



"If Ye Are Not One Ye Are Not Mine"

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 Wednesday.

Podcast Episode Descriptions

Part 1:

What is the impact of historical research on our faith? Dr. Christopher Jones examines Brother James Covell's life and choices and how his life inspires belief in grace and a message of hope.

Part 2:

Dr. Christopher Jones continues to explore themes of God's mercy, the importance of community and support, and the value of studying Church History with empathy.

Timecodes:

Part 1 -

- 00:00 - Part 1 - Dr. Christopher Jones
- 01:45 Dr. Jones previews this episode
- 03:10 Dr. Jones's bio
- 05:01 Becoming a Historian
- 10:06 Four missionaries and an important conversion
- 16:10 Three branches transplanted to Ohio
- 18:43 D&C 38:32 The Lord alleviates fear
- 21:15 *Insights from the Apostles*
- 22:07 James Covill/Covel
- 26:17 Changing our opinion of James Covel
- 27:18 Backgrounds of D&C 37 and D&C 38
- 28:18 D&C 37:1-4 - Gather to the Ohio
- 29:45 D&C 38:1-3, 32 God reassures and promises an endowment
- 35:25 A conference at Fayette
- 37:21 What we had wrong about James Covel
- 46:35 What is Antebellum? And more Covel discoveries
- 51:45 Why Methodist vs. Baptist matters for James Covel
- 53:23 D&C 38:26 - A parable and baptism debates
- 57:19 Methodism experiences changes
- 1:00:37 Final words to James Covel
- 1:04:51 Comfort for those that have left the fold
- 1:06:56 The end of James Covel's earthly story
- 1:09:04 Application of James Covel's story
- 01:12:23 - End of Part I - Dr. Christopher Jones

Part 2 -

- 00:00 - Part 2 - Dr. Christopher Jones
- 00:07 James Covel and a connection to Rhoda Young and Brigham Young
- 03:10 Bring the good
- 04:50 Ecclesiastical tyranny
- 07:18 Dr. Jones Presbyterian friend living the gospel
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- 18:43 Joseph preaches about judgment
- 20:27 *Star Trek* and the gospel
- 23:25 Our responsibility to know those that came before
- 26:43 What takes the Prodigal Son home?
- 28:51 Dr. Jones's inspiration and advice for studying Church History
- 36:01 End of Part 2 - Dr. Christopher Jones

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Biographical Information:



Christopher Jones was born in Salt Lake City but raised in suburban Dallas, Texas. He graduated from BYU with a BA (2007) and MA (2009), both in history, and afterward completed a PhD in early American history at the College of William & Mary (2016). He started teaching at BYU in 2016, first as a visiting assistant professor and, since 2019, an assistant professor of history. Dr. Jones's research focuses on the histories of religion, race, and slavery in early America and the Atlantic world. He is currently at work on two books. The first traces the expansive growth of Methodism in North America, the Caribbean, and West Africa during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, arguing that the defining features of the movement during this era were dissent and division, as racial and political strife ruined efforts to sustain a transatlantic Methodist community. The second book, a collection of essays co-edited

with David Golding, compares and contrasts Protestant and Latter-day Saint missions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Dr. Jones teaches a variety of courses at BYU, including American History to 1877, Revolutionary America, U.S. Colonial Family History, Slavery and the Slave Trade in Africa and the Atlantic World, African American Family History, and Missions and Missionaries in American History. He and his wife, Karim, live in South Jordan with their three children. He enjoys cooking (and eating) good food, traveling, reading, sports, and podcasts.

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Hank Smith:	00:00:00	Coming up in this episode on followHIM.
Dr. Christopher Jones:	00:00:03	This was a really exciting moment for me. I'm a young graduate student, fairly recently married and something that I've published has now helped lead to some changes, some updates in the scriptures. I got to tell you, the two Methodist archivists that I worked with, they think this is the coolest thing ever. They're like, wait, research you did here at the archives ended up in changes to Latter-day Saint scripture. They did a whole news release about it. It was very exciting.
Hank Smith:	00:00:30	Hello everyone. Welcome to another episode of FollowHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I'm your host. I'm here with my co-host John Bytheway, now John, listen to this. You are a co-host, so great as we the listeners, the people at followHIM have never known. That is perfect for you John.
John Bytheway:	00:00:48	I think you're perfectly describing the Church History Matters podcast. Good job.
Hank Smith:	00:00:52	Yes. That is a good podcast. That's section 40 verse 10. The Lord promises a blessing so great as you have never known. That's beautiful. John we're joined today by Dr. Christopher Jones out of the History Department at BYU. Welcome Dr. Jones.
Dr. Christopher Jones:	00:01:13	Thank you. Glad to be here with you, Hank and John.
Hank Smith:	00:01:15	This is exciting. Dr. Jones comes highly recommended. We are looking at sections 37, 38, 39 and 40. We are going to make a major move, or at least the Lord is going to tell us to make a major move. What do you think of when you think end of New York period going into Ohio.
John Bytheway:	00:01:35	You called it a major move. I think of how many people in our time have had to pack up and move and what a joyous, fun experience that is. And how often these folks who are asked to

move amongst the other trials, moving, not being able to put down roots has got to be tough for them.

- Hank Smith: 00:01:57 And I'm sure Dr. Jones can tell us a little bit more about moving in their day versus moving in our day. When we think of moving, we think, oh, that's going to be a rough couple of weeks. When they think of moving I can't imagine they go down to the U-Haul and grab a rental. Christopher, as you've been looking at these sections, what are you looking forward to?
- Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:02:19 Yeah, there's quite a bit that I'm looking forward to. I guess maybe first and foremost I'm excited about these sections because in spite of it being a major move here from New York to Ohio, I think that these four sections are ones that we as readers often might just pass over relatively quickly. Yeah, there's that nice little historical background there. They're making the move here. The Lord's commanding them to do that. But these are ones that otherwise we read over and then we move on to the more exciting things. I think when we delve more deeply into the historical background of these sections, when we try and learn more about the people than the places and the events mentioned they're in these scriptures can come to life for us as readers.
- Hank Smith: 00:02:58 That's fantastic because these aren't the sections where you'd ask someone, Hey, what's your favorite section of the Doctrine & Covenants? Rarely would you hear someone give 37 through 40.
- Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:03:08 Except me. Sections 39 and 40. My two favorite.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:10 They are, okay. I love it. John, how many times have we walked away going, okay, now that one's my favorite because of what a guest has shown us.
- John Bytheway: 00:03:19 Seeing something in a new light. You're right.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:22 I frequently tell my students, these are in black and white but you have to read them in color. John. Dr. Jones has not been with us before, but like I said, he comes highly recommended. You have some info. Have you done a background check? Do we know anything about this guy?
- John Bytheway: 00:03:37 Yes. Christopher Cannon Jones. I love that middle name. My stake president who set me apart to go on a mission was a Cannon.

Dr. Christopher Jones:	00:03:47	My son, my 12-year-old son whose middle name is also Cannon. Last year we were able to attend A BYU game. A member of the ROTC at BYU was in one of my classes and so he invited my son to come down on the field at halftime and as they kicked off to start the second half, my son got to fire George Q and that was...
John Bytheway:	00:04:05	Whoa That's awesome.
Dr. Christopher Jones:	00:04:07	He got a little t-shirt that said, I fired George Q. Cannon. It was awesome So yeah, it was delightful.
John Bytheway:	00:04:13	Oh, that's great. Christopher Cannon Jones, assistant professor of history at Brigham Young University. He teaches courses in early American history, American religious history, and the history of slavery and the slave trade and family history. He's the co-editor of the book, <i>Missionary Interests: Protestant and Mormon Missions in the 19th and 20th Centuries</i> co-author with David Golding and that's Cornell University Press. How interesting is that? He currently serves as the editor of the <i>Journal of Mormon History</i> . Lives in South Jordan with his wife Karen, and their four active children, one of whom has fired a cannon at a football game.
Hank Smith:	00:04:56	Christopher, we're so glad that you're here and thanks for taking time for us.
Dr. Christopher Jones:	00:05:01	Yeah, thank you so much for having me. I've enjoyed listening to several of the episodes that you all have done this year with different guests and scholars and honestly, I'm honored to be here and again, I really hope that we can geek out a little bit today about these sections and delve in pretty deeply here to understand who these people are and what the Lord is trying to tell them and to tell us.
Hank Smith:	00:05:21	I love it John. We've talked about this before. I've grown to love history. Started when I was in high school, you know, in another life I could have been someone who just made that a career. As I continued to grow and understand history and still am trying to understand it as a science, I've realized how difficult it is.
John Bytheway:	00:05:43	Yeah. And I think how valuable a historian is who follows those rules of scholarship and history of original sources and things, and then you can find out what really happened. It's kind of like going back to football games. Let's go to the booth and review that and see what really happened.

Hank Smith: 00:06:01 Right. Christopher I think in our day and age, and you can comment on this, every church member has to become kind of a little mini historian. We're coming to the point where someone says, have you read this from history? Have you read this from history? Did you know this from history? And all of a sudden we're going, oh, I didn't know that. So before we even get started here, do you have any recommendations or do you have anything that you would say to someone who's going, I don't know how to look at history. This is all overwhelming.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:06:30 Yeah, I think that's not uncommon and I think that's kind of a fair response. I've spent the last 20 years of my life training to be a historian and doing history. So it's not something I think somebody can learn to do overnight, but I think that there is so many tremendous resources out there that individuals, including members of the church as they study the Doctrine & Covenants this year can take advantage of to help deepen their understanding of the history behind these revelations. I am a big fan of [Steven Harper's](#) book Making Sense of the Doctrine & Covenants. I know that you've had Dr. Harper on as a guest in the past. I think about the incredible work that the Joseph Smith Papers project team has done over the last 20 years and making these high res images of all of these documents freely available. But also if you go on the Joseph Smith Papers project website, there is lesson plans and there is historical notes and there is biographical summaries of everybody mentioned and every place mentioned.

00:07:27 And it can really allow you to dig deep to understand the history behind this. The Doctrine and Covenants is unique because unlike the other books of scripture we have, it doesn't tell a story. There's no, and then Jesus went and this, and then the apostles went and did this. It's not a narrative history like we encountered last year in the Book of Mormon. Rather, we have this set of discreet revelations, set of independent revelations that are received and they're not even then put together in chronological order always. And so we're kind of going historically back and forth in this way and that way. But when you dig down into the history behind these revelations, you can begin understanding that historical narrative behind them and that allows you to see the way that the Lord worked with these early saints in building the church.

Hank Smith: 00:08:13 Every historian John that we've talked to has said something like, my fear is not that you'll know too much church history. My fear is that you'll know too little. I've seen that as we've learned.

John Bytheway: 00:08:24 Yeah, me too. We don't have to be afraid of anything. Go find out what happened. Find out as much as you can. I think Hank, when you said history, like the word we heard in high school, oh no. It's history as we are learning it's stories, it's real people and it just in color comes to life. Isn't everything history when you look at it that way?

Hank Smith: 00:08:48 The historians we've had on this year, John have said often that they like to give people grace as they look back. They try not to judge them harshly because they're not here to defend themselves. Right. They're not here to say, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. You don't understand. I'm excited for today. Let me read from the [Come, Follow Me](#) manual and we'll get started. "To the early saints, the church was more than a place to hear some preaching on Sunday. The revelations used words like cause, Kingdom, Zion, and quite often work that may have been part of what attracted people to the restored church. As much as they loved the doctrine, many also wanted something holy they could dedicate their lives to. Even so, obeying the Lord's 1830 commandment to gather in Ohio was not easy for many it meant leaving comfortable homes for an unfamiliar frontier. Today we can see clearly what those saints could see only with the eye of faith. The Lord had great blessings waiting for them. In Ohio, the need to gather to Ohio has long since passed, but saints today still unite around the same cause. To bring forth Zion like those early saints, we are invited to forsake the cares of the world and trust the Lord's promise you shall receive a blessing so great as you never have known." Wow. Dr. Jones. Christopher, where do you want to start?

