too, is ready as much and early as possible.

Hank Smith: 00:17:22 Elder Dallin H. Oaks, in his talk, is it preparation for the second coming, I think it's called in April 2004, general conference? He asked this question. He says, "What if the day of his coming were tomorrow? If we knew that we would meet the Lord tomorrow through his unexpected coming or through our premature death, what would we do today? What confessions would we make? What practices would we discontinue? What accounts would we settle? What forgivenesses would we extend? What testimonies would we bear? If we knew the Lord was coming tomorrow, we would be acting totally different today," he said, and then this piercing question. I love it. "If we would do those things, then why not now?"

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:18:05 And I really think part of the purpose of all of that discourse is Jesus Christ is saying, "Now. I'm coming tomorrow." Again, I always ask my students, "Well, when is Jesus coming back?"

00:18:17 They've already like, "Dr. Shannon, you've already said we can't do it. I'm like, just would you be comfortable saying, "Jesus Christ is coming back soon"?"

00:18:24 Like, "Oh. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Absolutely."

00:18:26 And I said, "How long has Jesus been coming back soon?"

Hank Smith: 00:18:29 Yeah.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:18:31 For 2000 years, it's been soon and it's still soon.

John Bytheway: 00:18:35 That's the way he wants it, right?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:18:38 That's the way, exactly. He wants us to be, as I said, on the edge of our seats. He wants us to be constantly prepared and thinking about other things besides the management of the creature.

John Bytheway: 00:18:47 That's why I love that verse, "Behold it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man." You'll live your life that way.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:18:55 Exactly.

John Bytheway: 00:18:55 It's really soon.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:18:57 Every single day. Exactly, because as Elder Oaks points to us, it could be he comes in the flesh. It could just be that we die. One of the things I found in my life is we're basically a hands breath away from life and death at almost all times, right? I mean, it's just, you never know what's going to happen.

Hank Smith: 00:19:12 Yeah. I remember President Monson always saying something like, "When the day of decision arrives, the time for preparation has passed."

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:19:22 Exactly. This parable's about, you've got to be ready and you've got to be ready yourself. You can't rely on somebody else being ready spiritually for when these things come.

Hank Smith: 00:19:32 There's a couple of verses. There's some great phrases in this.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:19:35 Oh. Jesus Christ is incredibly quotable.

Hank Smith: 00:19:38 Yeah. "Give us of your oil for our lamps are gone out," and we could talk about testimony. "My testimony is running out on me. What can I do to make sure that it's not running out?" And then the wise answered, "Go get for yourselves." That reminds me of Joseph Smith saying, "I have learned for myself."

John Bytheway: 00:19:55 Good point.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:19:56 From day one, the great privilege of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is you can learn for yourself. You don't need my testimony. For one thing, let's be honest here. I do my best to do what I can, but I'm not always a great person. If my children rely on me, I'm going to fail them.

Hank Smith: 00:20:15 They have to know for themselves. Yeah.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:20:17 I cannot give them what they need eternally, and so that's why it's so key for us to think through this and to think, but also this idea, the testimony idea, and this is just sort of a homily on this point here, but I think it's a good one. Don't wait until your oil's running out to try and rebuild your testimony. Don't wait until you're at the very end to say, "Now it's time for me to go try and build back up this fire." It's much easier while it's still burning than to try and do it again.

Hank Smith: 00:20:44 Some sobering verses in the Book of Mormon about you've procrastinated the day of your repentance until it's everlastingly too late. I mean, there actually is going to come a time when it's too late.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:20:55 When the doors shut and Jesus says, "I don't know who you are," and actually, of course, there's a JST there that's, "You don't know me." He is like, "I don't know you, but really you didn't know me." Many are called and few are chosen, and why are they not chosen? Because they forget.

Hank Smith: 00:21:11 In just simple terms, if you love someone, you show up at their wedding.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:21:16 And you're ready for it, right?

Hank Smith: 00:21:17 You're like, "I ran out of gas. I was busy running errands."

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:21:21 Exactly, and it's going to be a party. You're missing out on the cool stuff at this point, right?

Hank Smith: 00:21:26 Didn't President Nelson say that? Missing out on Celestial Kingdom is the ultimate FOMO?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:21:32 Yeah. It really is. And Jesus uses, in the gospels, all the time, this party imagery, the wedding feast. It's got to be a party, guys. Visit the table of the Lord, the feast of fat things, and Doctrine and Covenants. It's going to be awesome, and we're not going to want to miss out on it just because we forgot a couple, i.e., again, I think it's really cool, the desire to want to come to the wedding.

John Bytheway: 00:21:53 And we've received multiple invitations.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:21:57 Yes. So many. He's like, "Look."

John Bytheway: 00:21:59 So many.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:22:01 "I keep asking you. I knocked on your door and hand delivered it to you."

John Bytheway: 00:22:06 Elder Bednar said, "The central recurring theme of the Book of Mormon is the invitation to come unto Christ." We didn't just get one invitation in the mail that got put under the other mail. We'd been invited over and over and over. I like what you said, Hank. I put that in my scripture. If you love somebody, show up at their wedding." That's good.

Hank Smith: 00:22:24 Yeah, yeah. That's great. I mean, if your best friend called you the next day and said, "Oh. I meant to. Couldn't make it. Sorry."

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:22:32 That's one of the parable, right? That's the parable of the Wedding Feast, where they actually, "I bought a new ox. I'm too busy with it."

