

Come Follow Me Class Insights 24 D&C Sec. 63

I'm Taylor, and I'm Tyler. This is Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today Doctrine and Covenants section 63.

So, this section opens up a new phase where Joseph and the others have returned from their – their trip out to Independence, back up to Kirtland. They've been gone – they left on June 20th and they now return near the end of August, so two month's absence and a lot has happened in Kirtland. Well, a lot has happened along the path as well as in Independence, too. But the problem is, is when they returned, they recognize that there's been some pretty serious apostasy starting to set in among some of the members of the Church including some people who – who have been on this journey with them who – who are struggling with Joseph Smith and his role as the prophet and the promise of Zion being out there in this frontier town that they were not impressed with, some of them.

And the question then comes, why would – why would Joseph have taken that incredible effort and time to go clear down to Independence, Missouri, only to turn around fairly quickly and come on this long journey on the way back when there's so much struggle both going and coming? Why go? There's something powerful about just going out even if you don't know exactly what you're doing when you go out, but the act of just going out to try to serve can often open those – those windows of revelation, and so I guess we would say this – this journey even though when he comes home we're introduced to a lot of problems and a lot of issues with apostasy in some cases, it's worth it because now we have the inspiration that has come as the focal point for many of these sections coming up, and for many of the saints coming into the story, it's going to be this – this measured, marked inspiration of who to send to Zion when. You're going to notice they're not going in a flood, but Joseph now knows enough about everything that's going on out here and what it looks like, that over the next five years he's going to be able to send people as needed on that journey.

But now, before we dive into section 63, let's talk about some of the roots of apostasy and some of the causes of what's going on here.

So, we will talk about specific things that have happened with Ezra Booth and others, that they chose to leave the Church. Now let's talk about the word apostasy. Let me begin with this word - to stand. You might think of I'm standing right here. We often use the phrase, stand ye in holy places as immovable. The word stand actually comes from the same word that you might be familiar with, is we have this country called the United States and each state, right, is supposed to be immovable, but they're together, they're united. You hear this word in science – stasis – it means a steady state where things aren't changing. Also, in the United States we have something called the Constitution, and it literally means to stand together. So, think about how God wants his people to be one – not the same – but to be united, Zion. It means to stand together.

So how does apostasy fit into this? So, you can see that you've got the word stasis or stand and "apo" means away or to leave. So, apostasy literally means to stand away from. So, if God asks you to gather with him and to stand with him in unity with his people, if you decide to walk away from that and to stand away from God's unity, his oneness, his people, his Zion, that is apostasy. It's stepping away and it's standing elsewhere. It's standing not with God, but standing by yourself or standing with people who choose not to stand with God, and we'll see this and there are many ways that people can choose to no longer want to stand with God.

Now let's just make it clear. Do all of us metaphorically stumble or fall or sometimes find ourselves not completely unified with God? It happens. The beauty is every single week we have the opportunity to partake of the sacrament and to declare our intention and our purposefulness to stand with God, to be together with him. But if somebody chooses to intently and purposely and permanently stand away from God, that is apostasy. Stand with God. Stand in holy places and you will be saved.

So, when you read section 63 this week for Come Follow Me, as you get into it, you're going to find that some of you will feel like you're reading more from the Old Testament, where often people look at the Old Testament passages and see a God who is more filled with anger and wrath and justice and judgment and coming down telling the people they're going to be destroyed because they're wicked. It's fascinating when you look at the various swings of a pendulum that goes back and forth at times that you have these different attributes that get emphasized. Sometimes in scriptures we see the mercy, we see the love, we see the grace of God. And other times we see the justice, we see the judgment. You can see the problem that the prophets have to try to find this nice balance where they teach us the seriousness of sin, they cry repentance and they teach God's justice when it's needed, but it's mixed in appropriately as he would have us do with his mercy, his love, feelings of his grace which give us hope to say, yeah, I'm not perfect but it's okay because I'm striving so to be. I'm trusting in God.

So, as we jump in, look at verse 1: "Hearken, O ye people, and open your hearts, give ear from afar; and listen, you that call yourselves the people of the Lord, and hear the word of the Lord and his will concerning you. Yea, verily I say, hear the word of him whose anger is kindled against the wicked and rebellious." God doesn't want them thinking that he's not aware of what they're doing to break the covenants that they've made with him and the commandments that he's given them. He's basically saying, I know exactly what you're doing and I don't like it, because that's not leading the direction that you need to go.