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:10:08 Can we just position ourselves here historically where these saints are in December of 1830? Some of what I might share here might be a little bit of a rehash from previous discussions you have, but I think it's crucial background for getting into these revelations. We're here in December of 1830 at a moment that proves to be really quite pivotal in the early history of the church, which again had just been organized eight months earlier. We are just barely into this thing. In November, just a month earlier, God had called Parley Pratt, Peter Whitmer Jr., Ziba Peterson and Oliver Cowdery on the first mission. And they are called to go to the borders of the Lamanites and preach the gospel to Native Americans. This refers to the land just west of the furthestmost border of the United States at the time in just west of Missouri.

Hank Smith: 00:10:54 Christopher, I hate to interrupt you, but what kind of trip is that in 1830? I mean even from New York to Missouri today, you're going, okay, that's a long trip. Yeah. What is it in 1830?

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:11:08

Not a pleasant one, those missionaries are taking advantage of the newly completed Erie Canal that had just been completed five years earlier. So that is at least with the first part of their journey, simplifying things a little bit for them there. They're hopping on a small boat and going down the canal and that takes them to Ohio and then from there they're traveling either by river or over land, probably walking most of that time. And again, they set out on this mission almost immediately. And this is in the winter, right? And I don't know if you've spent any winters in upstate New York or northeastern Ohio, or even Missouri. Those are not pleasant places to be in terms of cold and snow and the like. This is a pretty burdensome journey to say the least as I think most listeners will know. They make a stop in northeastern Ohio along the way and they stop off there to visit Parley P. Pratt's old buddy Sidney Rigdon, who is a Baptist preacher, an independent Baptist preacher, an experienced preacher, a pretty smart guy.

00:12:07

He's leading a congregation of a little more than a hundred there and they stop off just to say hi, maybe stay the night, enjoy some food with them and to share the message of the restored gospel with them. Sidney Rigdon and his congregation are struck by the message. Many feel the need to learn more and ultimately choose to join the church. And those conversions, those mass conversions in northeastern Ohio have immediate implications for the church. Number one, it more than doubles the total population of the church at this time. So this is now all of a sudden, oh, we were in New York and maybe kind of a Pennsylvania church and now we're very much an Ohio church in terms of looking at where the members are located, but also this figure of Sidney Rigdon as a pretty important person. Historian Richard Bushman called him the most auspicious convert to date.

Hank Smith: 00:12:55

Wow.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:12:56

Joseph Smith is immediately impressed by Rigdon. He is, in the words of David Whitmer, a first rate Bible scholar and experienced preacher has all sorts of experience. He's been involved not only with the mainstream and independent Baptist churches, but also with the churches of Christ. This is the stone candlelight movement who fit into a broader group that historians refer to as restorationists. These are individuals that are reading the New Testament and looking to that as a model for the restoration of Christ's Church. These are people that we look back on and we see them as being prepared by the Lord to accept the gospel when it arrives on their doorstep in the winter of 1830.

Hank Smith:	00:13:37	If you're Joseph Smith, you got to think, wow. Like really? Yeah.
Dr. Christopher Jones:	00:13:41	Yeah, absolutely.
Hank Smith:	00:13:43	It's working.
Dr. Christopher Jones:	00:13:44	And then on top of that, Joseph Smith's right hand man, scribe during the Book of Mormon translation process and more recently scribe on Joseph's sort of nascent bible translation process has just been called on this mission. That's Oliver Cowdery. He's been sent out on this mission. Joseph is in need of somebody to help him with that work. Who better than this Bible scholar that has just been baptized? So immediately when Sidney Rigdon comes to New York to meet Joseph Smith, Joseph Smith embraces him and immediately welcomes him into the church, but also into his inner circle and asks him to help in this Bible translation process. This is the Joseph Smith translation or the inspired version of the Bible that Joseph Smith has just begun undertaking previously. That's the history that sets the stage for the revelations that we're here to discuss today. In sections 37 through 40, in section 37, this is a revelation received right before the end of the calendar year, right before the end of 1830, it's December 30th, 1830, Joseph Smith receives a new revelation in which he and Sidney Rigdon learned that it is not expedient that ye should translate anymore until ye shall go to the Ohio.
	00:14:57	Moreover, not only Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon are commanded to go, indeed the Lord has commanded them to also visit the other branches around New York state and to tell those people that the Lord has now commanded them to assemble together at the Ohio. There in Ohio, they are to meet Oliver Cowdery as he returns from his mission with the other three missionaries from Missouri. And there the Lord indicates that Oliver will tell them the location of the New Jerusalem. If you're thinking about the biggest way to wrap up the first calendar year of the church's existence, it's hard for me to imagine something much bigger than this. Okay, A, everybody's going to pack up and move. You're going to go to the Ohio and I love that they call it the Ohio throughout here. And Oliver Cowdery's going to meet you there. You're going to meet all of these new members of the church in Ohio and then I'm going to tell you more about the promised New Jerusalem where you all are going to move and help build this city and build this community in anticipation of Christ's second coming. This is the biggest way possible to wrap up the year 1830.

Hank Smith:	00:16:03	It's like the end of a season on a Netflix show like, wow. Stay tuned.
John Bytheway:	00:16:10	Hank, I would like you talk about those three branches and families of the church that all of a sudden all go to Ohio.
Hank Smith:	00:16:17	Yeah, it's interesting because you can place a family in a town. So you basically have three branches of the church. You have the Smiths in Palmyra in Manchester, you have the Whitmers in Fayette today it's about an hour from Palmyra an hour east. If you're driving, if you go another two, two and a half hours, you're going to get to Colesville, which is where the Knight family is. These are basically the three branches of the church and they're pretty far apart. I know to us we're thinking, oh, they're in the same state like we just said, traveling. We think, oh man, two and a half hours in a bus. That's a long time. This is days. And then to have those three families, all right, let's move. Christopher I love how you said this is huge. You and I think, well it's not Nauvoo to Salt Lake. Wait till they get there. They have no idea that's coming.
Dr. Christopher Jones:	00:17:11	They have no idea of anything that's coming. They just know the Lord has now commanded them to pack up and move to Ohio. Us looking back from 2025, we say there are so many exciting things awaiting you in Ohio. We're going to build the first temple of this dispensation. The Lord and angelic beings are going to appear to people in that temple. We are going to send out additional missionaries throughout the world from Ohio and hundreds and hundreds of additional converts will join the church here. What an exciting thing. They must have been so excited. They knew none of that. They knew none of that! All they know is they're being instructed here, commanded to pack up all of their belongings and leave. For many of them, the only home that they have ever known, this is a little bit more than just hopping on the bus and going down the road. And there's not really the chance here once you've moved from New York to Ohio to go back and make annual visits to your family there. That's a lot bigger of a deal in 1830 or 1831 than it is in 2025.
Hank Smith:	00:18:15	This could be goodbye for the rest of our lives.
Dr. Christopher Jones:	00:18:19	Yeah, absolutely
Hank Smith:	00:18:19	Right. Goodbye to my neighbors, goodbye to my cousins and aunts and uncles. I think of a listener at home saying, I don't know if I can do this difficult thing that I've been asked to do, whether it be a calling or maybe going off and serving a mission. You almost sound like an angel from years in the future saying,

oh, there are great things coming. How are you not more excited? There are amazing things coming, but right now I don't see that.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:18:43

And in section 38, the very next revelation, I think the Lord, aware that there's going to be some anxieties, there's going to be some fears, there's going to be some hesitancy. Immediately starts promising pretty magnificent blessings here. He tells us, saints, go to the Ohio and there I will give unto you my law and there you shall be endowed with power from on high and from then whomsoever I will shall go forth among all nations and it shall be told them what they shall do, for I have a great work laid up in store. That's verse 32 in section 38. The Lord I think is very aware that people are approaching this with some hesitancy and some reservations and he's seeking to quell those fears. Now again, I will give unto you my law. What does that mean? That you will be endowed with power from on high and then we're going to send people out to preach the gospel and great blessings are in store and that might sound exciting, but again, they don't know specifically what that means. They don't know a temples being built in Ohio yet, they don't know fully what endowed with power from on high means. These sound like cool blessings, but again, there's still some hesitancy.

Hank Smith: 00:19:49

And this is such a big thing to ask of someone.

John Bytheway: 00:19:53

Back in April of 2021, [President Henry B. Eyring](#) talked about when he was sealed in the Logan Temple and it was President Spencer W. Kimball who performed the sealing. He said to President Eyring and his wife, Hal and Kathy, live so that when the call comes, you can walk away easily. I think that's hard counsel back then. I think it's hard counsel today, he said a call came from the church commissioner of education, Neal A. Maxwell. "The warning given by President Kimball to be able to walk away easily became a reality. It was a call to leave what seemed an idyllic family situation to serve in an assignment in a place that I knew nothing about. Our family was ready to leave that blessed time and place because a prophet in a holy temple, a place of revelation, saw a future event for which we then were prepared." Man, that's easier said than done, isn't it? Again, President Kimball had said live so that when the call comes you can walk away easily, maybe easily in some ways, but I just think this is what they're being asked to do. That's hard. It'd be hard for us. You have that competing idea of just bloom where you're planted, put down roots, but be ready to go so that you can walk away easily. That's tough.

Hank Smith: 00:21:15 Oh that is tough. John, you quoting President Eyring there reminded me of something. I got an email from my friend Brad Boyce who works for the church. Brad pointed me to something I had not seen before. If you go into your gospel library app and you tap on, Come, Follow Me in your gospel library. It brings up the manuals as usual, but there's this new section called [Insights from the Apostles](#) where once a month the apostles are teaching a little bit from the sections we're looking at. This month there is a video called Ye are called to bring to pass the gathering, with Elder and Sister Gong. I hope everyone will go check these out. You've got a video from Elder Kearon, Elder Uchtdorf, Elder Bednar, Elder Renlund, Elder Andersen so far. So these are called insights from the Apostles and they're about some specific sections. Back to you Christopher.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:22:07 Yeah, so this section 38 is received in January of 1831. So this is the first revelation received in the new calendar year here. It is received at a conference, at a quarterly conference that the church has organized in Fayette at that time. So it's held from January 2nd to the fifth and there is two additional revelations received that we now have as sections 39 and 40 that are also received at that conference. Those revelations, unlike section 38, are not directed to the church as a whole, but they are directed to or specifically talk about one man in particular and that is a man who for 150 years remained a mystery to historians. It's a man named James Covell. If you were reading your scriptures in a pre 2013 edition, your copy of the scriptures, paper scriptures there, his name is going to be spelled C-O-V-E-L-L. The historical headnote will identify him as a Baptist minister. If you're looking at the scriptures on your iPad or phone or in a set of hard scriptures, paper scriptures published since 2013. His name will be spelled C-O-V-E-L and he will be identified as a Methodist preacher as opposed to a Baptist one.

Hank Smith: 00:23:29 So we found him.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:23:31 We finally found him. Credit here goes to the Joseph Smith Papers and I'll tell more about that story in just a minute if you would like. It's kind of a cool thing, and I want to dig into history. But maybe for now I want to simply note that James Covell was a Methodist preacher who was attracted to the message that he encountered at this conference in Fayette and who expressed his desire to be baptized there. So section 39 is God's message to James Covell in which he calls him on a mission and promises really pretty incredible blessings. And then it's followed the next day by section 40 in which we learned that Covell ultimately decided against joining the church

and returned to his former principles and people. Now there's a couple of reasons that I'm really excited to discuss these sections. Number one, James Covell is my favorite figure mentioned in the Doctrine and Covenants. I absolutely adore this man and I'm excited to tell you more about him today. I say that with the hope that it actually surprises some readers because what we learn about him in those revelations is that after initially receiving the word with gladness, he was straightway tempted by Satan that he succumbed to the fear of persecution and the cares of the world and that as a result he broke my covenant. None of those things perhaps seem worthy of Professor Jones' adoration here.

