

Come Follow Me Class Insights 28 D&C Sec. 76

I'm Taylor, and I'm Tyler, and I'm Casey. And this is Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today, Doctrine and Covenants section 76. And we have our friend Casey with us, you've seen him in other videos that he's been producing with Book of Mormon Central, and we're excited to learn with him today this marvelous vision that is received to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon.

This might get a little confusing. His last name is Griffiths and my last name is Griffin, so we've got Brother Griffiths and Brother Griffin here.

I had a student in the grocery store come up and say how much they loved my Book of Mormon class the other day, and I said I don't teach Book of Mormon, so they loved your Book of Mormon class.

Oh, thank you, and I get the same for you, for your Foundations of the Restoration class. It's kind of fun.

So today we get this incredible, section 76, that's so incredible that it gets its own label that is pretty powerful, The Vision.

And when we call this The Vision, one thing that we want to point out is that this is the first vision really written down by Joseph Smith. The earliest account of the First Vision is written down the summer after this in 1832, so this is Joseph Smith not just in his most famous testimony but one of the earliest testimonies that he gives of Jesus Christ, his resurrection, and the expansiveness of the plan of salvation.

So to put this in context, we haven't – we haven't put a lot of emphasis on this as we've gone through the curriculum so far this year up to this point, but as you track Joseph Smith's age when all of these different events are occurring, keep in mind Joseph was born December 23rd of 1805. So when section 76 is given, he just – almost two months ago from this point turned 26. He's 26 years old, and he's having the vision together with Sidney Rigdon which is kind of unique, because there are those times in Church history where you've got the two, whether it's Joseph and Oliver being visited by John the Baptist and getting the Aaronic priesthood or Peter, James, and John, as opposed to the First Vision where Joseph's all alone. Here you get Sidney Rigdon with him who happens to be 12 years older than Joseph, so you have a 26-year old, a 38-year old sitting in the upstairs of the John Johnson home, and they have this mind-blowing vision as we're going to see it unfold.

Stop and think about what you had accomplished if you're over 26, what you had accomplished by the time you were 26 years old, and now consider the fact that we're already in section 76. There's already been a ton of stuff happen over in New York, moving out to Kirtland, out to Missouri, coming back to Kirtland, Joseph's produced the Book of Mormon, he's produced 136 pages in our current Doctrine and Covenants up to this point, and he's 26. That, to me, is one of

the beautiful testimonies that Jesus Christ is standing at the head of the work through this prophet.

I think another thing that this highlights also is the importance of the translation project Joseph Smith is engaged in. What we call the JST, Joseph Smith called the NT. He didn't use the term Joseph Smith Translation; that would have been pretty egotistical of him. We invented this in the 1970s when we were incorporating elements of the translation into our scriptures. Joseph Smith just always referred to it as the New Translation of the Scriptures, and section 76 demonstrates how important this translation process was to Joseph Smith's revelatory process, that it's difficult to say that the Joseph Smith translation and the D&C are two separate books. They're really interwoven, because as Joseph Smith is studying the scriptures, and that's a big part of the reason why he's asked to translate the Bible, is to just really intensely engage with the scriptures; the Lord's giving him revelation along the way.

In fact, this whole revelation comes from one single verse, John 5:29, which talks about the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust. In response to that, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon started to ponder and say, if the scriptures are right, there must be more resurrections than just one, and that sparks this grand, panoptic vision that causes them to see the best of the best, the worst of the worst, and everything that's in between.

In fact, when Joseph Smith writes down this vision in the earliest copy, the introduction that he gives to it is that it concerns two things: the Church of the Firstborn, which is a Church within the Church. You can be a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and not be a member of the Church of the Firstborn. The Church of the Firstborn are the people that are going to make it, the people that are going to be exalted.

The second thing he said was that The Vision talked about the economy of God, and “economy” is a word that we use differently today than Joseph Smith would have used in his time. We think about stocks and bonds and finances when we think of economies. In Joseph Smith's day an 1828 dictionary defines “economy” as “the governance of a household”. So, Joseph Smith's one-line description of what The Vision was about was, it's about the Church of the Firstborn, the people that are going to be saved, and how God governs the rest of his household, how he deals with the people that are doing what they're supposed to be doing, and the people that are sort of doing what they're supposed to be doing, and the people that are totally against him, and the people that are absolutely dead set on being rebellious. How do you come up with a system of salvation that takes into account all those disparate groups? That's what The Vision's about, and that's one of the things that makes it so fun to study is that everybody has a stake in the story that's being told here, whether you're the most righteous person or whether you're the most wicked person, you're going to show up somewhere in the pages of The Vision, so you'd better pay attention. This is you we're talking about here.

