

"A Voice of Gladness for the Living and the Dead"

Show Notes & Transcripts

Podcast General Description:

followHIM: 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 if the key to healing both grief and past trauma was hidden in a single, radical revelation? Dr. Jordan Watkins explores how the early Saints' experiences of loss and grief were replaced with the doctrine of baptism for the dead–a practice that united heaven and earth.

Part 2:

Dr. Jordan Watkins examines how Joseph's revelations on baptism for the dead and record-keeping intertwined law, theology, and personal struggle, revealing how sacred records can bind communities, heal relationships, and link the living with the dead.

Timecodes:

Part 1 -

- 00:00 Part 1 - Dr. Jordan Watkins
- 01:15 Episode Teaser
- 05:26 Dr. Jordan Watkins' bio
- 07:04 *Come, Follow Me Manual*
- 10:28 A chronological approach
- 14:24 Divine interdependence
- 18:36 The Atonement of Jesus Christ is vicarious work
- 21:08 Quincy, Illinois
- 25:29 Top 10 Most Boring Cities in the World
- 26:22 Mary Ann Angell Young
- 30:52 Reports of Brigham Young as father
- 34:26 Background of D&C 127-128
- 36:47 Deep waters for Joseph
- 40:49 Baptisms will continue inside temples
- 44:05 Baptism's being salvific is unusual in Christianity
- 46:19 Anne Booth's vision
- 50:22 Getting sick in Nauvoo
- 52:08 Vienna Jaques, first baptism, and the altar call
- 56:15 Phoebe Woodruff's letter to Wilfred
- 1:04:18 The Nauvoo House and the Nauvoo Temple
- 1:08:03 Not performing baptisms abroad
- 1:10:20 Physical labor prepared the Saints for spiritual labor
- 1:14:02 Service that reaches across the veil
- 1:16:40 End of Part 1 - Dr. Jordan Watkins

Part 2 -

- 00:00 Part 2 - Dr. Jordan Watkins
- 02:11 Reasons for record-keeping
- 04:07 Legal context
- 06:14 What keeps Joseph busy?
- 11:02 Henry Sherwood - Local constable
- 13:13 Significance of keeping records
- 17:54 Prophets' expanding souls
- 20:22 Joseph emphasizes multiple records
- 23:20 Connection between baptism for the dead and writ of *habeas corpus*
- 24:47 *Schindler's List* parallels
- 28:19 Are there records in Heaven?
- 29:09 Nautical and Resurrection symbolism
- 32:14 Saviors on Mount Zion
- 36:09 Joseph revising and expanding scripture
- 38:00 Dr. Watkins's personal story of his uncle Scott
- 41:28 Teaching from beyond the grave

- 44:18 Why we need the dead
- 47:17 If they had “had the chance”
- 50:38 The call for the dead
- 54:03 Join our voices with the prophets
- 56:32 A new record of baptisms for the dead
- 59:54 What about those who lived before records?
- 1:04:58 The value of records of all types
- 1:07:13 Record of Micah
- 1:10:26 Our attitude toward difficult people
- 1:12:54 Dr. Watkins’ testimony of the Restoration and Jesus Christ
- 1:19:25 End of Part 2 - Dr. Jordan Watkins

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Jordan Watkins is from Alpine, Utah. He received a PhD in American history from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He also has a BA in history from BYU and an MA in history from Claremont Graduate University. His book, *Slavery and Sacred Texts: The Bible, the Constitution, and Antebellum Historical Consciousness* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), examines the ways in which antebellum biblical and constitutional debates over slavery brought awareness to the historical distances separating Americans from their hallowed biblical and Revolutionary pasts. His interest in American history stems from a lifelong fascination with Latter-day Saint history. His most recent work in that field appears in the volume *How and What You Worship: Christology and Praxis in the Revelations of Joseph Smith* (2020), which he co-edited. Before joining the faculty in Religious Education, Jordan was a volume editor of the Documents series of The Joseph Smith Papers. He is a co-editor on volume 10 of that series, which was published in 2020. Jordan is married with two children.

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Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:00:04	Think of all the demands on our time. We have never, I don't think, been busier. The options for spending our time are so great and many of those things are good. Maybe our effort to make time to attend the temple, to pay attention in the temple. And there's a great article by Michael Austin on the Sacrament of Attention and he says there's a reason we use the term pay attention. It costs us something.
Hank Smith:	00:00:37	Hello everyone. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name's Hank Smith. I'm your host. I'm here with the voice of gladness himself, John Bytheway. John, I am serious. You know how many people listening have heard your voice through the decades? You're not that old, but through the decades they've heard that voice of gladness.
John Bytheway:	00:00:55	No, that's kind of old.
Hank Smith:	00:00:57	Yeah.
John Bytheway:	00:00:59	Yeah. I started when I was five.
Hank Smith:	00:01:01	Yeah, I remember that first talk.
John Bytheway:	00:01:03	What I wish I'd known in kindergarten. That's right.
Hank Smith:	00:01:07	Hey John, we are privileged to have returning to the show, Dr. Jordan Watkins. Jordan, welcome back.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:01:13	Thank you. So excited to be here.
Hank Smith:	00:01:15	Jordan, I have been looking forward to this for a long time. It was months ago that you and I talked about what you were going to do this year. We have made it through the Missouri period. What comes to mind when you think these early years in Nauvoo we're not gonna be there very long?

John Bytheway:	00:01:30	I'm fixated on section 128 when I went as a 12-year-old to do baptisms for the dead. I love the activity 'cause we went to Der Rathskeller afterwards and had pizza. The idea of vicarious work and a connection to the spirit world. The older I get, the more I think how incredible and amazing this is to be able to do things here that have an impact there. Where else can you do that? I love it. I love talking about it. It's fascinating.
Hank Smith:	00:02:00	And what does that say about the Lord that this is part of his work, Jordan, as you've been studying for this today, and I knew you loved it before we even talked, what are we gonna do today? What are you excited for?
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:02:12	We're gonna do a lot. I'll just say that I'd actually like to start in an unlikely place, a Serbian writer. There's this short story that he wrote in 1981. His name's Danilo Kiš. He publishes this short story. I'll summarize the story for you. It's about a scholar who travels to Stockholm. It's at the invitation of her guide, the narrator's guide, she spends this night at the Royal Library of Sweden. She discovers something in the library called the Encyclopedia of the Dead. She notices that each room is arranged alphabetically and within these books she finds a record of every person who has died, including her father, who had passed just a couple of months before. And she writes this. What makes the encyclopedia unique, she explains is the way it depicts human relationships, encounters landscapes, the multitude of details that make up a human life. The reference to my father's place of birth is not only complete and accurate, but is accompanied by both geographical and historical details because it records everything.
	00:03:22	So this encyclopedia, the narrator explains it's the creation of a religious organization who, the narrator actually says this. They must have members all over the world digging tirelessly and discreetly through obituaries and biographies, processing their data and delivering them to the headquarters in Stockholm. The narrator goes on to say the compilers are motivated by a belief in the resurrection, says they compile their vast catalog in preparation for that moment. Their democratic program stresses an egalitarian vision of the world of the dead. A vision that is doubtless inspired by some biblical precept and aims at redressing human injustices and granting all God's creatures an equal place in eternity. So this is a 1981 fictional short story written by the Serbian writer eventually publishes this with a collection of other short stories and includes a postscript later on in the published version saying I subsequent shortly after this is published, I saw a magazine article about these people out in Salt Lake City who have these unusual archives in the granite of

		the Rocky Mountains who painstakingly gather all of these records from around the world. And the article even mentions they do these baptisms for the dead to secure the retroactive baptism of their ancestors. The article says they take their task very seriously. That whole story speaks to this human concern with the dead.
Hank Smith:	00:05:05	Yeah, yeah.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:05:06	It's a general concern including records of the dead and of course that's gonna be much of our focus for today.
Hank Smith:	00:05:13	Wow, Jordan, what a way to start. That is fantastic. Now John, Jordan was with us four years ago. I'm guessing some listeners have joined us since then. So could you tell our new listeners about Jordan?
John Bytheway:	00:05:26	Yes. Jordan Watkins is an associate professor of church history and doctrine at BYU. He was born in Alpine, Utah, served in the León Mexico mission. He has a bachelor's in history from BYU, a master's in history from Claremont Graduate University, a PhD in American history from UNLV. He's been a co-editor on the Joseph Smith papers. He authored Slavery and Sacred Texts, the Bible, the Constitution, and the historical consciousness of Antebellum America. Wow. Antebellum means pre civil war. Is that right?
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:06:02	You got it.
John Bytheway:	00:06:03	He's currently editing a primary source collection on slavery and religion in the 19th century for Rutledge. He and his wife Maddie have two boys, Emerson and Holland. They're three years old in two months at the time of this recording. That's a fun time. We're really glad to have you back. I'm already fascinated, just the introduction Hank was worth being here.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:06:28	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	00:06:28	That was fantastic.
John Bytheway:	00:06:30	Somebody's whispering in their ear.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:06:32	Yeah, it's interesting stuff.
Hank Smith:	00:06:33	That was beautiful. Jordan, you have a brand new baby to get him to sleep did you just read him some of the historical articles that you comb through?

Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:06:44	Yeah I just pull out my book.
Hank Smith:	00:06:45	Well not your book, not yours.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:06:48	No. Just pull out my book, read a few lines and he's down.
Hank Smith:	00:06:52	Yeah. That's so great. Well we're grateful for Maddie for letting you go because that's a lot of work. A 3-year-old and a two month old.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:07:02	She's adapted to it better than I have.
Hank Smith:	00:07:04	Has she? Why don't we get started with the Come, Follow Me manual because I know that Jordan has a lot to share. The title of this lesson is A Voice of Gladness for the Living and the Dead. In August, 1840, a grieving Jane Neyman listened to the prophet Joseph speak at the funeral of his friend Seymour Brunson. Jane's own teenage son Cyrus had also recently passed away. Adding to her grief was the fact that Cyrus had never been baptized and Jane worried what this would mean for his eternal soul. Joseph had wondered the same thing about his beloved brother Alvin, who also died before being baptized. So the prophet decided to share with everyone at the funeral what the Lord had revealed to him about people who pass away without receiving gospel ordinances and what we can do to help them. The doctrine of baptism for the dead thrilled the Saints; their thoughts turned immediately to deceased family members. Now there was hope for them! Joseph shared their joy and in a letter teaching this doctrine, he used joyful, enthusiastic language to express what the Lord taught him about the salvation of the dead: "Let the mountain shout for joy and all ye valleys cry aloud; and all ye sees in dry lands tell the wonders of your Eternal King!" Wow, what a way to start. Alright Jordan, where should we go from here?
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:08:24	We're gonna get eventually, I promise we'll get to Jane Neyman and Cyrus and Seymour Brunson and 128. We'll get there. It could be useful to start, a little broader framework and then we'll get through a lot of the context of baptism for the dead along with some of these other sections. One of the ways to frame this comes in section 19 of the Doctrine & Covenants. That's where the Lord instructed Martin Harris to impart freely of his property to fund printing of the Book of Mormon. Now his subsequent instructions have clear thematic ties to baptism for the dead. Before this, describing the depths of his own suffering, he said, I God have suffered these things for all that they might not suffer if they would repent. Christ's incarnation and atonement is a singular kind of proxy work. It's the most far

reaching act, the most ample provision in behalf of the living and the dead in all of human history, his body stood in for all of our bodies, not only saving us from unnecessary suffering, also allowing us the opportunity to emulate him in providing charitable proxy work for the living and the dead.

00:09:42 In other words, I'm saying Christ's vicarious sacrifice, enlivens gives life to all other kinds of proxy work allowing us to become saviors on mountain Zion from the beginning, from the foundation of the earth. And we'll get to this point again later. Vicariousness was and is the plan. It's not a plan B, it's plan A. What I hope we see throughout these sections is proxy work all over them. Certainly in the teaching of baptism for the dead everywhere else too. And hopefully that allows us to see proxy work throughout our lives to become emboldened, empowered to emulate Christ in doing for others what they may not be able to do for themselves.

Hank Smith: 00:10:26 That's fantastic.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:10:28 When I started to prep for this conversation, I thought maybe we just do a straightforward chronological approach. The background up front, talk through the revelations with that context in mind. After spending some time with these sections, section 128, which we've mentioned in particular, I think a different approach might be better. We know that Section 128 has a remarkable structure and logic. It's rooted in a specific historical moment and we'll talk about those details. It moves freely through time and space draws on several biblical passages, chronicles the appearance of various, I'm gonna say historical figures. At times you even wonder, did Joseph Smith lose his train of thought while offering the letter? He is kind of going off. He never does. He always brings it back to bear on the subject at hand. My point is I wanna use Section 128 as a model for this conversation.

00:11:22 It might make sense to work through each of the sections, take some contextual side trails along the way, all in an effort to try and shed some light on these sections. I'll just say too, I think it's important to say that I'm gonna draw on the scholarship of friends and colleagues who've done so much heavy lifting on these sections. Scholarship itself can be a kind of proxy work. Many people have already done this work and I'm drawing upon them. So style of 128, right where Joseph just names all the people who have shown up. I would just wanna, at the outset, some of these individuals I'm gonna be drawing on Phil Barlow, Sam Brown, Alex Baugh, Alex Smith, Lisa Tate, Chad Orton, Matt McBride, Ryan Tobler, Jenny Webb, Andy Hedges, John Durham

Peters, Mike McKay, Amy Harris. There are others. That's a list of names. Amy Harris has recently written a very fine book on the theme of Redeeming the Dead in the Doctrine & Covenants.

00:12:19 Those are some of the scholars we're gonna be drawing on to walk us through these developments. We've already mentioned Alvin. I think that's an important context to begin with. I mentioned Section 19. Section 19 talks about a book. The Book of Mormon talks about a body, the body of Christ, bodies and books ushered in the restoration. Another example of this is Moroni showing up in 1823. Joseph recalled in his records saying his hands, arms, feet, legs. He says that the owner of the body then spoke and told Joseph Smith about what? A book, so you have a body and a book. What did Joseph have to do? He had to resurrect that book. And what is the book about? Well, we know what the book's about. It's about a history of struggle, struggle of a people, destruction of a people, separation of a family despite the best efforts of parents, separation and destruction of a people despite the best efforts of prophets.