00:25:00 So I'm excited to explain why I admire Dr. James Covell. He is a medical doctor in addition to a preacher. And then I want to suggest specifically why I think his story including Section 40 and what we encounter there and should actually be a message of hope and a message of grace for Latter-day Saints today. It shows I think more than anything else that God's hand is continually outstretched. That even when we make mistakes, even when we go so far as to break our covenants, that God doesn't give up on us, that he is still there, still wants to meet us where we are and still wants to make the best of what may be a bad situation. That's the number one thing I'm really excited to talk about today. Second, in order to accomplish that, in order to see that we have to delve deeply into the history of both James Covell of the early Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints, what was then called the Church of Christ and into the early history of religion in America, into the religious rivalry, the divided Baptist and Methodist and the way that that shaped the United States at the moment when the church burst onto the scene.

00:26:17 These revelations then present to us a really fascinating case study that ultimately shows how understanding the historical context, how consulting some of those resources that we talked about earlier can illuminate these revelations and bring meaning to them that we might otherwise miss.

Hank Smith: 00:26:37 Yeah, that you miss just knowing a little bit of the background and John, isn't this why we bring people like Dr. Jones on the show? I mean it just gets you excited to almost flip the stage around and see what's backstage.

John Bytheway: 00:26:51 I'm really glad you're talking about this because I have used section 40 in particular to talk about the weeds that Jesus identifies in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13 and kind of like, Hey, here's an example of how you can get weeded out. I

think maybe you're going to change my heart about this, so I'm looking forward to what you're going to teach us.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:27:12 If I can change somebody's heart about James Covell, today will have been a success for me.

Hank Smith: 00:27:17 Awesome.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:27:18 Before we dive too deep into sections 39 and 40, would it be okay if we went back to sections 37 and 38? We quoted a couple of passages from them. I just don't want to overlook these revelations. I think they're really important both for understanding what we encounter in the revelations to James Covell in 39 and 40, but also just on their own. As a historian, I often get really excited by context and then I forget about the text. I want to make sure that we're not overlooking the text of the revelations themselves here.

Hank Smith: 00:27:46 You got it. Christopher, if I get this right, you said section 37 is December 30th?

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:27:52 Yes.

Hank Smith: 00:27:52 And I think section 40 is somewhere in the first week of January. So it is, this is a week. This is a wild week.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:28:01 Yeah, a rapid series of revelations here. I hope I've already provided a pretty decent background to section 37 in terms of the history there and it's just a pretty short revelation. It comes to us today in just four verses. Could we read that in its entirety?

John Bytheway: 00:28:18 Okay, here we go. Section 37, behold I say unto you that it is not expedient in me that you should translate anymore until you shall go to the Ohio, and this because of the enemy and for your sakes. And again, I say unto you that you shall not go until you have preached my gospel in those parts and have strengthened up the church whithersoever it is found and more especially in Colesville. For behold they pray unto me in much faith.

Hank Smith: 00:28:47 Verses three and four and again a commandment I give unto the church that it is expedient in me that they should assemble together at the Ohio.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:28:55 And they were together there in anticipation of my servant Oliver's return. Again, this is Oliver Cowdery's return from his mission to the Lamanites. In that same section, Joseph Smith

and Sidney Rigdon are also commanded to preach the gospel and strengthen the church whithersoever it is found and more especially in Colesville. Thanks to Hank earlier, we know that there's these three existing branches of the church spread out across upstate New York. So before leaving for the Ohio, the pair does exactly that. After visiting Colesville and the other branches of the church in New York, they hold the first quarterly conference of the new year on January 2nd beginning on January 2nd, 1831 in Fayette. There Joseph Smith shares with the saints, with the assembled saints, the revelation commanding them to all collectively gather to the Ohio. There also he receives the second revelation that we're reading today. That is section 38 and the Lord begins by reassuring the saints, mine eyes are upon you.

00:29:59 I am in your midst even though ye cannot see me, but soon ye shall see me and know that I am, for the veil of darkness shall soon be rent. And he that is not purified shall not abide the day. Wherefore gird up your loins and be prepared. Behold the kingdom is yours and the enemy shall not overcome. All right, now we might read this as a promise of Christ's second coming happening soon. That is probably how those saints that heard it interpret it. We might also think of it as a reference to some of those promised blessings and things that occur in Ohio. Once the saints arrived there, thinking again about the construction and dedication of the Kirtland temple and the appearance of the Lord as well as several angelic beings and past prophets as well as the appearance of many other angelic beings to the assembled hundreds at the dedication of that temple in early 1836.

00:30:56 But it isn't all excitement here. There's some scary stuff, at least some scary sounding stuff in this revelation too. The Lord notes that not all are clean before him. That all flesh is corrupted before me and the powers of darkness prevail upon the earth among the children of men, which cause causes silence, to reign and all eternity is pained and the angels are waiting the great command to reap down the earth to gather the tares that they may be burned. Yikes. The yikes is my sort of added commentary there, right? The Lord doesn't say yikes but this gives some credence to John the way you mentioned that you've taught and thought about the following two sections here, especially verse 40, the Lord is talking to the saints about separating wheat and tares. He's talking about burning those tares in preparation for his second coming. But the repeated message here from the Lord to the saints in section 38 is be strong, to fear not and continued reassurances that the kingdom is yours.

00:31:57 It is then that he tells them in a short time he will direct them to a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey upon which there shall be no curse when the Lord cometh and that he will give it unto you for the land of your inheritance and for the inheritance of your children forever while the earth shall stand and ye shall possess it again in eternity, no more to pass away. Here is the promised New Jerusalem, not where they're going in Ohio but somewhere else. The Lord then gives some additional counsel which brings us to verse 32. Does one of you have section 38 verse 32 there?

Hank Smith: 00:32:39 You got it. 38:32. Wherefore for this cause I gave unto you the commandment that you should go to the Ohio and there I will give unto you my law and there you shall be endowed with power from on high.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:32:55 Alright, so in Ohio the Lord is going to gather his people. He's going to deliver them his law and he is going to endow them with power from on high. And as we read in subsequent verses there he will, and I'm reading from verse 33 here. From thence whosoever I will shall go forth among all nations and it shall be told them what they shall do. For I have a great work laid up in store, for Israel shall be saved and I will lead them whithersoever I will and no power shall stay my hand. And then skipping over 34 to 35 there the saints will look to the poor and the needy and administer to their relief that they shall not suffer and send them forth to the place which I have commanded them. So really interestingly here, we have an early articulation of what we think of today as the fourfold mission of the church.

00:33:47 We have temple work, the Lord's going to endow them with power from on high. We have missionary work, they're going to go forth among all nations. We have the perfecting of the saints. Israel shall be saved and I will lead them whithersoever I will. And no power shall stay my hand. And we have caring for the poor and needy. The saints are to look to the poor and the needy and administer to their relief that they shall not suffer. Okay? What the Lord here is doing is preparing these people for Zion. And Zion is intimately connected to the promised New Jerusalem. As I noted earlier, at least some of the saints were a bit unnerved or overwhelmed at the thought of leaving New York and moving to Ohio. The Lord again addresses those concerns. And this is the verse I skipped over in verse 34.

00:34:35 And now I give unto the church in these parts of commandment that certain men among them shall be appointed by the voice of the church and they shall look to the poor and the needy and administer to their relief that they shall not suffer and send

them forth to the place which I have commanded them. Saints then were supposed to sell their farms and homes and if they couldn't sell them, they should try and rent them. And if they couldn't rent them, they should simply leave them. God had something greater in store for them and he's promised here to watch over and care for them.

Hank Smith: 00:35:12 Wow.

John Bytheway: 00:35:13 Thank you for mentioning that fourfold mission of the church and for drawing it out of those verses. I'd love to say, yeah, I've always known that was there, but I did not know that was there.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:35:25 And so at this Fayette conference in January of 1831, there's not only church members assembled there, but also as had become custom by that point, potential converts and interested others. Many who were in attendance were baptized immediately following the conference and then joined the saints in their journey to Ohio later that month. Among those in attendance was this man James Covell, again an experienced Protestant minister who evidently believed the message he heard and sought further instruction from the Lord, which was received in the form of the revelation that we now have as section 39. This is received on January 5th, the last day of the conference. In it, the Lord promised James Covell that if he obeyed the revelation given and was baptized, then he would be assigned a greater work. And that greater work was to preach the fullness of my gospel, to build up my church and to bring forth Zion in preparation for the second coming of Christ.

00:36:26 Now this is, and I feel funny calling this boilerplate, but based on previous revelations, this is pretty boilerplate stuff. This is what the Lord tells individuals when they're getting called on missions, but unique among the revelations received to date. This revelation is immediately followed by Section 40. It is a revelation received the very next day telling Joseph Smith why James obeyed not the command which he received. Covell according to that second revelation, succumbed to the temptations of Satan and the fear of persecution and cares of the world. Again, the lesson to others including us seems initially quite clear on reading section 40. Put the commandments of God above all else, above the cares of the world, trust in his promises to guide our lives. If not, we will be left to the temptations of Satan. I hope I can complicate that narrative just a little bit.

00:37:21 I want to be clear that I'm not suggesting that the Lord didn't say that in Section 40, he does. And if that's the lesson we take,

that's a perfectly valid lesson. But I don't think it's the full lesson that the Lord has for us in the person of James Covell and his experience. So in order to understand that fuller message, we really need to delve deeply into who James Covell is. So as I noted earlier, historians struggled for 150 years to identify who James Covell was. The reasons why I think are pretty interesting. So when the Doctrine and Covenants is first published in 1835, that very first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, the two revelations discussing Covell were included as sections 59 and 60. The head notes to each of those revelations at the time spelled the last name Covell, C-O-V-I-L-L, instead of Covell, C-O-V-E-L.

00:38:18 In the earliest manuscript versions of the revelations, he is simply called James or James C. That is how he's identified in the [Book of Commandments](#), published in [1833](#), just James C. So he's either James or James C. And then somewhere in 1835 they get the last name Covell, C-O-V-I-L-L. In 1839, while preparing Joseph Smith's history, the manuscript history of the church, James Mulholland, Joseph Smith's scribe adds a few additional details about Covell. He notes that Covell first approached Joseph Smith after the church's conference in Fayette and noted that Covell had been a Baptist minister for about 40 years. He also noted that upon rejecting the first revelation that Covell returned to his former principles and people, that was the basis for what historians knew about James Covell from 1839 until 2009. Okay, so I said 150 years, 170 years here. If you look at the Doctrine and Covenants in a pre 2013 version, the headnote repeats that information that we can trace back to 1839.

00:39:33 Fast forward to 2005 when historians learned of a manuscript collection of revelations called the Book of Commandments and Revelations. This was discovered during a search of the first presidency's archival vault that was conducted on behalf of the Joseph Smith Papers. Then still in its very early years in 2005, in search of any documents that may have been in that vault pertaining to Joseph Smith, any documents he may have written that he may have dictated, that he may have received. And among the things they found again was this manuscript collection of documents called Book of Commandments and Revelations. It is kept in the hands of John Whitmer between 1831 and 1835 and it contains what became upon its discovery, the earliest surviving manuscript versions of several of Joseph Smith's earliest revelations. So this was a really, really exciting thing for historians. We finally located early manuscript versions of these revelations.

00:40:35 Even if those revelations contained no new information, historians would've geeked out about this simply because it was a slightly earlier version. But it turns out that those revelations actually did include some differences and some additional information. So while the text of the revelations received by Joseph Smith and directed to James Covell in January of 1831 do not differ in any substantial way from the revelations as we have them now, there is an index at the back of the Book of Commandments and Revelations, a hand kept index in which it notes that James Covell, he is identified here as James a Methodist priest. The received knowledge was that he was a Baptist and now we have this earlier version of the revelation that identifies him as a Methodist. I first learned about this discovery in 2009 at the annual meeting of the [Mormon History Association](#), I think it was in St. George, Utah that year.

