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| John Bytheway: | 00:00:03 | Hello everyone. Welcome to followHIM. I'm John Bytheway. I'm here with my co-host Hank Smith and we are doing today a Voices of the Restoration lesson for Doctrine and Covenants. This year they've added a bunch of lessons called Voices of the Restoration. Last time we talked about who, Hank? |
| Hank Smith: | 00:00:24 | Gerrit was here and we did the Smith Family. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:00:27 | So glad to have Gerrit Dirkmaat back again. And this time we're going to talk about the translation of the Book of Mormon, which is a great topic because there's a lot of questions. Now, wait, how did that work exactly? Hank, what are you looking forward to today? |
| Hank Smith: | 00:00:42 | John, I just loved last time where Gerrit taught us what it's like to be a historian and what it's like to dive into the original documents and then pull out lessons. And Gerrit has done that for this topic more than pretty much anyone I know. He has spent time on this particular topic in the original sources. That's pretty exciting. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:01:03 | Yeah. In fact, Gerrit, I wanna mention this book called "From Darkness Unto Light" was co-written by Michael MacKay and Gerrit Dirkmaat. This is like THE book on the translation of the book Mormon, and we have its author here. We're really excited to have you here. Again, Gerrit, thank you for joining us today. |
| Gerrit Dirkmaat: | 00:01:25 | Thanks for having me back. It's great to be with you guys. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:01:28 | Gerrit, tell us a little bit more about this amazing project you did with Brother MacKay. |
| Gerrit Dirkmaat: | 00:01:34 | So while we were working on the Joseph Smith Papers project, the volume that Mike and I worked on was Documents Volume |

one, which is the earliest records of Joseph Smith's life. And of course that included the earliest revelations. And you know, as you're studying this part of the Doctrine and Covenants, a huge portion of these early revelations up through 19 and even part of Doctrine and Covenants section 20 are received while they are in the process of translating the Book of Mormon. And many of these revelations are actually received in the same way apparently that Joseph was translating the Book of Mormon. We decided that we'd write that book to help people understand: what do the historical sources say about how the translation took place? There's always some disconnect between what people assume happened or what people think happened or how they've conceived of it in their own mind and what our historical sources sometimes say.

00:02:37 The point of the book was to lay out, in a faithful way, people who knew Joseph, why were they certain that this was a translation from God? What did they experience as they were scribes or as they were witnesses of the translation? And especially important is that this is gonna come as a surprise to everybody listening, but enemies and antagonists of the faith and of the church are more than willing to mock sacred things and try to make them appear ridiculous by sarcastically attacking them. Now you don't have to have any social media feed at all to know that many things that we consider sacred are made fun of by other people. And sometimes what happens is that because people are mocking the things that we hold sacred, it creates this sense that there is something wrong with that sacred. And this is certainly the case with the translation of the Book of Mormon.

00:03:44 In the early church, to them this is the great miracle that proves that Joseph Smith is God's anointed seer. Antagonists attacked Joseph personally. They attacked the book and they attacked how Joseph said that he translated the book. All attempting to make a mockery of it. As Michael MacKay has said before talking about this, that part of the point of this book is to reclaim our miracle. That this is one of the greatest miracles of the latter days of the restoration of the gospel. We shouldn't feel uncomfortable about this miracle, even though there are antagonists who attack the way the translation took place, or at least what the records say of how it took place. Well, we can be built up in our faith knowing that God provided this miracle for the translation. So that's part of the reason why we wrote it. It goes through the various historical sources that we have and that it also explains in context the Odyssey that it was to try to get the book published.

00:04:51 Most Latter Day Saints know that Egbert Grandin published it there in Palmyra. Fewer Latter Day Saints know just how difficult it was to get that book published and the sheer cost alone. You've already covered Doctrine and Covenants section three, but it really is part of the context of this earliest revelation that Joseph Smith receives. Why? Why would he let Martin Harris take those pages? Well, because God has commanded Joseph to get this book translated and published and the cost of publishing the Book of Mormon is astronomical for Joseph Smith, astronomical. Joseph Smith buys his 13 and a half acre farm in Harmony from his father-in-law. So I, I don't know if he got a sweetheart deal or not. And knowing Isaac Hale, probably not. Joseph buys this farm with nearly 14 acres with an existing house on it, with a well, with other outbuildings, with some improvements already made on the land for \$200.

00:06:05 Joseph, you know, buys it the same way that I "bought", in quotes, my home. I say it's my house, but I only need to not make one payment and very quickly I'm informed by the bank whose house it actually is, right?

Hank Smith: 00:06:19 Right.

Gerrit Dirkmaat: 00:06:20 I have a right of occupancy, but it's not my house until it's paid off. Joseph actually struggles to make those payments. So that's the financial situation he's in. His \$200 farm, he can't even make the payments on it. And the cost of printing the Book of Mormon is 15 times, his entire net worth if he owned his farm, which he doesn't. If you think about it in those terms, the Lord telling Joseph that he needs to publish this book to the world, he might as well be telling him that he needs to walk on water or he needs to move a mountain.

00:07:05 There's no conceivable way that someone with nothing could come up with \$3,000 upfront to pay for the book. A lot of these revelations, they're occurring in the context of Joseph's desperate attempt to follow the commandments of God, to get this book translated and to get it to the world. To talk to your firsthand witnesses of an event because they're the ones who actually saw it, who actually experienced it, rather than someone saying that they talked to someone who talked to someone who told them that this is what happened. I mean, you certainly have this in the earliest anti-Mormon work that's

published, it's called Mormonism Unveiled, the plan of someone like Eber Howe-who's, he's not a dispassionate individual either. Eber Howe, he has a problem with organized religion generally. He thinks that religion's designed to dupe people into making them think that God's on their side.

00:08:10 And when the early latter day Saint Missionaries first arrive in Ohio in the fall of 1830, he makes fun of them in his newspaper. Oh, they say that this guy's seen an angel and they've got gold plates. And so he's already not terribly kindly disposed towards them. And then his sister joins the church. Now things become personal because this isn't just a group of crazies that are confusing people in my community. It's personal. And after his sister joins the church, his wife joins the church. Not only does she join the church, she's one of the women who donates money to the Zions Camp March. We have her receipts, record of her donating money for the Zions Camp March. All the while her husband is doing everything he can to undermine the faith. And one of the things they do is he sends the disgraced former member, Dr. Philastus Hurlbut, who's been excommunicated multiple times for adultery and attempting to commit adultery.

Hank Smith: 00:09:15 Tell me his name again.

Gerrit Dirkmaat: 00:09:15 It's Dr. Philastus Hurlbut.

John Bytheway: 00:09:18 That's his name, right? It's, it's not a title.

Gerrit Dirkmaat: 00:09:21 Yeah, I mean, before you start thinking, oh, what's his doctorate in? Is it, maybe he's a medical doctor, maybe he has a PhD in theology? No, his parents named him Doctor. That is a great way to give your child some respect. I wanna name my son MVP of the NBA Finals Dirkmaat and then, you'd have to call him that the rest of his life. Oh, he is MVP of the NBA finals. Isn't he just Jim? No, he's MVP. Dr. Philastus Hurlbut is employed by the anti-Mormon Committee of Kirtland to go back to New York and Pennsylvania and he's paid to collect as many negative affidavits as he can about the Smiths, about their early life. And lo and behold, this apostate comes back with these negative affidavits and they make all kinds of claims about Joseph Smith, about his family, about where the origin of the Book of Mormon comes from.

00:10:19 It's in this book that the ridiculous sorry tale of the Solomon Spalding manuscript gets originated. And to give you an idea of just how false these claims are, they collect affidavits. You know, Solomon Spalding is deceased at the time that this book is published. It's always best to blame things on someone who's

dead. I found that, if you're going to find a scapegoat, find someone who's not alive, 'cause then they can't rebut anything that you say. So that's just a tip for everyone listening if you're looking to blame something on someone. Solomon Spalding was a former minister. He had written a novel. Philastus Hurlbut-he claimed that while he was on his mission, he had found this novel and it was in many respects, word for word where the Book of Mormon came from. He gets affidavits from family members, the brother of Solomon Spalding, the wife of Solomon Spalding, the business partner of Solomon Spalding, and they all say things like, 'oh yeah, I read it'.