00:22:38 She said, "You've got to be ready for it."

00:22:41 So each of these parables teach you something a little bit different. The parable of the thief from the night, you've got to be waiting. You've got to be on the edge of your seats. You know what's coming. You know when you've got to be waiting for it. The parable of the 10 virgins is, "Look, you've got to be ready beforehand. You can't decide, after the fact, it's time to get ready. There are some things there that you have to do yourself. You can't do it for others."

Hank Smith: 00:23:04 To add to the parable of the 10 virgins, you have Doctrine & Covenants 45, verses 56 and 57, that have a little addendum to the parable, which is just wonderful. "At that day, when I shall come in my glory shall the parable be fulfilled, which I spake concerning the 10 virgins, for they that are wise, have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide and have not been deceived," going back to what we talked about earlier about being deceived, the Savior's warning, don't be deceived, don't be deceived, "Verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day."

John Bytheway: 00:23:41 Hank, I've been marking all of the section 45 references in my footnotes, because that's very much kind of a second coming revelation in the Doctrine & Covenants.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:23:50 It would not be a mistake to call Documents 45, a modern day revelatory sequel. He works through the parable, the fig tree. It's very much in this dispensation, talking about the generation,

the Jew. He talks about it in verse 21, the desolation, verse 19. He talks about the thief from the night. Documents 45 is revelatory commentary for this dispensation on the Olivet discourse, so you should be reading them together. God intends us to read them together.

- Hank Smith: 00:24:19 Absolutely.
- John Bytheway: 00:24:20 Yeah. I love the, "They that are wise have received the truth." I don't think that means just that you heard about it, but you received it. Speaking of weddings, you receive guests at a wedding. It's a wedding reception. I received the truth, like you receive seed into good ground. They've received the truth and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, just what we were talking about, because there's a lot of other guides out there who would like to guide you, but the one that we need, as you mentioned before, Avram, is we need to take the Holy Ghost for our guide.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:24:49 As always, that's going to be our short answer. Holy Ghost.
- Hank Smith: 00:24:52 Let the Holy Spirit be your guide. All right, so let's continue on. There's another parable right after this one.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:24:57 And so you remember, it's this guy. He's traveling to a far country, it says. When he calls his servants to deliver him his goods, and talents, by the way, talents are sums of money. It's a weight. It's actually astronomical sums of money. He's giving them huge amounts of money to work with.
- Hank Smith: 00:25:16 One talent is enough for lifetime.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:25:18 Exactly. And by the way, our modern use of talents, as being about gifts that God gave us, comes from this parable. In the parable, he's talking about sums of money, but because it applies so nicely to God's gifts to us, it came into English as a word for God's gifts to us.
- Hank Smith: 00:25:36 Oh, cool.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:25:37 It's really fun the way the New Testament, this Bible in general, informs our speech in ways we sometimes don't think about.
- Hank Smith: 00:25:42 Yeah. My talented co-host. I was right, John.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:25:45 You were right. So he's got these servants. They gave them according to there are several abilities. He's like, "I know that

you're pretty good," so I'm going to give you five talents. You're clearly the best at this. He's like, "I know that you're not as good as he is, but you're pretty good. I can give you two talents. You will do what we can with it. We're going to give you one talent," and then he leaves. And these various servants, verse 16, he that received the five talents went and traded the same and made them other five talents, received two, gained other two, and the one, he digged in the earth and buried it. He was afraid of losing it, and he comes back.

- Hank Smith: 00:26:24 After a long time, noticed that. After a long time, the Lord of his servants coming.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:26:29 And the one of five talents says, "Look, I did it. I worked. I doubled your talents, 10 talents." Again, it's an enormous sum. Then, with two, same thing, right? I doubled it, four talents.
- 00:26:41 The guy with one said, "Well, I was scared of you, because you're kind of scary, right?"
- Hank Smith: 00:26:47 I knew you required a lot.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:26:49 Exactly. I knew you were an austere man. Reaping what you know, you're a hard man, and I was afraid, so I just buried it. Of course, that makes him even more angry.
- Hank Smith: 00:27:00 You could have at least put it in the bank. I'd get interest, all right?
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:27:04 At least you would've done that. Then, of course, he says, in some ways, everyone that has should be given him, the hath not should be taken away. And of course, we read this oftentimes in terms of reception, that if you receive, you get more. If you don't, then even what you've got is going to eventually go away. There are two things, I think, that are key about this, and one that actually feeds into this idea by reading it as sort of gifts from God. One of the things I love, I love comparing verse 21 and verse 23. So these are the rewards that God gives to...
- Hank Smith: 00:27:39 10 talent guy and the 4.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:27:42 Yeah, and the 4 talent guy. 21. His Lord said to him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things. I'll make thee rule over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

00:27:53 The other guy, his Lord said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord." The reward is identical, which suggests to me that it's not so much what you're given, as it is what you do with it. I think this is really useful sometimes, as we look out in this world, applying this in terms of this idea of talents, in terms of gifts from God. I tell my kids this all the time, and they're like, "Dad."

00:28:27 I'm like, "Life's not fair." Even when babies are crying, I'm like, "You're right, kid. Life's not fair, and then you die." Actually, I think it's an incredibly, actually, a nobling truth, this idea that life's not fair and then you die. But part of if you have to get this perspective here, but I think that's the key. Part of this is a nobling perspective. There are people in this world who are better looking than me.