00:41:35 So I was sitting sort of at the back, I was preparing my paper that I was supposed to give later that day and I was listening to a plenary presentation early on. It was probably Saturday morning from members of the Joseph Smith Papers project staff in which they were sharing some of their finds from this book of commandments and revelations. And one that my colleague and close friend Robin Jensen mentioned almost in passing as if nobody would care, was that James Covell they now believed was a Methodist instead of a Baptist preacher. And at the time I was a master student at BYU and I was finishing writing a master's thesis that looked at Methodist converts to the early church and their influence on the shape and structure of the church in its early years. So my ears immediately perked up and I thought, I wonder if knowing that James Covell is a Methodist instead of a Baptist actually might change the way that we read section 39, might actually provide some insight into why he made the decisions he did, both in terms of initially being attracted to the church and the message he heard at the Fayette Conference and also his decision to ultimately walk away.

00:42:49 I reached out to a friend Rachel Cope, now your colleague there, Hank in church history. And Rachel at the time was working for BYU studies quarterly for the BYU studies quarterly journal. And she said, yeah, if you'd be interested in writing up sort of a short historical note on why, knowing that he's a Methodist instead of a Baptist changes our reading of this revelation, I would be delighted to receive it here and we'll send it out for peer review and we'll see if we can get it published. And I thought, cool, this is a fun little potential publication. It shouldn't take too much work. This is maybe a week's worth of me sitting down and really thinking about this and I'll send it off. So I did that. I think

the initial draft was like five or six double spaced pages, not extensive here, but as somebody who had been immersed for the last two to three years in the world of early 19th century evangelical Christians of Baptist and Methodists, I thought, wow, actually knowing that he's a Methodist instead of a Baptist does change the way that we read sections 39 and 40.

00:43:45 [I wrote](#) this up and I send it off to her. In the meantime, I became aware of Steven Harper's 2008 volume Making Sense of the Doctrine & Covenants and I reached out to Dr. Harper after reading the following in his historical note on section 39 it says, Covell had been a minister for 40 years and then covenanted to obey the Lord's will as revealed to Joseph Smith. But he had been a Methodist, not a Baptist minister. There is no sign of Covell in BAP records. But a James Covell spelled C-O-V-E-L appears in Methodist records beginning in 1791, exactly 40 years before section 39 was received. And again, a reminder that he'd been called a Baptist minister for 40 years. Okay? Turns out he was a Methodist minister for 40 years, Steven Harper. And he credited Sherilyn Farnes, his research assistant at the time, who also now teaches there in church history, I think as an adjunct professor, as an instructor there, he credited her with doing most of this research.

00:44:48 So I want to make sure she gets her credit there. And they found him starting in Methodist records in 1791 when he was appointed as a traveling preacher in Connecticut. He wrote various Methodist circuits for four years as an itinerant preacher. In 1795 he married a woman named Sarah Gould, the daughter of a Methodist preacher. He wrote the Lynn Massachusetts circuit for a year before he located so early Methodist preachers are all itinerant, they're all traveling preachers, similar to sort of early Latter-day Saint missionaries traveling around. But typically once they get married they would locate, which means they would become a local preacher and maybe preside over a local congregation or at least help preach there and oversee things there. So he does that. And so he settles, he raises a family, he apparently practiced medicine and largely then drops out of Methodist records. This is what Steven Harper wrote in 2008.

00:45:39 Sarah and James had a son, James Jr. who followed his father into the ministry. The Covells moved to Maine and then to Poughkeepsie, New York around 1808. It is not clear where they were when they heard of Joseph Smith and the restored gospel about 1830, but most likely they were still somewhere in New York. So that was the extent of what Steve Harper and Sherilyn Farnes were able to find. I thought this was really exciting

because now we had an actual historical figure that we had identified. I still wasn't 100% sure if this was our James Covell, but at least these initial findings sort of matched that up. So after I began my thesis that summer, and my wife and I were preparing for a move cross country to Williamsburg, Virginia for more school, I began a close reading of these two revelations and was both surprised and delighted at the ways in which Covell's religious affiliation changed my reading of them. Baptists and Methodists were bitter rivals in Antebellum America and they were both the most successful evangelical churches of the day. So these are the two largest and the two fastest growing Protestant churches in the United States by 1830.

- Hank Smith: 00:46:50 Yeah. Do a quick definition there for us, Christopher.
- Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:46:52 Before the war, so anti before bellum war. So this is the period of history before the US Civil War.
- Hank Smith: 00:47:00 Okay. Okay, keep going Christopher. This is exciting.
- Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:47:04 I get really excited about this. I hope that's okay. Baptist and Methodist shared a commitment to proselytizing to preaching the gospel, but they also differed in key points of doctrine and church organization among other things. And those themes immediately stood out to me on my reread of sections 39 and 40. And again, I drafted the short historical note for BYU studies. I sent it off and I didn't think anything more about it until I received feedback from the editors there and they said, Hey, this is great. We're really excited about this, we're interested in publishing it. But we would love to know more about James Covell. Have you dug any deeper into who he was? Have we found any more details about him? Are we 100% sure that this is the guy? And I said, I don't know. Let me look. I was already planning a research visit that summer to Madison, New Jersey where the largest Methodist archives are.
- 00:48:00 They're housed at Drew University and this is the United Methodist Churches archives from their general commission on archives and history. Think of their version of the Church History Department up in Salt Lake City. I'd already done research there before, I knew the archivist well. And so I reached out to them and I said, I'm going to come up, I'm going to dig around for this guy. If you guys can take a look ahead of time and see if you can find anything, let me know. Spent two weeks in Madison, New Jersey every single day, eight to nine hours a day just going through Methodist newspapers, Methodist manuscript documents, minutes of meetings, searching for anything and

everything I could find about James Covell with the assistance of Chris Anderson and Corey Flick two of the archivists there. I was slowly able to piece together James Covell's life and preaching career.

00:48:48 I even found two letters that he wrote that were published in newspapers. This was really exciting to me. And his life ended up being even more interesting than I initially imagined. I ended up greatly expanding the six page historical note into about a 30 page article that I submitted to BYU studies. And after a couple of rounds of peer review, it was accepted and then published in 2012. What I didn't know is that the church was also in the process of redoing the scriptures. At that moment in 2012, I'm preparing for a new edition of the scriptures. All of the scriptures, including the Doctrine & Covenants and a lot of the changes and updates, changes both to the text of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, but also especially like to the historical head notes and background information would come from the findings of the Joseph Smith Papers project. When those new scriptures were published in 2013, the first thing I very arrogantly did was flip to sections 39 and 40. I guess I didn't flip,

Hank Smith: 00:49:47 Yeah.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:49:48 I scrolled online because when they were first published, I just to access them online and I was delighted to see that Covell was now identified as a Methodist instead of a Baptist preacher and that his name was now spelled C-O-V-E-L instead of C-O-V-I-L-L. In both the text of the revelations and in the historical head notes. So this was a really exciting moment for me. I'm a young graduate student, fairly recently married and something that I've published has now helped lead to some changes, some updates in the scriptures. I got to tell you, the two Methodist archivists that I worked with, they think this is the coolest thing ever. They're like, wait, research you did here at the archives ended up in changes to Latter-day Saint scripture. They did a whole news release about it. It was very exciting.

Hank Smith: 00:50:32 That's fantastic. And wait, didn't you say this was going to be about a week?

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:50:37 Yeah, this is what I thought. I thought I would spend a week on this, you know, and flesh this out a little bit. Ended up kind of consuming most of that summer and then some of the next couple of years. So this is neat for a historian. We learned that he's Methodist, he's not a Baptist, we now know the correct spelling of his name. We think we've actually found the

historical figure that is this guy. But why does any of that matter? How does that change any of our reading of these revelations? Why do listeners of followHIM care? Let me suggest a couple of things. Knowing that he's Methodist instead of Baptist helps us better understand the appeal of what Covell heard at the January, 1831 conference. Not only were Methodists more likely than Baptists to join the early church, somewhere between 35 and 40% of the first generation of Latter-day Saints come from Methodist backgrounds. This includes Emma Smith, this includes Brigham Young. This includes a number of very important leaders, but also just among the general membership of the church.

Hank Smith: 00:51:38 I think also John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:51:42 Yep.

Hank Smith: 00:51:43 Lorenzo Snow, yeah.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:51:45 Eight of the original 12 apostles. Yes, on and on. Even Joseph Smith talks about how he's drawn to Methodism. But James Covell was not just any Methodist, although initially baptized and ordained to the Methodist Episcopal Church, the forerunner of what is now the United Methodist Church. This is the largest institutional expression of Methodism in the early United States. In 1820, Covell actually left the Methodist Episcopal Church and united himself with a group called the Methodist Society of New York. This is a splinter group headquartered in New York City that separated itself from the Methodist Episcopal Church over among other things, the issue of increasing wealth and respectability among the Methodists and their treatment of the poor and needy of the marginalized in society. So when Covell attends this conference in Fayette in January of 1831, what does he hear? Here's a revelation dictated by Joseph Smith, which commanded each member of the church to esteem his brother as himself and practiced virtue and holiness before me and the church more generally to organize, to look after the poor and needy and administer to their relief so that they shall not suffer. It likely resonated with Covell, not just because he's coming from a Methodist background, but from this very specific strain of Methodism.

Hank Smith: 00:53:16 The connection then between 38 and 39 is wonderful where you never would've seen it before.

John Bytheway: 00:53:23 In fact, section 38 has a parable. This is Jesus giving a parable, but it's not in our New Testament. In verse 26, for what man among you having 12 sons and is no respecter of them and they

serve him obediently and he saith unto the one, be thou clothed in robes and sit thou here and to the other, be thou clothed in rags and sit thou there and looketh upon his sons and saith I am just. That would've resonated with James.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:53:54

Yeah, he would've found this very, very specifically appealing. So just as his experiences as a Methodist had conditioned him like so many others to accept the restored gospel of Jesus Christ in 1830 and 1831, his experience also likely shaped his response to the revelation that was directed to him in the revelation received on January 5th. This is Doctrine & Covenants 39. Covell is commanded to arise and be baptized and wash away your sins. Latter-day Saints, of course, insisted on adult immersion or at least immersion after reaching the age of accountability. That same phrasing might actually have repulsed Covell on some level. Methodists were not so much opposed to baptism by immersion as they were opposed to their rival Baptist's insistence that adult immersion was the only acceptable form of baptism in the early 19th century. We have Methodist and Baptist and there's all sorts of accounts of this going after one another over the specific question of proper form of baptism.

00:55:09

Well, they argue over infant versus adult baptism. They argue over baptism by immersion versus baptism by sprinkling or pouring. But there's this really fantastic poem that a early 19th century Methodist writes about this specific issue and it just delights me so much. And that the writing poetry about this, you say, go read the scriptures and in them you shall find the ordinance immersion upon us all enjoined. How can you be immersed? The word we cannot find? And if it's in your Bible, I'm sure it's not in mind. But when you do immerse them, which we do think is wrong, it makes my heart to tremble because you think the work is done. You say, my Lord's a Baptist. How do you realize for there never was a Baptist, but one who did baptize your charity is scanty and that the world can see. If you do not quit immersion, then we cannot all agree. I just love that they're writing poems about this.

Hank Smith: 00:56:04

They're writing poems about this.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:56:06

It is possible and even likely then that the command to be baptized by immersion doesn't sit right with James Covell. That he has been brought up in this culture where they argue over these things and this matters so much to him that it's really hard for him to hear the Lord's command here to arise and be baptized, to be immersed in the water. Okay, but that's not all in that same revelation, Covell was also commanded to serve a mission, but he was told Thou art not called to go into the

Eastern countries, but thou art called to go to the Ohio, where presumably he would help build the church in its new geographical center. It is possible that when Covell heard those words in 1831, he was 62 years old and he had been traveling a circuit as a preacher full-time for four decades. It is possible, it seems even probable to me that he was probably tired of doing so and had no interest in uprooting his family, his wife and children, and moving several hundred miles westward.