00:13:20 What does Joseph do? He helps resurrect this record. He allows for these fathers to cry from the dust to tell their descendants what God had done for them. What does Moroni do at that initial appearance? He also points to another record the Bible. He quotes biblical passages including Elijah's return. Elijah's gonna turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers like Book of Mormon prophets. Elijah's gonna help heal the separation between generations, between the living and the dead. I'm just suggesting that right at the outset of the restoration, it sets the stage for past prophets either in person or through proxy records to appear to Joseph to give him truth, powers, practices that he couldn't otherwise obtain. Joseph can't obtain them by himself. He needs those people to come back to him. He needs their bodies to return and he needs the records and then that allows us in turn to help in the proxy work.

00:14:24 All of that points to a divine interdependence. We need each other. We need our bodies, we need our records. There's a problem that Elijah's appearance or the promise of Elijah's return highlights. We could describe it as a problem of separations, separation between God and his children. Separation between or among God's children. Even separation between God's children and the earth. I'm thinking of separation in spatial terms, distance from God. Also attitudes. We know that separation in and of itself isn't a negative thing. Separation can allow us to grow to having some separation from each other gives us a sense of identity. Selfhood.

Separation can also be of course, destructive, divisive, alienating. It can lead us to turn from God to turn on each other and to turn against the earth. We wanna overcome these separations. Elijah's return I think is in part an answer to those separations.

00:15:33 You mentioned Alvin in the introduction. Think about that as this initial separation that Joseph Smith experiences. Joseph experienced a lot of death throughout his life. That really begins with his oldest brother Alvin, who died in 1823. Alvin was beloved son, beloved brother, who made an outsized contribution to the family economy, a kind of proxy work on behalf of his younger siblings. After Moroni's appearance in 1823, Alvin encourages Joseph to follow the angel's instructions. As you know, a few months later in November he died. He was prescribed calomel for severe stomach cramps that may have made it worse and he died many decades later. A brother William Smith stated that the local Presbyterian minister at least intimated strongly that Alvin had gone to hell. And we don't know exactly if that happened. It's certainly the case that many Christian ministers of the day warned unchurched and unconverted individuals that hell awaited them.

00:16:35 Now this relates to this broad theological quandary arising from belief in a just God and the fact that so many of God's children live and die without knowledge of Christ. In 1823 Joseph doesn't have that answer, clearly wondered about his brother's fate. He doesn't even seem to have the answer when he gets the vision. Section 76. Perhaps it gave him some comfort. He may have assumed that okay, I guess Alvin will be in the terrestrial kingdom 'cause you need a baptism. January of 1836 he sees a vision of Alvin in the celestial kingdom, which we'll talk about later on in the year. That probably put many of Joseph's concerns to rest because he learned that yes, all who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would've received it if they had been permitted to tarry shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God.

00:17:27 Now that vision itself didn't mention baptism for the dead. Joseph and other saints must have wondered, we know we need baptism. Alvin's in the celestial kingdom doesn't quite understand how that works. I think it does inform his teaching. In 1838, he answered a series of questions that he said people often asked him. One of the questions was this, if the Mormon doctrine is true, what has become of all those who have died since the days of the apostles? This is 1838. He says, all those who have not had an opportunity of hearing the gospel being administered to by an inspired man in the flesh must have it

hereafter before they can finally be judged. He doesn't say anything about baptism for the dead. He's got this sense that there's an opportunity there. Alvin's death highlights these core problems. I'm suggesting that his death and other deaths and others suffering opens Joseph up to profound revelation. That's sort of broad contextual pieces that can then allow us to jump into some of these sections.

John Bytheway: 00:18:36 Jordan, I love that really brief explanation of, look, the atonement was a vicarious event. This is not new. We should all understand that doing vicarious work should not be strange. It's what the atonement of Jesus Christ was. I remember watching that movie Mountain of the Lord where Wilford Woodruff explains that Joseph was learning line upon line and I go way back to King Benjamin of a hint of this idea in Mosiah 3:11 for behold his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them or who have ignorantly sinned and way back then there's this hint that hey, wait a minute. Some people will never hear it. They will die not knowing the will of God concerning them. It took time and took some line upon line seeing Alvin and all of that for them to get all the way to 128.

Hank Smith: 00:19:40 The more I've studied the Joseph Smith family, the more you love Alvin, the way they talk about him. When you first come into church history, you talk about Hyrum, Lucy Mack, Joseph Sr, maybe even Samuel, and you think, oh yeah, they did have an older brother. At first Jordan I thought, oh how sad he didn't get to be part of this. This year I'm seeing he was a big part of this. He keeps showing up in Joseph's thoughts and his visions. So yeah, there is a Smith family member playing a role on the other side almost this whole time.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:20:14 Which highlights that point of proxy work we'll get to in 128 how we need them and what a perfect illustration of they need us. Because we have bodies and we can perform these ordinances, we can do stuff here, but we need them. And the story of Alvin highlights that point. Without Alvin, Joseph maybe isn't asking these kinds of questions. He's not wondering, he's not thinking about it. I think it's a perfect illustration of some of the central teachings of these sections. Joseph Smith's development of his understanding for work for the dead came in relationship to the saints suffering. His own suffering regarding Alvin and others he'd lost, but also the saints suffering more generally. Winter of 1838 Saints were religious refugees by the way, throughout the 19th century. Most of their contemporaries do not want them as neighbors.

Hank Smith:	00:21:07	Oh yeah, we've watched that.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:21:08	That was true in Missouri. That was true throughout the 19th century, especially as converts come from the British Isles in Northern Europe. They're described by some of their contemporaries as poor, lazy, immoral, violent. Not everyone felt that way about them. In fact, this is one of these periods when Joseph and other leaders are languishing in prison, Saint's journey to Illinois. They find refuge across the Mississippi River in Quincy and the people of Quincy provide them some much needed temporary relief and maybe that inspires some of Joseph's thinking about providing more enduring relief across the veil. In succeeding months, the Saints began to gather in what was called Commerce becomes Nauvoo and they gathered on the other side of the river in Iowa territory in October of 1839, a stake was organized there. John Smith, Joseph's uncle was the president. Alanson Ripley was the bishop before.
	00:22:03	Long questions are arising about, well where do we gather? Now this question comes in part because of section 124, a section in which the Lord provides instruction of saints on building a temple and on building what is called the Nauvoo house. It's also about gather to Nauvoo in that revelation, the Lord says, I accept your offering. You did what you could in Missouri. It's no longer required of you to build the city of Zion and build a temple there. You're gonna build it here in Nauvoo. That leads to some questions including the question asked by John Smith. A couple of weeks after that January 1841 revelation John Smith travels to Joseph Smith to find out what the Lord wanted the Saints in Iowa territory to do. Do we have to come across the river to Nauvoo given the Lord's instruction in section 124? That may be what they were asking and the Lord responds in section 125 that they could gather in places appointed by Joseph to this is verse two, build up cities unto my name that they may be prepared for that which is in store for a time to come.
	00:23:12	Again, I hear the Lord saying no longer required that all of your saints, all the saints gathered at Jackson County. Certainly also, you don't all have to gather to Nauvoo. It's also a reminder too, he's saying, build up cities in my name. We don't have to wait for God and we shouldn't wait for God to establish Zion. God's not gonna build Zion for us. That's what he says in section 58. You must be anxiously engaged in a good cause. We're not anxiously engaged in the good cause of building up Zion. We're not gonna become the people who are worthy of the heavenly Zion. Verse three, the Lord instructs them, build a city in Iowa territory and says, let the name of Zarahemla be named upon it.

That name had already been chosen by the saints by the way, so he is just confirming that like, yeah, that's a good name.

00:23:56 Of course that name is a prominent city in the Book of Mormon. The fact that they're naming it Zarahemla, what does that tell us? Well, it tells us that they care about the Book of Mormon, highlights their affinity for that book and of course it sets a precedent for place names in Utah and elsewhere where we have Book of Mormon names showing up for some of our cities. Verse four, the Lord instructs them to gather as Nauvoo and all the stakes which I have appointed. I think this relates to our broader theme. It's as if the Lord suggested that, yeah, Nauvoo can stand in for, be proxy for Jackson County for the time being.

Hank Smith: 00:24:32 Okay.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:24:33 Seeking to establish Zion as it's put in this revelation. Essaying to be the Lord's saints, striving to be the Lord's saints just as valid, just as important in Nauvoo, in ancient or modern Zarahemla in Nashville, Iowa, which most people don't know about or Nashville, Tennessee or anywhere else throughout the world. Just as valid there as it is in Jackson County. Wherever we live. I think the Lord is saying we can strive to live as Christ-like and Zion-like people.

Hank Smith: 00:25:06 I'm sure we have listeners Jordan all over the world who will never see Nauvoo. We've all been there. It's like a beautiful memorial. As you walk around the buildings that remain and you see the temple up on the hill, you don't have to go there to have a testimony of Joseph Smith and to feel the power of the saints, but there is a spirit of place still. There's a spirit there.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:25:29 There absolutely is. Just before my mission, I did a semester at, I think they called it the Joseph Smith Academy. It was really BYU Nauvoo and I spent a semester there. It was wonderful from a certain perspective, it's among the probably top 10 boring cities, towns in the world.

Hank Smith: 00:25:50 Especially after about five o'clock, you know in the fall.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:25:53 Exactly. Exactly. There is a spirit of that place that is still there. You can sort of feel it in the air.

Hank Smith: 00:26:03 Scott Esplin, Dr. Esplin loves the phrase, come see the place that the angel says to the women at the tomb, come see the place and there is something about, let's see the place. Alright, Jordan, let's go to 126. I'm excited to get to 128. You're gonna

have to tap the brakes on me saying, no, these are important too.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:26:22 Let's do this 126 on the surface, themes and messages of 126 are quite distinct from 125. This revelation to Brigham Young also raises questions of where to live and where to work in the section. Just as the Lord had told the Saints he no longer required them to build the temple in Jackson County and that their offering was acceptable to the Lord. Now he tells Brigham, President of the Twelve that he was no more required to leave his family and to preach and that his offering was acceptable. Now, Brigham had served, of course, several missions since his conversion in 1832. What did those missions mean? Well, they meant temporary separation from loved ones. His, as the revelation says, his labor and toil and journeys for the Lord had come at a great cost. 1832, his first wife, Miriam Works, had died leaving behind Brigham and two children, two young children in 1834, Brigham remarries. He marries Mary Ann Angell and an angel indeed she was. Within a month he was on Zion's camp and then missions continue after the birth of their first child. In October of 1834, more children and more missions follow. Late 1837, Brigham had to flee from Kirtland due to persecution, leaves Mary Ann to care for their five children. Probably heard that when they're reunited in Missouri. Brigham says, you look as if you were almost in your grave. Given all that, given all that she was doing, it's kind of surprising she wasn't.

Hank Smith: 00:27:57 Not something you say to your wife though.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:28:01 Yeah, just try that. Yeah, see how that goes. Yeah, don't try that at all. Probably an indicator of all she had been doing. April of 1838, Joseph received a revelation he actually already received in a revelation like this, in April of 1838, the Lord instructed Brigham is not canonized. Lord instructed Brigham not to leave his family again until he had amply provided for them. Frankly, I'm not sure that happened. I'm not quite sure how it could have happened. The Saints were driven from Missouri soon after this. Mary Ann recalls living in 11 residences over the course of three months and she was pregnant at the time. Saints moved to Illinois. Brigham in the Twelve. As you know, they're called to go to the British Isles. It's hard to imagine worse conditions when they leave. We all remember the story or many of us know the story of Brigham and Heber being very sick, riding away in the back of a wagon and shouting, hurrah for Israel and that's a beautiful story.

00:29:00 What we don't talk about often is the impoverished and sickly conditions of Brigham's family. Mary Ann had given birth to

their seventh child 10 days earlier and all seven children were sick when Brigham left. Within two months she's out of food. She lives on the Iowa side. She's out of food, so what does she have to do? Well in the winter, she gets in a skiff with her infant and rows across the Mississippi River and the waves soak them. They get to Nauvoo, they go to some friends, some friends give them some potatoes and flour, help them survive. She makes that trip many times. She's actually eventually given a plot in Nauvoo and what does she do? She plants a garden. She builds a cabin. She puts blankets over the doors and windows. Remarkable what Mary Ann Angell emphasis on angel does while her husband is away. She is doing a proxy work for her husband.

00:30:15 She was preaching the gospel. Now, when he gets back to Nauvoo on July 1st, 1841, he sees the condition. Joseph Smith comes to their home eight days later. He sees the condition of things he probably already knew about the condition of things. To some extent, he dictates a revelation on the spot and I imagine the Lord had in mind Mary Ann as much as Brigham when he said, your offering is acceptable to me. I have seen your labor and toil. It's a beautiful thing to hear from the Lord. That's his word to all of us, to all people who labor for and weep for Zion. We'll all hear, I think, I hope, those words in time. So then what does the Lord do? He says, Brigham, you can send the word abroad, but now you're not gonna go abroad yourself. Brigham and the Twelve are now gonna authorize missionaries.

00:31:08 They're gonna author missives to stand in for them again, proxy. The records and the other missionaries will stand in as proxy for Brigham and the Twelve. Brigham serves a couple of short missions in the years to come, but of course most of his work after this is focused on administrative work from church headquarters. In fact, Joseph gives a discourse shortly after in which he says the Twelve now stand next to the First Presidency and attend to the business of the church, and they had earned the right to remain with their families. All of us have to find balance between caring for those closest to us and those at a distance, and Brigham was caring for those at a distance. Now it was time for him to care for those closest to him. We have to figure out that balance. Christian life is life and community.

00:31:58 The community we seek is really with all God's children. We're trying to figure out how to love of course ourselves, our families, love the world. It's a great challenge. Gospel living requires that of us. One other thing I'll say about Brigham Young here, he's told to take especial care of his family from this time henceforth and forever. Aftermath, he gets to work. They build

a better home. Also, his family, as we know, becomes one of the largest families in American history, which would give new meaning to this instruction. I think it's fair to say that not all of Young's family members believed that he took special care of them. His 56 wives divorced him. There's a prominent sort of extreme example, Eliza Young who later lectures on Brigham Young and writes an expose and says that this system is horrible on the other end of the spectrum.

00:32:53 Consider this from Clarissa Young Spencer, one of his daughters. She writes this a couple of decades later. Perhaps it's informed by golden age mentality. I think her words are rather striking. On the day of my birth, a company of the Saints had made the customary trip to Brighton and they had no sooner reached their destination than word was brought to my father that my mother had taken ill. To the great disappointment of his people my father turned around and went immediately back to the city in order to be with Mother during her ordeal. As I was his 51st child, the birth of a baby was far from being a novelty in the family. His consideration for each of his wives or any other member of his family was such that he would willingly forego any pleasure of his own if he could be of any comfort or assistance to them. She added his constant thoughtfulness for our happiness and wellbeing endeared him to all of us. The bond between my father and me, she said was as close as if I had been his only child and I am sure that each of the other children felt the same way. I shall always be grateful that I was born his daughter. In her view at least Brigham had taken especial care of his family.