Hank Smith: 00:28:51 No.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:28:52 There are people in this world who are smarter than me. There are people in this world who are certainly more athletic than I am. There are people in this world who are wealthier than I am. Lord love them. There are people in this world who are all four. The reward is identical. The point is what you do with what you're given, even though the second servant ends up with less talents than the first one started with.

Hank Smith: 00:29:19 The guy even started with.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:29:20 He gets the same reward.

Hank Smith: 00:29:23 I imagine them standing outside the Lord's office, and the guy holding 10 is looking at a guy holding 4 and saying, "You're in serious trouble."

00:29:31 And the guy holding 4, and he looks at the guy with 10 and thinking, "I'm in so much trouble," yet they get on the other side and they both get the same reward. The guy with 10 is probably thinking, "How'd you get here?"

00:29:41 And the guy with 4 is probably thinking, "I don't know," but then they start talking, and they say, "How many did you start with? Oh. We had different starting places." Now, that's an important concept.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:29:53 It's a huge important concept, because it's really easy for us in celebrity culture and in our own lives, just around, right? You

look around and you're like, "Man, I just feel so insecure, because they're doing this thing so much better than I am."

00:30:04 Part of the message is God's like, "Stop looking around. Just do your thing. Stop comparing yourself to somebody else." The great message of the gospel of Jesus Christ is actually that it's not fair. It's not nearly as so bad as all that.

Hank Smith: 00:30:17 It reminds me of the loaves and fishes. Bring what you have, and I'll multiply it.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:30:23 The laborers, right? In the field. We get there, and we're like, "Oh, I've been working all day long. Look what I'm going to get."

00:30:28 And God's like, "Just let me give you what I'm going to give you, okay?"

Hank Smith: 00:30:32 Yeah. And, "I'll judge you based on your starting line.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:30:35 Yeah, exactly. "Let me be merciful." I think, in terms of how this frames the second coming, is this idea of how you use your time is what's going to matter here. Favorite verse is in Doctrine & Covenants six, where Joseph and Oliver, they're brand new with this whole translation thing. The Lord says, he's like, "Don't be afraid to do good." Sometimes, I know I do this, I get so set on, what's the right thing to do? How can I do the most good in the world? How can I help the most people? What should I do for my job? What should I write? In my particular job of writing and teaching, what kind of writings are the most good to the church? Parenting, right? What's the best way to parent? It can be really easy to get really paralyzed by that and not do anything.

John Bytheway: 00:31:20 Analysis paralysis, we call it. Right?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:31:23 Exactly.

John Bytheway: 00:31:23 As soon as I figure it out, then I'll do it, but I can't figure it out, so we do nothing.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:31:28 I can't figure it out. And we bury the talent, and God says, "I don't care, in some ways. Just do something good. Don't be afraid to do good. If it's good, go ahead and do it."

Hank Smith: 00:31:39 I have a great thought from President Ballard. We've been quoting him a lot today. This is one that I love to share. He says, "I feel that judgment for sin is not always as cut and dry as some

of us seem to think. He says, "I feel that the Lord recognizes differences in intent and circumstances. When he does judge us, I feel he will take all things into consideration. Our genetic and chemical makeup, our mental state, our intellectual capacity, the teachings we have received, the traditions of our fathers, our health, and so forth." There's only one person who can know all that, your genetic and chemical makeup, your mental state, the teachings you've received. Take all that into consideration. I love that you pointed out that the guy with four doesn't even get to where the other guy started with five, and yet they get the exact same reward.

- John Bytheway: 00:32:30 You're reminding me of, I think, way back a couple of years ago when we were doing Doctrine & Covenants, and there's a phrase in section 46, I think verse 15, where it says, "The Lord suiting his mercies according to the conditions of the children of men." Conditions in 2023 different than conditions in 1975, whatever, and we can trust him. I'm so glad, and every person in every parable, in the laborers in the vineyard, they all were different, came from different places, so don't look at the reward they got. Just be grateful what you've been given, and do something with it. I love the Elder Hollands thing about that parable. It's so, so good.
- Hank Smith: 00:33:10 The other thing that I could take from this parable is that I can't compare myself to others to make me look good. I might be saying, "Well, at least I'm not as bad as, fill in the blank." Sometimes we do that with the world. "Well, I'm not so great, but at least I'm not as bad as the rest of the world."
- 00:33:27 And the Lord might say, "Of course you're not. They started at 1 and you started at 40," so it takes away that crutch.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:33:35 You've gone down, and they've gone-
- Hank Smith: 00:33:37 Yeah.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:33:38 The fact that you're close together is a problem.
- John Bytheway: 00:33:41 That's a pharisee in the publican. "I'm glad I'm not like this publican here."
- Hank Smith: 00:33:45 Yeah. So it takes away that crutch from me just saying, "Well, I'm doing better than most people."
- 00:33:52 He might say, "Of course, you are. You started at a much higher place."

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:33:55 Be held accountable for what you've done with what you've been given. He's like, "But I understand who you are, what you're doing. I understand where you're coming from," and he's so much better at that than we are. Sometimes we struggle. We say, "Oh. Well, they did this bad thing or whatever, and they did do something terrible," but the beauty of this, and the beauty of the whole thing is, one, I don't have to decide. I love that so much, that I'm under no obligation to decide and say, "Oh. You did this. You did that." It's the Lord's decision for it, but also this idea that, again, I like what Hank was saying about this idea of comparison, not comparing. We want it to be fair.

00:34:32 "Oh. That's not fair."