00:57:19 It's not just uh oh, I don't want to uproot my family again or I don't want to leave them. There's also something deeper going on here among the reasons that the Methodist Society of New York, this is the Methodist group that Covell is affiliated with, broke off from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1820 was what they called ecclesiastical tyranny, in which the Methodist Bishop dictated where preachers were to be sent. Covell and others who left and formed the Methodist Society, which then later became part of a group called the Methodist Protestant Church believed that preachers themselves ought to have more of a say in where they were stationed or assigned. While the early Church of Christ opens its priesthood to all males in good standing and promises each of its adherence to the right to spiritual gifts, personal revelation, and a duty to proclaim the gospel, it also located authority squarely in the hands of its presiding Elder Joseph Smith and his second Elder Oliver Cowdery. And that centralized prophetic authority, especially located in the hands of somebody that in comparison to Covell was young, inexperienced, and uneducated. Right? Probably did not sit right with this senior 62-year-old, four decade long experienced minister.

Hank Smith: 00:58:45 That could be hard. He's just a kid.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 00:58:46 That's exactly right. Some people find [Joseph Smith](#) really appealing, but we also have records where people meet him for their first time and they say, that's not what I expected a prophet to look like. This seems to be James Covell's situation here on the historical headnote accompanying section 40. We learned that after receiving this initial revelation on January 5th, Joseph Smith, the prophet and Sidney Rigdon, received another the following day on January 6th, preceding the record of this revelation, the prophet's history states as James Covell rejected the word of the Lord and returned to his former principles and people, the Lord gave unto me and Sidney Rigdon the following revelation. Because I've been talking a lot, can I ask the two of you to read just those three short verses in section 40 here?

John Bytheway:	00:59:36	Yeah. Behold, verily I say unto you that the heart of my servant James Covell was right before me for he covenanted with me, that he would obey my word and he received the word with gladness, but straightway Satan tempted him and the fear of persecution and the cares of the world caused him to reject the word. Wherefore, he broke my covenant and it remaineth with me to do with him as seemeth me good. Amen.
Dr. Christopher Jones:	01:00:05	Thanks John. The Come, Follow Me manual doesn't focus much on these verses and that may be for the best. Again, this is not exactly kindly and loving from the Lord. This is pretty harsh stuff and the implication for all of us is clear. Don't do that.
Hank Smith:	01:00:22	Yeah.
Dr. Christopher Jones:	01:00:22	There's something of a warning there for us. How many times have each of us let the cares of the world distract us from the things of the Lord? For me, way too many times to imagine.
Hank Smith:	01:00:35	Not me, I don't know if it's ever happened.
Dr. Christopher Jones:	01:00:37	That's what I meant me. I was not going to call you out Hank. I want to focus here on the final words of that second revelation to Covell. It remaineth with me to do with him as seemeth me good. Amen. Now at first glance that might sound like something of a threat.
Hank Smith:	01:00:57	Right? Sounds kind of ominous.
Dr. Christopher Jones:	01:00:59	Yeah. He succumbed to the temptations of Satan. He went after the cares of the world and ultimately returned to his former principles and people and now I, the Lord will do as seemeth me good. Yeah. There's just one major problem I don't know about you guys. That's not the God I worship this vengeful God who is like, Ooh, now I get to do with him whatever I want. Right? The God I worship, the God I know from my own experience, the God I read about in the scriptures is a loving God. He's a God whose hand is extended continually. And here's the cool thing about finding James Covell as a historical figure, we don't actually have to wonder what the rest of his life looked like. We don't have to wonder what it means for the Lord to do with him as seemeth him good. While we don't have journals or letters from Covell detailing his innermost thoughts, we do know the broad strokes of the remaining two decades of his life until his death in 1850.

01:02:02 For the next several months, Covell's name doesn't appear in any Methodist records. And then in July, 1831 it does, in a letter from Orin Miller, the president of the Methodist Protestant Church's Genesee Conference, he reports that the venerable Dr. J Covell has been preaching to a large congregation organized under his labors for the few months past. And the minds of the people were evidently prepared by his preaching for the work of reformation. We expect our brother Covell will soon gather an abundant harvest in this neighborhood. And then in September another report comes in. We were favored with a visit from Dr. James Covell, who preached with much zeal to the great satisfaction of all that heard. And finally in December of 1831, a letter from Covell himself was published in which he described his preaching labors. I therefore determined to take the Bible and select such parts as were best adapted to bring the great truths therein immediately before the people.

01:03:10 The blessed work still goes on convictions, conversions and accessions are numerous and frequent. His colleague, Oren Miller, concludes writing about these same events. I think I never knew Dr. Covell so much engaged in the work as at this meeting and then with no sense of what we know as Latter-day Saints. He says it seemed as though Dr. Covell had renewed his age and was anointed anew with a divine unction from on high. Instead of going on to do great things as a Latter-day Saint missionary in Ohio, which I have no doubt he would've done, and which I selfishly wish that he might have done. Covell instead became renewed with fervor for taking up the message of Methodism and preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ as he understood it. And I want to suggest that the hand of God may in fact have played a role in that, that God doing with him as seemeth him good was not some ominous promise of punishment, but rather sticking with Covell, with meeting him where he was at, with knowing that he had to respect Covell's agency and making the best of that situation. I think that those people that Covell preached to probably were truly converted to Christ. Did they have the fullness of the gospel as taught by Joseph Smith and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? No. Did they have the Bible and the words of Jesus? Did they have prayer? Did they have preaching? Yes. And do I believe that God can lead those people sincerely to conversion in Christ through Methodist preachers? A hundred percent I do.

Hank Smith: 01:04:51 Yeah. What that can do for someone who's listening, who's thought, my son or my daughter, my brother, my former mission companion, they rejected the covenants they've made here and oh, the punishment they're going to face. And here you're saying, hold on. That's not the God we know.

John Bytheway:	01:05:15	I love how someone's backstory increases how we extend more grace. Can we do that with everybody? When we talk about people who aren't here to defend themselves, we call it gossip. Does it change because they've died? It's still gossip, isn't it? They're not here to defend themselves and we don't know the full story.
Hank Smith:	01:05:38	John, what a great insight. I would like to speak more to this because it is so relevant, John. I don't think anyone who listens to our show would say that we don't want people to stay active members of the church. With that said, I think personally a lot of us, I'm sure can be better about the way we talk about those who leave, who go inactive, who go and do other things. We have quoted Stephen Robinson here before, but I'll quote him again. He was talking about first Nephi and the Church of the Lamb versus the great and abominable church and the labels that we've put on that before. And he said, "just as there are those on the records of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who belong to the great and abominable church by virtue of their loyalty to Satan and his lifestyle", it's pretty strong. "So there are members of other churches who will eventually belong to the Lamb by virtue of their loyalty to him and his lifestyle, which will lead to their accepting the saving ordinances." And then this is the statement, "the distinction is based on who has your heart not on who has your records."
Dr. Christopher Jones:	01:06:56	Just really quick wrapping up Covell's life here. By 1836, 4 years after those events take place, he finally stepped down from his position as president of the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church and essentially retired then 66 years old, the day-to-day strains of the position and the responsibilities had simply become too much. But instead of enjoying a kind of laid back, quiet retirement, Covell and his wife instead moved back to New York City where they remained active in the community. They sort of threw themselves back into it. Or as soon as they arrive, you open up newspapers in New York City and you see James Covell has helped with this community. James Covell has married this couple. James Covell preached a sermon in this local church. He remains active and involved in both preaching the gospel and working with the poor and marginalized in New York City. And he does that, at least according to the, to the bits and pieces of newspaper records we have up until his death in February of 1850.
	01:07:55	James Covell remains active and involved in the community. He's marrying people, he's preaching sermons, he's mentoring young people, they're hosting children and grandchildren that come to visit. He lives a rich and a full life. We can read these revelations

and we can take the message from them that here is an example of somebody who fails to heed the word of the Lord, the let the cares of the world get in the way, and who chose to walk away from some really incredible promised blessings that are laid out in section 39. That's an entirely fair reading of this, but it's not a full reading of it again because of those final words in Section 40, I will do with him as seemeth me good. And again, we don't have to wonder what the Lord did with James Covell. We know from his life story, even just the bits and pieces that we have of it, that God continued to work through him to bring people to Christ to help those in need to be a good person and live a rich full life.

01:09:04 Hank, you mentioned that you think that this might be a message that is really appealing to listeners whose children may have stepped away from the church. I think about it regularly with students that I've taught, students that I've loved who after graduating from BYU have chosen to take a break or step away, right? I think about family members and friends who have made similar decisions, and I think once upon a time, I wished more than anything else that they would just come back. And I still want that because I know about the incredible blessings that the gospel can bring. But what I've tried to do is take a message from these revelations and seeing the grace that God continually extends to those people and have me try and emulate that and extend that same grace to them, that instead of looking at every single decision they make as something I wish they would not do, rather seeking the good and believing and having faith that God can do much good for them.

01:10:04 I see this with family members. My wife's grandparents in El Salvador were among the first converts to the church in a tiny village in Usulután department in El Salvador. They hosted the first church meetings there. The sacrament meetings took place in their living room. Missionaries adored them and their family. My mother-in-law and her older sister were the only two children baptized because they were the only ones old enough to be baptized at the time. And then civil war came to El Salvador. In the 1980s missionaries were immediately pulled and the church largely ceased to function, at least in some of these smaller towns and villages. My grandmother-in-law, my wife's grandmother, seeking to better her life and to provide for her family, escaped from El Salvador and came to the United States, came to San Francisco, California as a refugee. She's lived there ever since. When she arrived in California, her activity in the church, let's just say declined. That here was a woman who was married and had children now living apart from them and doing sort of menial labor to try and provide for

them and sending money back to them as often as she could, including in an attempt to help some of her children also be able to migrate to the United States for 30 years.

01:11:22 My wife's grandmother fell into inactivity at best within the church including, and that that was very much the state she was in when I first met her almost 20 years ago. And yet she continues to be one of the most spiritual, one of the most God-fearing and one of the best people that I know. As a result of her continuing to do good and believing in God and God meeting her where she is, she has brought people into the church even though she hasn't fully returned to activity, she has blessed the lives of her children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Now, my children all love going and visiting their abuelita in San Francisco, and I think of her often when I read these verses and think about the good that God can continue to do working with us and through us, that his working with us and through us doesn't only come through those that are members of the church or that remain active in the church, that he can still bring about so much good again by his hand being continually extended to them.

Hank Smith: 01:12:30 Coming up in part two of this episode.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 01:12:32 One of the most meaningful ones arrived in my inbox a couple of years after it was published, and it was from one of James Covell's descendants. She said that she'd been doing family history research into him, genealogical research into him, and had come across my article and it uncovered this entire aspect of his life that she and her family knew nothing about.



John Bytheway:	00:00	Keep listening for part two with Dr. Christopher Jones, Doctrine & Covenants Sections 37 through 40.
Dr. Christopher Jones:	00:07	<p>Early 1832, shortly after he has this side of really solid stretch of preaching and conversion. Here Covell is again elected to his former position as president of the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church. And in that capacity, he not only continues preaching, but also begins mentoring many young preachers in the church, including two of his sons, James Jr. and Zenas James Jr. goes on to read this, to write this really fantastic scriptural commentary that goes through multiple editions. It becomes very influential in Methodist and Protestant circles, and that group of preachers that he mentored during that time also included a man named John Green, a Methodist reformer who joined the Methodist Protestant Church in 1832 and took up an assignment on the Hannibal Circuit of the Genesee Conference for the year and a half prior to Green accepting that appointment. Though he had also been investigating the Church of Christ and reading the Book of Mormon, he received that Book of Mormon from Samuel H. Smith in July of 1830.</p>
	01:12	<p>This is the John Green, married to Rhoda Young, who together with her brothers, Phineas, John, Joseph Lorenzo, and Brigham Young, read and studied the Book of Mormon. Phineas, Joseph and John Young, like their brother-in-law, John Green, were all Methodist preachers who, in the words of Phineas, continued to preach, trying to tie Mormonism to Methodism for more than a year before finally concluding that they must leave one and cleave to the other. Green apparently reached a similar conclusion and in spite of his recent decision to unite with the Methodist Protestant church and accept this preaching appointment had become within two months convinced of the Book of Mormon's Truth and decided to be baptized at a special session of the Genesee Conference in October. Green's decision was characterized thusly. John P. Green, having left the connection in an irregular manner therefore resolved that we withdraw the hand of fellowship from him as president of the Genesee Conference. Leading up to that meeting, James Covell</p>

certainly played some part in that decision. Whether Covell and Green talked about the church, whether they talked about Covell's earlier flirtation with it, and the revelation that he received, we don't know, but we do know that these two men knew one another and that they provide sort of contrasting examples of how they responded to this message.