And what's interesting is we often hear the phrase, "great are the words of Isaiah." (3 Nephi 23:1) If you turn to Isaiah chapter 1, this is what it says: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me." (Isaiah 1:2) So, great are the words of Isaiah and it's the same thing, God's, like, I have done all this mercy, and unfortunately because you guys have chosen to stand away from me, I need to talk about this to invite you back into my mercy. I want you to have my mercy, and you can only get

it if you choose to stand with me. And if you're not standing with me, you may hear a louder voice asking you to come back. And he can't force us, and we see something similar going on here in D&C 63.

This pattern shows up not just in Isaiah chapter 1, but in multiple Isaiah chapters. One of the classic examples of this is 1 Nephi 20, which happens to be the first time that Nephi introduces us to some of the words of Isaiah. So right out of the starting gate, look what he says. The very first quote from Isaiah – that's a direct – where this whole chapter is from Isaiah 48, the first one given to us in our Book of Mormon, listen to the first words: "Hearken and hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah." (1 Nephi 20:1) And then the parenthetical statement, or out of the waters of baptism that was added later for clarification. Now listen to this: "who swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, yet they swore not in truth nor in righteousness. Nevertheless, they call themselves of the holy city, but they do not stay themselves upon the God of Israel, who is the Lord of Hosts; yea, the Lord of Hosts is his name." (1 Nephi 20:1) It's exactly that. They're saying, I've been baptized; I'm a member of the Church, I'm covenant Israel, but it's in name only. They've strayed from his righteousness, from all of his commandments, and so they've got the label, they've got the show, look at me, I'm a member of the Church or I'm a good Christian, but at the core they've strayed.

It's interesting. He says they take their strength as – because they believe that because they're part of the city of Jerusalem that makes them safe, and he's, like, just because you're inside the walls of Jerusalem does not mean you will not suffer the consequences of your choices. And also, significant he talks about swearing in the name of the Lord. The word “swear” in the past actually meant to make a covenant. We will hear here in Doctrine and Covenants 63 God talks about people who take his name in vain, they make empty promises, and it's all here. God says, if you're going to do something in my name, you have to live, stand where I expect you to stand, and if you don't, then I'm going to have to come out in judgment and invite you back in. So, it's just interesting all these things just play out over and over in the scriptures, and it really comes down to God is all of this and he wants us right there standing in the middle with him.

So, it's interesting if you look at the concept that the infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ is this steady and balancing influence and power here, to the point where somebody who is struggling over in this moving away from God realm can have hope that there's – that there's a reason to come back into the safety of that covenant connection with Christ, but the reality is, is when people sin, as we're going to see later on in this section, it often affects a lot more than just them. It affects other people, and those other people need to know when they've been hurt by others' poor use of agency, that the Atonement of Jesus Christ gives them just as much hope as the sinner. Everyone needs the infinite Atonement equally, for different reasons, perhaps, but we all desperately need the infinite Atonement.

So now you can start seeing this - this beautiful comparison that takes place all the time in General Conference where they'll teach – the leaders of our Church will teach the covenants and the commandments and the expectations, but they'll also give lots of hope, and they'll give lots of motivation for us to get up and move forward. Whether we've sinned or have been sinned against, all of us need this help to move forward.

Now look at verse 6: "Wherefore, verily I say, let the wicked take heed, and let the rebellious fear and tremble; and let the unbelieving hold their lips, for the day of wrath shall come upon them as a whirlwind, and all flesh shall know that I am God." Are you noticing Joseph is – is getting this revelation and he's speaking for the Lord in first person here, but we really are getting more of that Isaiah Old Testament voice of the Lord coming out here, not because God has changed, not because he woke up and he's in a bad mood on that particular day up in heaven, it's because people have changed. God changes not; that's one of his attributes. Everything he does is for the benefit of God's children. So, what you're seeing here is more of a reflection of the state of being and the state of mind and the state of heart of his saints and the people on the earth than it is a changing temperament of God.