00:34:33 "No. No, it's not that. That's the whole point. It's not fair." Whatever else the gospel of Jesus Christ is, it's not fair. It's just. It's good. It's wonderful, but I am not getting what I deserve. What I deserve is to go to hell.

John Bytheway: 00:34:50 Thankfully, all of us are not getting what we deserve.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:34:55 Exactly, because of Jesus Christ's inexhaustible grace. Well done, thou good and faithful servants. With what I gave you, you did amazing. Well done.

Hank Smith: 00:35:04 Yeah. From where you started and where you finished, you just really improved so much. Let's talk about this guy with the one talent. It seems that he doesn't do anything, and he blames God. Well, he blames the Lord in the story.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:35:19 He's like, "But you get mad so often."

Hank Smith: 00:35:21 "So I did nothing." It would be like one of our students saying, "I knew you were a hard grader, so I didn't do any work and I didn't come to class," right?

00:35:29 Well, the Lord says, "That's not the problem. You are slothful. That's the problem." He kind of calls him out on it.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:35:36 Yes, he does. Not just for his wrath, but sometimes we try and blame God for any number of things and say, "Oh. Well, I didn't do this because you're this way." And part of it's like, "One, did I tell you I'm that way? Did I say that?"

00:35:52 But in this case, he's like, "You're right. You knew I was angry. You knew that I expected a lot out of you."

Hank Smith: 00:35:58 Yeah. I have high expectations. You knew that.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:36:00 And somehow now, your contempt of me was not wrong, but you didn't even try. At no point does he say, "This is how much money and expected you to make that." He says, "You could have at least just earned interest on it."

Hank Smith: 00:36:15 Put it in the bank. That would've been something.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:36:17 Something. "You didn't even try," and I really appreciate that, because I do think, with President Ballard, God's going to be as merciful as he possibly can. All mitigating circumstances, everything, every excuse you could possibly make, I was like, "Yeah, yeah. I know." But the key idea, and I go, "Well, how this leads to a second coming is you've got to be doing. You've got to try. You can't just wait." This is the problem with the thessalonian saints. Oh, that's a fun word to say there. The thessalonian saints end up doing, they just quit. They just stop, like Jesus coming back. "We're just going to stop. We're just going to wait." Waiting does not mean just holding on as fast. You've got to be actively doing to wait.

Hank Smith: 00:37:00 It's a perfect parable for the second coming. "Here, I've given you gifts. I'll come back, and I want to hear what you do with them one day, so be ready for when I come back."

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:37:11 Yeah, and that segues beautifully into the final parable, the sheep and the goats. This one actually sounds to be more of the second coming, because it's about the king, sheep, and goats. Although, as a minor joke, so my wife and I are both left-handed. One time she was in Sunday school and somebody asked her, the teacher, the teacher asked her, he said, "So Thora, can you tell us about why God puts the sheep on the right hand and not on the left hand?"

00:37:42 Thora said, "No. No, I cannot. I have no idea why, and it's bothered me all my life."

Hank Smith: 00:37:48 By the wicked are the left-handed.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:37:50 Sinister. Of course, there's all kinds of things in the sinister and all that stuff with it, and there's imagery behind it and whatever, but he divides them up, right? Sheep, like a sheep, like a shepherd. Sheep and goats. The sheep on the right hand, those are the good guys. The goats on the left hand...

John Bytheway: 00:38:05 Isn't this something common in for shepherd, to let them graze together and then separate them?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:38:12 Put them out and let them do their thing. And again, the implication, this is why it's in the second coming thing. This is kind of a final separation. It very quickly changes from being about sheep and goats to being about people. This is almost not a parable in that sense. It's still parabolic in the sense it's a story that may or may not be how things actually play out, but it's kind of a parable about the second coming, almost as anything as it is about the second coming. The narrative is almost the second coming in this parable.

Hank Smith: 00:38:38 Yeah. The beginning three verses are about sheep and goats, and then, never again.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:38:42 Right. The king says, "Come. You blessed of my father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. I was a foreigner, and you took me in. I was naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you came and visited me. I was in prison. You came to me, and then the righteous will answer." I love this.

00:39:07 "Lord, what are you talking about?"

Hank Smith: 00:39:10 We never-

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:39:11 "We would've loved that. We never did any of those things. We never saw you. We never fed you. We never gave you any drink. What are you talking about?"

00:39:20 And the King shall answer and say unto them, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

00:39:28 Now, this is so key, because we're talking in this whole thing, this is still about the second coming, and it's still about how you wait for the second coming. We've talked about things that can't be shared. We've talked about the need for preparation, and we've talked all about the need to be actively doing, preparing, take where you're going and building on what you have. Then, he says, "The thing that marks the sheep from the goats is how we've taken care of each other." And so in terms of waiting for the second coming, what that looks like, he says is, "Did you help each other?" And not just broadly. "Did you feed

the hungry? Did you take in strangers? Did you help each other?"

00:40:10 And we say, "Well, no."

00:40:11 "Did you help me?"

00:40:12 And we're like, "No, we didn't."

00:40:13 He's like, "Yes, you did. If you help anybody, you've helped me."

John Bytheway: 00:40:18 I like that you're saying that, because it's easy to think of a, "Oh. I get it. Yeah. The sheep, the goats. The righteous, the wicked." No, it's more specific than that. It's those who served others and those who didn't. It's a different kind of more precise wickedness and righteousness about service.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:40:35 On the other side. He asked the same question. He's like, "You never fed me. You never gave me drink. You never helped."