- Hank Smith: 02:39 Let me make sure I have this. You can help me out. James Covell, who we've been talking about here, comes in and out of the church pretty quickly in January of 1831 and then John Green, he decides to leave Methodism early 1832 and yet they knew each other.
- Dr. Christopher Jones: 02:58 Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 02:59 Wow. Wouldn't you love to know if they had talked about this ? Wow.
- Dr. Christopher Jones: 03:06 Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 03:06 Yeah. I did not expect this, John.
- John Bytheway: 03:10 Yeah, this is great. What was [President Hinckley's](#) statement? Bring all the good that you have and let us see if we can add to it. Now we wish James would bring all that good that he has, but it's good. I like that phrase. It remaineth with me to do with him as seemeth me good. And he did do good. If it invites to believe in Christ and to serve him, that's good. By definition, I think too that what did Elder Kearon say, God is in relentless pursuit of you and of all of those that we sometimes feel some angst about, as you said Christopher beautifully, the God that I worship is not excited to punish or eager to punish.
- Hank Smith: 03:53 Yeah. As you've been telling us this, this has made me look at almost every part of 39 and 40 now with a completely different lens. Instead of, oh, look at all these promises. Oh, what a disappointment. Even this phrase, he returned to his former principles and people, his former good principles, and his former good people.
- Dr. Christopher Jones: 04:23 Exactly.
- Hank Smith: 04:24 I have to confess, back when I was a young seminary teacher, I used James Covell as kind of the great could have been because he came and went so quick in the history of the church. We had no idea who he was. And you're right John, if you don't know someone's story, it is easy to label them. It is easy to say, well,

look at what, that's too bad the apostate, they left. They're gone. I'm sure they're miserable now.

John Bytheway: 04:50 I would like to have Christopher go through that list again. One of his first issues was baptism by immersion.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 04:59 Baptism by immersion. That again, this is sort of a conjectural reading. This is a contextual reading. We don't have a letter from John Covel saying, I rejected the message because I was told to arise and be baptized. But all I'm asking here is conjecturally, contextually what does, knowing he's a Methodist, a Baptist in 1831 would have no problem with the commandment to arise and be baptized. To be baptized by immersion. Right. Baptists are champions of that, but knowing that he's Methodist instead of a Baptist adds that additional insight.

Hank Smith: 05:28 It does.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 05:28 This is one area that might not have sat right with him. Right. Another one is the issue of being called on a mission far from home at his particular age, but also the individual extending that calling being Joseph Smith, who again is this young, uneducated person who lacks all of Covel's experience and coming from a church that was formed in part on the basis of having ministers and preachers and missionaries having a greater say in where they serve.

John Bytheway: 06:00 In where they went. That ecclesiastical tyranny, I think is what I put in the notes.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 06:05 Yeah, that is, that was the phrase that they used. They decried the ecclesiastical tyranny of the Methodist Episcopal Church and formed the Methodist Society and then the Methodist Protestant church. Yeah.

John Bytheway: 06:15 You're saying at that time he was already approximately 62 years old. He had already been preaching for much of his life.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 06:24 Yeah. 40 years.

John Bytheway: 06:26 I don't know what the average mortality rate was back then either.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 06:31 He lives a long life into his late seventies. That's a pretty long life for the early 19th century. He is probably looking at that call to the Ohio in 1831 and thinking, I don't know how much longer I

have out here and you want me to go spend that time in Ohio somewhere. I've never been far from family, far from my sons who have just entered the ministry. This is really a different world than what he's used to.

Hank Smith: 06:56

He was in for what, a day or two? He was at the conference apparently. So sometimes we look at people like that and go, well, they've rejected the truth. He didn't have a lot of experience with it.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 07:08

Yeah.

Hank Smith: 07:08

He was interested.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 07:09

Yes.

Hank Smith: 07:09

Saw it, thought about it, received a quite a blessing,

Dr. Christopher Jones: 07:12

And then have some sort of conviction. Yeah. Right. But how much did he know? How much did he understand? Absolutely.

John Bytheway: 07:18

I confronted this as a teenager because one of my best friends in high school was a rock solid Presbyterian who was living For the Strength of Youth. I don't know if I had that pamphlet back then, but who was living a gospel standard just as well as his active Latter-day Saint friends were. And like you said, Hank, there were some Latter-day Saints who weren't living it and he was.

Hank Smith: 07:46

Yeah, you're going...

John Bytheway: 07:48

Yeah. And so it helped me to see that and I like how [Stephen Robinson](#) articulated that. It's not who has your records, it's who has your heart, who are you trying to serve? Where's your loyalty? We've talked about the Come Back podcast. There's always hope and I just hope people feel that way too. God is going to feel after people.

Hank Smith: 08:08

Right.

John Bytheway: 08:08

I have a friend who was worried about his daughter. He told me that he was struck with a Book of Mormon story of the four sons of Mosiah. The angel came and what the angel said in Mosiah 27 was not, you guys should come back to church. What the angel said was, your father has prayed with much faith concerning thee, not that thou mightest come back to church, but listen to this phrase that thou mightest be brought to a

knowledge of the truth. And he was struck with that when he read it is that some will find the truth and some may go a different path, but they'll find it and the Lord will help them find it. And I liked that emphasis. Maybe we just kind of leave it up to the Lord to guide them to find the truth.

Hank Smith: 08:55

Yeah. I'm not a psychologist here, but both of you, let's pretend. Why are we so harsh? We sometimes speak so harshly of those who according, you know, even reading Section 40, he broke my covenant. Satan tempted him. The cares of the world caused him to reject the word, whatever it is. And here, this person or this family or this couple leaves the church. I think lessons like this can help us to calm our heart. Maybe in fear we speak harshly because we're scared and we maybe we're scared our children will do that. Well, they're never going to be happy again. Just watch. They're never... And what happens if they are, what if they turn into James Covell and just do all this good? Can we be okay with that? Christopher, now that you've been through this experience, how do you see that?

Dr. Christopher Jones: 09:48

Maybe I can share a little bit of my own story here. When I first did all of this research, again, this was 2009 to 2012, what I was interested in was this purely as an academic matter, purely as a historical matter. I simply wanted to know who this person was. I wanted to think about what his background told us historically, and I didn't think much about sort of the spiritual takeaways of this, but what happened was, over the course of the next decade, as I saw more and more podcast episodes, church lessons that talked about these revelations and talked about James Covell, and I was always gratified to hear some of the research that I did being brought to bear on this and to make sure that people knew who this was. They all still seemed to end on this really dour negative note that made me begin to think, well, first off I got defensive.

10:37

I thought, that's not fair to James Covell. Right? That's not fair to the guy whose life I researched. And then it was upon rereading section four that that final phrase there finally stood out to me and I thought, wait, we know what the Lord did with him. He continued to work with him and he did all of these incredible things for the remainder of his life. So this takeaway from these revelations didn't come to me initially when I was immersed in his story. Right. Again, I approached this as almost a purely intellectual matter, and it wasn't until I went back and read these verses carefully that that final phrase stood out to me and I thought about what it meant and what it could mean in light of what I knew about James Covell's life. I think if I don't strain this

analogy too much, that was the Lord continually reaching out to me, helping me to understand something.

11:25 And I got to tell you, that was a really comforting message for me. As somebody who regularly succumbs to the cares of the world, as somebody who regularly doesn't do everything I'm supposed to as a gospel doctrine teacher, or Deacons Quorum advisor or husband or father or professor or saint who regularly, weekly, daily makes mistakes, it's actually really, really comforting to know that God's hand is still there, that his grace is still being extended and that he can still do much good through me. That even after I've made a mistake, that's a really, really meaningful message for me as a believer, for me as a Latter-Day Saint, for me as a sinner.

Hank Smith: 12:09 Occasionally I'll hear from a parent, I'll say, Hey, how's so-and-so I haven't seen them in years? Right. How's your son or daughter doing? And they'll say, well, they don't go to church anymore. Sometimes you get a little teary, they don't really care much about the church anymore. And I'll say, oh, you know, that's hard. And they'll say, yeah, you hope. And I often ask the same question, which is, are they a good person? Almost a hundred percent of the time I would say it's, oh yeah, they're a good neighbor. They serve, they love, their family is doing this thing. I've come in as I've gotten older to a place where I can say, I think because of the Lord, I believe in that, oh, they're fine, they're fine. I don't know John, maybe we're too nervous to allow them to be okay and to allow that the Lord to do what is good. What seems to him to be good. I can't believe I used to read that in such an ominous tone to do with him as seemeth me good. I honestly have read it that way and I want to change my mindset that obviously we want people to remain active in the church. I don't think anybody listening would go, oh man, you're giving people permission to leave the church. That's not our intention here.

John Bytheway: 13:26 No. We want them in the temple.

Hank Smith: 13:29 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 13:29 We want them to enjoy temple blessings. We've talked about this before. The Lord said this is my work and my glory. He didn't say, this is your job and your glory to make sure your children know. He said, actually, this is my work. I am able to do my work. Best you can do is be willing, but I am able, I'm able. If he's instructed us to be patient, then we can be patient and say the Lord, I don't know how the Lord's going to do this, but I trust him to do as seemeth him good with my loved ones.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 14:03

It doesn't even have to be something like leaving the church or choosing to walk away or break one's covenants. I may struggle to extend grace or even good feelings to my neighbor down the street who posts a political sign in his yard with which I disagree. And I think, how on earth could you ever think that or support that person? Right. And yet I have those neighbors and I have thought those things and I know that those same neighbors are the sorts of people that if I needed something at 3:00 AM if there was a pipe burst in my house that I could call them and they would be over in a heartbeat to help think about that as just in my day-to-day life, extending that grace and hoping that others in turn extend that to me. And the reason why is because the Lord's extending that grace, because the Lord loves that person. Even if I struggle to find that love at times again, I hope that same grace can be extended to me by both the Lord, which I have faith it will be, but also by others.

Hank Smith: 15:02

Yeah. When it's someone you don't know, it's easy to say, well, but when it's someone you know, when it's your child, when it's your sister, when it's your brother, you're please be gentle. Right? You're saying what Chris said in the back of that gospel doctrine class. Oh, oh, that's not fair. Right? That's not fair to say about that person. I think of my own sister. I don't think she'll mind me saying this down there in Florida, she went inactive from the church and even took her name off the records of the church and she was a kind, good, wonderful person. She took a different path and obviously I hoped, but there wasn't a moment where I would say, well, oh, you know, we're going to have to live without her in the next life. That's too bad. Section 38 verse 25. Let every man esteem his brother as himself.

John Bytheway: 15:54

That's a final judgment. We don't get to make those. [President Oaks](#) taught us that's a final judgment and the Lord's in it for the long game.

Hank Smith: 16:04

So I got to tell you a little bit more about my sister. She, like I said, left the church, went inactive, completely removed her name from the records and went and lived her life. And always a good person, always a kind soul through and through. And I think the Lord was using her in his work wherever she was. At some point she decided to go to church, not to our church, but to church. She found a local Christian Church. The preacher was fantastic and she really enjoyed it. She enjoyed the choir. I remember my mother saying, I don't know what to think about this. She really likes her Christian Church. I said, mom, this is fantastic. It's awesome. I'm glad she's doing it. Well, she's going to this church. I think it was a few years where she was going.

One day, I think this pastor, I don't know what he was thinking, he must not have known her background, but he gave a message about the Mormons.