00:11:31 And 'all of the names are exactly what's in the Book of Mormon'. 'Oh, I remember Solomon all the time talking about Nephi and Lehi'. And it's this very concerted effort to deny the miracle of the translation of the Book of Mormon. When Joseph first says, I'm translating a book that is like the Bible, the initial reaction is Joseph Smith? Joseph the farm worker, Joseph, the guy who dug my, well, he's producing something equivalent to the Bible? I'm sure he's not. We have a record from a Palmyra newspaperman, who, when he talks about he, he doesn't have the Book of Mormon yet, but he's been told that it's going to be published. His response is that it's just so ridiculous to believe that a person, this is the quote, "a person like such as this Smith" and then he has in parentheses "(very illiterate)" that it should have been uh, gifted to find and to translate it.

00:12:41 The initial response is there's no possible way that someone like Joseph Smith could produce the Book of Mormon. Then after the book is published, you have an initial reaction from people like Alexander Campbell, another Religionist, the founder of the Disciples of Christ movement, who will attack the Book of Mormon, primarily along the reasoning that, well it's not the Bible and since only the Bible is true, everything that the book of Mormon says that isn't directly in the Bible is obviously false. So, Joseph Smith must have written the entire thing himself. But Alexander Campbell doesn't know Joseph Smith. What becomes apparent pretty quickly is if you know Joseph Smith and you've talked to him, claiming that Joseph wrote the entire book on his own is not a very good argument. On top of that, claiming that Joseph just wrote it on his own doesn't account for the fact that there's a lot of people who believe it.

00:13:41 Now look, if one crazy person shows up in your town and is like, 'I'm the Messiah, you gotta listen to me',, like no one's really affected by that. They might be like, oh, there's crazy Bill down there on the corner. But they aren't afraid of that because crazy Bill is crazy Bill, he is not hurting anybody. He has got a sign, the

end is near whatever, but you move on. But when hundreds of people start to believe crazy Bill, well now suddenly you need a better explanation. It's easy to say, well only stupid or deluded or crazy people would believe that the Book of Mormon is from God. Until your sister joins the church. Until your pastor, like Sidney Rigdon, joins the church. Until someone that you know as a doctor of religion joins the church. Then the argument that only an idiot could possibly believe this becomes not a very good argument.

00:14:42 And so you need a different way to explain. How is it that illiterate, liar, conman Joseph Smith? How is it that he produced something that appears to replicate something holy to the point where people who I know who are intelligent, people who I know who are religious, believe that it's the word of God. That's where this alternate explanation comes from. Why does it seem like it's religious? Oh, because a pastor wrote a novel and so of course it sounds like the Bible 'cause he was a, a great Bible theologian and Joseph just stole the manuscript and then like scratched his name off and put Joseph Smith on top of it and published it as his own. And that's why it sounds more educated than Joseph is. That's why it sounds more religious than Joseph is. That's why it's convincing people. And that becomes the standard argument of the origin of the Book of Mormon for roughly the next 60 years. And when I say standard argument, I mean if you get an Encyclopedia Britannica from 1860, it will say in the encyclopedia that the real origin of the Book of Mormon was a novel written by Solomon Spalding. It becomes the only way that people talk about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and it becomes the way that everyone dismisses the entire movement. Oh, I know you might be persuaded by some of the things you think, but you know the whole book of Mormon was just stolen from Solomon Spalding.

00:16:18 Well, to make the long story short, which I don't have the ability to do, in the 1880s, the original actual manuscript that Solomon Spalding wrote was discovered not by Latter-Day Saints but by some other scholars. In fact, the president of Oberlin College, James Fairchild, along with Mr. Rice, they find the manuscript among some old papers that were from the Paynesville Telegraph office, where Eber Howe published his stuff. And they find the manuscript and they read it and they compare it to the Book of Mormon. And the statement from James Fairchild is that there is no name or incident that is common between the two. So you have all these affidavits, these affidavits that say, oh yeah, Solomon Spalding kept telling me how his main character was Lehi and that Nephi was coming to America and

the whole thing was about, I mean you have these affidavits that are claiming with certitude—

00:17:25 Oh yes, everything that Solomon Spalding wrote is exactly what's in the Book of Mormon. And then they find what Solomon Spalding wrote. And not only is not everything from the Book of Mormon, literally nothing is. The only similarity is that Solomon Spalding's novel talks about some Roman soldiers who are blown off course in their boat and they land in a new land. I mean, I guess you could say that, I don't know, that's like the Jaredite barges. Nothing else that they claim is true. What Fairchild concludes is another explanation of the origin of the Book of Mormon must be found. It's not this one.

John Bytheway: 00:18:10 And Gerrit, what you just said, they found it among Eber Howe's papers?

Gerrit Dirkmaat: 00:18:17 Yeah, it appears that both Eber Howe and Philastus Hurlbut are well aware that the manuscript that Hurlbut brings back from Pennsylvania, in no way resembles the Book of Mormon. Hurlbut will later in life in a later interview claim that he never read the manuscript. Okay, well why are you claiming that it's where the Book of Mormon came from. I mean, I mean I get it. You don't wanna read, or you can't, but at the same time you may want to actually know what you're talking about. It's a very persuasive attack and it gives people what I sometimes will call a "unison anti-Mormonism". It helps them sleep at night because I can't explain where the Book of Mormon came from. Oh, if you give me this explanation that really the whole thing was just stolen from a pastor and published, well then now I know where it came from. And to this day, antagonists of the faith don't have good explanations of where the Book of Mormon came from. Many historians when they talk about the rise of Latter-day Saint religion and culture and history simply breeze right over where the Book of Mormon came from. They say Joseph claimed that he found plates and claimed that he translated and they move right on into, and you know, here they are in Ohio—because there isn't a good explanation

Hank Smith: 00:19:49 When you think about the translation of the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith doesn't say a lot about it, but what we do know we get from people who were there.

Gerrit Dirkmaat: 00:20:00 Yeah, Joseph is relatively tight lipped about it when he describes it. He uses this terminology that he translated the Book of Mormon by the Gift and Power of God when he publishes what he expects to be published to the world and the Wentworth letter. I would inform you that by the medium of the Urrim and

Thummim, I translated the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God. He describes that there are instruments that are involved- Urrim and Thummim-and that there's the power of God. But doesn't provide the, well, so this is what I did first. I took these stones, I wore them like this. Those explanations you get from scribes and witnesses of the translation and they give them throughout their lives. You have some early accounts of translation from early people and then you have people being asked about it later in life.

00:20:59 One of our witnesses of the translation that is here in In the Come Follow Me manual is Emma Smith. Emma is the primary scribe for the early translation of the Book of Mormon. We just don't as often think about her as being the primary scribe because the part that she was the scribe for is the part that Martin Harris lost. She puts a lot of time and a lot of effort into this translation only to have all of her work go up in smoke as it were, because of the loss of the 116 pages. She provides an account. Oliver Cowdery provides several accounts, although most of his, also don't have a lot of detail. Martin Harris, who is the other early primary scribe, does provide a considerable amount of detail. David Whitmer, who wasn't one of the scribes but was a witness of the translation, as much of the translation took place at his house, he provides multiple accounts of how the translation took place.

00:22:02 And then of course you have people who are recounting in their journals or in their letters, they will say, I heard Oliver Cowdery say that this is how the translation happened. Or I heard Martin Harris say this is what happened with the translation. What do historians do? Historians try to discern what most likely happened in the past. Now sometimes it's pretty easy. Did BYU win the Alamo Bowl? Well, we've got some footage of that as BYU fans, we're replaying it over and over and over again. It's much easier to tell with something in the recent past, something with video evidence that it most likely happened. You're dealing with things that are miraculous in nature. It becomes even more difficult because I know that miracles happen, but I, I don't know that I know how they happen. I know that Jesus walked on water. I know Peter walked on water.

00:23:05 I understand that that how Peter walked on water was by the power of God. I, I believe the miracle. But I don't know that I know. Let me give you the scientific explanation. Well, what obviously happened is Peter stepped out this—I I don't know that. And when we're talking about the translation, that's where we're at. This is a miracle from God. Can I describe exactly how

that miracle took place? I can't. What I can do is describe the effects of that miracle, which is the produced translation of the Book of Mormon. And I can say, this is what witnesses and scribes said that they thought was going on. Now maybe they're not right about it. Maybe they think that it's happening a certain way or that, that that's what they assume, but they are certainly much closer to the events than someone later trying to say, well I'm pretty sure it happened like this.