Look at verse 7: "...he that seeketh signs shall see signs, but not unto salvation." Isn't it fascinating that the farther you get away from God, the more you want signs? You want physical proof. You – it's this idea of, prove it, show me, then I'll believe. So, if you look at the – at the scientific method, the scientific method when seeking for physical evidence and physical proof to make sense of this world of ours, what do they do? They run experiments based on hypotheses that they may have, they run the experiments, and then if they see certain results, then they draw certain conclusions, and we can say now they've changed the way they believe something is supposed to work.

Brothers and sisters, this is a beautiful pattern, and quite frankly, we're invited to do this type of thing in the scriptures on occasion. But the reality is, is that's a really good thing for seeking certain portions of truth, but when you're seeking eternal truth, we're told in the scriptures, you receive no witness until after the trial of your faith. But he's inviting you to run a trial – a trial of your faith. So, you – you choose to believe, and then you receive the evidence; you receive the witness after, to use the Ether 12 flow.

And to talk about this further, even if you consider scientists, they actually believe that if they follow a particular process of going out and getting experience and running a test, like the word experiment and experience and expert all come from the same root word, so it is true that the data suggests what they should think, but in advance they say, I believe if I'm rigorous about doing this, I will get to a conclusion that will give me more experience. It's exactly what God asks. The whole purpose of this life is to get experience which means go run some tests. Some of them you might fail at, some of them might blow up in your face but guess what? God's got you covered. But you should keep practicing. But can you imagine any scientist who sits around and says, yeah, yea, yeah, I know about the scientific method but I'm going to sit here in my lab and wait for the data

to show up and I just – if I wait long enough, I'll become an expert. God doesn't want us to sit around waiting to become experts. He wants us to do and he wants us to be experts at loving him and loving our neighbor. The only way to do it is to run experiments.

Yes, which is a trial or an experiment of our faith. We move forward not knowing at all times what the end result is going to be but we – we study the scriptures, the words of the prophets, we do the best we can to move forward in that experiment, and as we do, things unfold, and we do mess up sometimes. But because our intent is to move forward, that's not a failure, it's not a tragedy. We learn from that and we move forward.

Just last night in our home we were working on a little project, painting some big panels 4 by 8, 4 feet by 8 feet sheets of wood, and my little Jenna age 12 was helping us paint, and she was standing on one side of the 4-foot panel and she wanted to get to the other side to finish painting that side and she was holding her paint brush, and she said, I'm going to jump over the panel. I thought she was joking. Jenna wasn't joking. She tried to jump over this 4-foot panel and made it about 3-1/2 feet and landed with her bare feet, one foot on this painted board and jumped off very quickly and then stepped down with that wet paint on her foot that now got on our regular floor, and this was not a great dad moment for me. I didn't laugh. I didn't say, oho, that was a failed experiment, Jenna, what did you learn from that? No. I treated it like it was a tragedy. I'm like, oh Jenna, what did you do? I thought you were joking but you – you can't jump 4 feet, are you serious, you thought you could make it over, Jenna, now look you've got to go and get this floor clean. And it was a terrible moment. She went and she - she hopped over to get a rag with some water on it to fix up the mess, and after she fixed it up, she quietly put her brush, um, with the others and started walking away. And my other daughter said, Jenna, where are you going? She says, I'm going to go brush my teeth and go to bed now.

And then it hit me what I had done. I had communicated to her that the project really was more important than her, and I called her back and I said, oh Jenna, come here, and she came back and each step that she came towards me she started crying more and more, and I just held that little 12-year-old and I hugged her and I let her cry, and in my heart, I thought, oh Tyler, you've got to do better. So, it became this learning opportunity not just for my Jenna. I was so focused on what did you learn from this? In the future what are you not going to do and all you had to do was walk around the board rather than trying to jump it. You learned that lesson, right? Okay, now we're good if you learned that lesson.

The fact of the matter is, brothers and sisters, last night the most important lesson that was learned in the Griffin home wasn't learned by Jenna. It was learned by me, that I need to focus more on people and on building them rather than on having perfected projects and programs and procedures of life, and to work with this process of when you try things and it doesn't work, learn from it and move on and do better.