So as we jump into this section that most people, when you think section 76 and if you ask most, just average member of the Church, what's in section 76, they'll say oh, that's the degrees of

glory. And we then instantly in our minds start thinking of the circles and the lines, right? You've all seen this – this diagram of the locations – heaven, this is a veil, birth, earth, we die, spirit paradise, spirit prison, we're resurrected, we're judged and then we're assigned to one of three degrees of glory in the kingdoms or to outer darkness. We've seen this. And section 76 kind of highlights these, but, Casey, what would you say is the real focus that you get out of reading section 76 – are those the circles and lines?

Well, let me first say that I love this diagram. I love to draw this, and there's nothing that prompts a better discussion. I mean this has probably been drawn on every white board, black board, and blank surface in the Church. At the same time, too, there's defects to every type of diagram, right? I had a friend who was teaching up at the Weber Institute, and he had a pair of missionaries from another church visit his class, so he decided to just jettison his lesson and draw this and explain it, thinking this is going to blow their minds. Well, he drew it and he explained it and then he said do you guys have any questions? And one of them raised their hands and said, where's Jesus? Part of the problem is, this emphasizes our journey. It doesn't emphasize the role that Jesus Christ plays, and in that sense it is a little bit defective because we don't want to mention salvation without mentioning the main force of our salvation which is Jesus Christ and the work that he carries out.

Now fortunately, The Vision doesn't make the same mistake. The Vision, as we call it – is it okay if I erase this? – The Vision is really a series of visions, at least six, depending on how you classify it. And as you read through the text, you're going to note that they say a vision opened to us and we saw, and then they explain what they saw, and then they'll say the vision closed and another vision opened.

This happens in sequence several times throughout section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants, and interestingly, it's something that you could draw a couple of different ways. For instance, the first vision of The Vision is a vision of the Father and the Son, and that's an important thing to recognize is that the start of The Vision is putting the emphasis right exactly where it needs to be. The first thing that Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon see is Jesus Christ, and they share their witness of who he is and what he does and how expansive the work of the Atonement really is. Then you go from the best of the best to the worst of the worst. You get to see how good a person can be, personified in Jesus Christ, and then you get to see how bad a person can be, because the second vision that they witness is the fall of Lucifer from heaven. Interestingly, after we see Lucifer, the vision takes time to explain the fate of the sons of perdition, specifically those sons of perdition that kept their first estate, then came to earth and then lost their salvation, became perdition, which is a Latin word that just means ruined, the connotation means ruined beyond all repair.

From the worst of the worst we go back up to the best of the best, and there's a vision of celestial glory where Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon see the fate of those that are valiant in the testimony of Jesus and make and keep sacred covenants, “the church of the Firstborn”, as it's

defined here (Doctrine and Covenants 76:54). We move from the celestial glory down to the terrestrial glory, and then from the terrestrial glory to the telestial glory, and then at the end of the vision we kind of mix it up and revisit all of these, again discussing the fate of each, but that's kind of a rough outline of what Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon saw. They were presented with a study in contrasts where they got to see Jesus Christ and his Father, then see Lucifer, see the sons of perdition, see the sons and daughters of exaltation, and then work their way to the place where every element of the human family would eventually end up.

This is really, really helpful. You'll notice the flow of thought as God unfolds this panoptic vision for Joseph and Sidney. The question, Casey, is that they're sitting in a room in John Johnson's home upstairs. What's going on in the room around them?

Well one of the things that's really unique about The Vision is the fact that it's not a single-person vision or even two people. Philo Dibble, who's kind of our best source when it comes to what happened here, said that when he arrived there were twelve people in the room, that Joseph and Sidney were present, and that Joseph would describe things that he was seeing, saying, I see this and this, and then Sidney Rigdon would say, "I see the same." Sidney Rigdon would describe something, and Joseph Smith would say, "I see the same."¹ Philo Dibble said the other people in the room felt the power and the glory but did not see The Vision. So, there's this whole shared experience for the first several hours. They're sitting there describing what they're seeing in eternity and then they're writing down afterwards.

In fact, there's certain places in the text that says, we were commanded to write this, and there's other places where they say, and we were commanded not to write this. There's certain aspects of The Vision that Joseph Smith is going to dole out gradually over the next decade and a half of his life, but it will probably be revealed back here. So, what you see in section 76 again it's going to affect everything that comes after, up to and including the ordinances of the temple which were revealed almost a decade later in Nauvoo. So, this is really kind of the start of the story. And by the way there's that story that Philo Dibble tells too where at the end, he said Joseph appeared hale and hardy and ready for more, while Sidney sat in his chair, pale and limp as a rag. Joseph Smith just glanced over at Sidney Rigdon and said, Sidney's not as used to this as I am.