00:24:07 The church has provided great resources for this if you want to know more about the translation. The church has not only included these materials in their lesson manuals, their footnotes, you can see them. There's also the Joseph Smith papers volumes which provide many of these sources surrounding the translation and explanations of it. And since not everyone wants to, you know, go to sleep tonight with a 600 page volume of Joseph Smith papers right on their face, the church has produced a gospel topics essay that you can find under the church history tab on your on your gospel library app that discusses the translation of the Book of Mormon. That essay is actually cited to here in the voices of the restoration. It's one of the footnotes. It's there. You can go read what the church has produced because some of these things, they're relatively unfamiliar to people and sometimes when things are unfamiliar, they make us feel uncomfortable. I think that's part of the reason why the church is providing all these resources to people so they can know, okay, well what did David Whitmer say about the translation? What did Emma say about the translation? Translation? What did Oliver Cowdery say about the translation? So that they have a better understanding of how they believe that miracle took place.

John Bytheway: 00:25:27 Eber Howe was not there. Philastus Hurlbut was not there. But we can talk to people who are actually there and observed the process, whatever it was.

Gerrit Dirkmaat: 00:25:40 And the people who are there, the people who are closest to it, the ones who know Joseph the best are the ones who are certain that it's a miracle from God. The ones who are not closest to Joseph, the ones who are not witnesses, they're the ones trying to find a way to explain it away. I know on the next Voices of the Restoration we're going to talk about the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, but some of these same witnesses are also witnesses of translation. And even though they will come to a point where they are denouncing Joseph Smith and they've left the church and they've apostatized, they are not ever going to do the one thing that would most besmirch Joseph Smith. That despite their anger, despite their

wanting to get back at the church and their feeling that they've been excommunicated unfairly...the way that they could easily accomplish that, is to simply say, Joseph didn't translate by the gift and power of God. We already had a manuscript. We just copied that down and that ends the whole argument. But they all are certain that this translation was done by the gift and power of God, that it was a miracle that I might have some problems with Joseph Smith and I might X and Y, but I know the Book of Mormon is true and you see that from the people that are closest to it. The witnesses of translation.

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| John Bytheway: | 00:27:13 | Gerrit just referred to this as one of the first footnotes, is that on Gospel Library, the gospel topics essay about the translation— let me read what the manual says under the Voices of the Restoration. That's our lesson specifically translation of the Book of Mormon. In April, 1829, the month when Section six through nine of the Doctrine and Covenants were received—and Gerrit already told us that one through 19 and even some of 20 was during this time—Joseph Smith's main work was the translation of the Book of Mormon. We don't know many details about the miraculous translation process, but we do know that Joseph Smith was a seer aided by instruments that God had prepared two transparent stones called the Urim and Thummim and another stone called the seer stone. When asked later to relate how this record was translated, Joseph said that it was not intended to tell the world all the particulars. He often simply stated that it was translated by the gift and power of God. And then in the manual you've got some eyewitness statements about the translation process. So that's a good introduction. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:28:25 | That is excellent. We don't know many details because as Gerrit told us, the only person who really knows what happened is Joseph Smith who didn't say a lot about it. So now we're coming from that original source out to those who were watching. Now, Gerrit, I can't remember this is in the book that you wrote, <i>From Darkness Unto Light</i> , or if it was just a conversation—that's the problem with knowing the authors of books, right? You're like, did he tell me that or did I read it? |
| John Bytheway: | 00:28:53 | Did I read that? |
| Hank Smith: | 00:28:54 | Yeah. |
| Gerrit Dirkmaat: | 00:28:55 | If it's a really good point, I'm gonna claim it was in the book even if it wasn't. |

Hank Smith:	00:29:00	Yeah, like you said, it can be off-putting to people to think, wait, what? How did this book? Really? But if you forget about Joseph Smith, forget about the whole story. If you only have the book and you read it closely, the assumption would be that the book would be translated the way it was. From Mosiah having his instruments right from, what is it Alma 37, Gazelem. You talk about the book of Ether and the brother of Jared and the Stones that are touched by the Lord and prepared by the Lord. All of a sudden if you just read the book closely, the assumption would be it's gonna come this way that it does come forth. I think that's in the book.
Gerrit Dirkmaat:	00:29:45	It certainly is. If all you had was just your scriptures to figure out, okay, what are the mechanics of translation? I know that it's a miracle and in this entire discussion, if what I present is something that someone feels uncomfortable with, that's fine. But what really matters is the Book of Mormon is the word of God. If we don't know exactly how it was translated, as long as we know that it was translated, that's the major takeaway. If you were to go to what the angel says to Joseph initially, before he has plates, when he just found out they existed like four seconds ago, what does the angel tell him? He tells him about the gold plates and then says that there were two stones in silver bows and these stones fastened to a breast plate constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim deposited with the plates and the possession and use of these stones were what constituted seers in ancient or former times and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book.
	00:30:53	First and foremost, as we're envisioning translation in our mind, the angel is telling Joseph that there were stones prepared by God to be used for the translation and that that's how the book is going to be translated. So any image that we put up in our mind, any painting of the translation that we're looking at that doesn't involve sacred stones in some way is not accurately portraying what the angel says is going to be used to translate the book. Our starting point is before we get to one word of the Book of Mormon, the angel says, God is going to give you these stones and these stones make you a seer or part of being a seer. And that's how the book's going to be translated
Hank Smith:	00:31:45	For those who want to know that reference. That's Joseph Smith History, chapter one. There's only one chapter. That's verse 35.
Gerrit Dirkmaat:	00:31:52	If you want to, as Hank said, you can then go to the book itself. We get introduced to these sacred stones that are used for translation purposes in the book itself. You can go to Ether, as

Hank said, Ether chapter three that talks about translation being done by the use of stones. And you shall write them— this is verse 22— You shall write them and seal them up “that no one can interpret them; for you shall write them in a language that they cannot be read. And behold, these two stones will I give unto thee, and ye shall seal them up also with the things which he shall write.” If you drop down to verse 28: “And it came to pass, Lord commanded him that he should seal up the two stones which he had received, and show them not, until the Lord should show them unto the children of men.” You have these stones that are prepared as far back as Ether, for the purposes of translation.

00:32:48 And then you have some direct accounts of translation using stones that are in the Book of Mormon- that the story of the people of Limhi where you have Ammon, not everyone's favorite, chops off everyone's arm, Ammon. This is uh, a different guy. This is the, I'm not worthy to baptize you Ammon. He is a little less flashy and certainly has fewer arms on his belt. He finds the people of Limhi, which were also the people of King Noah. When the people of Limhi, first find Ammon they assume that he's one of these wicked priests of Noah that he's there spying things out. When they find out that he's not a wicked priest, but that he's from Zarahemla— which they can't find. They don't know how to get back to Zarahemla anymore. They went to go try to find Zarahemla and they found the ruins of the Jaredite civilization.

00:33:46 And in those ruins, they found those Jaredite gold plates, which they couldn't read. So as soon as Limhi realizes that Ammon is actually from Zarahemla, you'd think the first question he would ask is, can you go get an army to come back and get us so that we can be freed from the Lamanites? Instead he says, do you know someone who can translate ancient records because we found these plates and I think they'd be of great worth to my people. And the response that Ammon gives him is, I can assuredly tell the oh king of a man that can translate the records for he has wherewith, he can look and translate records that are of ancient date and it is a gift from God. The things are called interpreters and no man can look in them except he be commanded lest he should look for that, he ought not, and he should perish. And whosoever is commanded to look at them, the same is called a seer.

00:34:53 And behold, the king of the people who are in the land of Zarahemla is the man that is commanded to do these things and who has this high gift from God. So here you get a little bit of an explanation about how those stones are going to be used. We

know from later in Mosiah that, in fact, Mosiah does translate the Jaredite records with these stones. So, we don't know the history of every stone that's mentioned in there, but it is important for our purposes to go to Alma 37 as Hank mentioned, because here, another stone is mentioned and rather than the two stones, this is a separate stone. So you notice from the introduction that John read that there were two stones that were prepared and there was also another seer stone that was prepared. It's possible that this is a reference to that.