C. S. Lewis in his book *The Problem with Pain*, he said this: “We can ignore pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but

shouts in our pains: It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” And sometimes when we've strayed too far from him, he will allow painful experiences to come, but oh, they're sweet when it actually serves his purpose of having gotten our attention to refocus us and get us back, centered in Christ.

So, as we go through scriptures and we see some of the correction and we see some of the joys, recognize God is shaping us. He's helping us to see some things like this. You have the kingdom of God in heaven, this amazing place that we always talk about that is our eternal home that we left to come down to the earth. And on the earth, he asks us to help him build the kingdom of God on the earth. It's patterned after what's going on up in heaven. Brothers and sisters, now we get to it, we get to the – for me – the core of section 63, the core of Isaiah, the core of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's this: God is giving us everything he can to help us to become like him. So, as we go through the rest of this section, see it through the lens of God saying, kingdom of God on the earth, you're becoming less and like the kingdom of God in heaven. You're straying further and further from me, and my kind, gentle extensions of love and expressions of love aren't bringing you back, so I'm going to bring some pretty hefty words against you to get your attention and it'll probably hurt.

So, look at verse – look at verse 7: "...he that seeketh signs shall see signs, but not unto salvation. Verily, I say unto you, there are those among you who seek signs, and there have been such even from the beginning. But, behold, faith cometh not by signs, but signs follow those that believe." (D&C 63:7-9) So, you want to see signs, you will see signs, but it won't cause you to become more like God. Can you think of some scriptural examples where people saw incredible things, whether it be Laman and Lemuel seeing an angel, hearing the voice of God, whether it be a whole group of wicked Nephites who said, if we don't see the sign by this date that Samuel the Lamanite prophesied, we're going to kill all of you believers. And then they do see this incredible sign, but they all of a sudden come to Nephi and say, I believe, I want to be baptized, I want to change my life.

The scriptures are loaded with examples of people who saw incredible signs, and down towards the end of the Book of Mormon and towards the end of the book of Ether, lots of signs are being given, but it's not helping people draw closer to Christ. That only comes through, through sincere repentance. Now he's going to make a comparison later on where he says, those who seek signs – Jesus is going to use this phrase – “it is a wicked and an adulterous generation that seeketh after signs.” (Matthew 16:4) Let's pull that apart for a little bit. Let's dissect that. What does that mean? A sign-seeker, what do they have in common with, say, a wicked and an adulterous generation? Sign-seekers and adulterers want something right now, but they don't want to work for it. They want all of the fruits and the pleasure and the momentary gratification that comes, but they don't want any of the work, so back to the experiment; they don't want to experiment on the word in order to become expert and in order to know and to be settled, a sign-seeker doesn't want the effort or the work. They just want the results. They're like the scientists that Taylor was talking about, sitting in her or his office saying, I'm just going to sit here and wait for the data to come to me and then I will know. They don't want to have to go through 45 experiments, all of which fail until they

get to the one that actually does work. That's a lot of money and time and energy and effort. They want it right now without having to have it cost them anything.

Think about the root of adultery. Wait a minute. Think about the root of lying, of cheating, of stealing. It's all the same root of sign-seeking. It's rooted in, I don't want to have to work to get this thing. Brothers and sisters, in the kingdom of God we're not afraid of work. In fact, he tells us, my work and my glory is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. And brothers and sisters, I'll just speak for myself, but, my goodness, that must be a lot of work. It must be a lot of effort on God's part because I'm so thick-skulled sometimes, I'm so hard to understand and to learn and to do the right thing the right way for the right reasons. But God keeps working with me. He's not taking the quick route which would be to come down and hardwire my heart and my mind like a robot to say I will never sin again; I will be perfect from here on out. That wouldn't be work. That would be easy.

So, as we go through the rest of this section, understand God is trying to help these people understand your discipleship is going to cost you something. It's going to require that you put your heart and your mind into this effort, knowing that the infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ gives us hope and enables us to do all of this, but it is going to require that I – that I give the Lord that degree of my desire, my will, as I move forward.