00:40:42 And they asked the same thing, "What are you talking about? We never saw you. If you'd been there, we would've helped you."

Hank Smith: 00:40:49 Yeah, right. "If I'd seen you hungry, I would've come to the rescue."

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:40:53 "I would have totally given you food."

00:40:55 And he said, "Anybody you didn't feed, you didn't feed me."

John Bytheway: 00:40:59 This is where Mother Teresa's going to look really good, isn't it?

Hank Smith: 00:41:02 Yes.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:41:04 This is something that Doctrine & Covenants is very clear on, but so are the gospels. This is part of our Christian obligation. We are obligated to help people, and I think it's very compelling that Jesus describes this obligation as part of this discourse, as part of the second coming. He's still answering their question, but somebody's like, "What is it going to be like? How are you going to wait for me?"

00:41:31 He's like, "You've got to go out and do and help each other. That's how you're going to be ready for me."

Hank Smith: 00:41:36 Great insight. While you're waiting, you're not just waiting. You're doing, you're serving, and you're waiting in the very best way.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:41:45 According to Doctrine & Covenants, one of the things that has to happen before the second coming is we've got to build Zion. We've got to be the kinds of people who do this, and we've got to build a society where we do this. Again, this is one of the last things he teaches before he dies, but the whole thing's a peace with the entire rest of his mortal ministry. One thing I find very compelling, as I read the New Testament, especially when I read the gospels, there's not a lot in the gospels from Jesus, but what we call doctrinal topics in the sense of, he doesn't talk a whole lot about the degrees of glory. You don't get really priesthood organization. You don't get any of these things.

00:42:29 We'll talk about doctrine, but most of Jesus' teachings on mortality are about how we treat each other, and I find that incredibly compelling, that when he comes to earth, he's got one chance at this. He's going to teach us the rest of the time, all over the place. He's got one place where he's going to teach the people directly, and he says, "How do you take care of each other? What do you do?" It's not that those topics aren't important. I care deeply about church organizations. It's one of the things I love to write about, but it's not going to get me into heaven. It's not going to put me on the right hand of God. I can write a lovely treatise about church organization in the first century. Good for me, but if I do that and neglect to help somebody else, I'm going to be found on the left hand.

John Bytheway: 00:43:11 I see in verse 40 there, inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, you've done it unto to me. I see footnote 40A, King Benjamin's. I don't want to call it a punchline, but King Benjamin's point is, "When you're in the service of your fellow beings, that's how you serve me." And I think for centuries, people have wondered, how do I serve God? What's the best way to serve God? And there's an answer here, answer in King Benjamin's speech, to just take care of each other.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:43:38 Elder Uchtdorf talks about, he's like, "The two great commandments, 'Love God and love your neighbor.'" He says, "Actually, there're two sides of the same coin. You cannot love God without also loving your neighbor," and he said, "Sometimes we focus on the spiritual at the expense of the physical. He says, "We're missing the point." Actually, one of my favorite scriptures in Doctrine & Covenants. 29:34, this is God talking to Joseph again.

00:44:02 "Wherefore, verily I say unto you that all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal. Neither any man nor the children of men, neither Adam, your father, whom I created." Part of what he's saying here is this idea of helping people, giving of your substance, sharing, dressing, visiting, helping the sick, these very in the dirt, physical things. He's like, "These are not temporal commandments. These are spiritual commandments." Actually, but what God says is, "I think they're the same thing." I've never given you a temporal command. I don't even know what those are.

Hank Smith: 00:44:40 This parable, the sheep and the goats, this could be a great week for teachers and parents to share stories of when they've seen people come to the rescue for others, maybe themselves, maybe when they did. I remember when our twins were born, we had three children. We had twins born, and it was a lot. People have said, "Oh. You have twins. I've always wanted twins."

00:45:01 I thought, "Oh. Goodness."

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:45:02 Did I ever tell you, Hank, that we're pregnant with twins right now?

Hank Smith: 00:45:05 You are?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:45:06 Did you not know that? We're pregnant with twins.

Hank Smith: 00:45:08 The eight and nine?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:45:09 Eight and nine.

John Bytheway: 00:45:10 Wow.

Hank Smith: 00:45:11 Oh my goodness, Avram. I hate to tell you this, but this is my description of twins. It was three in the morning. I'm holding a baby, my wife is holding a baby, and all four of us are crying.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:45:24 Yes. Basically, I'm expecting it.

Hank Smith: 00:45:26 Yeah. There's just so much work, and a lot of people came to our rescue, just came to help us. The Barlow family, Heather and Jake Barlow, came to our rescue and fed us weekly for months. Even over a year, they were feeding us weekly. Jenny Thompson came to our rescue and brought food. We were hungry. Our kids were hungry, and we were exhausted. People

came to our rescue. I've always loved, and this is a hard one, this story from Elder Holland.

00:45:59 He talks about, it's in a talk called Emissaries to the Church, and it was about home teaching at the time, which is now ministering. I'll read this. He says, "On May 30th of last year, my friend Troy Russell pulled his pickup truck slowly out of his garage on his way to donate goods to the local DI. He felt his back tire roll over a bump. Thinking some of the item had fallen out of his truck, he got out to find his precious nine-year-old son, Austin, lying face down on the pavement. Their screams, priesthood blessings, paramedic, crew, the hospital staff were all to no avail. Austin was gone. Unable to sleep, unable to find peace, Troy was inconsolable.