00:35:49 In Alma 37, the Lord said, I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem or Gazelem. I actually don't know how to speak Nephite. I don't know how this is supposed to be pronounced. I'm sure you'll get plenty of cards and letters from people who will let you know how they would've pronounced it. You can tell them that, well, when you have poor quality guests, you get poor quality pronunciations. But I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem. So, this is a name here, right? A stone which shall shine forth in darkness unto light that I may discover unto my people who serve, may discover unto them the works of their brethren, yea, their secret works, their works of darkness, their weakness and abominations. Here's a single stone that's mentioned that's going to be part of bringing forth this work in the future. And it has this name.

00:36:45 Now there have been some people that have said, well, maybe because the punctuation of the manuscript of the Book of Mormon is put in later, maybe what it's saying is that the servant is named Gazelem. Maybe that's what the name is. For our purposes, it honestly doesn't really matter because even if it's referencing the servant named Gazelem, well then, you're still just talking about a single stone that is being produced. At any rate, just by looking at these passages in the Book of Mormon and in Joseph Smith history, there are several conclusions that someone could easily come to. First, that the way the Book of Mormon is going to be translated and the way that these other ancient records were translated was by sacred stones prepared for a seer. You basically have to come to that conclusion. Second, that the way those stones worked is that the seer interacted with them.

00:37:51 He didn't just have them on his mantle that he looked at them. Third, that there's at least two different translation devices. There's at least the two stones that are bound together and a separate single stone. There's at least those two different things. And then the last conclusion, is a much more speculative, it may not be definitive, but based on what you get

from Alma 37, I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem a stone which shall shine forth in darkness unto light. It's at least a speculation one might have that the way those stones worked is that they shined in the darkness. That in some way placing them in a dark place was how you were able to see what the translation was or read the translation. That's what the Book of Mormon itself says before you get to the witnesses of the translation. But this separate stone that Joseph used is well known to early church leaders. To the point that with the events surrounding the dedication of the Manti temple, Wilfred Woodruff has this stone, which he calls Gazelem, and he places it on the altar in the Manti temple in 1888.

00:39:25 It's May 18th of 1888. It's in Wilfred Woodruff's journal. You can go check it out. And what he writes is that he consecrated upon the altar, the seer stone that Joseph Smith found by revelation some 30 feet under the earth. That's clearly a separate stone than the two stones that were found in the box with the plates. It's not a point that causes Wilfred Woodruff to doubt his faith. He is clearly believing that this stone is so sacred that he makes it a part of the dedication of this latter-day temple. He sees it as part of the miracle. In fact, he believes, as does Brigham Young, that Joseph has actually given a revelation about where to find this separate Gazalelem stone.

Hank Smith: 00:40:19 That was over by Lake Erie.

John Bytheway: 00:40:21 Yeah. I like that. In our common church vocabulary, in common usage, sometimes we talk about light as being knowledge. Let me bring that to light or let me shed some light on the subject. This sounds like it's both. I love that you pointed out in Alma 37, it will shine forth. And what is the translation of Urim and Thummim?

Gerrit Dirkmaat: 00:40:46 Yeah, the lights and perfections, right?

John Bytheway: 00:40:48 And Ammon talking about Mosiah. "Ammon the Scoutt". Eric Huntsman called him— and we've got in Alma 37, Alma talking to Helaman, a single stone. Oh, I love that. So here in the book itself are those two different things that we learned later in history of the translation of the book in our time. Love that.

Gerrit Dirkmaat: 00:41:08 And I think the terminology, Urim and Thummim, also becomes one of the ways that it's harder for people to understand, historically, what happened from a historian's perspective. The terminology of Urim and Thummim obviously is from the Bible. That's Biblical. We don't have to figure out where that came from. But in our earliest accounts of the translation and of the

stones prepared by God for the translation, that terminology isn't used. The earliest accounts, Joseph refers in his own history in his 1832 history, he says that God had prepared spectacles for to read the book. Wherefore I commence translating. And we have multiple accounts that these bound together stones in some way resemble a pair of glasses. Only these are giant rocks. So maybe some of us need glasses that are so thick that- talk about Coke bottle lenses, these would-be rocks. But that's the way that Joseph describes it in the first several years as spectacles, we actually see the transition from when they stop.

00:42:19 They still will use the term interpreters, but they start using the biblical term Urim and Thummim. In late 1832, WW Phelps publishes an article in the church's newspaper in which he says, these interpreters, these stones, they were called in latter days teraphim or Urim and Thummim. And after that point, they start to use the term Urim and Thummim to describe any seer stone. That I think is where, because growing up I always thought, well, one of these stones is named Urim the other one's named thummim. And that's why we're calling, you know, and that those are only a reference to the stones found in the box. But as you go through the Doctrine and Covenants this year, it'll become very apparent to you that by the end of his life, Joseph is using the term Urim and Thummim in a generic way, not in a specific way. Because what is this world going to be like in its glorified, sanctified state? A giant Urim and Thummim.

00:43:25 What is the world that God resides on? Giant Urim and Thummim. What is every Latter-day Saint going to get before they enter into the celestial kingdom? Their own Urim and Thummim. And that one that you get isn't going to be the one that's found in the box with the plates. So clearly this terminology is being used more generally. And this is a speculation, but I think it's a response to the attacks, the antagonistic attacks that are being made because people like Eber Howe are mocking it. He claims he put a rock in a hat. He's making fun of it by adopting a biblical term. What were the stones that the high priest of Israel used? That Urim and Thummim and stones. They were sacred stones that aided in revelation. These are sacred stones prepared by God for revelation. So, by using that terminology, it sends the message to the hearer, I am claiming that these are holy, sacred stones prepared by God.

00:44:32 This is not whatever Eber Howe wants to mock and make fun of. When Wilfred Woodruff in 1841, Joseph shows him a stone and

Wilfred Woodruff's all kinds of excited writing in his journal. And he calls it Urim and Thummim. Well, that stone that Wilfred Woodruff is seeing clearly isn't the stone that was with the plates. Brigham Young tells us very directly that when Joseph was done translating that he delivered those stones back to the angel. The Urim and Thummim was delivered back to the angel. And Brigham Young lists that Joseph had other seer stones as well. Joseph is apparently calling the stone that he shows Wilfred Woodruff in 1841. He's clearly referencing it as Urim and Thummim. As a sacred Holy stone. And so that terminology actually kind of makes it really difficult for us to figure out, well what is Joseph referring to? Is he referring to the two stones that are bound together or is he referring to the separate single stone when he says, I translated by the Urim and Thummim?

00:45:44 Because if you look at some of the things that Emma has to say, I mean they have great quotes here from Emma in the manual. These quotes about how, look, if there's anyone who knows that Joseph can't translate, it's Emma. I have to help him pronounce the word Sarah. It would seem like at that point, if he can't figure out how to spell and pronounce Sarah, he probably can't write Alma's Alma chapter five sermon. So you get this great testimony of just how miraculous it is. I still think that the greatest testament to the miracle of the Book of Mormon is where did it come from? People who blithely say things like, oh, Joseph Smith just wrote it, have never read literally anything else Joseph Smith wrote. And certainly not from the time period. If you read the 1832 Joseph Smith history, which is written three years, at least, after Joseph wrote the entire book of Mormon.

00:46:53 And Joseph is clearly trying to sound erudite, he's trying to make this eloquent. You get the sense that he's planning to publish this as a defense of the church. He doesn't ever publish it, but you get the sense that he's trying to strike a scholarly pose here. It's grammar is everywhere. It's run on sentences. He spells the word keys the same way that you and I spell bees. I mean, keys is a pretty important part of our religion. Joseph will regularly misspell the word church. You'd think as the founder of a church that one of the words that you'd figure out how to spell pretty quickly would be church.

Hank Smith: 00:47:36 And Gerrit, he doesn't have Google saying, did you mean this, right?

Gerrit Dirkmaat: 00:47:39 Yeah. Did you mean this?

Hank Smith: 00:47:40 We pride ourselves on being good spellers.