Now, jump down to verse 12: "Wherefore, I the Lord, am not pleased with those among you who have sought after signs and wonders for faith, and not for the good of men unto my glory." Look at verse 13: "Nevertheless, I give commandments, and many have turned away from my commandments and have not kept them." It's this, I told you how to be happy, you've turned aside and you're not happy and you're saying, well, show me a sign and then I'll believe, then I'll do the commandments. Jesus tells a group in the gospel of John, "if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." (John 7:17) He didn't say you should know of the doctrine and once you know of the doctrine clearly and surely, then you do the will of God. The gaining of a testimony of a principle of the gospel is most profoundly built and rooted in living that principle of the gospel, not in listening to people talk about that principle of the gospel.

Now let's look at verse 14: "There were among you adulterers and adulteresses; some of whom have turned away from you, and others remain with you that hereafter shall be revealed." So, he's saying some have already left, but there are actually some in Kirtland who are still here. Verse 15: "Let such beware and repent speedily, lest judgment shall come upon them as a snare, and their folly shall be made manifest, and their works shall follow them in the eyes of the people." And then he describes the struggle with verse 16: "...verily I say unto you, as I have said before, he that looketh on a woman to lust after her, or if any shall commit adultery in their hearts, they shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear."

Once again, brothers and sisters, we live in a world that is saturated with this particular problem, and you'll notice that God isn't telling the people, sorry, there's nothing I can do for you. There's no hope for you, you're lost and you're forever gone if you struggle with - with these kinds of sins

or with pornography or associated issues. He says that you've, you've gone to this place, but there's hope. Now the thing that he doesn't talk about here is the fact that in our world today, something we mentioned before, is there are people who are affected by those kinds of decisions that people make. There are loved ones who are hurt deeply by people who are making these – these decisions. Both groups need the infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ and that promise is sure.

Look at verse 17: "Wherefore, I, the Lord have said that the fearful, and the unbelieving, and all liars, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie, and the whoremonger, and the sorcerer, shall have their part in that lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Are you noticing something here? Are you noticing that God has given a pattern? He's given his covenant connection. The kingdom of God has revealed to the kingdom of God on the earth the celestial blueprint. This is how to build a truly enduring, joy, life on the covenant path. But you'll notice that there's this opposing – we always point downward to represent hell. There's this opposing set of directions that has come from the adversary, and he's just giving you a nice list there. But, brothers and sisters, the person who ultimately loves and makes a lie is Satan. The person who is the ultimate whoremonger or sorcerer or the one who believes falsehoods – that's Satan. He's inviting you and me and our loved ones to become more like him. You have this – you have this perfect contrast coming: one, the commandments that are inviting you to become more like God, and other, the temptations inviting you to become more like the devil. Whoever we decide, whichever team we decide to stand next to, that's the side that we're going to get paid by. But the check is going to be signed – our paycheck is going to be signed by either the Lord or the devil in this – in this dichotomy that we've set up, and God is making it very clear that the wage of sin is death. It's this lake of torment, the second death.

Now let's go to the hope section, verse 19 and 20: "And now behold, I, the Lord, say unto you that ye are not justified, because these things are among you. Nevertheless, he that endureth in faith and doeth my will, the same shall overcome, and shall receive an inheritance upon the earth when the day of transfiguration shall come." Then he talks about the earth being transfigured even after the pattern which I have shown you.

The transfiguration, we get this in 3 Nephi chapter 28 verse 38, it says that they might not taste death, that they might not suffer pain nor sorrow, and that's what God's talking about, that there's going to be a blink of the eye, that we'll be transitioned to the state of being physically more like him. Beautiful.

Now there is a notion that among some, some Christian faiths out there of this doctrine called the rapture that is kind of alluded to in this section here, the event of the Lord's coming. The way some people interpret this from 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verse 17 is that when Christ comes for his Second Coming, the righteous will be taken up off of the earth; they'll go up to meet him, and then the teaching or the idea is he'll take them off to heaven and everybody else will be left behind in a, in a wicked state without any righteousness on the earth and it will be terrible. The reality is, is if you look at the biblical teachings on this, when Jesus comes again, indeed, the righteous will be

caught up to meet him in the clouds, but the irony is, he won't take you away from this earth and go off to heaven or off into the clouds. The wicked will be burned at his coming, we'll talk about that in the next week's lesson in section 64, but then once the earth has been purified and purged, he'll then bring us back down with him and begin his millennial reign.