Hank Smith: 00:34:14 That's great, Jordan. If you asked my daughter about me, I think you'd get some truth. Our kids know. Our kids have a front row seat. Okay, Jordan, what should we do next

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:34:26 On to 127 and 128 as 126 suggests we're called to care for those closest to us, henceforth and forever. We're also called to care for all God's children, the living and the dead. Sections 127 and 128 are two letters that Joseph wrote to the Saints while in hiding in September of 1842. Now we'll get to the background and immediate context in detail. First a few words about why these sections are unique. When the 1844 edition of the Doctrine & Covenants was published, it had 110 sections, only four of which dated from the Nauvoo period. This includes what are now sections 124. In some ways, section 124 was understood to be the Nauvoo revelation. We also had 127 and 128 Joseph approved of those sections for inclusion in the Doctrine & Covenants. Now as you know, by the time the

Doctrine & Covenants is published in 1844, it also included Section 135.

00:35:34 Joseph didn't authorize Section 135 I'm sure he was okay with it. Right? That's the section on the martyrdom which was quickly added after Joseph's death. The other sections we just spoke about 125 and 126, along with several other sections, they are added in 1876 when Orson Pratt put together a new edition of the Doctrine & Covenants. At that same time, Pratt added portions of Joseph's letters from Liberty Jail. Those great letters 121 through 123. What does that mean? That means sections 127 and 128 are the first letters as far as I can tell to be published in the Doctrine & Covenants, the letters themselves are not dictated revelations. They do contain revelatory passages. They do contain moments where the Lord is delivering instruction. They aren't in and of themselves dictated revelations. Joseph understood their value and believed they needed to be included in the cannon. The first few verses of section 127, Joseph is writing about his enemies pursuing him.

00:36:47 Again pursuing him, and again, we'll come back to that immediate context. He also refers to persecution more generally that he's faced throughout his life. Deep water is what I am wont to swim in. It has all become second nature to me and I feel like Paul to glory in tribulation. That's a remarkable thing to say and it's born of experience. Now, Joseph experiences persecution throughout his ministry. I suspect his imprisonment in Liberty Jail is a kind of hinge point at which he begins to glory in tribulation. I don't think he starts out that experience glorying in tribulation. He wouldn't have been praying to God, asking where God was if he was glorying in that moment. As he gets the answer, as he waits to get the answer, as he gets the answer, as he learns that, yep, in time you'll triumph over all your enemies.

00:37:50 By the way that shows up in verse two, section 127. He's reflecting back on what the Lord had told him in Liberty Jail. He's also told that if he endured his affliction well God would exalt him on high. This Liberty Jail experience broadens his vision. Initially what is he worried about? He's worried about himself and he's worried about the Saints. He's hearing reports of their suffering. I think the Liberty Jail experience really expands his understanding and his vision to think even broader. Verse three of 127, Joseph again referred to what the Lord had told him in Liberty Jail that his enemies would face God's justice. Then what does he do? He moves on from that really quickly, sort of like, okay, that's in the Lord's hands. Now, I'm not

suggesting Joseph doesn't think about his enemies going forward. He does and he has things to say about them.

00:38:44 He turns his focus elsewhere. In Liberty Jail as Joseph turns inward, replaces anger with hope and love, he turns upward to God. The Lord then gives him revelations that further empower him to turn outward and as we'll discuss even backward to bless all God's children. I think it's notable that within a short period of time after he's out of prison, he sends a letter to the Quorum of the Twelve. This is December of 1840 Quorum of the Twelve are on missions as we've indicated. Joseph wrote these memorable lines, which will sound familiar. Love is one of the leading characteristics of deity and ought to be manifested by those who aspire to be the sons of God. A man filled with the love of God is not content with blessing his family alone. As section 126 says, must do that as well, but he also needs to range throughout the whole world being anxious to bless the whole of the human family.

00:39:47 He actually says, this has been your feelings and caused you to forego the pleasures of home that you might be a blessing to others who are, and I love this phrase, candidates for immortality. So lines about preaching the gospel, also think they're very much tied to teachings on baptism for the dead. In fact, Joseph talks about baptism for the dead in the same letter. Part of the point I'm trying to make here is the Liberty Jail experience, other contexts of suffering and separation, separation from the Saints or from loved ones or even feeling separated from God. Those moments for Joseph are incubators for his revelations. They're incubators for his revelations of teachings that aim to address all human suffering and in large measure by addressing the fragility of human connection. Verses four and five, Joseph turns Revelator. Now we hear some of the word of the Lord.

00:40:49 The Lord commands the Saints to continue the work on the temple. That would be the Nauvoo temple and then he proceeds to offer instruction on this big topic baptism for the dead. Now, large chunk of context here to outline the origins of baptism for the dead. We could start with an obvious point. It was a point I tried to make through the short story that I shared at the beginning. Throughout human history, the living has done work for the dead in every culture, caring for the body, prayers for the deceased, creating records of their lives. There's a book by the cultural historian Thomas Laure entitled The Work of the Dead. It's not about Latter-day Saints. It's a history of how the living have cared for the dead. Much of that work is through history, religious in nature. Scholars have examined work for the

dead done by early Christians, for example, including praying for the dead and even baptism for the dead.

00:41:54 We know the passage in 1 Corinthians 15:29, Paul, he's not lecturing on baptism for the dead. He's talking about resurrection. He is defending resurrection in asking why some people are baptized for the dead if the dead rise not at all. We know that some early Christians perform baptisms for the dead. That appears to have been a more limited practice and it appears to have been done for those who believed but had not been baptized. Now, in subsequent centuries, work for the dead became a point of contention and division. Augustine rejected the idea that salvation could be found after death. In later centuries Protestant reformers, they condemn the Catholic view of purgatory and the practice of praying for the dead, mostly believing with some caveats, mostly believing that the dead immediately go to heaven or hell. Protestants viewed prayers for the dead as an example of Catholic's misplaced emphasis on works which they believed undercut the doctrine of grace.

00:43:04 Now, Protestants don't entirely get rid of all of the sacraments. Of course, practice baptism and the Lord's supper. For most of them, these ordinances are commemorative. They're not salvific. They do not save. In fact, there's a very prominent theological dictionary written not long before Joseph Smith is born by a man named Charles Buck and there's an entry on baptism and it reads in part and he's Protestant, baptism is not essential to salvation he writes. To suppose it is essential is to put it in the place of that which it signifies. If baptism is unessential, no need for baptism for the dead. By the way, he has an entry in that dictionary on baptism for the dead. When he says, yeah, this was formerly in use, he cites First Corinthians 15:29. Then he provides an interpretation that suggests that baptism wasn't literal. Ancient Christians didn't do baptisms for the dead.

00:44:05 What I'm saying is Latter-day Saints in early America are not only unique for the practice of baptism for the dead, they're actually unique in their view of baptism in describing it as essential. Even Baptists. Did they think baptism was important? It's in the name. Did they think it was essential that it saved you or had some salvific fully transformative power? No. It was a sign of your belief in Christ, a token of your belief. In some ways, we have more in common with Catholics than Protestants. Our faith is in some ways, I'm gonna use the term sacramental, ritualistic. We believe that your sins are remitted through baptism. That's essential. Now, is it also a symbol and a sign and it's those things as well. If we insist on the necessity of

baptism, then that does create a conundrum regarding those who have died without them.

00:45:14 When the 1830s again, the Saints are like, no, you must be baptized. Yet, what about all the people who have died? Now, I'll mention two interesting precedents for baptism for the dead in the United States. According to one 19th century historian, there was a group of German Pietists who had immigrated to Pennsylvania who performed baptisms for the dead. He writes that in 1738, a man was baptized for his deceased mother and another man was baptized for his deceased father. The historian says the idea of thus securing immunity for deceased or absent kinsfolk and friends struck the popular fancy. According to this historian, he says, this practice continued into the 1830s. That would've been the exception. I don't know of any other instances in early America. I'll give you a more interesting, I think an immediate precedent. May of 1840 Brigham, we know where he is at.

00:46:18 He's on a mission. He writes to his wife Mary Ann and he tells her about a vision, a vision had by a convert to the church named Ann Booth. Now, if you wanna read more about this, Chris Blythe has written a very good article on it. Brigham sends news of this vision and he actually includes in his letter, a transcript of her account of the vision. I'll read a part of it. She says, being carried away in a vision to the place of departed spirits, I saw 12 prisons, one above another, very large. On arriving at the uppermost prison, I beheld one of the 12 apostles of the lamb who had been martyred in America. This is a reference to David Patten, an original member of the Quorum of the Twelve who had died at the Battle of Crooked River. In 1838, shortly before a couple years before the record goes on to state, Patten was standing at the door of the prison holding a key in his hand with which he unlocked the door and went in.

00:47:24 According to the account, John Wesley greeted David Patten and announced that deliverance had come. According to Ann Booth's vision, Patten preached baptism and confirmation, and then she says this, a river of water clear as crystal appeared, Patten entered the water with Wesley and baptized him. Patten ordained Wesley to the Aaronic Priesthood and Wesley baptized the other prisoners. Patten confirmed them. Members of the church gave them the gift of the Holy Ghost. Ann Booth also records that she had a reunion with her deceased grandfather and her mother who blessed her. Brigham and other leaders in Britain, they knew about this vision. They wrote home about it. We also know that Joseph Smith knows about it because a couple of months later, in October of 1840, he gives a sermon

on baptism for the dead and he refers to the vision. He says this, according to Vilate Kimball, Joseph taught that the dead will have the gospel preached to them in prison, but there is no such thing as spirits being baptized.

00:48:31 Joseph does not wholly discard sister Booth's vision. Now, what does this all mean? I'm not entirely sure. Joseph may have received a revelation on baptism for the dead before ever hearing of Booth's vision or maybe Booth's vision inspired him to reflect further on a subject he'd already been thinking about and to receive revelation on that subject. In either case, Joseph appreciated the vision's emphasis on the need for the dead to be baptized even as he taught spirit can't be baptized. Latter-day Saints believe baptism is necessary. Latter-day Saints also believe that baptism requires bodies that corresponds with an emphasis on, I'm gonna use the term embodiment in Joseph's revelations. Bodies are essential to exaltation. We need bodies also to perform certain works. Of course, our bodies are the source of much suffering during this life. Joseph's revelations teach that our souls are made up of body and spirit and that both are crucial components of salvation.

00:49:39 Our belief system prizes materiality, and in the late 1830s, the Saints knew that the dead who would've received the gospel would be in the celestial kingdom, but given the emphasis on baptism and embodiment, they weren't quite sure how that made sense or at least if they gave it much thought, they might not have been sure how that would make sense. That's some of the immediate context. There's an even more immediate context for Joseph's introduction of the practice and teaching of baptism for the dead, and this is also tied up with death. This separation, a very severe separation of separation of the spirit from the body is a central context for Joseph to introduce this practice. Reports of Ann Booth's vision is crossing the Atlantic. What are the saints doing in Nauvoo? They're staring down death on the banks of the Mississippi River. Many of them had arrived in Commerce on the banks of the Mississippi River and what happens?

00:50:43 They get sick. They get sick with malaria and they don't know why. They don't know what the cause is, but they're getting sick. Some are miraculously healed, others die. One of those who dies is Seymour Brunson. In fact, the record says that moments before he died, Joseph was actually there. He says that David Patten, the same David Patten we've just mentioned was in the room from across the veil and urged him to join him on the other side. Days later at Brunson's funeral service, this is August 15th, 1840, Joseph introduced the practice of baptism

for the dead. We have an account. We don't have contemporary accounts. We have recollections. According to the account of Simon Baker, Joseph referenced 1 Corinthians 15. Then he speaks to a widow in the audience whose son had died before he was baptized. We believe this to be Jane Harper Neyman, and according to Baker, Joseph told the widow and the saints that the living could be baptized for the dead. About a month later, Harvey Olmsted, member of the church baptized Jane in behalf of her son, Cyrus. Vienna Jaques was on horseback acting as a witness in the Mississippi river.

John Bytheway: 00:52:08 Vienna Jaques was something else, someone I never heard about as a kid or church history, whatever. In seminary. Now we're finding out all these things, donating her means and she was a powerhouse.

Hank Smith: 00:52:21 Our friend Dr. Anthony Sweat, who was just with us for the Kirtland Temple dedication, he's an artist. He'll say he's such a good artist he became a religion teacher. If you want to look this up, it's called First Baptism for the Dead and you've got Jane Neyman there and Vienna Jaques is it?

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:52:43 There's some uncertainty about how to pronounce her last name.

John Bytheway: 00:52:47 Jackie? Jacques. Jean.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:52:50 I say Jaques.

Hank Smith: 00:52:51 Yeah. She's on horseback in the river. Witnessing.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:52:56 Yeah. I'll add that. Brett Rogers, a historian of the Church History Library, recently published her biography.

Hank Smith: 00:53:02 Oh, okay. Wow.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:53:03 Or a biography of her, so yeah, check out the the painting and check out the book.

John Bytheway: 00:53:10 If you've ever been in the high council room in practically any stake center, you've got, I think there's a set of certain paintings. There's the resurrected Christ saying, go ye into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature, baptizing them. It just sounds essential there. I picked up a book once, it's called Will the Real Heretics, Please Stand Up and it's by an evangelical named David W. think you say it, Bercot, B-E-R-C-O-T, I really appreciated he looked at early Christianity and then he made

comments. In fact, there's a section called Our Need For Doctrinal Humility. Listen to this. He said, interestingly, we evangelicals seem to recognize the need for some type of initiation ceremony, a rite of passage to mark the Christian rebirth. Strangely enough, we had generally rejected the historical ceremony of the baptismal rebirth and have developed our own special ceremony, the altar call.