17:06 He said that we know Mormons will not be in heaven. My sister, who is not shy, okay, she stands up in the middle of church. Oh, sorry. She said, excuse me. My father is the best man I have ever known. She said, he is going to heaven. And she grabbed her little boy's hand and said, come on, let's go find the Mormon church, and she left. She has since, you know, come back a little bit back into activity. I just think, let's let the Lord do his thing. Let's let that plan play out. And it it plays out beautifully. He did with her as seemeth him good.

John Bytheway: 17:59 She was brought to a knowledge of the truth.

Hank Smith: 18:02 Yeah. And don't you think both of you, when we think that way that oh no, they're cut off forever. We start to behave in a way that is towards them that is, I want to say over the top or almost a little irrational, right? Oh, you got to come back. We're not going to have our family forever. And we say things like that. It can wound. This discussion has made me think of a quote from Joseph Smith that I love. He says, how glorious are the principles of righteousness? We are full of selfishness. The devil flatters us that we are very righteous while we are feeding on the faults of others.

John Bytheway: 18:43 And thank you for providing this feast, everybody. No. Here's another one. [Prophet Joseph Smith](#) said in an editorial, this is so good, while one portion of the human race is judging and condemning the other without mercy, the great parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family with fatherly care and paternal regard. He views them as his offspring. And without any of those contracted feelings that influence the children of men causes -in small quotes because it's out of the sermon on the Mount- his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust, he holds the reins of judgment in his hands. He is a wise law giver and will judge all men, not according to the narrow contracted notions of men, but according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or evil, or whether these deeds were done in England, America, Spain, Turkey or India. That's the long version from [History of the Church](#). Volume four.

Hank Smith: 19:48 I'm reading through section 39, just glancing down at it now at this promise made to James Covell about all the things that still came to pass. I read verse 13, thou art called to labor in my vineyard to bring forth Zion that it may rejoice in the hills and

flourish. And then in verse 17, wherefore lay too with your might, which he did and call faithful laborers into my vineyard, which he did that it may be pruned this last time, verse 19, go forth crying with a loud voice. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. There are so many things that he went on to do. I love this merciful way of seeing this.

John Bytheway: 20:27

Hank, when I was a bishop, sometimes I used to borrow a phrase from Star Trek. Okay, hear me out guys.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 20:37

Okay.

John Bytheway: 20:38

When Captain Kirk would leave the bridge, and I suppose this is a common phrase of command in the Navies around the world, but he would say, you have the con. There were times when I used to say to the Lord, you have the con. It's this, I knew he was better at it than I was. I could in faith hand that off and say, I've done the best I could figure out. You have the con. Sometimes I couldn't sleep. So I'd say, I don't know if me sitting here worrying is going to do the congregation any good. Probably not. So you have the con goodnight. Does that make any sense to you guys? Or is that way too nerdy?

Hank Smith: 21:24

Oh, I love it.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 21:25

Yeah. I don't think you can get much nerdier than what I've done over the last hour and a half. So I think you're good. Maybe one point I can bring up here, one thing that this conversation has made me think of at the outset, I said that I hoped that a close reading of these verses with an understanding of the history and the biography of this person, in this particular time would result in us rereading and thinking anew about these particular verses, about these particular revelations. I hope that comes across, but I want to point out again here that what really makes this reading of that last phrase of section 40 possible is coming to know James Covell. I teach a class, History 205 Introduction to family history and genealogy. And the biggest challenge I face in there initially is getting students to think about family history as something more than names and dates.

22:26

They want to find the names, they want to find the dates and they want to take that card that they've printed out to the temple. Well, good, worthy goals, right? But what I constantly work with them to understand is that the commandment, to turn our hearts to our fathers, to turn our hearts to our ancestors, has to mean something more than simply scribbling down names and dates and inputting those into family search. It

even has to include something more than just taking those names to the temple. As important as that work is, what I tell them is that what I actually think is that turning your hearts to your ancestors means truly coming to know them and it's coming to know them as fully formed three-dimensional individuals who lived, who struggled, who cried, who laughed, who rejoiced, and who ultimately died. And that if we don't do that, then we haven't fully turned our hearts to them.

23:25 There's this great quote from [President Joseph Fielding Smith](#) in the 1960s, and you can imagine what computer technology was like in the 1960s. And he writes to a stake president and he says, it doesn't matter if computers can do all of your family history work for you, it still remains the responsibility of every single Latter-day Saint to turn their hearts to those ancestors and come to know them. James Covell is not my ancestor, but coming to know him as a person, coming to know who he was, what his background was, why he was interested in the church, why he ultimately decided to leave, and what he did afterwards has entirely reshaped the way that we read these verses. And this is possible with every section of the Doctrine & Covenants. If we allow ourselves, if we take the time in our study to not just give it a quick read and then show up to gospel doctrine class on Sunday, to not just listen to a podcast episode or two about it, but to really delve deeply and come to know these people, whether that's Joseph Smith or Emma Smith or James Covell or Sidney Rigdon, come to know who they were.

24:36 I really think we can read the scriptures with an entirely new eyes and we can see how the Lord is relating to each of those people individually, how the words that we think is pretty boilerplate, common stuff that he seems to repeat every time he calls missionaries on a mission, right, could actually have specific meaning to those individuals. This isn't easy work, but I think it's really, really worthwhile work. It's more than history for history's sake. It's history because understanding that history, understanding that background, understanding who these people were, brings these revelations to life and really helps us appreciate them in a way that we aren't able to otherwise.

Hank Smith: 25:19 As you said that, Christopher, we have a knowledge of a merciful God, and I went back to section 38 and I looked at verse 14, I have a phrase highlighted. He's saying, this is why I'm telling you these things and you are blessed not because of your iniquity, neither your hearts of unbelief. So he's saying you are very blessed. It's not because of your actions and it's not because of your heart for verily, some of you are guilty before

me and then this phrase, but I will be merciful unto you in your weakness. That's the God we worship. A God who looks at us all in our weaknesses and says, oh, I love you.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 26:07

Yeah.

Hank Smith: 26:08

I will be merciful to you.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 26:10

And again, James Covell's there, he hears that revelation. He hears those words. Does he take comfort in those even after he has made other decisions, you know, further on in life? Does he remember that message that God delivers through the prophet Joseph Smith there in January of 1831? Does he believe that God is still working with him, being merciful to him in his weakness? Whether he understands it as a weakness or not, I imagine that those are words that both he and all of us could draw strength from and draw hope from.

Hank Smith: 26:42

Yeah. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, John, you know it better than me. What takes the prodigal home? It's not, oh, when I go home, my father's going to be so mad at me or, oh, I need to go home because my father will be proud of me. It's my father is so good. Even with just employees.

John Bytheway: 27:00

Yeah. It's Lehi pleading with Laman and Lemuel with all the feeling of a tender parent. That path home was always open and available. He knew he'd be welcomed.

Hank Smith: 27:12

I know how good my father is and I'll go home. I won't want to be a son. I'll be an employee.

John Bytheway: 27:18

Yeah, I'll be a day laborer.

Hank Smith: 27:20

But he's that good. I don't know, maybe this is a little over the top, but I can almost hear James Covell from the other side saying to Christopher Jones, please tell my story. I want this story told.

Dr. Christopher Jones: 27:34

I will share with you one story along that line. In the weeks and months and years since the article was published in 2012, I've had dozens and dozens of emails from individuals thanking me for the article, thanking me for the research. Some from high ranking church leaders, two arrived, one from a very high ranking church leader and another five minutes later from a very well known public dissident of the church, and both of them wrote and I received these within five minutes of each other, and I thought, oh, that's kind of interesting. One of the

most meaningful ones arrived in my inbox a couple of years after it was published, and it was from one of James Covell's descendants. She said that she had been doing family history research into him, genealogical research into him, and had come across my article and it uncovered this entire aspect of his life that she and her family knew nothing about. And that was a really, really meaningful connection to be able to make, to know that some of this research I had done had arrived, you know, at the virtual doorstep of his descendants, and that they had come to know their ancestor a little bit better through that research. So we never know who we're going to touch by what we share and what we do, but it's all part of, I think God continually reaching out his hand, and working through us to bring about whatever good he can.

Hank Smith: 28:51

Yeah. Oh, so wonderful. Christopher, if you don't mind, let's ask you one last question before we let you go. We'll occasionally hear the narrative that if you study church history, you'll likely lose your faith. Yet here you are, you are a trained professional historian. I'm guessing you know quite a bit about the history of the church, yet I sense a believer here. That narrative kind of falls apart. In your situation, what have you seen in the history of the church that has stirred you?

Dr. Christopher Jones: 29:28

That's a really good question. I want to say here at the outset, I think that there are very real and very difficult issues in the church's past, and I am entirely sympathetic to those who encounter that information and struggle with what they learn, that it gets to the core of their beliefs about the church, its inspired history, the nature of prophets and prophethood and so on. I sympathize. I have struggled with those issues myself over the years, and I don't want anybody to think it's bad to have those questions or to ask them or to struggle with them even. I think from a historical perspective, this is me putting on my historian's hat here, the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The history of this movement is in terms of the people that it involves, is probably best approached as a history of people doing their best to implement what God has instructed them to do.

30:28

Okay? And I don't mean to remove God from the equation when I say that, but rather there's a respect for human agency there. Along the way, there are stumbles and there are falls, and there are mistakes. There are also a lot of wonderful, truly fantastic things to those that are currently in the middle of struggling. I would implore you to find a community of people who are sympathetic, who are kind, who are generous, and not just to you in your struggles, but that are also sympathetic and

kind to those that you're struggling as you learn more about. To Joseph Smith or Brigham Young, or Emma Smith or whoever that individual or whatever that event might be. There are historians like me out there that would love to be of service if we can. As I went through my own periods of struggle and crisis earlier in my life, as I encountered some of this information for the first time, some of these more difficult aspects of church history, I had a community of friends that got me through it, a community that I could ask difficult questions of people that I trusted.

31:32 Some of them were professors at BYU, some of them were fellow graduate students, Latter-day Saints, studying this past. And I could trust them both because they knew spiritually what I was going through, but also intellectually what I was wrestling with. And that sense of community was what saved me on more than one occasion was that God placed those people in my life to help me, and I've tried to do that same thing for others. That's not the question you asked, that's not an answer to the question you asked. You asked Hank, what have I found in church history that has been inspiring or assuring or confirming of my testimony? I read the history of the church. I study it as a history of God intervening in human history and humans doing their absolute best to make sense of what it is that God is telling them.

32:18 That is me attempting to extend grace to historical figures who are trying their best to implement the commandments of God. When you think of it that way, I see the history of the church. I celebrate it, not because it erases or dismisses or excuses the more difficult aspects of church history, whatever those might be for individuals, but because it confirms to me, it shows to me, it provides examples to me of God continually working with people. And that's what we've spent so much time talking about here today, is God not giving up on people. It's not easy because there's a lot of people in history that did truly, truly despicable things. I don't seek to excuse their actions. I don't think I need to pretend like this person didn't enslave that person or that person didn't commit a violent crime against that person. But I can try and understand who those people were and I can try and see them as I think our heavenly Father sees us, and that is as his children, that he loves and that he cares for. Even when we make mistakes, even when we choose to follow our former principles and people, even when we don't respond to what he's urging us to do.

Hank Smith: 33:39 Yeah, I can tell when I'm getting nearer to God because I'm more inclined to look with gentleness on people.

Dr. Christopher Jones:	33:47	Yeah, I like that. I like that. Gentleness is good.
Hank Smith:	33:52	John, I didn't know when we started the show, when I said that you are a blessing, a co-host so great as I have never have known that this episode would be a blessing so great as I never have known.
John Bytheway:	34:04	That's better said, yeah.
Hank Smith:	34:06	I walk away going, I am forever changed. That's the power of studying together, studying these revelations. These words. Don't know if they have the episodes playing in the spirit world, but if they do, then we hope that these fine folks we've talked about today are happy with what they heard. We want to thank Dr. Christopher Jones for being with us today. What a treat. We want to thank our executive producer Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors David and Verla Sorensen, and every episode we remember our founder Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We need to talk about what happens in Ohio on followHIM. Thank you for joining us on today's episode. Do you or someone you know speak Spanish, Portuguese, or French? You can now watch and listen to our podcast in those languages. Links are in the description below. Today's show notes and transcript are on our website. FollowHIM.co. That's followHIM.co. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew. David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Neilson, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra, Heather Barlow, Amelia Kabwika, and Annabelle Sorensen.