Gerrit Dirkmaat:	00:47:44	It is funny. Yeah. I mean, the way he misspells church multiple times is he, he spells it with an I. And so I've always assumed that, well, whenever we watch a church produced movie and the actor portraying Joseph Smith has this wonderful western Utah accent. Like Joseph was raised in Sandy. But the reality is Joseph Smith, you know he's born in Vermont and he grows up in New Hampshire and Vermont and then upstate New York. So, my guess is he spells church with an I because he's spelling it phonetically. Because it's not the church, it's the chick.
	00:48:26	That's gonna make some people feel uncomfortable that he also misspells Edward Partridge's name multiple times because he leaves the R out of it because it's not PARtridge, it's Patridge. If you don't want to think about Joseph Smith having a New England accent, don't, but he's not from Utah. So that's the reality. Emma, who is a witness to all of this, she describes exactly what you might expect given the book of Mormon versus that we read. She says that there were two different devices that were used in the translation. She says, the first part that my husband translated was translated by the use of the Urim and Thummim. And that was the part that Martin Harris lost. Emma's probably still a little bitter about that. And after that he used a small stone, not exactly black, but it was rather dark in color. There is an article that was published in what was then the Ensign magazine several years ago, called Joseph the Seer, in which the church talks about the translation and publishes an image of this stone sometimes called the brown seer stone that is in the possession of the First Presidency at the church.
	00:49:50	And they published a photograph of it so people could see. And when you see the stone, you'll see why Emma describes it that way, that it was not exactly black, but it was rather dark in color. So, she describes Joseph using two different devices. She also describes that the way that Joseph translated was that he would place those stones into a hat and that he would look into the hat in order to translate. And I think this is probably the part of the translation story that makes people feel the most uncomfortable. It's certainly the one that's made fun of the most by detractors and antagonists who make fun of the idea that Joseph is looking into a hat. Again, it shouldn't cause us to doubt our miracles because some faithless person wants to mock and make fun of it. She describes that, that's what happens.
	00:50:51	Joseph Knight Sr, who's a family friend, I mean he's the one who when they're just about starving, shows up with a barrel of fish during the translation process. And in his history, he explains

the translation like this. Also, discussing this hat that Joseph used. He said Joseph would put the Urim and Thummim into his hat and darken his eyes. A sentence would appear in bright Roman letters. And then he would tell the writer and he would write it and then that would go away and the next sentence would come and so on. I've always thought this next line of what he writes—there's a great deal of irony in it —'cause he writes, but if it was not spelled right and he's spelling right with RITE, like it's a RiteAid. So you have no idea how Joseph Knight Sr. would know whether or not it was spelled right, but, but if it was not spelt right, it would not go away until it was right.

00:51:53 He explains that Joseph is placing the stone in a dark place so that you can see the words that are appearing on the stone as part of the translation. Martin Harris says something very similar. David Whitmer says something very similar as well. Martin Harris says, by the aid of the seers stone, sentences would appear and were read by the prophet and written by Martin. And when finished he would say written. And if correctly written, that sentence would disappear and another would appear in its place. But if not written correctly, it remained until corrected. David Whitmer gives us probably the most expansive account of this later in life. David Whitmer will say, Joseph would put the seer stone into a hat and put his face in the hat, drawing it close around his face to exclude the light. And in the darkness, the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear.

00:52:57 And on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear and under it was the interpretation in English. So at least according to David Whitmer, a character from the plates would appear. And below it would be the translation that Joseph would then read off to his scribe. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe. And when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear. And another character with the interpretation would appear. You actually have multiple people. Martin Harris, Emma Smith, David Whitmer, all saying that the way Joseph translated was by placing a stone or stones into a hat in order to make it dark enough around the stone to see the words that were appearing. If you're trying to see something that's appearing on the stones, there are two ways to control light in a room.

00:53:56 You can either make the entire room dark, in which case that's gonna be a little bit difficult for Oliver Cowdery to write. Or you can just make the area entirely around the stone dark and then read it. I think people get hung up on the fact that there was a

hat because it was made fun of and mocked, and but it, it's not a magic hat, it's not Frosty the snowman's hat. You don't put it on his head and he begins to dance around. It's simply a tool. The same way that the pen and ink that they're using is a tool. The same way the table they're writing on is not a magic table. This is how Joseph found a way to make it dark enough around the stone that he could read the miraculous translation at the same time that Oliver Cowdery or Martin Harris or Emma could write as he translated

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| Hank Smith: | 00:54:49 | For our listeners. There might be listeners saying, oh, I just don't know how to take this. This is uncomfortable for me. This is why John and I both wanted Gerrit on. Because Gerrit, he's saying, look, here is what the people... |
| John Bytheway: | 00:55:01 | Here's the account, here's what they said. Here's what people who are actually there said, yeah, |
| Hank Smith: | 00:55:07 | ...not Gerrit, thinking, well, this is what I think happened. As much as you might think, well I don't think it happened that way. |
| Gerrit Dirkmaat: | 00:55:15 | It's fine. It's not an Article of Faith for people to believe that the translation happened a certain way. It's essential that you know that it is another testament of Jesus Christ. And Joseph Smith, the prophet and seer of the restoration translated it from actual gold plates that actually existed. That's essential to your faith. How that miracle occurred is interesting. And to me it is faith promoting the very fact that God has prepared these devices thousands of years in the past to come forth so that Joseph, the seer, can use them the same way that Mosiah used stones, the same way that the brother of Jared, Ether used stones. That God has prepared those things so that Joseph can translate. To me is faith promoting. On the other side of the argument or the debate or discussion, there are people say, well, Oliver Cowdery doesn't say that Oliver Cowdery doesn't. Oliver Cowdery in his accounts doesn't provide very many of the mechanics of translation. |
| | 00:56:22 | I mean, he would say, you know, there I sat day after day. But he doesn't say, and this is the way that we did it, although we do have one source from a Shaker journal. When Oliver Cowdery is sent on his mission in 1830, you'll get to this eventually, where Cowdery is sent on a mission as a result of the Hiram Page, seer stone fiasco. I mean, that's not why he sent on a mission, but it's in the aftermath of that in Doctrine and Covenants section 28 that Oliver Cowdery's sent on a mission to go preach to the Lamanites. And on their way, they preach in |

Ohio. And everyone knows all about that because this is where Sidney Rigdon is converted and you have this new group of saints in Kirtland. But as he continues on his way, Oliver Cowdery is preaching all the way, along with his other missionary companions. They stop in a Shaker village in western Ohio.

00:57:20 One of the Shaker elders records in his journal, the coming of Oliver Cowdery, and what Oliver Cowdery is talking about. In his account of what he says, Oliver Cowdery said, so, I mean look, is that definitive? No it's not. But he says Oliver Cowdery said that Joseph used a hat as part of his translation. For people who feel uncomfortable with it, they might say, no, that's not what happened. It happens some other way. Again, if that's how you feel that, that's fine for historians, you have multiple independent attestations, you have people separated from one another. Not knowing that the other person wrote something down in their biography but are saying the exact same thing as someone else is. Is that definitive that the way Joseph translated was by placing the stones in a hat? Well, of course it's not. First of all, we're talking about a miracle.

00:58:23 So nothing's gonna be definitive to begin with 'cause I can't replicate the power of God. But second of all, a historian's job is to say, given the evidence what most likely happened in the past. If all of the people who leave records are saying that it happened a certain way, then the most likely thing is that it happened that way. These early Latter-day Saints, the scribes, the witnesses, they are not trying to figure out a way to believe that the Book of Mormon's from God in spite of the fact that stones were used in the translation. They actually believe that it's a miracle because stones were used in the translation. I've talked with a lot of people who feel uncomfortable because this isn't what they were taught. It isn't what they envision in their mind. Personally, myself, I never once had a lesson growing up in primary or Sunday school where someone said, this is exactly how Joseph Smith translated.

00:59:31 He took the Urim and Thummim and he put 'em on the plates, and he...I never once had that lesson. But in my mind, I conjured up the image of, well, Joseph must have translated the same way that I translate. You know, I get my German to English dictionary and I read, oh, you know, "fernsehen" oh, it's a television. And that's how I came. The translation happened. So, when we find out that it's different, it can sometimes cause people to feel uncomfortable. But I think it's important to realize that the discomfort we have is more a factor of the fact that we haven't thought about it or we didn't know about it that

way than it is that it's inherently some kind of problem. Because the idea that God could write words on a special instrument for revelation is something that every person listening absolutely believes.