00:54:15 When Peter preached to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, his hearers asked him, what shall we do? Did Peter tell them to walk up to the front of the crowd and invite Jesus to come into their hearts? No. He told them, repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. After Philip explained the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch, what did he do? He immediately baptized him. Likewise, when God demonstrated to Peter by the outpouring of the Spirit on Cornelius, that Christianity was open to Gentiles, the first thing that Peter did was to baptize Cornelius and his family. When Paul preached in the middle of the night to the Philippian jailer and his household, did Paul then hold an altar call? No. The scriptures say, then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in the house, and he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes and immediately he and all his family were baptized. Then Mr. Bercot says, since we feel the need to associate our spiritual rebirth with a fixed day and hour, why don't we tie it to baptism rather than to the altar call? Actually, the altar call and associate prayers are a product of the revival movements of the 18th and 19th centuries, and they were virtually unknown to any Christians before that time. You must be born again. Those words that are often repeated in the standard works and how we interpret that as a baptism by water and of the Spirit maybe baptism and confirmation.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:55:45 That's related to the conversations that Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith are having about section what becomes Section 20. They have a disagreement about some of the language. Oliver Cowdery, who essentially wrote another version of the articles of the church, had a phrase in there that the members need to come up and tell about their path in salvation, their conversion story. Joseph is like, nope, that's not it. So yeah, that's a crucial context.

Hank Smith: 00:56:12 Yeah. Thanks, John. Yeah, that was good. Jordan, what do we do next?

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:56:17 During this same period, Joseph worried about more proximate separations. What I mean by that is during the summer and fall of 1840, his father Joseph Smith Sr. was sick. Joseph Junior was

threatened with removal from Illinois in September, 1840, same month that Jane Neyman was baptized for her deceased son. Missouri authorities initiated extradition proceedings against Joseph Smith. Extradition involves the removal of a person in one state to another state for trial. In this case, Missouri authorities wanted to extradite Joseph back to Missouri to be tried for crimes he allegedly committed during the what's called the Mormon War. Now we have a great passage from Lucy Mack Smith's history that highlights the close relationship between these contexts and the new teaching of baptism for the dead. So she says, on a Saturday evening in mid-September of 1840, Joseph Smith Sr. was so sick that he vomited blood.

00:57:33 The next morning, Joseph Jr. shows up. She writes, he came in and told his father that he should not be troubled anymore for the present with the Missourians, after which he informed his father that it was then the privilege of the saints to be baptized for the dead. These two facts, fact one that Joseph Smith Jr. was safe from extradition for the time being, and fact two, that the dead could be brought out of Spirit prison. Mr. Smith, Joseph Smith, Sr. Was delighted to hear and requested that Joseph should be baptized for Alvin immediately. Joseph Smith Sr. then proceeds he's very sick. He's essentially on his deathbed. He proceeds to bless his children. Lucy writes that after the blessings, he paused and said, I can see and hear as well as I ever could. Now we'll discuss seeing and hearing a lot today. Then came a second pause before he said, I see Alvin then came a third pause and he said, I'm gonna live seven to eight more minutes.

00:58:48 He died about eight minutes later. Lucy says, we found that her record's not always accurate, but I find these passages so interesting. She notes that they're compelled to attend to his funeral the next day or run the risks she says, of seeing Joseph and Hyrum torn from their father's corpse before it was interred and carried away by their enemies to prison. After we deposited his last remains in its narrow house, she wrote, my sons fled from the city. Hyrum was baptized for Alvin. Soon after this, he actually was baptized again for Alvin later the next year. Why? We're not quite sure, maybe that was after the temple font was completed. The point to make here is contexts of suffering, persecution, death, separation, those were springboards for revelation. They certainly were for Joseph. I think they can be that for us as well. Joseph had had this vision of the celestial kingdom in 1836 suggesting that the dead, who would've received the gospel would be in the celestial kingdom. Now the saints could do something about it. They knew that was the case. Now they can do something about it, so they did. I love

what Vilate Kimball said in a letter to her husband, Heber, who again is on his mission in the British Isles. She says, the waters, meaning the waters of the Mississippi River have been continually troubled. They're flocking to the Mississippi River.

John Bytheway: 01:00:31 Yeah.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 01:00:31 Remember again, Brigham, Heber, Wilford, they're not in Nauvoo for this big announcement. They're on missions in the British Isles. Many of them learn about the practice from letters written by their wives. October, 1840, Phoebe writes to Wilford, there has been quite a number of deaths, she says, in Commerce, people are dying. And then she says, oh, and Joseph has taught on the livings being baptized for the dead, that they may be judged according to men in the flesh. Joseph, she writes, had explained that members could be baptized for their kindred dead, including children, parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, uncles and aunts, and that as soon as the dead are baptized, they are released from prison and their friends can claim them in the resurrection and bring them into the celestial kingdom. Of course, we believe that the dead have the option to accept or reject those baptisms and ordinances. It's agency. You can hear in Phoebe's statement, the exuberance of the Saints.

John Bytheway: 01:01:38 The waters are continually troubled.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 01:01:40 Continually troubled. They're not being baptized for distant relatives. Somebody who they've found in their family tree, they didn't have that language. They're being baptized, in fact, Joseph's instructing them to be baptized for close family members. They were baptized for those who they knew and for those whose deaths they had mourned. Now, throughout the 19th century, the work expands both in terms of the kind of work done for the dead and the scope of who the Saints perform the work for, but initially this focus is on very proximate family members. Now, Joseph himself does eventually write to the Twelve about the teaching. I mentioned actually the December, 1840 letter. That letter with the great statement about a man who's filled with love of God is not content with blessing his family alone. Later on in the letter, he says, I presume the doctrine of baptism for the dead has ere this reached your ears and may have raised some inquiries in your mind respecting the same. This is an interesting time. You might learn about baptism for the dead when you're on your deathbed and Joseph shows up to your home and he says, guess what, dad? The living can be baptized for the dead. You might hear about it on your mission and somebody sends a letter,

right? Things were changing rapidly theologically during this period, but Joseph says, I cannot in this letter give you all the information you may desire on the subject, but aside from my knowledge independent of the Bible, I would say that this was certainly practiced by the ancient churches in St. Paul endeavors to prove the doctrine of the resurrection from the same. I first mentioned the doctrine in public while preaching the funeral sermon of Brother Brunson and have since then give general instructions to the church on the subject.

01:03:24 He proceeds to explain the Saints have the privilege of being baptized for those of their relatives who are dead, who they feel to believe would have embraced the gospel if they had been privileged with hearing it and who have received the gospel and the Spirit through the instrumentality of those who may have been commissioned to preach to them. While in prison we'll get much more about that from his nephew, Joseph F. Smith, and his vision. Without enlarging on the subject, you will undoubtedly see its consistency and reasonableness and it presents the gospel of Christ in probably a more enlarged scale than some have received it. I love that phrase, but as the performance of this rite is more particularly confined to this place, it will not be necessary to enter into particulars. At the same time, I always feel glad to give all the information in my power, but my space will not allow me to do it.

01:04:18 You see that sort of phrasing through many of these documents, Joseph often felt he lacked the language, the space, the time to appropriately convey his visions and revelations. That's certainly true with baptism for the dead. Just a month later, Joseph received more instruction on baptism for the dead. We've mentioned his January 1841 Revelation section 124. In it, the Lord provides instruction to build a temple, to build a Nauvoo house. By the way, isn't that interesting? If you read section 124, there's almost equal emphasis on building the Nauvoo house and the house of the Lord. That's an interesting thing. What does it suggest? I think it suggests that these endeavors are tied together. We're called to offer Christ-like hospitality and saving ordinances to all God's children. What a beautiful way to live the two great commandments building habitations for God, providing hospitality for God's children and taking care of both temporal and spiritual needs.

01:05:23 Then the Lord specifically addresses baptism for the dead. Build a house unto my name for the Most High. This is again, section 124 for the Most High to dwell therein that he may come and restore again, that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away even the fullness of the priesthood. Of course, much

more on that in Section 128. For a baptismal font, there is not upon the earth that they, my saints may be baptized for those who are dead. For this ordinance, belongeth to my house. Saints continue to work on the temple. They get to work on a temple font. In the meantime, as permitted by the Lord, they continue to perform baptisms for the dead in the Mississippi River. Some numbers. In 1841, the Saints in Nauvoo performed almost 7,000 baptisms for the dead in the river. Nehemiah Brush was baptized in behalf of more than a hundred individuals.

01:06:16 Sarah Cleveland was baptized for about 40 individuals. Franklin Richards was baptized for his brother who had been killed in the Hans Mill massacre. Decades later Wilford Woodruff, he's reflecting. Wilford Woodruff, of course, is very important figure for a number of reasons. One is the development of temple work. He broadened that work in significant ways. Decades later he's reflecting back on this moment, and he says this, when the prophet Joseph had this revelation from heaven, what did he do? There are witnesses here of what he did. He never stopped till he got the fullness of the word of God to him concerning the baptism of the dead. Before getting the fullness he went into the Mississippi River, so did I as well as others, and we each baptized a hundred for the dead without a man to record a single act that we performed. Why did we do it? Because of the feeling of joy that we had to think that we in the flesh could stand and redeem our dead. We did not wait to know what the result of this would be or what the whole of it should be. Isn't that beautiful? He's sort of saying like, yeah, we didn't all have it all figured out. How are we not going to flock to the Mississippi River to perform these baptisms for the dead?

Hank Smith: 01:07:32 I've had a hard time finding a good source for this. There's a story that President Packer was taking questions from a journalist and someone said, do you really intend to do this temple work for every person who's ever lived ? Do you have any idea how big that, yeah I mean, and President Packer, I guess said something like, it's a big job.

John Bytheway: 01:07:54 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 01:07:55 Take a thousand years and a thousand temples probably.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 01:07:58 That's excellent.

Hank Smith: 01:08:00 It's a big job. It's a beautiful doctrine.

Dr. Jordan Watkins:	01:08:03	There's much more to say about it. I'll note that in section 124, the Lord does reference baptisms for the dead by those who are scattered abroad. They're not doing them in the British Isles. Remember what Joseph said in his letter. It's mostly confined to this place. We actually do know that Saints in other areas, including Kirtland, performed baptisms for the dead. In October of 1841 Joseph says, no more baptisms for the dead until we have that font completed. It's weeks after that in that Brigham Young dedicates a temporary wooden baptismal font in the basement of the unfinished temple. A few weeks after that, the Saints began to perform baptisms in the font. We have a couple of exceptions in terms of baptisms being performed out of the font after that. For the most part, the practice of baptism for the dead is then confined to the temple font. Every other teaching and practice of the restoration, there's development over time and in relationship to the Saints circumstances.
Hank Smith:	01:09:08	Did they even write down who they're being baptized for or was it like ?
John Bytheway:	01:09:12	Was somebody recording it or...?
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	01:09:13	Initially, I presume that in some cases they didn't even record it. We do have some records of baptisms for the dead from before these letters. Before sections 127 and 128. There was some sense that we should keep some record not at the level that that they got to after these letters. Why do we need temples to perform these? The Lord says we do so I guess that's a good reason why, because he allows exceptions. I don't have the answer. God doesn't need a house. He's not looking for a nice place to reside. I would say it this way, at least for the early saints, the process of building temples, especially for these saints who don't have much financial means, that's gonna uniquely prepare them to be endowed with power from on high. The fact that they have to sacrifice so much to build a temple, how are they then gonna feel when they enter that temple and receive those ordinances?
Hank Smith:	01:10:17	Right? The building of the temple makes you something.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	01:10:20	Like the building of Zion makes you something. God doesn't give it to you. You build it and you become something in the process. It's also interesting to note that the physical labor of construction prepared them to receive these ordinances are tangible. You feel them. It's physical. When they completed the temple, they worked with the same eagerness that led them to flock to the Mississippi River to be baptized for their dead. Even though in Nauvoo they knew their time was very limited. It does

make me wonder about today. I don't help in building a temple. I mean, I pay my tithing.

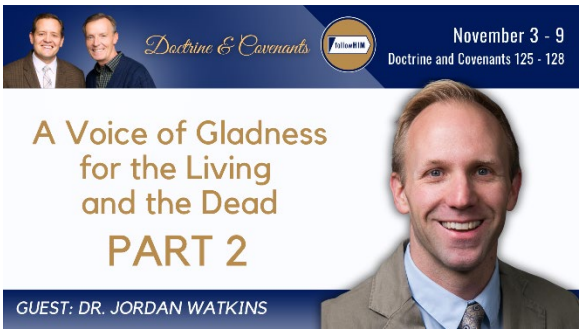
Hank Smith: 01:10:56 I'm not out there with my wheelbarrow, right? In fact, they'd kick me out. They'd say, get outta here. You're gonna hurt yourself.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 01:11:02 You're slowing the work. It does lead me to wonder, what do we do today? Obviously donating a tithe is not nothing. That's something, what kind sacrifice do we make? I wonder if at some level time has taken the place of physical exertion. Both are still required to some extent and in different parts of the world it still takes longer to get to a temple, even though it's becoming easier. Many of us, I should say, it costs relatively little time to get to the temple, but you have to spend the time in there and we're asked to give up that time. We sometimes think, wow, people, what? What did they do in the past? They just had so much time. I mean, they were busy. You had to work the land to actually eat. Think of all the demands on our time. We have never, I don't think, been busier. The options for spending our time are so great and many of those things are good. Maybe our effort to make time to attend the temple, to pay attention in the temple. There's a great article by Michael Austin on the Sacrament of Attention, and he says, there's a reason we use the term pay attention. It costs us something. Give the time and then to pay attention. Maybe that's what prepares us to be endowed from power from on high today.

Hank Smith: 01:12:31 Yeah, it's not going out there with a wheelbarrow and working, but it is maybe doing the same thing to me as that working did to them. I really like that. Jordan, you might think the Lord's work is sometimes a paradox. He says, if you lose your life, you'll get it. You're going, that makes no sense. To pay your tithing, the windows of heaven will open. You're like, well, I'm giving something away. How? How am I getting something back? Maybe it's the same way with the temple. I don't have time to go to the temple. Oh, go to the temple. You'll have more time or there's something that will happen to you.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 01:13:07 Maybe one way to say it is you'll have eternity. I'm thinking of those revelations on the law of consecration, right? It's like, give me everything because it's actually mine. Show me that you know that it's mine and then if you keep this law, what will I give you? I will give you the kingdom. All that the father hath will be yours. Are we the kind of people who can use that kind of time, use that kind of power? Well, and I think the temple can prepare us for that sort of thing.