00:46:44 He said it was more than he could bear, and he simply could not go on. But into that agonizing breach came three redeeming forces. First was the love and reassuring spirit of our father in heaven. The Holy Ghost that comforted Troy taught him, loved him, and whispered that God knows everything about losing a beautiful and perfect son. Second was his wife, Deidre, who held Troy in her arms, loved him, and reminded him that she too had lost that son, and was determined not to lose a husband also. Third in this story is John Manning, home teacher extraordinaire."

00:47:22 Elder Holland says, "I frankly don't know on what schedule John and his junior companion made visits to the Russell Home, what message was given when they got there, or how they reported the experience. What I do know is that last spring, Brother Manning reached down and picked Troy Russell up off the tragedy of that driveway, just as if he were picking up little Austin himself. Like the watchman brother in the gospel he was supposed to be, John simply took over the priesthood care and keeping of Troy Russell." He started by saying, "Troy, Austin wants you back on your feet, including on the basketball court, so I will be here every morning at 5:15 AM. Be ready, because I don't want to have to come in and get you up, and I know Deidre doesn't want me to do that either.'" I didn't want to go.

00:48:11 Troy told me later, because I had to always taken Austin with me on those mornings, and I knew the memories would be too painful, but John insisted so I went. From that first day back, we talked, or rather, I talked and John listened. I talked the entire drive to the church and the entire drive home. Sometimes I talked as we parked in the driveway and watched the sun rising over Las Vegas. At first, it was difficult, but over time, I realized I had found strength in the form of a very slow six two church

ball player, with an absolutely pathetic jump shot, and who loved me and listened to me until the sun finally rose again in my life. Elder Holland says, "We are asking you to be God's emissaries to his children, to love, care, and pray for the people who you are assigned." I'm sure he would add those who are not assigned, "As we love and care and pray for you. May you be vigilant in tending the flock of God." I just thought it fit perfectly with this parable.

- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:49:27 I think a key idea there, Hank, is this notion that sometimes, as we talk about ministering, helping each other, or things like that, when we say correctly, we're like, "Oh. Well, it's more than just giving a meal," and that's right. But I think Matthew 25 reminds us it's not less than giving a meal, that we almost diminish somehow. You know, you were talking about your twins. When my little boy died, I didn't want to cook. I didn't want to do anything, and somebody fed me. What I needed then was food. Even little things, like again, from you, Hank, when my son got hit by a car, he lived, this one. But actually, Hank brought over a Lego set and a Batman shirt. The kid still wears, and actually his now five-year-old brother was like, he's like, "So if I get hit by a car, do I get a Lego set too?"
- 00:50:35 And I said, "Gareth, let's not do that, okay?"
- Hank Smith: 00:50:36 "Let's not do that." Yeah.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:50:39 This is my point about so much you need to do. It's just visiting, just being there. I remember our bishop came over and talked to us after Torvald. That was my son who was stillborn. He's like, "I don't have much opportunity to do pastoral care." We have a lot of young families in our ward, but it was enough that he came and he visited. Even here in Matthew 25, there's all this stuff about, there's the feeding and there's the clothing. He's like, "But also, you came and you just visited me, and you listened and you sat." I still remember. I remember every note I got after Torvald, every single one. Because of that, I try real hard to send notes out too, because in some way, it costs you nothing, not even time in that case.
- 00:51:31 Another thing on this, somewhat less, whatever. I said we're pregnant with twins right now, which we're very excited about, and twin girls. We're very, very excited. My wife was describing, this is not our first rodeo, but I'm not sure I've competed in the sport before. It is kind of how I feel about it. Thora was like, "I had a bad first trimester, and then a second trimester that felt like a third trimester, and now I'm in a worst third trimester, if that's possible for it." We're doing what we can. A sister in our

ward came this Saturday and cleaned my kitchen. Her name's Sarah Campbell. I'm going to embarrass her on this. I'm sure she'd say it was nothing. My kitchen's clean now, and it wasn't before. I think, as we think through what it means to be God's sheep, it means in some ways taking care of God's sheep. It also means letting people come and help you too. Sometimes we get so proud. We say, "Well, no. No, I don't need anything."

- Hank Smith: 00:52:39 Allow people to serve you.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:52:41 Yeah. I mean, life's hard. Look, we can't do this by ourselves, and we shouldn't even try.
- John Bytheway: 00:52:48 For a long time, I remember President Kimball talking about the threefold mission of the church, "Proclaim the gospel. Perfect the saints. Redeem the dead." President Monson added to that, "Care for the poor and needy." That just seems very President Monson, doesn't it? Today, the work of salvation has been defined. I really like how they've done it in the newest handbook. It's, "Live, care, invite, unite. Live the gospel of Jesus Christ. Care for those in need," and sometimes it's not just the poor who are in need, as we've just talked about. "Live the gospel of Jesus Christ. Care for those in need. Invite all to come unto Christ, and unite families for eternity," and that can be on both sides of the veil. I just think that those are action words. It's what to do while we're waiting for the Savior to come back. Live, care, invite, unite.
- Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:53:43 And of course, the beautiful thing about President Monson's thing is that he added it. He was just articulating what was already there. It was always our mission. He just reminded us of it.
- Hank Smith: 00:53:53 From his April 2017 general conference talk, President Monson said, "Let us examine our lives, and determine to follow the Savior's example by being kind, loving, and charitable. As we do so, we will be in a better position to call down the powers of heaven for ourselves, for our families, and for our fellow travelers in this difficult journey back to our heavenly home." John, you and I can't read this story and think of the Sorensen family, who have given and given and given so this podcast could be available to so many people.
- John Bytheway: 00:54:29 How can I express how this has blessed me and my family? Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:54:34 And people all over will come up to me and say, "I love that podcast. I love that podcast." I'll be in the grocery store, and someone will stop by and say, "I love your podcast." The other day I was walking in the parking lot, and someone rolled down their window as they drove by. "Love the podcast," and all of that love needs to go to Shannon Sorensen and her late husband, Steve, for giving us this chance. If we sat here, how many people could we come up with who have helped the three of us, just the three of us?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:55:02 We don't have time.