That's a really good point, that things of the Spirit take physical exertion. It's exhausting and it's like muscles, the more you use them, the more in shape you get. Well, Joseph's – Joseph had lots of – he's used to this, right? And so, he's ready for more, I guess, while Sidney Rigdon needed to take a breather before they moved on.

Yeah, so now as you open up your section 76, you'll notice it opens with kind of these – these things that you've heard before, the introduction in verse 1 and describing the – Jesus. Look at

¹ Various Authors. "Chapter 14: Visions and Nightmares." *Saints: the Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days*, vol. 1, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2018, pp. 146–157.

verse one, how it's a little unique compared to maybe some of the previous sections that we've covered: "Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, and rejoice ye inhabitants thereof, for the Lord is God, and beside him there is no Savior" (Doctrine and Covenants 76:1). That's a beautiful way to introduce the plan of Heavenly Father with the key feature of that plan, the Lord Jesus Christ. "...Beside him there is no Savior", there's no other name nor means whereby we can hope to be saved, "...only in and through the name of [Jesus] Christ" (Doctrine and Covenants 76:1, Mosiah 3:17).

And then it describes some of his attributes and characteristics and perfections, his wisdom, his ways are marvelous, his purposes fail not, he is from eternity to eternity, he's merciful, he's gracious. And by the way, this isn't just column filler – these aren't column-filling words. These attributes that you see here, they're going to be manifest throughout the section. You're going to see what God's mercy and grace and knowledge and power and wisdom, what they look like as far as the governing of heaven's economy, using the definition of governing his household and all his children. It's beautiful as you see this coming out.

He gives you a precursor, "Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory" (Doctrine and Covenants 76:6). Now as you turn the page over and we get into the meat of the translation process that Joseph is working on that Casey's been talking about, they get to this section in the book of John chapter 5 verse 29, and isn't it interesting how often revelation is rooted in us going to God with a question about something we've learned from the prophets, whether it be in ancient scripture or in living prophets. Well, that's exactly what happened here, this idea of two resurrections, the resurrection of the just and the unjust, which now opens up what we would – and I will label these over here on the side to help keep these straight, the first vision opens in verse 19, and it's going to take us down through verse 24. So, let's pick it up in 19.

Another thing that we want to point out that will help in your scripture study is that The Vision is one of those rare sections in the Doctrine and Covenants that Joseph Smith provided a commentary for. He presents this vision in 1832. In 1843, a decade later, W. W. Phelps, who's a close friend of Joseph Smith, publishes a poem called "Vade Mecum", "go with me" in Latin, where he writes to Joseph Smith and says this. This is an excerpt from "Vade Mecum": "Go with me, will you go to the mansions above, where the bliss, and the knowledge, the light, and the love, and the glory of God do eternally be? Death, the wages of sin, is not there.--Go with me."²

Joseph Smith, in response to that, writes a poem back to W. W. Phelps. He's probably helped a little bit by W. W. Phelps in writing it, but that's a poetic version of The Vision. And in that, he comments, it's basically a commentary on what he received in section 76 where he adds an additional insight, some of which come from the book of Abraham and other scriptures that he's received along the way to help you understand it.

² Phelps, William W. "Vade Mecum." Nauvoo, Illinois.

Just to illustrate how this works, let's go to the first vision that he sees here, the vision of the Father and the Son. So, if you have your scriptures, the vision of the Father and the Son starts in verse 19. It runs through about verse 24, and it gives us a whole bunch of interesting information about the Father and the Son, that they're separate beings, but the Savior's standing on the right hand of God, that the Savior has this important mission, and then it makes this unusual and kind of interesting statement. He's describing the mission of Jesus Christ, and he says this, verse 24: "That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds..." plural, "...worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God." This is suggesting that not only is Jesus the creator of all the worlds that exist, that's already been revealed to Joseph Smith when he was translating the book of Moses, but that Jesus is also the Redeemer of all the worlds that he's created as well.