Hank Smith:	01:13:43	President Hinckley said, what appears to be a sacrifice turns out to be an investment which pays you dividends for the rest of your life. I think he was talking about missions, but I think our time in the temple is the same way. It feels like a sacrifice. It ends up being an investment that keeps paying dividends.
John Bytheway:	01:14:01	Remember too, there is another soul, another immortal soul on the other side that has benefited from your time in the temple. That's huge. Someone else out there. That's why I like when they call it temple service, a service that reaches across the veil. That's kind of incredible to think about. I found a statement by Elder Richard G. Scott. He said, do you young people want a sure way to eliminate the influence of the adversary in your life? That's a pretty big statement. A sure way to eliminate the influence of the adversary in your life. Immerse yourself in searching for your ancestors. Prepare their names for the sacred vicarious ordinances available in the temple, and then go to the temple to stand as proxy for them to receive the ordinances of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. As you grow older, you'll be able to participate in receiving the other ordinances as well. I can think of no greater protection from the influence of the adversary in your life.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	01:15:09	And it feels like we've heard similar things recently from our prophet.
John Bytheway:	01:15:12	Yeah, this is 2012. A sure way to eliminate the influence of the adversary. Find your ancestors, prepare their names, which has never been easier. Couple of touches on a phone.
Hank Smith:	01:15:23	As a parent of teenagers John, I want that. That's high on my list of to reduce the effects of the adversary in my children's lives. I have an answer right here. Here's something I can do.
John Bytheway:	01:15:39	We had a mission farewell in my ward this last Sunday. Elder Mason Ontiveros thanked the bishop for the temple trips that they took. He said, first I was thinking about the refreshments or whatever we get afterwards. Then he thanked him for that time in the temple. I loved that. That would be the thing that lasted with him as he heads off to Columbia, is time in the temple.



John Bytheway:	00:00:00	You are listening to part two with Dr. Jordan Watkins Doctrine and Covenants 125 to 128. Content warning: This episode discusses suicide. If you're in crisis, please reach out to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988 or a local helpline. Listener discretion is advised.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:00:09	When we talk about temple work, we don't usually focus on records of temple work. That's what 127 and 128 are all about. Records of baptisms for the dead. The sections of the Doctrine & Covenants that talk about work for the dead are these sections and the focus is on records. We'll get to why it's interesting. So in verse six, the Lord instructed the Saints, when any of you are baptized for your dead, let there be a recorder and let them be an eyewitness of your baptisms. Let him hear with his ears that he may testify of the truth saith the Lord, that in all your recordings it may be recorded in heaven. Now we'll come back to that second part in a little bit. This instruction relates to the first command the Lord gives the church. April 6th, 1830, Joseph gets a revelation and the Lord says there shall be a record kept. At various points the Lord gives further commands to keep records. Joseph and the Saints made efforts to fulfill those commands with mixed results.
	00:01:14	Sometimes they're great, sometimes they weren't great. The Saints kept various kinds of records and the purpose of record keeping in the church shifted in relationship to distinct circumstances. Sometimes the attempt to keep records and to compile information was an effort to secure human and divine justice. We mentioned Liberty Jail, his second letter from prison, much of which is contained in Section 123. What's the emphasis? Gather up all facts related to the saints losses in Missouri, he describes this as an imperative duty. We owe this to God, angels, people who have died. The saints are gonna present these records to the government and they're gonna hope that the government provides them redress remuneration. But the Lord had also told them, he commanded them, you keep a record, you present it to the heads of

government and then I'll come out of my hiding place to bring divine justice.

00:02:11 One of the reason to keep records is because people are out there hurting other people, including us. We need to keep a record of it. 123 verse 13 through 15. He says, we should waste and wear out our lives in bringing to light all hidden things of darkness wherein we know them and they're truly manifest from heaven. I love that caveat wherein we know them and they're truly manifest from heaven. You gotta be careful in keeping records of these things. These should then be attended to with great earnestness. Let no man count them as small things. There is much which lieth in futurity, pertaining to the saints, which depends upon these things. I don't know exactly what he had in mind there. Just a few years later in more letters he writes to the Saints from in hiding. Joseph is insisting on the importance of keeping records of proxy baptisms, a very different kind of record.

00:03:04 Joseph's Liberty Jail experience, it inspired him to broaden his vision. I would say it this way, from a focus on securing justice for the Saints, we've been wronged, we need justice. I think that's an understandable desire, but then it shifts, it broadens to an emphasis on finding revealed answers to aid in the salvation of the living and the dead. Now we'll say more about the function and power of these records. I'll just note broadly that in early America there is a record keeping culture. That record keeping culture had very religious roots. I think for example, of family Bibles, families had Bibles and what did they record? In those bibles, they tended to record important dates and family history, dates of birth, dates of baptisms, dates of marriages and deaths. Some of the Saints would've participated in those same kind of practices. They're already coming from a culture that sees some value, some sacredness to keeping records of important events.

00:04:07 Now I'm gonna shift from there to a legal context. We're actually gonna do some legal stuff today, American legal culture contributes to a focus on record keeping. I mentioned that in September of 1842 when Joseph writes these two letters in September of 1842, he mentions the context in the final verses of section 127. Joseph refers to the fact that he's being pursued by his enemies while he wants to preach to them about baptism for the dead, he'll have to settle with sending forth his thoughts on the subject. He can't be with them. He's in hiding. The written word, in other words, will have to stand in for the spoken word. Another sort of instance of proxy in the opening of the next letter. So section 128, written from the home of

Edward Hunter. He's hiding in the homes of members. He writes, I now resume the subject of the baptism for the dead as that subject seems to occupy my mind and press itself upon my feelings the strongest since I have been pursued by my enemies.

00:05:18 Now why would that be? Is that a coincidence? I'd suggest that his isolation, Joseph is a social person. He glories in the idea that the same sociality that exists here will exist there. He likes to be around people. He doesn't like to be isolated and in hiding. Now he's facing a threat of separation. I'll get to more of that in a second. And even death, I think that opens him up to inspiration about how to restore relationships, how to restore sociality. What are the divine practices and teachings that can, if life is so fragile here, if my relationships are so fragile and if at any moment I can be separated from my family and friends, how can I make sure that doesn't happen in the next life? Now, the most immediate threat had emerged in the summer of 1842. So a couple of months before.

00:06:14 Think of Joseph Smith in this period. He is incredibly busy. You know some of the events that happened in 1842 March organizes the female Relief Society, May introduces the Endowment. During this time he is Church President, he is trustee and trust for the Church. He is editor of the Times and Seasons, the newspaper in Nauvoo. He is Lieutenant General of the Nauvoo Legion He is also mayor of Nauvoo and the presiding officer of the mayor's court. He became the mayor in May. Why did he become the mayor in May? That's when John C. Bennett was excommunicated. That's another story. Within days of becoming mayor, rumors begin to spread that Joseph had been involved in the attempted assassination of former Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs, that same Lilburn Boggs who had signed the extermination order. Some asserted that Joseph had sent who's he gonna send?

Hank Smith: 00:07:13 Porter.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:07:13 Orrin Porter Rockwell to assassinate Boggs. Now there's really no evidence that this was the case. There is a little bit of circumstantial evidence in the fact that Rockwell was actually in the area around the time of Bogg's attempted assassination. But famously right, he later says, if it had been me, he wouldn't have survived. So we don't really have any evidence that it was Joseph or that Joseph had sent Rockwell. In some ways that doesn't really matter. Rumors are going around that Joseph had tried to have Lilburn Boggs assassinated. So what happens? He begins to worry. Joseph begins to worry about another mob attack and another extradition attempt. We talked about one

extradition attempt that came at the time that he introduced baptism for the dead. This is a couple years later and now another extradition attempt is emerging. He actually thought Bennett was conspiring with the Missourians to send him back to Missouri.

00:08:11 Bennett actually indicates he was ready to help in that kind of effort. What do they do in Nauvoo? In early July of 1842, the Nauvoo City Council passes an ordinance, a law. That's interesting to think about. Ordinance we use in a particular kind of way, but ordinances are also used to refer to laws. They pass an ordinance granting Nauvoo citizens the right to habeas corpus through the city court. Okay, now I know we're getting into some legal jargon here, but we can explain this. This right, the right to habeas corpus allows a detained individual, if I get arrested, I have a right to petition for a writ of habeas corpus from the local justice. If that judge grants that writ of habeas corpus, that means the authorities have to take me. They have to take my body before the court to consider the legality of the arrest or detainment. Habeas corpus is Latin for you shall have the body and refers to the need to bring the body of the arrested individual before the judge. And the judge is not gonna determine whether or not that person is guilty. The judge is looking at the arrest warrant. Is that warrant valid?

Hank Smith: 00:09:25 It's gonna protect me from being just hauled away by someone.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:09:29 That's right. If the warrant's invalid, you can go free. Joseph tried to use this. He tried to use it in Missouri, not successful. He had successfully used it in the prior extradition attempt. In June of 1841, he obtained writ of habeas corpus and Stephen A. Douglas. Yeah, prominent figure in American history. He was an associate justice of the Illinois Supreme Court. He determined that the arrest warrant on that occasion was invalid. Joseph was allowed to go free. Now a year later, Joseph is faced with a new extradition attempt. So what does the city council do? They pass this law. Now the right to habeas corpus already existed. The city law tightens it up or expands it that give the city court broad powers to grant this writ. Well within days, Lilburn Boggs has signed an affidavit identifying Joseph Smith as an accessory before the fact of the attempted assassination. Current Missouri governor, governor Thomas Reynolds issued a requisition.

00:10:27 You have to send a requisition to the Illinois governor Thomas Carlin saying, arrest Joseph Smith. Send him to Missouri for trial. Couple of days later, August 2nd, Carlin signs an arrest warrant. Six days later on the morning of August 8th, three officers arrive in Nauvoo and they arrest Joseph Smith and Rockwell. Now

what does Joseph and Rockwell do? They petition for a writ of habeas corpus. They're in Nauvoo, at about one o'clock the Nauvoo city court they meet. Orson Spencer has to act as the temporary President because Joseph Smith is the President, he's absent. So we get some proxy work here. The court issued the writ of habeas corpus. That means the officers are supposed to bring Joseph Smith and Rockwell before the court. Henry Sherwood is the local constable. He delivers the writ to the officers. The officers are like, is this okay? We're not quite sure. So what do they do?

00:11:25 They leave Joseph and Rockwell in Sherwood's capable hands and they go to Quincy to get more instructions. And by the way, Sherwood's a member of the church, he's a local member. Smith's petition for habeas corpus had worked. We have a petition for writ of habeas corpus. We have the city council's election of Spencer in Joseph's stead because he's absent. And then the city court grants this writ. What does that highlight? The power of authorizing an individual to act on behalf of another. It also highlights a text as power to save. I'll come back to this. What does Joseph do? Sherwood says you're free to go. Joseph doesn't fully trust in the legal system, so he is gonna use it.

Hank Smith: 00:12:14 Shocking.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:12:15 It can help him, but surprisingly not fully trusting in the legal system, he's like, I'm gonna turn to my friends for help. He crosses the Mississippi River to Zarahemla. We've mentioned Zarahemla, Iowa territory, and over the next few weeks he hides in homes of church members in and around Nauvoo, somewhat isolated again, he likes to be around people. So what does he do? He becomes very contemplative. On August 16th, he's hiding in the home of Edward Sayers. A week later he's hiding in his store in Nauvoo. He's with his secretary, William Clayton, and he becomes really sort of pensive and he speaks the names of family members, of friends, and he says, William Clayton, I want you to record their names. The names are recorded in a book called The Book of the Law of the Lord. This book appears to have had its origins from an 1832 letter many years earlier.

00:13:13 Joseph writes a letter to William W. Phelps and in the letter he says, basically, there must be a church clerk who keeps a record of all those who consecrate. We need to write their names down. Well, almost a decade later, beginning in 1841, Willard Richards begins to record the saint's tithing donations in this book called The Book of the Law of the Lord. What's fascinating

about this book, not only does it have these tithing donations, it's Joseph's journal for the period. So if you examine the book, you'll find several pages, journal entry, journal entry, journal entry, and then several pages of tithing donations, tithing donations, tithing donations. So it's functioning in different ways. Well, in this August 16th entry, which is by the way, followed by, almost interrupted by almost 20 pages of tithing donations, Joseph begins the entry. He's speaking to William Clayton. He's saying he gives a blessing to Erastus Derby.

00:14:12 Erastus Derby was staying with Joseph. He assisted him in transporting correspondence. Joseph blesses Derby and then he names and blesses many other people. He called them his pure and holy friends and he said, these are the ones that shall inherit eternal life. It's as if Joseph believed that by recording their names in the book of the law of the Lord, it would secure their salvation. Over several pages he names those who had helped him during his current crisis. He says, because I live, they shall live also. He returns to the subject a week later when he hides in his store in Nauvoo. This is August 23rd. He proceeds to mention others. He'd gotten on a roll and he just kept going. He mentions his deceased father, his deceased brother, Alvin. Of Alvin he said in particular, shall his name not be recorded in this book? Yes, Alvin let it be had here and be handed down upon these sacred pages forever and ever.

00:15:13 The point I'm making here is that there's a connection right between this emphasis on writing the names of his friends and family members in a book. He sees that as having some great significance. It's within a few weeks that he's avoiding extradition, that he's writing these letters to the saints about baptism for the dead and not just about baptism for the dead, but about record keeping. He exalts record keeping as sacred, as crucial, as necessary. So yes, I'm saying his attempts to avoid extradition and his reflection while in hiding, they anticipate his instruction to keep records of baptism for the dead.

John Bytheway: 00:15:56 Wow.