01:00:34 Every person listening has probably at some point born a testimony or given a talk quoting 1 Nephi 16:28. "And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that the pointers which were in the ball, that they did work according to the faith and diligence and heed, which we did give unto them. And there was also written upon them a new writing, which was plain to be read, which did give us understanding concerning the ways of the Lord; and it was written and changed from time to time, according to the faith and diligence which we gave unto it. And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things". Now, there's nobody listening who's ever had a faith crisis over the fact that words were appearing on the Liahona. No one. Every one of them not only hasn't questioned their faith because there were words appearing on the Liahona, they see it as one of the great miracles in the Book of Mormon.

01:01:40 Here's a brass ball found outside of a tent in the middle of the desert. And God is putting words on that ball and they change and they change. And the seer has the ability to read them. God, for whatever reason, at times, uses physical devices as part of the way he interacts with his people. Moses is given a staff. The Lord and Savior Jesus Christ places mud on the blind man's eyes. So sometimes people will say, well, if Joseph was looking at the stones and he didn't have the stones on top of the plates, why does he even need the plates? I mean, in our next Voices of the Restoration, we're gonna talk all about the witnesses of the plates and I'll probably get a little too excited about that. If the question is, if Joseph wasn't looking at the plates, could God have given him the translation of the Book of Mormon entirely by Revelation rather than by using, you know, the stones?

01:02:47 I mean, since I said the word God, I guess the answer is yes. Could God have made it so that Moses parted the Red Sea without a staff, I'm pretty sure he could have. Would Jesus have healed the blind man without putting clay on his eyes first? So I don't know why God at times chooses to use physical objects as a means of projecting his power through his servants, but I know that he does. He didn't have to put a brass ball outside of Nephi's tent. He could have very easily just spoken to Nephi directly. He could have sent another angel. Nephi's talking to angels right and left. He could have had an angel come and tell him, Hey Nephi, this is where you go find food. He could have

easily done that, but that's not what God did. The fact that God uses these physical objects in the past with other seers and other prophets, should help us understand that for whatever reason, God used these stones as a means of the translation of the Book of Mormon. And for early Latter-Day Saints, they see this as a powerful faith building miracle.

John Bytheway: 01:04:10 Hank, I love what you said in the past about what is the greatest miracle. If you're thinking plausibility of things like that, what would you say? Hank?

Hank Smith: 01:04:20 How many times have we talked about this, John, that once you believe in the resurrection of Jesus and that's a big deal. I know we talk about it and everybody believes in it. Everyone you know, believes in it. Everyone I know believes in it. Most everyone. We're saying a man was dead, dead, completely dead. And then three days later he was not dead. That doesn't happen. And if someone came to me and said, oh, that happened to my uncle Greg, I'd say, no, no it didn't. And not only that, that man is never going to die again trillions of years from now. And then the last one, he comes and goes from this planet. He ascends into heaven. He descends to the Nephites. He's traveling through space. Once you believe in that, every other miracle becomes very easy to believe if He's involved.

Gerrit Dirkmaat: 01:05:15 Sometimes people will say things like, well, are you trying to tell me that Joseph Smith ran through the woods with the gold plates? I mean those plates must have weighed 50, 60, 70, 80 pounds. They might even weighed 200 pounds. There's no possible way he could have run through the woods with the plates. And it's like, so let me get this straight. Joseph saw God and Jesus. Then he saw an angel who appeared to him three times in one night, once the next day. And then again the next day when he went to the place that the plates were, he wasn't able to get the plates. But every year after that he came back in the same spot where he had the angel appear to him again. And each year then having another subsequent visit to the angel. And then he actually has a special second visit from the angel in the year he finally gets the plates.

01:05:56 'Cause the angel says, you better go up and get the plates. He goes up the angel's there, he gets the plates. And your first problem with this story, is you don't think he could lift the plates? What are we even talking about? You have missed the forest for the trees. And you're right Hank, that once you are telling people that you are a Christian. Once you say Jesus is your Lord and Savior. Once you say He died were your sins and He was raised from the dead. All other claims, all other miracles,

pale in comparison. Nephi uses some miracle comparisons when he is arguing with his brothers. I mean, he's the God of the whole earth. He caused the Red Sea to part. He's mightier than Laban and his 50 or yea, even his tens of thousands. We're talking about God. And so, if you're going to try to say, well yeah, but I believe in the resurrection, but there's no possible way that Joseph Smith translated gold plates.

01:07:04 I don't know where your logic's even coming from. I think this miracle is one that we shouldn't be afraid of. And yeah, are people gonna make fun of it? Oh yeah. Joseph Smith was using a magic hat and and he just put rocks in his hat. Sure, they're gonna make fun of it. They make fun of temple clothing. They make fun of our belief in doing work for the dead. They make fun of our adherence to the Word of Wisdom. They make fun of our belief in family values. They make fun of everything we believe. But the fact that someone makes fun of it in no way lessens the miracle. It in no way changes that this is Jesus' church and that Joseph saw Jesus and that Jesus commanded Joseph through the angel through multiple revelations to translate the Book of Mormon. Hopefully we can all get that burning feeling, that certitude, that this book is a miracle in its existence, in its translation, in its publication to the world and personally in its ability to convert, to testify that Jesus really is the Christ.

Hank Smith: 01:08:21 John, last year we did an episode with Dr. Joe Spencer on 2Nephi 27. I've brought it up multiple times where he goes through Isaiah 29 and 2 Nephi 27. He talks about the book, the plates, the evidence, the tangible objects and the words of the book. I would encourage anyone who wants to know more about this, go back to that. What Dr. Spencer showed us is look, the book itself, the plates, everything we're talking about today, they're important. But the Lord emphasizes the words of the book more than the book itself. That was an eye opener for me.

John Bytheway: 01:09:04 The way that we are instructed to gain a testimony of the words of the book is not to know exactly how they came about in every particular. I don't understand as well as I'd like to exactly how the Pearl of Great Price and the papyrus and the mummies and everything. But boy, have you ever read it? Whoa.

Hank Smith: 01:09:24 Pretty spectacular.

John Bytheway: 01:09:25 Where did this come from? Yeah.

Gerrit Dirkmaat: 01:09:27 We could say this about every book of scripture. We don't know exactly the chain of custody for the New Testament. I don't

know how many copies of a copy of a copy of a copy, Paul's letters are that we have in the New Testament. But the value of them is not in being able to demonstrate exactly who wrote the letter down first. The value of them is in the reading of them and the ability they have to convert people to Christ.

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| John Bytheway: | 01:09:57 | If I can accept that God could open the Red Sea, then maybe he can make light come from a stone, right. |
| Gerrit Dirkmaat: | 01:10:06 | It would not be the most miraculous thing that that is going on around here. I realized that for some people they don't like to think about it or they have an idea in their own mind about how they think it happened and that's how they feel comfortable and and yeah, I would emphasize that. Look, if you in any way feel uncomfortable with what the scholarly sources are on translation, don't worry about it. It is not a necessary aspect of your faith. I think that we have got great evidence. I think that it helps strengthen some people's faith and it certainly refutes some of the arguments of antagonists. But what you really need is to read the book so that you can feel the Holy Spirit testify to you. This is the word of God. That's what matters most. |
| John Bytheway: | 01:11:01 | You will all remember Anthony Sweat that we've had on before and he is an artist, and in the appendix of the Unto Darkness into Light book of Gerrit's book, Anthony wrote a chapter called the Gift and Power of Art. So much of what we have learned in all of our classes, there was an image attached to it, maybe some art that we saw from the time we were in primary so that we have this idea of it. It looked like this. Can you comment on that article and what Anthony was teaching us about art and what we've learned? |
| Gerrit Dirkmaat: | 01:11:36 | Yeah. Anthony's a brilliant teacher and scholar and also an artist. Being around him, it kind of makes you feel like God didn't try very hard on you because he seems to have more talents. But in his article what he did was he interviewed several of the artists who created some of the well-known images of Joseph Smith with the plates and Joseph Smith translating and asked them why did they portray it the way that they did. And in some cases, some of those artists didn't really know that these other sources existed about Joseph placing a stone in a hat. In some cases the artist did know. And part of what he wants to convey to the listener is Latter-Day Saints in America it seems are very black and white when it comes to things that we see. We want our art to look like photographs, we want our art to be a photograph before there's a Polaroid. When we see an artist's depiction, our tendency is to think, what I'm looking at is |

literally what happened. And you know, he uses this great example: Washington crossing the Delaware River, one of the most iconic images in American history. As a historian, I can tell you...

Hank Smith: 01:12:36 That's not what it looked like.