In the poetic version of The Vision this is even more directly stated. The poetic version of The Vision describes these verses this way, it says this: "I heard a great voice, bearing record from heav'n, He's the Savior, [the] only begotten of God -- By him, of him, and through him, the worlds were all made, even all that career in the heavens so broad. Whose Inhabitants, too, from the first to the last, are saved by the very same Savior as ours; and, of course, are begotten God's daughters and sons, by the very same truths and the very same pow'rs."³

Now the poetic version of The Vision adds some true concepts here, that not only is Jesus Christ the Savior of every world, that the sons and daughters of God live on out there, but that they're also saved "...by the very same truths and the very same pow'rs." That means regardless of what world you live on, and the Lord doesn't tell us a lot about these other worlds, just that they're there and that they're moving through the plan as well, but that a person living on another world isn't saved by a truth other than faith in Jesus Christ or a power other than the priesthood of God. They're saved "...by the very same truths and the very same pow'rs."

It's kind of neat to think that we're not just a world-wide religion, we're a – we're a universal religion, we're an inter-galactic religion, that if aliens showed up on earth today, it really wouldn't disturb our theology. We'd just walk up and hand them a copy of the Book of Mormon, and they'd be like, have you heard of the Book of Yoda or something like that, and we'd pick that up and read that too. But one of the beautiful things the Doctrine and Covenants says here is really makes the gospel an extra-solar affair, something that reaches into every corner of the universe and makes Jesus Christ not just the Savior of the world, but the Savior of all creation, makes the Atonement really Infinite with a capital I.

So that's a very, very powerful, cosmic perspective of Jesus Christ and of his role and the expansiveness of his infinite Atonement. If our understanding of the Atonement was big before, verse 24 right there just makes it astronomically huge. It's fascinating in scripture when you get

³ Various Authors. "History, 1838–1856, Volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843], Page 1478." *The Joseph Smith Papers Project*, www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-d-1-1-august-1842-1-july-1843/121.

deep, deep concepts like this, you kind of want triangulation, so we get a little bit of triangulation because we get it in section 76 and then we get the commentary that Joseph Smith gives us through that poem that he wrote, and we'll put a link to that poem down in the header of this particular video in case if any of you want to read the entirety of section 76 in this poetic form, so it will be easy for you to find. But it's nice when you can even triangulate it further.

Also coming out of Joseph Smith's translation effort, the Book of Moses, which is his translation of Genesis chapter 1 through chapter 6 verse 13. In there, you get the story of Enoch, and part of the story that gets added in the Joseph Smith translation, that we get in Moses 6 and 7, is this fantastic vision, a panoptic vision, that Enoch also has. And in there, there's this one section where Enoch looks down and he sees the wickedness of the world and the Lord destroying some of the people on the earth through the flood of Noah. And he looks over at the Lord during this part of the vision and God is weeping, and that caught Enoch off guard. "How is it that thou canst weep, seeing that thou art holy ... from all eternity to all eternity?" (Moses 7:29)

Why are you crying? God gives him a long answer in Moses 7, but then at the end of his answer, listen to this, chapter 7 verse 36: "Wherefore, I can stretch forth mine hands and hold all the creations which I have made;", and what we learn from Moses 1 and from other places is it's worlds without number. It's – it's huge out there. "I can ... hold all the creations which I have made; and mine eye can pierce them also..." (Moses 7:36). Now listen to this qualifier, "and among all the workmanship of mine hands there has not been so great wickedness as among thy brethren" (Moses 7:36).

It's interesting that Jesus seems to have come to this planet to perform his infinite Atonement, his saving act for all of the creations which he has made, they're all going to be redeemed through his Atonement that he performs once for all, but he performs it here. Brothers and sisters, we don't know the answers to all of these questions or the implications, but you and I are walking on the same planet that the creator of worlds without number was born onto and lived and performed his infinite Atonement here. We're breathing the same air he did when he performed this infinite Atonement for all of God's children, which gives us context to these elements of the gospel that he's asking us to live in a very, very wicked world. He's giving us help that we need to combat that world that we live in.

Now let's shift over, Casey, to the second vision. So picking up in verse 25 we're going to take this second version of the devil. Like you said, we're going from this contrast of ultimate good to now what does ultimate opposition, ultimate evil look like in the second vision?

Right, the best of the best or the highest a person can become is personified in Jesus Christ. The interesting thing is right after this revelation with Jesus as the Savior of all the worlds, we immediately go down to where Lucifer is. We see the worst, the most depraved that a son of God can possibly become, and it gives us some interesting background on Lucifer. For instance, verse 25 describes him as "an angel who was in authority in the presence of God, who rebelled against the only begotten Son whom the Father loved and who was in the bosom of the Father, and was

thrust down from the presence of God and the Son,” and then it says he was called perdition. “Perdition”, like we mentioned earlier, is the Latin word that means “ruined beyond all repair”, and in contrast to that they mentioned he was Lucifer. “Lucifer” is a Latin term that means “the bright one”, meaning he had all this potential; he had all this goodness within him, he could have been a great leader, but he was ruined beyond all repair.