Hank Smith: 00:15:57 Jordan, probably not a time to just stop you and pay you a compliment, but the way you can weave together all of this and and paint a picture of Joseph Smith because I've picked up on that too. I'm not a historian, but I picked up on the fact that he does not like to be isolated. When he does, he gets very reflective and contemplative. I think it's 1832, right when he is helping his Bishop Whitney, who broke his leg. He's writing to Emma saying, I'm spending a lot of time in the forest just thinking. The way you can weave together all that's happening

		almost makes us feel like we're there. It was intense there for a while and then he is hiding and oh.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:16:38	What you say is so true. Thank goodness that Joseph was isolated at times. Hard thing to say. Thank goodness he was imprisoned. As hard as that is what comes out of his experiences in prison or in isolation are these teachings and practices that we prize so dearly.
John Bytheway:	00:16:58	I just had never ever considered what he's going through legally with recording things and the power that has maybe impressed upon his mind. Let's record all this stuff. This is out there, but it reminded me of Enos. You also quoted that a man filled with the love of God as not satisfied with blessing his family own. When Enos prays, he prays for himself. Then he prays for his brethren, then he prays for his enemies, then he prays for the records. I've always thought how interesting we've worked so hard on these records, preserve these records for even my enemies that it might bless them.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:17:39	Yeah, that's beautiful. There's something prophetic that you see not maybe in every prophet but in a variety of prophets. You mentioned Enos that led me to think of Enoch, he's the one who says, God, why are you crying?
Hank Smith:	00:17:52	Yeah. Yeah.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:17:54	We exalted the Zion people, we're good. God's like, I love all my children, but what does Enoch do? Enoch's like, oh yeah, I'm gonna weep too. A prophet, even after he'd been exalted, you think that maybe he'd made it. Not entirely. He needed to expand his soul more and I think that happens for Joseph in Liberty Jail and I think that happens for Enos. Yeah, that's beautiful.
Hank Smith:	00:18:18	Let's keep going. Jordan, I wanna learn more.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:18:20	Okay. More to say on this topic back to the text beginning in verse two. So this verse two of section 128, Joseph is again addressing the topic of keeping records of baptism for the dead. He explained that because a single recorder cannot be present at all times, the Saints must appoint a recorder for each ward in the city. He urged the recorders to be known as this language, very particular and precise certifying in his record that he saw with his eyes and heard with his ears the history of the whole transaction and also instructed the recorders to name witnesses who can at any time when called upon certify the same. I just

wanna pause here to note that proxy work is everywhere in these letters. In the first letter, Joseph authorized his agents and clerks to transact business in his behalf. Now he's explaining that recorders can stand in for the general recorder.

00:19:18 Given all that Joseph Smith was doing, he had to rely on others to be his eyes, ears, hands and feet. He also relied on records to stand in for him in various ways. Here he's writing in the place of preaching. He can't be with the Saints, he can't preach, so I'm gonna write, actually, he's not writing. He's dictating to William Clayton who is writing in his behalf, in place of him preaching. I'm just pointing out that there are all kinds of ways in which bodies and documents are working as proxies in these sections. Now, as I've already highlighted, there's a legal context here. Much of this language sounds legalistic, not coincidental. In his first letter, Joseph had indicated that the records kept on earth would also be kept in heaven. Okay? In the second letter, he expands on this idea, verse six, he quoted the book of Revelation, which refers to the book of life and the book out of which the dead were judged.

00:20:22 Joseph is emphasizing here multiple records. It's not one record, it's multiple records. His explanation is the books out of which the dead were judged were books containing the record of the works kept on earth. Records on Earth would stand in for the dead in heaven, demanding that those without bodies be judged according to the work's done in the flesh or the work's done when they had bodies. That is a power that can rewrite history. We'll say it that way, or put differently, somebody with a body is baptized for someone who once had a body but now does not. The record of that baptism stands in for the body of the living. Records of baptisms in particular have power to loose or release those in Spirit Prison just as a writ of habeas corpus had loosed or released him from detainment. Now that's a scholarly observation.

John Bytheway: 00:21:23 That's awesome.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:21:24 It's actually a connection made at the time, the day after we're gonna fast forward and then we'll come back. The day after Joseph gave his King Follett discourse, April, 1844. He intended to speak the next day to the Saints on the subject of baptism for the dead. He couldn't because he'd just spoken the day before for hours on the great topic of the King Follett discourse. So what does he do? He has someone else, he has Elder George Adams speak on his behalf. What I presume here is that Joseph says, well, the topic is baptism for the dead. I don't know if he gave him explicit direction, but he says, if he makes a mistake, I

will tell it. I'll let you know. If George Adams gets off and says something wrong, George Adams gives a three hour sermon on baptism for the dead. He tells the Saints this, I want to find a writ of habeas corpus for the dead. He observed that the Saints know what a habeas corpus means.

John Bytheway: 00:22:30 Wow.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:22:31 Yeah. And then he goes on to say this, he relates a tale of two people. He says there are two people. One is imprisoned for lying, swindling and deceiving. Another person through some embarrassment, is involved in debt and is seized under the same law and is also put in the same prison. The innocent man is taken from town many miles off and suffers without hope, but a friend searches the law and finds a habeas corpus and doing what the other man cannot do for himself, Adam says, the friend pays the money and gets the receipt in the presence of witnesses and gets it recorded and goes to the prison and looses the prisoner who falls on his bosom and thanks him for his liberty and freedom. Adams and I think Joseph, they saw this clear parallel between writ of habeas corpus and records of baptism for the dead.

John Bytheway: 00:23:30 Go Brother Adams.

Hank Smith: 00:23:33 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:23:33 Whoever you are.

Hank Smith: 00:23:33 That's awesome.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:23:37 Partly what I'm suggesting here is revelation is not received or understood in vacuums. It comes in the midst of our messy lives. Revelation is powerful precisely because through it God reaches down, condescends to meet us down in the muck and mire of our own lived experience. We shouldn't be looking for revelation free from or outside of our contexts, but instead in light of, in relationship to our context, including our problems, those are launching pads for revelation. At least they were for Joseph.

Hank Smith: 00:24:21 I can imagine you're arrested. You know if this person takes you away, it's probably over for you and here comes this paper that says you're free. You can go. At least I can get a sense of how that might feel. Now I can get a sense for how it might feel in the next life. For someone to show up and say the work has been done for you. It's like opening up the gates of hell.

Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:24:47	On that point that makes me think of a scene from a movie. There's a film called Schindler's List. In the film, German industrialist, Oscar Schindler. He goes to great lengths to save over a thousand Jews from death in the concentration camps and in one scene he and his assistant, what do they do? They create a list. They create a list of Schindler's Jewish employees so that they can transfer them to another factory so they won't be sent to Auschwitz. When they finish the list, this is like Schindler's William Clayton. When they finish the list, his assistant holds it up and states, this list is an absolute good. This list is life. Now again, context is quite different. The comparison is not exact, but Joseph is teaching something similar about records of baptism for the dead. The records themselves stand in for the dead. I'm gonna say it this way.
	00:25:46	This gives the records ontological status like they have a nature or a being. The records themselves are life. John Durham Peters scholar, has written about section 128 and he put it this way, Smith's materialism went so deep as to find eternity in a ledger. These records are powerful. That's the boldness of this doctrine. Joseph knows this is, I'm gonna use the term radical teaching. Verse five. He acknowledges some might think he's going overboard. You may think this order of things to be very particular and what is he saying in verse nine? It may seem to some to be a very bold doctrine, but right. He's insisting this is aligned with the order of heaven, the specific ordinance he speaks of and the power of the priesthood, including the power to bind on earth and in heaven. He says it's always existed.
	00:26:53	It's been present in other dispensations. That teaching sounds familiar to Latter-day Saints. Power to bind on earth as it is in heaven. What doesn't sound as familiar, or at least we don't think about it as much, is record keeping is the power to bind. At least that's how he's describing it here. That's not how we normally think of this power. We think about it in a different way. Verse nine. In all ages of the world, whenever the Lord is given a dispensation of the priesthood to any man by actual revelation or any set of men, this power has always been given. Hence whatsoever those men did in authority in the name of the Lord and did it truly and faithfully, and then this part, and kept a proper and faithful record of the same, it became a law on earth and in heaven. Record keeping here, at least in these sections is another function, or in some ways we might even say the function of priesthood. If God grants us the power to perform acts that assist others on the path to salvation, why should it seem strange that keeping records is one of those acts.
Hank Smith:	00:28:08	He found, what'd you say? Eternity in a ledger.

John Bytheway:	00:28:10	In a ledger.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:28:11	John Durham Peter's great phase. Smith's materialism was so deep as to find eternity in a ledger.
John Bytheway:	00:28:19	What would it mean when we talk about what you bind on earth would be bound in heaven? I've always wondered if somebody's writing it down here, is somebody writing it down up there like at the same time?
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:28:30	That's a great question and I do not know.
John Bytheway:	00:28:33	Because that's what I've always imagined, but they're waiting for us. But if we're writing it down, there's somebody mirroring you.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:28:41	That's why it is a bold teaching.
John Bytheway:	00:28:43	And if only we had some really secure, maybe we could hollow out a mountain made out of granite to store those records in or something. I don't know.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:28:53	There's an idea.
Hank Smith:	00:28:54	The phrase you read in verse five, you may think this order of things to be very particular, rings of Alma to Helaman. You may suppose this is foolishness in me, but this is how God does things.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:29:09	Yeah, and that relates back to what he had said in the Liberty Jail letter in 123. He says, this is a small thing, but what is the metaphor he gives there? I think it's a ship. You just need to turn it a little bit and it has a great impact.
Hank Smith:	00:29:24	Yeah. He says a very large ship is benefited very much by a very small helm in the time of a storm. One of my favorite verses. Yeah. Jordan, this has been spectacular. Is there more to come?
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:29:39	There's more. There's more. Let's go. You continue to get surprises in Joseph's discussion of baptism for the dead. So verse 12, the ordinance of baptism was instituted to form a relationship with the ordinance of baptism for the dead being in likeness of the dead. Okay? We're familiar with the idea that baptism bears a symbolic relationship to death and resurrection, but what is Joseph, at least really strongly implying here, that God first instituted baptism for the dead and then instituted baptism in relationship to baptism for the dead. We

don't usually think about it that way. We think, well it's baptism and we need to make a plan for those who aren't gonna get it. Jenny Webb has written about this and she says, well, that can seem a little backward until you consider the fact that the vast majority of God's children would not have the chance to be baptized during their lives. Joseph's revelations tell us that the plan of salvation was not just about, or even primarily about offering the living salvation, but also and perhaps especially about offering the dead salvation. We're focused on ourselves 'cause we're alive and we have access to the gospel. God is no respecter of persons, loves all his children. He makes ample provision for the redemption of the dead and the living. The teaching actually seems quite reasonable when you think about it that way.

Hank Smith: 00:31:07 Death is actually part of symbolically the ordinance itself. It points to those who die.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:31:14 It does. But the teaching, it's reasonable, it's consistent, but it remains bold.

Hank Smith: 00:31:21 It does, yeah.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:31:21 Verse 14, as are the records on earth in relation to your dead, which are truly made out, so are also the records in heaven. This therefore is the sealing and binding power and in one sense of the word, the keys of the kingdom, which consists of the key of knowledge. In one sense, at least the sealing power and the keys of the kingdom is record keeping of work for the dead. Now, yeah, we might be prone to say, wait a minute, can't place someone's chance at exaltation in the hands of imperfect humans in their imperfect records, but Joseph is proposing that God has done just that. That divinity depends on mortality, that eternity depends on time, and this teaching is emblematic of other distinct Latter-day Saint teaching embodiment, which we emphasized materiality.

00:32:14 I would add to that the idea of becoming like God, the teaching that we can act as saviors on Mount Zion by using our bodies to be baptized for the dead and to make records of those baptisms that encapsulates those really distinctive teachings. Now, one of the contexts that we haven't talked about that is absolutely crucial is what we get to in the subsequent verses. Verse 15, Joseph continued to teach that these are principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over as pertaining to our salvation. He proceeded to quote other passages of scripture, including no surprise, 1 Corinthians 15:29, but also Malachi 4:5-6. What does he say if Malachi, he had his

eye fixed on the restoration of the priesthood, the glories to be revealed in the last days and in in a special manner, this most glorious of all subjects belonging to the everlasting gospel, namely the baptism for the dead.

00:33:20 Joseph Smith could be hyperbolic. He said similar things about other teachings at other times, but what a thing to say about baptism for the dead, and then what does he do? He quotes Malachi as it appears in the King James Version. Behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, and he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest thy come and smite the earth with a curse. Now, what does Joseph go on to say? I might have rendered a plainer translation to this, but it is sufficiently plain to suit my purposes as it stands. This is really interesting because these verses appear without any change. In 3 Nephi 25, they appear without any change. When Joseph revised the Bible, he didn't change it simply noted Malachi, correct.

00:34:12 Now, why is that interesting to us? Even when Elijah appears in the house of the Lord in 1836, language is similar to the KJV when Moroni comes. Now this is Joseph's history written in the late 1830s recollecting, Moroni's appearance. In 1823, he says, Moroni quoted the fifth verse of Malachi. Thus behold, I will reveal unto you the priesthood by the hand of Elijah, the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. The next verse different as well, and he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so the whole earth would be utterly wasted in His coming. The revised passage makes Elijah more active, indicating that he would reveal the priesthood, that he would plant the promises made to the fathers in the hearts of the children.

00:35:07 That's what will turn the hearts of the children to the fathers and save the earth from destruction. That revision also places emphasis on the children doing the turning, not the fathers perhaps suggesting the fathers already turned their hearts to us and now we have to respond. The promise of Elijah's return appears to provide a solution to the problem of separation that we mentioned at the outset, and it suggests that we can assist in addressing separation between God and his children and between God's children and the earth. By turning to our fathers. By 1842, Joseph has understood this to mean performing baptisms for the dead and recording those baptisms. Verse 18 of 128, baptisms for the dead are the welding link between the fathers and the children. Still placing emphasis on the children,

but I think he also wants to remind the Saints that the children depend upon the mothers and fathers.

00:36:09 Verse 15, Joseph provides an interesting expansion of a verse from Hebrews, Hebrews 11:40, God having provided some better thing for us that they without us should not be made perfect following Moroni's pattern and quoting and revising passages of scripture. What did Joseph say? He revises it this way. They without us cannot be made perfect. Neither can we without our dead be made perfect. From our sort of myopic and maybe sometimes soloistic view of the world, it makes sense that the dead need us. Just like it makes sense that the living who don't have the gospel, they need us, but Joseph is saying, well, we need them too. Bit surprising. How do we need them? I'll suggest a couple of ways. Again, it's obvious to us why they need us. We have bodies. We can perform the proxy baptism and other ordinances. We need them in several ways.

00:37:07 I would suggest this, we need them in the sense that doing work for them teaches us grace, charity, mercy, selflessness. We need this work to help us learn to be more like Christ. We need this work to become who God wants us to be, perhaps just as much as the dead need access to the ordinances to become who God wants them to be, but there are other ways we need them. They once had bodies. In those bodies they had experiences including experiences with the divine. The Book of Mormon teaches us that these records, the records of past people have power to enlarge our memory. Moroni says, we want you to see these records to learn to be more wise than we have been. We can learn from them not only prophets, certainly them, but all people, and I would expand this to all of history.