Brothers and sisters, God isn't trying to save you from this world. He's trying to help us create heaven on earth. The same thing could be said of our body. Your body is not evil. Your flesh is not horrible. It's a gift. The devils would give anything to have one of these physical bodies even with major mental or emotional or physical disabilities. This physical body is amazing. God's not trying to save you from your physical body; he's trying to help you refine your appetites, your passions, your desires. He's trying to work with us to make them become more heavenly. That's what the commandments are, so we do it with our physical body, we do it with our physical world. He's trying to help us become an extension of heaven.

So, look now at verse 23: "...unto him that keepeth my commandments I will give the mysteries of my kingdom, and the same shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life." That well of living water and everlasting life, those are things the devil can never promise. Well, he can and he does promise you those, but he can never deliver on that promise; it's a lie. It's all part of his lie and his deception.

Look at verse 26: "Nevertheless, I, the Lord, render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's." So now he's shifting focus and shifting his attention in this section to the building up of Zion in Independence, Missouri, and he says, you're going to have – you're going to have to buy the land, so he's saying we're going to follow the laws of the land. I am going to render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's. He's clearly alluding here to the statement that he made in Matthew chapter 22, verse 21. Some of you will remember that Jesus is right here, in his final week, he's a few days away from Gethsemane and the cross when this group comes to him tempting him to see if they could trap him, and they say, Master, we know you're wise and you don't - you're not a respecter of persons, so is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Rome, to Caesar? And Jesus, instead of saying yes or no, which was the trap they hoped he would fall into, he said, show me the tribute money, and they showed him the tribute money. And he said, whose image is on that coin? And they said, it's Caesar's image. He says very well, render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's.

Brothers and sisters, often in scriptures, when we learn, when we see a connection, we stop there. The connection that is made is Jesus didn't fall into their trap. He turned it back on them, and he said that image has – or that coin has Caesar's image on it, therefore render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's. But then we often stop there. My favorite part of that whole statement is, and render unto God that which is God's. Huh. Now that's interesting, the coin is supposed to go to Caesar because it has Caesar's image on it; render it to him. But render what to God? What has God's image on it? That was an invitation from Jesus to devote our whole life, our whole soul to God, the God who gave us life, rather than squandering it by giving it to the devil's temptations, who

hates us with an eternal hatred, but rather render unto God that which is God's because we have his image on our countenance. So even though he didn't finish that off here in 26, the implication is still there because of what happened in Matthew 22.

And then in this next phase he's discussing the purchasing of that land and – pick up verse 32: "I, the Lord, am angry with the wicked; I am holding my Spirit from the inhabitants of the earth." He's saying there are consequences for decisions; it's the law of the harvest. You can't plant weeds and then pick fruit. It doesn't work that way. I'm going to withhold my Spirit. Verse 33: "I have sworn in my wrath, and decreed wars upon the face of the earth, and the wicked shall slay the wicked, and fear shall come upon every man; and the saints also shall hardly escape; nevertheless," now put greater emphasis here, "I, the Lord am with them, and will come down in heaven from the presence of my Father and consume the wicked with unquenchable fire. And behold, this is not yet, but by and by."

So, he tells the saints to assemble upon the land of Zion in 36 and to be – look at verse 37: "...that every man should take righteousness in his hands and faithfulness upon his loins, and lift a warning voice unto the inhabitants of the earth." He's pleading with them to just trust him and to start building more of a heaven on earth in the way we – we live our life.

Go down to verse 40: "...let all the moneys which can be spared, it mattereth not unto me whether it be little or much, be sent up unto the land of Zion." Have you noticed from last week, sections 60, 61 and 62, all three sections have the phrase "it mattereth not unto me"? Now you get it again in 63, it mattereth not unto me, the phrase it mattereth not appears seven times in the Doctrine and Covenants, but here in these four sections, one after the other after the other, God really is empowering their agency to say, just move forward and he will discern – help Joseph to discern who needs to go first and when they need to go.

Look at verse 47: "He that is faithful and endureth shall overcome the world." Thank heaven that he didn't say, he that is perfect, he that never messes up, he that always treats people with perfect kindness and love and gentleness and meekness and persuasion, he will overcome the world and he will be saved. He didn't say that. He said he that is faithful and endureth.