Gerrit Dirkmaat: 01:13:04 That image is powerful and it's beautiful and it's wrong. If your understanding of the Battle of Trenton, is taken solely from the fact that you saw that painting, then I think all of us need to take a little bit of a step back and say, if someone were to say, well actually they crossed in different boats, your response shouldn't be, no, no, I saw the painting. I know what boats they were in. I mean I've always thought they're crossing it in the darkest of night when there's no moon and what in that painting there it's all lit up. So from the very beginning, I mean, but why does the artist show it with the light? Because it's pretty hard to portray something in pitch blackness. What happens though is that because these images are what we tie to those events, we sometimes start to fill in the gaps of what we think happened in the past based upon the image that we saw.

01:13:58 So some of these images of the translation, they focus with the light on the plates and the plates are sitting there on the table. And the emotional response you have is the plates are real. Or you have Joseph contemplatively looking down at the plates and Oliver Cowdery writing with these serious looks on their face. What the emotional responses that you're supposed to get is the translation is the work of God. But in most of these images, even though the angel says you're going to translate this through stones, there aren't any stones. And what Anthony Sweat found as he interviewed artists was that even those who knew about the descriptions of Joseph using a hat to translate—they didn't know how to portray that in a way that would be understood by the person looking at it. All of us need to kind of take a little bit of a step back.

01:14:56 Art is designed to help us have an emotional response about the event being depicted. But we probably shouldn't have an argument with a biblical scholar about how many cobblestones were in a Roman road because I saw a painting and it only showed this many. We need to take a little bit of a step back and say, do I know this because I've read it somewhere credible or do I just think I know it because I've seen images of it? And that's how I've always thought about it. I have people say all the time to me, uh, why was I taught that the way Joseph Smith translated was by looking at the plates and they were right there in front of him and there wasn't any hat. And that's how I

was taught. And when I asked the further question, most people actually weren't ever taught that. Most Sunday school teachers, most seminary teachers, most institute teachers did not say, now let me tell you exactly how the translation took place.

01:15:56 Joseph got the plates, he put 'em here, he took the Urim and Thummim stones, he... Mostly, that wasn't something that was discussed directly. And mostly it ends up being, now I know that there's people saying, well, in my case there was, I know that there's exceptions. I get how exceptions work, but in most people's cases they have an idea in their mind about how translation takes place. They see several images portraying translation. Yeah, that makes sense to me. That's what translation is. And so when you hear something that's different, the response is not to something that they were actually taught, but really kind of an assumption that they had. There's a reason why we think and talk about these things differently now. We have many, many, many more sources than we once did. We have the Joseph Smith Papers project, which has analyzed those sources and provided them all for everyone.

01:16:54 There are sources on the translation of the Book of Mormon that we didn't know existed in 2000, that we now have. So you can't fault someone from the past. Well why didn't they quote that Shaker journal? Well, because it hadn't been found yet. So makes it pretty hard to quote it. Why didn't they quote from the Palmyra Freeman newspaper? Well, because that hadn't been found yet. And so we do also need to have a little bit of grace as we look back on things in the past. Without all of the sources, without professional historians looking at things, it's a pretty natural thing for someone to read Emma's account talking about Joseph putting the stone in the hat and saying, wait a minute, Emma apostatized. So I can't believe this either. That's a natural emotional response, but it, it's just not an accurate one. I understand why we have it.

01:17:53 I had it. My first response. But that's why the church has spent so much time and so much effort creating these manuals like this one that make references to the gospel topics essays, that make references to the translation and in our various manuals, providing these sources for people. So if they want to understand more about what the witnesses and scribes of translation said that they can. It certainly obviously is not the biggest part of the lesson. The lesson here is the Book of Mormon translation is a miracle from God. But if you want to know more, especially in the face of detractors and antagonists who mock the very idea of it, the church has provided these resources so that you have more answers.

John Bytheway:	01:18:48	Wonderful. Anthony actually mentions Walter Rane in his article and Walter Rane did a series of Book of Mormon paintings. I love to look at Arnold Friberg's depiction of Abinadi and the Wicked Priest. And you look at Walter Rane's depiction, and wait a minute, do we know how old Abinadi was? And what I love is Walter Rane has him as a young younger man and it brings you into the scriptures to say, what do we actually know? Just like you're saying, let's go to the original sources and see what we actually know. And we don't know how old Abinadi was and Alma looks young there. Well, it says he was a young man. Oh, okay, let's see what the original source says.
Gerrit Dirkmaat:	01:19:31	Well, we know that King Noah had jaguars. We know that. We know that. That's actually the most known thing in all of Book of Mormon.
Hank Smith:	01:19:41	And the plant on his head, right? <laugh>.
Gerrit Dirkmaat:	01:19:42	Yep. It's an amazing image and you could see how powerful it is. I mean, not to take too far off of topic, but religious art. And it would be better to talk to Anthony Sweat or someone intelligent about this. But religious art was used as a means of conveying the messages of the Bible. For centuries, most of the Christian world was illiterate. So, we say things like, well, I read the the Bible and I gained my testimony. Well that wasn't an option. In 700 A.D. Europe. You couldn't read, so you couldn't read the Bible. So, imagery, stained glass, sculptures, paintings, they conveyed stories that you wouldn't have the ability to appropriate yourself or or to come upon yourself through your reading. There's a long history of religious art designed to help you build faith in the thing that it is that you're studying. It's not a negative evil thing that an artist takes some liberties in order to try to help you understand it.
	01:20:50	'Cause I may not know exactly what part of the hill that the cross was on, and I may not know exactly what the tomb looked like. But an artist isn't trying to do an archeological excavation of what the tomb looked like. The artist is trying to show you an empty tomb, which means Jesus was resurrected. If we're a little bit more responsible in how we view art in realizing, hey, this is meant to convey an idea, it's not a photograph, this is not the documentary of how Joseph bought this horse. It's an image that's created to convey something. I think that will help as people work through some of these church history events.
John Bytheway:	01:21:38	The other thing I love about what you said is we are still discovering sources. That Shaker journal was more recent. I think we have to allow that there are still maybe more even

from now. I remember reading Hugh Nibley talking about the name that appears in the Book of Mormon, Paanchi. And discovering, after the Book of Mormon was published, Paanchi, that was an Egyptian, a military leader. And yet that name is in the Book of Mormon, which kind of verifies it was an ancient Egyptian name but it wasn't known. And even today, still sources coming to light. Can we allow for that? Are we okay with that?

Gerrit Dirkmaat: 01:22:17 Historians are trained to allow for that. Now of course you have to be careful because there are people who try to manipulate the past by creating false documents. You saw this very recently with New Testament history with a forged gospel of Jesus' wife that for a long time even some scholars believed were accurate. But by and large these things, as they are vetted over the course of time, they add to our understanding. When I was first at the Joseph Smith Papers, there were a series of letters that were donated or acquired by the Church History Library. And they were one of the earliest Latter-day Saint letters written of a convert to the church. It was Thomas Marsh writing from New York to his sister and brother-in-law in Massachusetts trying to convince them that God just gave him a commandment to move to Ohio and that they need to move to Ohio.

01:23:18 And there was all kinds of amazing insight in that letter, how he tried to persuade her with it coming of the Second Coming. How he tried to explain that we don't know what will happen until things are revealed. And at the end of that letter is a postscript from Thomas Marsh's wife, Elizabeth Marsh, where she bears her testimony about how she was totally opposed to the work. Then God showed her a miracle and they actually named their first son Nephi. It's this powerful letter with perhaps the earliest written female Latter-day Saint testimony that exists in the church. It always existed. That letter was actually written and it was actually sent. The fact that I didn't know about it when I wrote my dissertation is why I didn't include it in my dissertation. It wasn't because I was nefarious about it. It wasn't because I was like, let's see if I can lie to people more about this. I didn't write about it 'cause I didn't know about it. Now when I write about this call to go to Ohio, I do write about it. It doesn't mean that as we learn new things, that everyone before us was just lying to us. Frankly, everyone before us was probably just doing the same thing we're doing and that's the best we can with what we have.

Hank Smith: 01:24:45 Figuring it out.

John Bytheway: 01:24:46 Well said.