Hank Smith: 00:55:04 Yeah, we'd be here all day. Then, the good that people do in this church and outside the church, it's a beautiful use of agency. There's some things I hate about agency, about pain people can inflict on other people, but there's a flip side to it that I love about agency is, like you said, Mother Theresa, John. It's the same agency that took her into the slums of Calcutta to help people. I remember reading about Mother Theresa and a reporter was watching her work, and she was helping a man who had a terrible skin disease. I mean, just really difficult kind of, I don't know how to say it, not the word disgusting, but...

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:55:42 That's what you're thinking.

Hank Smith: 00:55:43 Yeah. The journalist said, "I would not do that for a million dollars."

00:55:50 Mother Teresa heard him and said, "Oh. Neither would I, because that's not why I'm doing it."

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:55:59 As I said before, I find it very, very compelling that this is how Jesus wants us to wait for him, that this is what it means to be the followers and the waiters for Jesus, is wait for the second coming. Again, President Nelson says all the time, "We're preparing the world for Jesus Christ's second coming," that's the purpose of the church, the purpose of the gathering, the purpose of everything we're doing right now, these prophetic priorities is to prepare the world for the second coming. You look here on Matthew 25, and what that looks like is making the kind of world that he wants it to be. That's what it means to prepare the world. It means to go out there, help people, and find it, and not for money, but for God and his glory to make the world the kind of place that he wants to come back to. That's what agency is for. You're right, Hank. That's our mission. That's our goal. That's our job, is to transform this world through Jesus Christ into Jesus Christ's world.

Hank Smith: 00:56:56 So often we think, "That's the Lord's job," or "That's the church's job," when we really should say, "That's my job."

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:57:04 A little bit silly thing. So Brandon Sanderson, of course, is a fantasy author. He's also a Latter-day Saint, and there's a bit in one of his books where there's a character who's a kind of a God figure in the book. This character's basically praying, and he is like, "Aren't you going to do anything to help?"

00:57:22 The God figure says, "I did. I sent you."

00:57:29 So then he answered to that, "Aren't you going to do anything to help God?"

00:57:31 God's like, "I did. I sent you." I love that.

Hank Smith: 00:57:36 Avram, this has been fantastic today, studying Matthew 24 and 25, and seeing how Luke and Mark changed things a little bit. Of course, looking at how Joseph Smith changed Matthew 24, this has just been fascinating and fun. What do you hope our listeners walk away with? So someone listening today, what do you see someone listening, saying, "I need to, fill in the blank." What's my next step?

Dr. Avram Shannon: 00:58:03 Yeah, Hank. Thanks. So therefore, one of this is Jesus Christ is coming back. I mean, in some ways, this is the central part of the Christian message. Jesus Christ is coming back, and we get the privilege, as his followers, to make the world a place he wants to be. We get the privilege to wait for him. We get the privilege to learn and to grow, to spread and to teach, and to build His gospel and build his kingdom. I think that, if we take away from this, sometimes we talk about the end of the world, and we get this almost zombie apocalypse, Mad Max kind of idea behind what it is. I think that Matthew 24, Matthew 25, just the Matthew, all these things we've read today, Mark 13, as we've read through these, recognizing that that's not how the Lord wants to see the end of the world.

00:59:01 It's going to be great. It's going to be amazing. A wedding feast. Revelation, another book where we get caught up in the locusts and the pit and all this, it's fun stuff. But if we're not careful, we can miss that central message there at the end there, where he says he's going to come, and John says he's going to wipe away every tear. He's going to come, and he is going to make everything better. That's the takeaway, brothers and sisters. That's the takeaway for everybody. Jesus Christ is going to make everything better, and we have the privilege now to do our best

to make things better, as we wait for him to come. There's lots of things in this church that I love. Lots of things I believe, lots of things I would ever, but one of the bedrocks of my testimony is that Jesus Christ is coming back, and it's going to be wonderful.

Hank Smith: 01:00:04 Thank you for being with us today. We've loved having you back.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 01:00:07 I was happy to be back. Thanks.

Hank Smith: 01:00:09 Really fun. We have a good assignment here, don't we?

John Bytheway: 01:00:12 Yeah. I feel like, man, we better hit stop, so that I can go serve somebody.

Hank Smith: 01:00:18 Yeah. That's exactly right.

John Bytheway: 01:00:21 I've got to find someone to help.

Hank Smith: 01:00:22 Yeah. I got to find someone to help. Today, I better find someone to help, not wait until tomorrow. I better do something with what I've been given and get ready for the wedding, right? All of that. You've shown us that preparation for the second coming, you should be pretty busy.

Dr. Avram Shannon: 01:00:37 That's what Jesus seems to suggest, yes. Absolutely.