Notice verse 50: "He that liveth when the Lord shall come, and hath kept the faith, blessed is he; nevertheless, it is appointed to him to die at the age of man." So, then he describes this, you will grow up to the age of man and then you will be changed in 51 in the twinkling of an eye. So, your mortality will die and you'll be changed in the twinkling of an eye, but you won't have to be buried in the grave if you live into the millennium. So twinkling isn't some – some different concept, it's just the English word a blink, a twinkling of an eye, a flash. It's in a moment that change is going to come over his people.

Now go down to verse 54: "And until that hour there will be foolish virgins among the wise; and at that hour cometh an entire separation of the righteous and the wicked; and in that day will I send mine angels to pluck out the wicked and cast them into unquenchable fire."

The Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament is a standard there for what it means to be wise, and particularly if you look at chapters 1 through 9, all sorts of great principles about what God expects of wise people. We might ask ourselves, are we somebody who seeks to be wise or do we delight in foolishness? Do we – do wise people embrace lies? Do wise people embrace misinformation? Do the wise who trust in God encourage misinformation and misunderstanding? Do they glory in misinformation and lies?

Now what I love about what God has asked all of us is to be wise, is to be grounded in the truth. God is a God of truth. And if we want to experience joy, we seek after and fully embrace all truth, not just this salvific truth or the truth that saves us in the kingdom of God, but also the truths that make our world function. And the invitation from God is to be like him, we can choose to be wise. And I love this encouragement that we should not be like any of the foolish virgins, and the time is now to choose.

Verse 58, the Lord makes a pretty profound statement now: "For this is a day of warning, and not a day of many words." So, he's saying this is intended to be a warning that, that the time is far spent. "For I, the Lord, am not to be mocked in the last days" (Doctrine and Covenants 63:58). And then he describes who he is in 59 and 60, and you can mark this with his attributes, his characteristics, his perfections. It's profound, all of the ways he describes himself with his power and his knowledge: "Wherefore," verse 63, "let the church repent of their sins, and I, the Lord, will own them; otherwise they shall be cut off."

Now, brothers and sisters, I know what he meant here in 63, that if we repent of our sins the Lord will own us. I think that's what he meant, but I think in the symbolic way, you could have the Lord saying, if you repent of your sins, then I the Lord will own them, your sins. I will own them. In other words, you don't have to carry those sins anymore, because I'm going to take them from you. I will own your sins so you can move forward on the covenant path, and I will own you as my adopted son or daughter in this covenant – covenant connection.

Verse 64: "Remember that that which cometh from above is sacred, and must be spoken with care, and by constraint of the Spirit; and in this there is no condemnation, and ye receive the Spirit through prayer, wherefore, without this there remaineth condemnation." Notice he's giving you this connection with God through prayer – talk to him. You don't have to stand apart, you don't have to keep going further into apostasy. At any point somebody can say, wait a minute, I don't like the fruits of this standing apart. I need help, and as we turn to him, he will help. He is merciful, he will own us. Verse 66: "These things remain to overcome through patience, that such may receive a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, otherwise, a greater condemnation. Amen."

Now in closing, many of us probably feel much of the time like my little Jenna last night with tears in her eyes saying, I thought I could do it. I thought it would be fun. I thought I was capable. Turns out I wasn't. I didn't make it and I made a mess. But there's a big difference. You and I have a Savior and we have a God in heaven who isn't rebuking us in moments like that, but rather helping us clean the paint off of our foot and off of the floor and fixing the project with a smile on his face

because he owns us. We're his. And he loves us way more than he loves the project that we're working on.

Brothers and sisters, ultimately these lessons, they're not about building up Zion. They're about building up you, and in the process you and I collectively are going to help him build up Zion, which by definition is to make others or to help others to come in so they're not standing apart, but they're standing with the Lord as one. That's what Zion is, to bring us all to become one in this glorious project of God, which is to bring to pass your immortality and eternal life. He lives. He loves you and he loves you with a perfect love, and sometimes because of that perfect love, we need some discipline, but there is always hope for anyone who turns to God, and that is our testimony that we leave with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen. Know that you're loved.