Gerrit Dirkmaat:	01:24:48	<p>And things will likely change. I mean, we have found numerous documents related to Joseph Smith and his life over the course of working on the Joseph Smith Papers. Now, most of them are not earth shattering. There are a few things that are gonna be like, oh wow, I had no idea that that this is what happened. But there are some things that are incredibly important that are interesting and that help us better understand the miracles of the restoration. Hopefully we allow for that, that God, as part of this work, will allow these things to eventually come to light. That our repository of these Joseph Smith documents grows. And as we grow we gain a little bit more understanding on this side and on this side. And so yeah, the things that you thought once they might be a little bit different going forward in the future as more comes to light that shouldn't change what our testimony is in the miracles of the Restoration.</p>
Hank Smith:	01:25:52	<p>Gerrit, before we let you go, you referenced something early on that I'd love to just circle back to, and that is people around Joseph Smith going, wait, who like the farm boy Joseph, that no, that can't be. It clicked in my mind with the New Testament—happens twice. Luke chapter 4. It's the people of Nazareth, of Jesus's hometown and saying, when he stands up to declare who he is to his hometown, they no isn't this Joseph's son, the carpenter's son? And it happens again in John chapter six when Jesus said He came down from heaven and the group is talking, isn't this Jesus the son of Joseph whose father and mother we know. How is he saying he came down from heaven? It was almost poetic to me to hear you say those same things about Joseph that were said about the Lord.</p>
Gerrit Dirkmaat:	01:26:49	<p>The Book of Mormon continues to stand as if not one of the greatest evidences of Joseph Smith's prophetic calling. And there have been many, many, many people that have tried to explain its origin. The fact that there is not a scholarly consensus among non Latter-day Saint historians about where it actually came from is a pretty good demonstration that when your ex brother-in-law's cousin's son tells you that he knows exactly that the Book of Mormon was copied from a book published in the 19th century. Well, he doesn't really know that. Scholars don't make that claim. They don't know where it came from and you only have to read Joseph Smith's letters and his writings to know that it is entirely beyond his abilities. Oh, so then someone said, well, well maybe it was just 'cause Oliver Cowdery prettied up the language for him. Okay, well we have Oliver Cowdery's early letters too.</p>
	01:27:52	<p>The reality is, that book is not able to be explained for its complexity and its power for its writing and its ability to move</p>

the hearts of of men and women, millions all over the world. The book itself stands as a testament that there was a miracle that was wrought. That Joseph Smith is God's seer in the dispensation of the fullness of times that the revelations that we are studying this year are the words of the Lord to us. The Book of Mormon is this entry point into understanding the will of God for us in the last days because the Book of Mormon testifies of Christ demonstrates that Joseph Smith was a prophet and now that he's a prophet, we better listen to what it is that the Lord reveals through him.

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| Hank Smith: | 01:28:48 | Critics of the book of how to what now, 200 years to say, no, no, no. It didn't come forth that way. It came forth this way. And yet there is no alternative yet. |
| Gerrit Dirkmaat: | 01:28:59 | Yeah, at some point it's almost easier to believe an angel appeared to Joseph Smith, than all of these various arguments for which there are no credible sources. That you're not doing history if you're saying, well, it stands to reason that probably this happened. Whenever anyone says it stands to reason, what they mean is I don't have a source. I can't show you. That's why I'm telling you it stands to reason 'cause I don't have a source. Maybe Joseph and Oliver Cowdery got together and cooked it up to write it. I mean, the reality is the book is so powerful and convincing of tens of millions of people of its power over the course of time that for scholars, they still wrestle and grapple and try to figure out where it came from. Some people still dismiss it by saying, well, it's not very well written at all. It's pedestrian. That's not what Daniel Walker Howe said, imminent Professor of American history. He said, true or not, the Book of Mormon is an amazing book. He's not a believer or not a member of our faith. But acting like the Book of Mormon is not somehow an incredible piece of literature is just sticking your head in the sand and pretending because you don't like Latter Day Saints. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:30:26 | The very thing you accuse other people of doing. Gerrit, this has just been fantastic and John, at the beginning of last year, 2024, I would've told you I love the Book of Mormon. I know it's true. It is life changing. Then we studied it for a full year in depth. And now I look back at my 2024 self, my January of 2024 self and think you had no idea how incredible this book is and I sure it's gonna keep happening. |
| John Bytheway: | 01:30:57 | Yeah, there's more. And how many times did we say, I mean, it was embarrassing Hank. It was like, oh, I've never seen that before. I'm embarrassed for myself because I thought I knew this chapter. I've never seen that and that's why it's so exciting. |

'cause we said it a million times, Hank, it's as deep as it is wide. Rooms undiscovered. All those metaphors that we've used before. As Gerrit has talked, I'm thinking of, I have seen what the Book of Mormon and the restoration has done for members of my family. That's evidence I've seen the miracle that has happened in the lives of people that I know.

Hank Smith:	01:31:37	It reminds me of the blind man in John chapter nine. Do you remember where they said, look, Jesus was a sinner. Here's what I know: this morning I was blind, now I can see. Can you imagine them saying, nuh, uh, you weren't blind?
John Bythway:	01:31:52	No you can't.
Hank Smith:	01:31:54	I remember it well.
Gerrit Dirkmaat:	01:31:54	And you notice the way that they tried to destroy his testimony, right? They said, first of all, he must not have actually been blind. So, we're gonna deny the miracle on its face. We're gonna say that it didn't even actually happen until they go find his parents. They're like, yeah, he was born blind. Well then how can he see? They're so afraid of...
John Bytheway:	01:32:15	They're like he's of age go ask him.
Gerrit Dirkmaat:	01:32:18	...you go ask him, I don't, I don't know. They first attack that the miracle even happened and then unable to refute the actual miracle itself. They then went to the character of the person who performed it. Give God the praise for we know that this man, Jesus is a sinner. It's very similar to the attacks that are made on Joseph Smith in the Book of Mormon and the restoration. First, we'll attack the book. Well, this is obviously garbage. This can't, no one could possibly believe this. This is made up. Boy, everyone's believing it.
		Hank Smith: 01:32:58 So we attack Joseph. Go after Joseph. Right?
Gerrit Dirkmaat:	01:33:01	So now we're gonna talk about the person who produced the miracle. Well, Joseph was obviously drunk. You get some of these affidavits in Mormonism unveiled. Well, if he was, get me a bottle of that. 'cause that's incredible. I would write so many better books had I had whatever he had. We know because the angel told Joseph that his name would be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, tongues. We shouldn't be disheartened or surprised when we hear people say horrible things about Joseph Smith. Literally the angel said, people are

going to say horrible things about you, Joseph. We just can't allow what they have to say that's horrible to affect the way the Holy Spirit has born testimony to our souls that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God, that Jesus is the Christ and that Jesus gave him these revelations.

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| Hank Smith: | 01:34:01 | Don't you love that with the blind man in John 9. He stands up to these people and says, look, I don't know what you're claiming, but here is what I know. |
| John Bytheway: | 01:34:12 | Oh, so good |
| Hank Smith: | 01:34:13 | Yeah. So good. |
| John Bytheway: | 01:34:15 | I love that you've tied that to this and I'm remembering Anthony Sweat talking about the theory. Well, maybe the devil inspired the book and Anthony saying, yeah can you see that? The devil whispering in Joseph's ear? Okay. Write this. Come unto Christ and be perfected in him. Right. |
| Gerrit Dirkmaat: | 01:34:33 | Find a way to create this movement in church that inspires more people to believe that Jesus is their savior and requires them to refrain from all kinds of sinful activities. This is, this is the greatest plan I've ever had. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:34:47 | It is interesting to watch the reactions to this book. |
| John Bytheway: | 01:34:52 | This has been wonderful. I hope people will read through the rest of the manual on Voices of the Restoration and look at the show notes and see the references to what we've talked about. Also, Gerrit has his own podcast called Standard of Truth. Where does that standard or truth phrase come from? |
| Gerrit Dirkmaat: | 01:35:11 | It comes from the prophet Joseph Smith saying, the standard of truth has been erected. |
| John Bytheway: | 01:35:16 | It's the last paragraph of the Wentworth letter before the Articles of Faith start. Which is really kind of a cool way to read the Articles of Faith, is to read that last paragraph first. That was a favorite of our founder, Steve Sorenson, that he loved the Standard of Truth. Thank you for being with us today. We'll have Gerrit back again. Join us again on another episode of followHIM. |