THE PARABLE OF THE BLUE MICROWAVE



- Hank Smith: 00:02 Hello, welcome to FollowHIM Favorites. This is where John and I are sharing a single story to go with each week's lesson. John, we are in sections 37 through 40 today. And I have a story for you. I hesitate John to tell you this story because it is going to be a display of my own humanness. Just bear with me John. When people say, oh, you work with John Bytheway, is he really that good? He is. He's really that good. But when people say, John, you work with Hank, is he really that bad? He really is that bad. Alright. In section 38 of the Doctrine & Covenants, the Lord tells the saints it's time to move to quote the Ohio. As I saw that, John, I remember a move that Sara and I had to make years and years ago. It was when we had three children, we have five now. We were moving from West Jordan, Utah, down to Mapleton, Utah because I had been hired to teach at BYU. John, you've moved before. Moving is stressful.
- John Bytheway: 01:07 It's rough.
- Hank Smith: 01:08 You're leaving this house, you're trying to get that house all cleaned out and ready and you're trying to have a system. So you're, you know, labeling each box. But then people come over to help and they don't care about the system. They're just throwing things in. Then your dad comes over to help and he treats you like you're 12. In fact, I remember my dad telling me what to do. Like you move that there. And I said, dad, this is my stuff. Right? This is my house. And he said, you just do what I tell you to do. And I did it, John. It's like, I'm like, yes sir. And I started to do it. My sons are saying, do it again. Grandpa, how'd you do that? How'd you get him? How'd you get him to do what you said? So we finally get the house in West Jordan all done.
- 01:49 We say goodbye to our life there, which we loved. And we moved down here to Mapleton. Well John, you know how unpacking is also very stressful. Packing it up and moving it, that was stressful. Well, getting it into the house is also a little bit stressful. And then they have people coming over to help and they mean well, but they don't know where to put stuff. It's just stuff is everywhere. And then kids, wouldn't you know it, they

get hungry. This is not a time to get hungry. You need to stop getting hungry. Yeah. It's very selfish. We're in the middle of moving this stuff in. You're trying to be gentle. You can hear some things breaking. I'm just trying to get everybody on board here that, that my life was hard. So my children wanted to eat and they said, can we get pizza? I said, no, we're not going to get pizza. That's not healthy. We'll cook up some hot dogs. I went to find the microwave and I couldn't find it. I asked Sara, did someone bring the microwave in? And she said, it's in the garage.

	02:48	Yeah bring it in and use it, but then put it back in the garage because we're not going to use it. We're going to get a new microwave. And I said, is this one broken? And she said, no, it doesn't match. I gotta be honest with you. I was tired, I was stressed and I did not know what she was talking about. I thought she meant like a match.
John Bytheway:	03:09	Oh, I can't light it.
Hank Smith:	03:11	Yeah, like you can't light the microwave. I was thinking, I don't think you have to light a microwave. I'm pretty sure you...
John Bytheway:	03:18	Don't have to match a microwave.
Hank Smith:	03:19	It's electric. Yeah. I've never had to light one before. She's tired and I'm tired. And I said, what do you mean it doesn't match? It doesn't light? And she said, no, it doesn't match. And I said, Sara, I, and my wonderful wife, we adore each other. John, I think she looked at me like, oh what? What did I marry? She says, well, just describe for me the exterior of the stove. And I'm like, what? She's like, just tell me. And I'm like, it's stainless steel. And she said, okay, next describe for me the exterior of the refrigerator. It had come with the house. I said, it is also stainless steel. And she said, and our microwave, I said, it's white and I'm still John, not clued.
John Bytheway:	04:07	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	04:07	And she kind of looked at me.
John Bytheway:	04:08	Does it matter?
Hank Smith:	04:09	Yeah. Like how is this, how is this about lighting a microwave? All of a sudden it clicked. I'm like, oh, it doesn't match. Oh you want, oh you want them all to be the same color. Oh, I said, we're not getting them a new microwave because that doesn't

matter. John, I don't know if you and your wife have ever disagreed on something, but that started a little bit of a war because she wanted to get a new microwave so all the appliances would match. I was not one of those people who thought that all the appliances need to match. I'm someone who thinks they all need to function.

John Bytheway:	04:46	Yeah. Does it work? Then it matches.
Hank Smith:	04:49	It works. Does it work? It matches the other ones that also work.
John Bytheway:	04:53	It matches because the other ones work.
Hank Smith:	04:55	The kids were like, are you guys fighting? We're like, no, no. Mom and dad love each other. Eventually John, we decided to compromise and get a new microwave. Now. I know.
John Bytheway:	05:07	Hank. That's not a compromise. Yeah, I know.
Hank Smith:	05:09	Yeah, I know. That's not a compromise. Yeah. Yeah it is when you're married.
John Bytheway:	05:12	But that's a, that's when you're married. That's a compromise. That's right.
Hank Smith:	05:15	That's a compromise. So I stop by the store to pick up this microwave. I go all the way in. It's too expensive in my opinion. But I go to the front. I'm a little bit ornery. I'm tired. I am buying something I don't think I should have to buy. I get it John. I know right now that this was probably a bad attitude. But welcome to our store. I'm like, just ring up the microwave. I get the microwave, I put it in the back of the car, it would barely fit. I took it home, I loaded it up the stairs, I almost fell and I set it on the counter with, Hey, here's the new microwave. She of course was, thank you, you know, sweetie, I'm grrr. I went into a different room to do my very important things. I can hear her open up the microwave and she says to me in the other room, what did you buy?
	06:08	And I said, a microwave. And she said, well yeah, but this one's blue. And I said, no it's not. Look at the box. And she said, it doesn't matter what it says in the box, the microwave is blue. I came out and looked at it and sure enough, you only saw the top of it. And I, sure enough, it's blue. I kind of looked at her like I know what's coming. She said, can you take it back? And I said, no I don't want to take it back. I will tomorrow. She said, we

need it tonight. I said, let's just use the old one. And she said, I sold it. I'm like, no.

John Bytheway: 06:50 That didn't take long.

Hank Smith: 06:52 I load it back up and my wife knows how difficult it is to take kids to the store. She says, Hey kids, you want to go with dad to the store? I'm like, you are doing this on purpose And of course my kids, you know, they're little at the time are three. And yeah sure, let's go to the store Dad. I load the microwave back in the car with the kids and I'm taking the microwave back to the store and it's a long drive. And I was using my kids as therapists, right? I'm telling them how hard it is to be a dad and to buy microwaves and they're your dad and it sounds really hard. And we get to the store. John, now I'm really upset. This is what made me think of it. Section 38, verse 39. The Lord says, beware of pride. Beware of pride. And John, I was not beware of pride I was just pride. There was no beware going on.

John Bytheway: 07:48 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 07:48 I am now frustrated and I'm frustrated enough that I can get a little bit ornery. I put this microwave on the customer service desk and this girl that was there said Hi, what can I do for you? And I said, the microwave's blue. And she said, what? And I said, the microwave's blue. It says stainless still on the box. The microwaves blue. Okay, I just need to get a new microwave. And she's Oh, um, okay. Yes. Do you have your receipt? And I'm holding up my receipt for it, she starts ringing it up. And I think I was ornery enough that it brought her supervisor over. I know, I know everyone. I know you're judging me. John Bytheway would never be this way. I promise.

John Bytheway: 08:32 You were also tending. You were also tending.

Hank Smith: 08:35 Yeah, I was tending and I was moving.

John Bytheway: 08:38 I've been there.

Hank Smith: 08:40 Thank you for validating me. The supervisor I guess, he comes walking over and he said, what's the problem here sir? And you know, I'm not even going to look at him because I am a disgruntled customer and I do not want to have this conversation again. She kind of looks around and goes, oh well he bought this microwave. It's supposed to be stainless steel, but it's not, it's blue. So we're going to get him a new microwave. And he looks at me, oh, I'm so sorry sir. And I was

like, yeah, I bet. I'm really ornery. He goes about 10 steps, John. And he turns around, he said, sir, did you take the blue cellophane off the microwave? And I said the what?

John Bytheway: 09:35 The what?

Hank Smith: 09:37 John, we hadn't bought new appliances. It's just not something we had done in our little family. Right? Hadn't bought new things. And he said the stainless steel appliances, they come with a blue cellophane wrap on them. And he opened up the box and he said, oh yeah. And he pulled the blue off of the microwave and he held it right there in front of me. John, I don't know if you've ever seen someone who was trying desperately not to laugh. It wasn't him. It was the girl. It was the girl who I'd been so abrupt with. She is over there making faces because she just does not want to laugh. You can tell she's, he's looking away. She's, you know, crying and he's staring at me with this blue cellophane. I'm just looking up at him and John, you know me. I talk for a living. I had nothing to say. I had absolutely nothing to say. I'm just staring at this guy. One of my children chimes in, my oldest boy Mason. He says, wait, the microwave's not blue. And I'm like, shush, shush. Dad, you said these people were so dumb. I'm like, yeah, I know. I know what I said. I know what I said. Just go over there.

10:52 I didn't know what to say John. So all I did was pick up the microwave and turn around and walked out. I walked out of the store. I got about 20 feet I think from the customer service desk. And I hear it erupt in laughter. Come here, come here. You gotta hear this. You gotta hear what this guy just did. No, that guy, that guy leaving with the kids.

John Bytheway: 11:14 Pull that, pull the hat down.

Hank Smith: 11:16 Yeah, I think my daughter was saying, dad, they're laughing at you. I'm like at us, they're laughing at us. So we put the microwave back in the car and we're driving home. And John, I don't think I need to tell you this, but guess who else thought it was the funniest story she had ever heard in her life?

John Bytheway: 11:35 Sara?

Hank Smith: 11:36 Yeah. About a half hour later I'm at home telling this story and she is crying. She's crying and she said crying, she said, tell me again, tell me again. And I said, And she said, and then he just held it up for you? And I'm like, yeah, he just held it up for me. And she said, you must have felt so dumb. And I said, I did. I felt

so dumb. She said, I can't believe you thought it was blue. I said, Sara, you thought it was blue. And she said, yeah, but I'm not the one that took it back. We still talk about that story to this day. It has been a long time. I think it's been 15 years since that happened. But we still talk about it today. And as I'm reading section 38 with the Lord saying, Hey, you're going to move. This is going to be really hard. But remember, if you are not one, you are not mine. And beware of pride. I was not reading section 38. Apparently when we moved.

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| John Bytheway: | 12:32 | If you're feeling blue, pull off the cellophane, pull off the cellophane. In fact, this laptop I'm using is blue. Hey, hey, how long has this been blue? How long has this been here? |
| Hank Smith: | 12:44 | After I told that story once, John, a woman came up to me and she said, it's okay. I thought my washer and dryer were blue for two years. Okay, I'm not the only one. Beware of pride the Lord says. Thank you for staying with us for the entire story. We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called FollowHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcast. We're, like I said, in section 37 through 40 this week. And we're going to talk about this man, James Covel, who I'm sure is smarter than me, at least when it comes to appliances. |
| John Bytheway: | 13:18 | Your telling this story shows that you were aware of pride and because now you're sharing it with us. |
| Hank Smith: | 13:25 | I am aware now. And guess what, John, today I can go upstairs and I can see the matching appliances. |
| John Bytheway: | 13:33 | Oh, what a feeling. |
| Hank Smith: | 13:35 | And she's right. It does look good. |
| John Bytheway: | 13:37 | Not only do they work, but they match. |
| Hank Smith: | 13:44 | Come back and join us next week for another followHIM Favorites. |