Hank Smith: 01:00:40 There's a lot to do to prepare you and to prepare the world, so get out there and let him find you working when he comes again. Thank you. We want to thank Dr. Avram Shannon for being with us today, taking his time to be with us. We, of course, want to thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen, and we always remember our founder, Steve Sorensen, and we hope all of you will join us next week as we come back with another episode of Follow Him.

01:01:10 Today's transcripts, show notes, and additional references are available on our website, followhim.co. Followhim.co, and you can watch the podcast on YouTube with additional videos on Facebook and Instagram. All of this is absolutely free, so be sure to share with your family and friends. To reach those who are searching for help with their Come Follow Me study, please subscribe, rate, review, or comment on the podcast, which makes the podcast easier to find. Thank you. We want to thank our incredible production crew, David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie

Neilson, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, and Ariel Cuadra. We also love hearing from you, our listeners.

Speaker 5: 01:01:51 Hello, Hank, John, and Come Follow Him. Friends, I just wanted to make this little video to thank you for putting this podcast together. Every week, it's been a joy to listen to you and your guests speak about the life of the Savior, and I just wanted to basically say thank you for having a format where, out of the mouth of three witnesses, we can fill the testimonies and strength that you have, and share with us that I know that it helps me and strengthens my testimony every week that I listen, so thanks.

WHEN IS THE SECOND COMING?



- Hank Smith: 00:04 Hello, my friends. Welcome to another followHIM Favorites. My name is Hank Smith, and I'm here with the incredible John Bytheway. Welcome, John Bytheway.
- John Bytheway: 00:11 Hi Hank.
- Hank Smith: 00:12 It's a good day. John, we're going to take on a single question from this week's Come Follow Me lesson. This question gets a lot of attention, John. It's when is the second coming, and what does Jesus have to say about that? So we're in Matthew 24 and 25. How do you answer that question?
- John Bytheway: 00:28 I let Jesus answer it. Cause yeah, if we had the answer to that. Let's see, Matthew 24:36: "But of that day and hour, knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." So thank you for joining us on followHIM.
- Hank Smith: 00:44 Yep.
- John Bytheway: 00:46 But why are these parables here? He wants to give us some hints, some things to watch for, some signs.
- Hank Smith: 00:52 Yep. Some instructions. I think it's important to know that verse, John, because there's many people out there who claim that they do know when the second coming will be. But I think we can trust Jesus when he says, "I promise you, nobody knows. Not the angels, nobody, just the Father. Just the Father knows." And that can keep us on the right path. But what instruction has he given us along with that?
- John Bytheway: 01:14 Well, in Matthew 25, we have some parables of preparation. I think that helps us to say, "Hey, it's coming, but here's some ways that you might know, and here's what you ought to be doing in the meantime." So which one do you like in there, Hank?
- Hank Smith: 01:29 Yeah, I am a big fan of the Parable of the Talents. I just think this can help us so much in preparing for the second coming. Most people know this story. A guy with a lot of money is going away

for a while, so he gives his money to financial people, and he says, "Please grow this." He gives one guy five talents, that's five lifetimes worth of money. He gives another guy two talents, he gives another guy one talent, and he says, "Go to work. I'll be back." And obviously coming back is the second coming. And the guy with the five turns it into 10, the guy with the two turns it into four, and the guy with the one did nothing.

02:03 And of course the guy with the one got in trouble for being lazy. But I really like this other lesson that the guy with the five ended with 10, the guy with the two ended with four, didn't even get to where the first guy started, yet they get the exact same reward. So that tells me in my own preparations for the second coming, that I don't have any way to judge anyone else. I don't know where they started from. I end up just working hard myself and cheering on everybody else.

John Bytheway: 02:27 I like that a lot. I like the idea that we all had different starting lines. And my dad joined the church at 24. Never had a youth conference, never went to a youth fireside. They never had that. Or a family home evening.

Hank Smith: 02:38 It's a different starting line.

John Bytheway: 02:40 Yeah. Another one is the parable we all know of the 10 virgins, or sometimes we call it the wise and the foolish virgins. And you're going to take your lamp, so you should be prepared with enough oil. Well, the bridegroom tarried, it says in verse five. What does tarried mean?

Hank Smith: 02:56 He took longer than they thought he would.

John Bytheway: 02:58 Longer than they thought. And so they slumbered and slept. I guess this is a warning not to slumber and sleep when you're supposed to be watching, so that you can be ready. And at midnight there was a cry made. "The bridegroom cometh go ye out to meet him. And all the virgins arose, trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said, 'Give us of your oil. Our lamps are gone out.'" And boy, this is tough because I remember I used to read it as a kid and think, well, that's so stingy. Why didn't they share?

Hank Smith: 03:25 Just share, yeah.

John Bytheway: 03:26 And I think we've heard lots of applications to this. I love President Kimball's, is "I can't share my preparation with you. I can't share a lifetime of honesty with somebody else. I can't go

to the Judgment and say, 'Listen, I was kind of crooked in my life. Can you lend me some of your integrity?'" There's some things that are shareable and some things that are not. So that's how I think of it. So be ready. And I guess the big message is, just don't worry so much about when Christ will come, but come unto Christ so that you'll be ready no matter when.

Hank Smith:

03:59

That's beautiful. Thank you, John. We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. We're talking about both of these chapters with Dr. Avram Shannon. I think you'd love what he has to say about these. So come find followHIM wherever you get your podcasts, and then join us next week. We have another followHIM Favorites.