00:38:00 The stories of the people who have come before, their successes and failures. They have something essential to teach us. We need their experiences, records of their experiences to help us understand more about God, more about how God works with his children. I would add that I think that's the same with our contemporaries. Regardless of their belief system, they have truth. They can teach us. Perhaps they can do things for us that we cannot do for ourselves. Joseph's instructions here are a reminder that while others may need us, we also need them and of course we all need God. So again, a divine interdependence. When I was young, most members of my extended family, we all lived in Utah. I saw them fairly often. One of my mom's sisters and her family, they lived at a great distance, the great distance of Idaho.

00:38:54 I saw her and her husband and their kids less frequently than I saw my other cousins and aunts and uncles didn't know much about them, but what I did know, I could feel a little disapproving. I knew they didn't attend church. I knew their lives looked a little different than mine looked based on that information. What did I do as a young kid? I filled in the gaps. I made the differences exaggerated. That was especially true for how I thought about my Uncle Scott. He always seemed to me a bit gruff, a little bit unapproachable. On the rare occasions that I did see him, he had this thick beard, bit of a gruff voice, and that seemed to confirm my notions about him. Well, when I was 16, my mom's father passed away. I learned about his death after I'd returned from a trip to California, I was devastated.

00:39:51 This is kind of my first experience with real loss. On the day of the viewing, we walk into the funeral home. I walk into the doors and who's the first person I see my Uncle Scott. I'm in a pretty vulnerable moment. He was not who I wanted to see. We lock eyes and I, it's sort of this gravitational pull. It's like, what can I do but walk to the person standing there? So I do. I walk to him and he just embraces me. I don't know how long we hugged. He held me long enough for my, all that misplaced trust, false assumptions to be replaced by love. This act, this embrace turned my heart to him. In the years that followed, we became close. We had a friendship that blossomed. We regularly corresponded while I served a mission. After my mission, he was interested in history, so we went to church history sites together.

00:40:47 A heart attack actually cut short his life. A little over a year after that trip, I went to his home for his funeral and I saw on his desk on his reading table, Joseph Smith, Rough Stone Rolling. I gifted him that book. He apparently just recently finished it. I remember my aunt told me that he loved me. I already knew that by now, that hug in the funeral home tied us together and that experience is still teaching me from beyond the grave. Uncle Scott's still teaching me to check my assumptions, to seek, to learn from others, to recognize that I need others, even people that I might not think that I need.

Hank Smith: 00:41:28 That is a beautiful story and it illustrates the point Elder Renlund told the story about two brothers. If you both remember this was April of 2018. The link is actually in the Come, Follow Me manual for this week. The talk is called Family History and Temple Work Seal and Healing. He talks about Parley and Orson Pratt, brothers, early converts, ordained apostles both sacrificed and contributed greatly to the cause during the Nauvoo era. He says in 1846 there was a heated public confrontation between

		the two of them. A deep and prolonged rift developed. Parley initially wrote to Orson to resolve the rift, but Orson did not reply. Parley gave up, feeling that correspondence was over forever unless initiated by Orson. Several years later, so it's now 1853. Orson learned about a project to publish a book on the descendants of William Pratt, the brothers earliest American ancestor. He glimpsed this treasure trove of family history.
	00:42:35	He wept like a child. His heart melted and he determined to repair the breach with his brother. Orson wrote to Parley. Now my dear brother, there are none among all the descendants of our ancestor who have so deep an interest in searching out his descendants as ourselves. We know that the God of our fathers has a hand in all this. I will beg pardon, for having been so backward in writing to you, I hope you will forgive me. It was their love for their ancestors. That was the catalyst to heal the rift, mend a hurt and seek and to extend forgiveness. And then Elder Renlund says this, when God directs us to do one thing, he often has many purposes in mind, family history and temple work is not just for the dead, but blesses the living as well. A beautiful story there as well like Jordan's and his uncles.
John Bytheway:	00:43:29	Yeah, brothers fighting. That never happens. Even in the scriptures. Let's go way back to Adam. Yeah,
Hank Smith:	00:43:37	They're apostles. Yeah, and they're brothers.
John Bytheway:	00:43:40	As we've talked about writ of habeas corpus and words. I think the whole idea of being governed not by people in their whims, but by a constitution and having to test things, is that constitutional? Does that conform with the words, wow, this is amazing that this has worked for this long, that we're being governed by words and they're really impressive words, but we're being governed by a document and people coming in and out of power. It's all supposed to work according to these words. It's just fascinating.
Hank Smith:	00:44:15	Yeah, and Jordan, that's right up your wheelhouse.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:44:18	Yeah, that's a good connection to this topic. The early Latter-day Saints, I guess those that live in the United States reside in a nation where texts and certain kinds of texts are paramount, and those texts have deep meaning. Now for the Latter-day Saints, their concern during this period was you're not upholding the text. You're not protecting our constitutional rights, but they knew the value of a record like that, which is precisely why they're crafting their own laws. That's why they come up with a Nauvoo charter. Now, their contemporaries

think they go too far. They're trying to protect themselves, and they know of the value of texts in doing that, so that's a great context to bring up. I'll mention one other obvious way in which we need the dead. Joseph actually refers to it, so this is verse 18. He provides this more expansive gloss on the passage in Hebrews 11, he says, for we without them cannot be made perfect. Neither can they without us be made perfect, and then he says this, neither can they nor we be made perfect without those who have died in the gospel also. All of us, I hear him saying, the living and the dead need those who have died in the gospel. How do we need them? We need the records, as I've suggested, to teach us. We also need them to complete the link backward in time, this welding link, and we need some of their body to return to this dispensation, to usher in the fullness of times to make what Joseph describes as a whole and complete and perfect union and welding together of dispensations and keys and power and glories. Joseph couldn't do that alone. He needed them to return and restore.

Hank Smith: 00:46:12 He goes into that list next, doesn't he?

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:46:14 He goes into the list.

Hank Smith: 00:46:15 Yeah.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:46:16 Now, one thing I'll say here is we again, I made this suggestion in talking about the Protestant Reformation and Catholicism. We are in some ways a sacramental faith. One of the things that sacraments or rituals do, things that we do, we take the sacrament every week. Those things are inherently, or at least it could be argued those things are inherently about community. We participate in them together. As we do so, we make community with fellow participants. We also make community with those who have participated in the same or similar kinds of rituals in the past, they did these things anciently or something like this, or they did this or something like this. In the early days of the restoration, we are part of that community by participating in the same kind of ritual. Then when we offer those ordinances to the dead, what are we doing?

00:47:17 We're expanding that community to include those who would have participated if they had had the chance. This is very much about community. Joseph Smith was so fixed on the idea of Zion, and this is part of the process of Zion building. We mentioned that list that he goes into. Speaking of community, records and books play a central role in creating community. What's remarkable is the Book of Mormon essentially creates a community of all the sacred texts. It's an exception to the rule

that texts get canonized over time. It's canon before it's even printed. It's accepted by a community of believers before it's even printed. Records and books play a role in creating community. From the beginning of our discussion today, we've seen books and bodies in close proximity. That tandem books and bodies shows up in spades in section 128. Joseph has emphasized the importance of keeping records.

00:48:23 He's done so by referring to and revising biblical passages. Now, as we get to verses 19 through 21, Joseph names some of those who died in the gospel. One among them has returned with a message about a book. Others of them have returned with powers and keys including the very powers and keys that allow for proxy work. As I've mentioned, Joseph's revelations prize, I'm gonna use that word again, embodiment, so it's no surprise that the senses show up a lot in the restoration. We find a lot of emphasis on sight, vision. A friend of mine, Mason Allred, has recently written a book on vision as one of the themes in the Doctrine & Covenants. Joseph increasingly emphasized touch. He once taught, no one can know God until he has handled something. That's an interesting thing to say. What is the reigning sense in these verses? Notice how aural these passages are sound.

00:49:34 What do we hear? Moroni, an angel from heaven declaring the book to be revealed. A voice of the Lord in the wilderness, declaring three witnesses to bear record of the book, voices of the dead or once dead are making way for voices from the dust to speak in connection with the Book of Mormon, the voice of Michael, the voice of Peter, James and John, the voice of God, the voice of Michael, the voice of Gabriel and of Raphael, whoever that is and of diverse angels all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood. I've cited John Durham Peters in this conversation. He hears in this, these passages, a sonic time lapse is what he says in quick succession. Joseph names some of the fathers who have come to speak and plant the promises in our hearts, so we'll turn to them and their contemporaries, and of course to our contemporaries as well.

00:50:38 I think the invitation is to listen to those voices. The call is for the dead. Here's the passage in 128, the dead to speak forth anthems of eternal praise. We want to add our voices to theirs. That's exactly what Joseph does in the verses that follow. Now, we don't often talk this way about these passages or maybe about scripture in general from one vantage point. There's some seriously consequential time travel going on here. Each of these figures named lived in a specific time and place. When

Latter-day Saints talk about angels or people appearing, it's not just like some random person except for, I don't know who Raphael is, but they're people from the past. They come from a specific time and place. They appear to Joseph in his specific times and places. Notice just how specific he is, including from Cumorah in the wilderness of Fayette, Seneca County on the banks of the Susquehanna, in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna County and Colesville, Broome County on the Susquehanna River, the chamber of old father Whitmer in Fayette, Seneca County, and at sundry times and in diverse places.

00:51:58 What do you have here? You have historical figures traversing time and space to arrive in these particular places to deliver information and power meant to save us, meant to save our dead, meant to really save those yet to be born, and now they're asking us to continue the work, to join our voices to theirs, to use our bodies as they have in the service of others and to consecrate ourselves to the gospel. In these final verses, we hear Joseph at his most exuberant. In fact, he can't help but frame this as like a battle or maybe a competition of sorts, courage brethren, and on, on to the victory. He's so animated that he called upon both animate and inanimate objects to sing praises. Again, I'm not sure what would've happened to the earth if Elijah had not returned, but Joseph suggests that the earth should be happy that he did. He urges it to join the chorus, let the earth break forth into singing. Let the mountains shout for joy, and all the valleys cry aloud and all ye seas and dry lands tell the wonders of your Eternal King. And ye rivers and brooks and rills flow down with gladness. There's that voice of gladness. You're a river, John. Let the woods and all the trees of the field praise the Lord and ye solid rocks. Ye solid rocks weep for joy and let the sun, moon and the morning stars sing together and let the eternal creations declare his name forever and ever. I think the focus on the earth there should remind us that we are stewards of the earth. One way that we can work to ensure that our children and descendants turn to us is to care for it so they can continue to work for salvation. That's such a beautiful moment where Joseph wants the earth to shout the Lord's praises.

John Bytheway: 00:56:00 I wrote in my margin, Isaac Watt. Let heaven and nature sing.

Hank Smith: 00:56:05 Jordan, you would know this much more than I would. Don't you get a little of Joseph's personality when he is excited about the gospel?

Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:56:13	Granted he's not in Liberty Jail here. That is a particularly dark place to be writing from. Writes some marvelous things from Liberty Jail. He's writing from in hiding. He is ecstatic. You absolutely get some of his personality shining through.
Hank Smith:	00:56:30	Yeah, all the exclamation points.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	00:56:32	There's a sense here that as you read through some of this, you could think, this is where I'm suggesting has Joseph lost his focus, like is he getting a little off? But he's not. He brings it all back, not just to baptism for the dead, but to record keeping. Verse 24, he cites Malachi three, another passage of scripture that Moroni had quoted in 1823. He quotes the statement about the sons of Levi being purged that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness, and then he goes on to say, well, here's the kind of offering that we can make. Let us therefore as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Let us present in his holy temple when it is finished, a book containing the records of our dead. The work to keep a book worthy of all expectations started almost immediately.
	00:57:30	Joseph's letter is read to the Saints a few days later, he's not there, but it's read to them On September 11th. That evening, James Sloan begins keeping a new record of baptisms for the dead. They take seriously the instruction given from the Lord so that very day they start a new record. The records were more complete. They were more detailed than the earlier records that they had kept. The recorders actually would start to use a form to record baptisms. We actually have some language from one of those forms. It read in part I certify that upon the day of the date hereof, I saw and heard the following baptisms take place in the font in the Lord's house in the city of Nauvoo, Illinois. Think about the specificity that is there that Joseph Smith asked them to include in section 128, verse 21. Joseph indicated this in the letter teachings about baptism for the dead came line upon line, precept upon precept.
	00:58:36	It's right in there and there would be many other changes regarding work for the dead after Joseph's death, but during his life, he continued to teach on the subject he says he would in verse 25, and he continued to teach on the subject throughout his life. He taught several sermons on baptism for the dead. He also wrote an editorial in the Times and Seasons. In April of 1842, he offered a biblical explanation for the practice. He also included this line, which I think is a lovely line. He said, the Lord God knows the situation of both the living and the dead and has made ample provision for their redemption according to their

several circumstances and the laws of the kingdom of God, whether in this world or in the world to come. That's a comforting teaching. I think it encompasses all that we know about work for the dead and all that we don't know about work for the dead. Our teachings on this topic are so beautiful, but there's still questions. Let's raise some of them. We don't have records for most of the people who have lived.

John Bytheway: 00:59:53 Right.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 00:59:54 Especially most of the people who lived before 1580. We don't have those records. What happens to them? Even the records we do have, like all records have deep limitations. Records are just as imperfect and as susceptible to decay as our bodies. Not everyone I think it's probably worth saying this, especially since I referenced Schindler's List. Not everyone is as enthusiastic about baptisms for the dead and understandably so. I'll give an example of this. During the last few decades of the 20th century, some Jewish leaders and individuals raised deep concerns and even criticisms about baptizing victims of the Holocaust who died, of course, for being Jews. Now, the Latter-day Saints, we wanna say, oh they have a choice, right? We emphasize agency, but we're sitting here talking about just how valid these baptisms are and just how powerful the records of the baptisms are.

01:00:57 So given that and given the treatment of Jewish people at the hands of Christians through history, including cases of forced conversions, it makes sense that some are not comfortable with the practice. What did the church do? Well, in 1995, they created a policy to prohibit the posthumous baptism of Holocaust victims. They've since done work with Jewish leaders to prevent such baptisms, and in 2012 when it was reported that the policy had been violated, the church issued an apology and they reiterated the policy. We might be thinking to ourselves, well, how do I square all that we've been talking about today with that policy? I would say the whole thrust of the practice of baptisms for the dead is to assist in turning the hearts of the children to the fathers. We can make changes and we can be careful when that practice might, in some cases, actually inhibit that rather than assist in that effort. If I could put it that way. Again, I take great comfort from Joseph's teaching that God has made ample provision for the redemption of the living and the dead, and I would suggest that we know some of that ample provision. We don't know all of that ample provision.

Hank Smith:	01:02:18	That's just a idea that God is not looking to send people to hell. He has made ample provision more than enough room to save anyone who chooses.
John Bytheway:	01:02:29	Maybe he's not explaining all of it to us right now, but he's made ample provision. Let that rest in your mind.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	01:02:36	Some of it we know, and for so many of us, what we know is so beautiful. It's worth reminding ourselves that there's much we don't know. I presume that that's gonna be really beautiful too.
Hank Smith:	01:02:49	As far as I know, Article of Faith nine has not been rescinded. Many great and important things yet to come.
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	01:02:56	That's right. But having said that, despite the fact that there are many things we don't know, and there are questions that remain, clearly the indication is we have much work to do. There's been lots of technological developments. Let's say it this way. We are all church recorders now. Every member a recorder, but again, not perfect. We're not gonna be perfect in it. The answer is not to give up. It's to work harder, kinder, smarter. This means we have to be discerning with records of the past. We have to work to correct and prevent mistakes. We have to try to keep accurate records, even as we know that our own records will need correction. I would say as a historian, I believe the care we take with records of work for the dead should inform our approach to all kinds of records. Whether we do so intentionally or not, we are creating a paper trail for ourselves and others throughout our lives.
	01:04:00	I think we ought to do so with grace and with honesty. We have to make sure that our records, the records we promote, the records we create are of the kind that turn hearts to each other that promote peace, union, reunion rather than division, discord and separation. Think about this as an example. Amy Harris writes about this in her book. Think about some of the records we have in the past and in the present are records created out of, let's call them unjust and unholy regimes and systems. All kinds of things create records. The example I'm familiar with is slavery. Slavery creates a lot of records. Some of those records, what do they tell the story of? They tell the story of families torn apart. Now, such records can be used to create new kinds of records that have the power to bind families together, which is a remarkable thing.
	01:04:58	We can acknowledge the problems with these kinds of records, even as we use them to challenge the very dehumanizing systems that created them. Again, I'm suggesting we can do

that through genealogical and proxy work, but also just by learning more about the lives of the people who stand behind those kinds of records. So what does that suggest? That suggests that we ourselves can assist in creating records that help bind people together now and in the future. This summer, it's been a busy summer. Most summers are, but during the last few months and weeks, I've seen lots of things happen. I've seen a niece be baptized. I've blessed my second child, celebrated the marriage of a sister, a nephew, and a couple of former students. In fact, last night I was at a wedding reception, former students. All of those events, they generate various records in different kinds of official unofficial. Such records have the power to deepen relationships if we craft and then maintain them with care and attention.

01:06:02 Same is true of other kinds of records I'm gonna bring up here, and we've just referenced records of suffering and Joseph talks about records of suffering in the Liberty Jail Letters. I'll mention a personal example of records of sadness. In April of 1994, a birth record was created for a newborn black girl in Texas. In that same month, records were produced for her adoption to a white family in Utah. This girl's life began with a series of separations through adoption and connection through adoption. A few months after her adoption, a powerful binding record was created when this girl, another adopted sister, and that family were sealed together in the Salt Lake Temple. Years later in May, 2002, records of baptism and confirmation followed that life produced many other kinds of records. This girl created her own records, including diaries in which she described in one way or another how it was hard for her to fit in.

01:07:13 These and other records bear witness to something wrong, that something was off. Attentive and caring parents, they did all they could do to help her. Those efforts produced records as well. Those are not the kinds of records that had the power to save. 2012, another record was created. This one was a death record that followed the 17-year-old suicide. Now, did the end of her life, did this separation, was that an end of records about her? Was that the final record, that death record? Of course it wasn't. In some ways, the records proliferated. In 2013, about a year after my sister Micah passed away, other binding records emerged. My mom took Micah's name to the temple and received her initiatory and endowment on her behalf. That work created more records of salvation with power to seal, weld and bind. Talk about that line confirming our hope from Section 128.

01:08:20 During the last several years, I've written a little bit about Micah and my relationship to her and her death. So I've added to the archive of her life and death. Now, I'm not sure those are records of salvation, but I do believe they have a kind of welding or binding power of their own. In a strange way, Micah's death and her absence has turned my heart and the hearts of others who read about her to her, and I hope through that process I also learn how to turn my heart outward to others, others who are suffering, others who are in need. So Micah continues to teach me from beyond the veil. I feel like, did she need my mom to do that work for her? Yeah. Can she also teach us something? Yeah, I think she can. I'll mention here an excellent article on the restoration by Phil Barlow.

01:09:13 He describes the restoration as a response to a fractured and fracturing world, and he says this at one part of the article, math is not ultimately about numbers. I'm gonna have to trust him on that 'cause I don't know much about math. Math is not ultimately about numbers. He says it is about relations. Joseph Smith's religion, religio meaning to bind together was like this. Doctrines, policies, priesthoods, keys, revelations, and ordinances were ultimately in the service of restoring proper relations and order in time and eternity. I think that's exactly what section 128 says. Joseph taught the performing and recording ordinances for the dead was part of the divine order. I don't know exactly how that works, but I do believe it. I also think that such work should instill within us an attitude of care toward all people, certainly toward the dead. It's worth a reminder perhaps that we perform ordinances for people we don't know.

01:10:26 In many cases, we perform ordinances for people who probably, if we did know them, we may not like them or wouldn't agree with them, or may even think they are bad people. Now, I'm not asking us to think poorly of the people behind the names on our ordinance card. Instead to recognize that the work that we do is a work of grace, a work of mercy, a work that emulates Christ's sacrifice. I think such attitudes ought to open us up to people who live in our own time and place, including those we do and don't agree with. Those who we might be prone to think are either good or bad. Perhaps especially we ought to consider how we can help those who may lack the capacity, comfort, safety, and freedom to do what we do. If we are willing to offer saving ordinances for the dead, we ought to be willing to offer temple relief to the living. That too is a kind of proxy work. Think about these words from King Benjamin who've taught us that when we are in the service of our fellow beings, we are only in the service of our God. And of course, Jesus taught that

		inasmuch as we have done it unto one of the least of these His brethren, we have done it unto Him. Opportunities for meaningful proxy work exists all around us. Again, vicarious work is not plan B, it is the plan. Yes with Joseph Smith. Shall we not go on in so great a cause.
Hank Smith:	01:12:10	What a fantastic day. We've heard from you professionally and personally and in your own theology. I just, I knew it would be great, Jordan. I knew it would be great, but it was, it was profound.
John Bytheway:	01:12:25	The world of spirits feels closer today and more involved in my life just thinking about all of this. It's like the Lord wants to help us make that separation disappear a little bit and we have a connection and we can make a difference and they can make a difference for us, which is such a soul expanding idea. You know?
Hank Smith:	01:12:50	What did Joseph Smith say? They are not far from us.
John Bytheway:	01:12:53	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	01:12:54	Jordan, I wanna ask you just one last question. I'm sure you've had to explain this to your students many, many times. There may be an idea out there that if you learn Latter-day Saint history, you'll lose your faith. I know quite a few faithful historians, incredible historians, and you're one of them. What would you say to those who have that fear of diving into their history? Yeah, I'm gonna know too much. I'm gonna lose my faith. This happened to this person and this person. Can you give us any closing thoughts in that direction?
Dr. Jordan Watkins:	01:13:26	Sure. Davis Bitton was a church historian. He wrote an article in which he talked about this topic and he said something along the lines of sort of the best historians he knew, the best historians of the Latter-day Saint faith were and are faithful members of the church. Rather, what he said actually was, those who know the most about this history are faithful Latter-day Saints. Now, of course, that's not true of everyone. We have agency, as we've said today. Is it possible to learn something and then make a choice to not believe? Yeah, of course. But I think in part it's a question of expectations. What do we expect of the past? Sometimes we expect far too much historical figures. We can do a disservice to historical figures by being overly critical. There's a potential problem there, but I think we can also do a great disservice to historical figures by holding them up on a pedestal, talking about them and their lives as if

they were not perfect, but maybe pseudo perfect. They were close to perfection.

Hank Smith: 01:14:44 Pretty much. Yeah.

Dr. Jordan Watkins: 01:14:45 Yeah. That's not fair to them. If we think about historical figures that way, then we think about the restoration as a whole that way, and because it's God's divine work, we come to assume that the divine work must have occurred in a perfect way, but this gets stressed from the beginning of the end of the restoration that we lose sight of it. God references Joseph's imperfection in the revelations at multiple times, including in his preface, in his preface section one, and he tells the others of church, you've seen his imperfections. The whole restoration begins because a boy knows he's imperfect. The restoration proceeds because that boy grows into a man who knows he's imperfect, so he keeps asking for forgiveness. He asks for help, and he relies upon Jesus Christ. We can lose sight of that and maybe as a culture, we're sort of at fault for building up that kind of expectation as we learn things.

01:15:54 Yeah, we might come to see things as a bit different than we had expected, but that's not a negative thing. That's a maturing process. One of the beautiful things about it is that I think as we glimpse how God really works with people, how he really works with his prophet, how he condescends to meet Joseph and to meet the saints where they were. Well, that ought to give us a better sense of how God condescends to meet us where we are. Some of us are not, but many of us are aware of our own imperfections that can inhibit us from receiving revelation. But hopefully if we can find that Joseph in his imperfection found God and received revelation, that becomes a message of hope. We might have to tear down some of our paradigms and frameworks for how we viewed how God works in the world, but once we do, we'll see that it actually aligns with our own experience much more fully so that the early Saints and Joseph were not... Yeah. Did they live in very different times and places? Yeah. As a historian, I'm gonna say that they did. They're also people who are striving imperfectly. That's a message of hope. Often the problem is one of expectation rather than any given historical detail.

Hank Smith: 01:17:21 Thank you, Jordan. I don't know if you're getting a lot of sleep with this new baby, but it, if this is what it's like for you not getting sleep, then you need to not get sleep more. This has just been fantastic. I don't know even what to say other than I don't want it to end. It's that profound.

John Bytheway:	01:17:42	If there's people out there listening who feel invisible, not heard, not making a difference, we have this way to make noise in the spirit world. Glad tidings noise on the other side. Go into the temple and make some noise on the other side.
Hank Smith:	01:18:00	That is, and thanks for the prophet Joseph who brought this forward. Well, with that, we want to thank Dr. Jordan Watkins for being with us today. We want to thank our executive producer Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors David and Verla Sorensen, and every episode we remember our founder. He would've loved this. In fact, he probably does love this. Yeah. Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We have more of the Doctrine & Covenants to study 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, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra, Heather Barlow, Amelia Kabwika, Sydney Smith and Annabelle Sorensen.



Hank Smith:	00:03	Hey welcome to followHIM Favorites. This is where John and I share a single story to go with each week's Come, Follow Me lesson. John we are in sections 125 through 128. Pretty much all on baptisms for the dead. You have a story for me.
John Bytheway:	00:17	You know what I love about this story is almost everybody has a story like this. It's a wonderful place where the spirit world touches our world, and it happens to a lot of people. But this one, I just loved it. This was written by Sister Vicki Taylor, who was a Caribbean area communications senior missionary. There are so many names in here and country names that I'm gonna mispronounce.
Hank Smith:	00:38	We apologize in advance.
John Bytheway:	00:40	Yeah. Here we go. Augustina Constantie Doorson was born July 1st, 1863 on the Sarah Plantation in the district of Coronie, west of Paramaribo, in the country currently known as Suriname. She was born the day slavery was officially abolished in the country that was then known as Dutch Guiana located in the northeast part of South America. Augustina's mother, Molly Doorson and Molly's sister, Eva Doorson were slaves on that plantation. Life for the slaves was hard and did not change for 10 years after slavery was abolished because the government had to repay each plantation owner for each person freed. The family eventually moved to Paramaribo, a larger town in Dutch Guiana to find work. Fast forward, Hank these wonderful brothers and sisters start doing family history. You heard the name Eva Doorson was one of the slaves. Early in the morning, September 13th, 2024, sister Lusanne Libretto attended the temple to do baptisms for their ancestors. Lusanne was given five names to be baptized for. She sat quietly in the chapel waiting for her husband to change clothes while the rest of the group entered the baptistry. But as she waited, she felt strangely restless. She was being urged to go inside and start the baptisms. Immediately she said, I literally felt I was being pushed forward. I passed the entire group, and to the surprise of my fellow

		brothers and sisters, I was helped first. They wondered why I was in such a rush to pass them to the first row.
	02:16	Once I started the baptism, the first name I was given was that of Eva Doorson. Later that evening, when Lusanne returned for another ordinance session, she received Eva Doorson's name again. She was amazed and felt a strong bond with the deceased woman, as if Eva had chosen Lusanne to help her. At the end of another ordinance session, Lusanne said I was tired, but a temple worker handed me one more name to complete, in addition to the five I had already done. To my surprise, it was Eva Doorson again, with tears in my eyes. I knew with certainty she wanted and had chosen me to do all her work at the temple. I never asked for her name, but I kept getting it pressed into my hands. Even though I was exhausted, I felt grateful that I had listened to the gentle promptings of the Spirit.
	03:11	On September 21st, 2024, Imro, her husband, Lusanne, I think, or her relative, and others from the Paramaribo Suriname district, returned home with gratitude for the opportunity to attend the temple and for their shared memories. Imro witnessed ordinances completed for over 90 family members, including his great-grandmother Augustina, his grandmother Molly, his mother, Sieglien, and his great-aunt Eva, as well as his father, brother, and son. It was a deeply emotional experience that strengthened his bond with his family, both past and present. In his testimony, Imro said, the best time we can spend here on Earth is in the temple with our Heavenly Father.
Hank Smith:	03:56	Wow. That is amazing. She gets pushed forward. You, you, you move. Move. I want her. I want her.
John Bytheway:	04:05	I want her.
Hank Smith:	04:07	I would love to find out if she in her life was this way. If we find out she was. She was a, hey, we're doing this right now.
John Bytheway:	04:14	She was waiting for her husband to get dressed, but it's like, no, no, no, no. Go now.
Hank Smith:	04:18	No, go now.
John Bytheway:	04:19	And she gets that name. This Eva Doorson. Cool. Huh?
Hank Smith:	04:22	Over and over again. Well, we hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. Now, John, I don't know what word you would use to describe it, but what Dr. Jordan Watkins

does in these sections, talking about Joseph Smith and his legal problems with baptisms for the dead. It really will expand your mind in ways that you just, I don't know how to describe it. Come join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcast. Come back here next week, we'll do another followHIM Favorite.