From there The Vision shifts to explain that the fate of the sons of perdition and talks a little bit about what it requires for a person to become a son of perdition. So this is describing the people who come to earth and fall far enough that they become sons of perdition. Interestingly, in the Church we sometimes downplay sons of perdition because it's correct to say that it's not an option for most people. Most people don't attain the level of knowledge in this life necessary to become a son of perdition, but if you look at the overall scope of The Vision, the sons of perdition receive the second most amount of attention after the celestial beings. So it's clear that from the emphasis that they're given in The Vision, the Lord wanted us to know about it. It might be also because of the knowledge Joseph and Sidney were receiving right here. They're moving up to the level where they have enough knowledge to become sons of perdition, and the Lord wanted them to understand kind of the responsibility that was coming along with this.

But if you go down a little bit further to verse 34, it's going to start to list off the requirements for a person to become a son of perdition, and the Lord says: "Concerning whom I have said there is no forgiveness in this world nor in the world to come." I sometimes have students say, does this mean the sons of perdition can't repent or that they won't repent? There is no difference between those two things, really. If they refuse to repent or if they can't be forgiven for what they have done, the same state is in the end. The Savior's just making a declaration. Then he explains what they have to do, verse 35: "Having denied the Holy Spirit after having received it, and having denied the Only Begotten Son of the Father, having crucified him unto themselves and put him to an open shame." Now that is a very, very serious listing of sin that a person engages in, and when we say denying the Holy Ghost, that's not something as simple as just saying there is no Holy Ghost.

Joseph Smith near the end of his life gave a discourse where he described what a person had to do to become a son of perdition. This is what he said. He said “What must a man do to commit the unpardonable sin? He must receive the Holy Ghost, have the heavens opened unto him, know God, and then sin against him. After a man has sinned against the Holy Ghost, there's no repentance for him. He has got to say that the sun does not shine while he sees it. He's got to deny Jesus Christ when the heavens have been opened unto him and deny the plan of salvation with his eyes open to the truth of it and from that time he begins to be an enemy.”⁴ And this is such a huge degree of sin, to the point where you would literally crucify Christ again if the opportunity was given to you, but we would say it doesn't seem like it's an option for most

⁴ Smith, Joseph. “Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by Wilford Woodruff, Page 139.” *The Joseph Smith Papers Project*, www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-wilford-woodruff/7.

people. That's what makes the next line of Joseph Smith's discourse so haunting. The next thing he said was, "This is the case with many apostates of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Now Joseph Smith was a classy guy, he doesn't say hey, I'm talking about you or anything like that, he just says, this is the responsibility that sometimes comes with the light and knowledge that exalts a person. With that knowledge comes the responsibility that you also could fall, and that's the fate of these sons of perdition.

Section 76 goes on to say, "they ... shall go away into the lake of fire and brimstone, with the devil and his angels – And [they're] the only ones on whom the second death shall have any power; [and] the only ones who shall not be redeemed in the due time of the Lord, after [suffering] of his wrath" (Doctrine and Covenants 76:36-38).

Now section 88 which is going to come along a little bit later does decree that sons of perdition will be resurrected at the end of the millennium, but when they say the second death, they mean the spiritual death. They mean that they're going to be cut off from God forever. And the only people that are totally cut off from God at that point are cut off because of their choices, because of their decisions, not cut off because God doesn't ever want to see them again and he shuns them, but because they've cut themselves off from God and put themselves in a place where God – I'm not going to say God cannot reach them – but they won't allow God to reach them is probably the best way to phrase it.

So, in just a moment we're going to talk about this interlude, the gospel as a focus beginning in verse 39, and it's crucial and interesting, and valuable that when God defines his gospel, that we pay attention. We'll see that in verse 39. Before we get to that, let's look again here at this word "Lucifer". And as Casey was telling us, it's an interesting word. It actually comes from two words. The word "luce" means light, in fact a great name is Lucy, it's actually one who's full of light. The "fer" actually comes from the word "ferry", like maybe you've gone on a boat, a ferry boat somewhere that carries you from one location to another, and Lucifer literally means "to be a bearer of light".

And another name that I think is really beautiful is the word "Christopher" – Christ - fer – somebody who bears Christ. And it's interesting that Lucifer, his original name, is he's somebody who actually bore the light of God and he turned away from it. Just as Casey was explaining, he had all the light and knowledge that he could ever want, and he fully turned away from it. He lost everything. So, "perdition" means to be ruined beyond repair. It also means to be lost, and what I love about this vision is that most of us are not going to get to a point where we have so much light and knowledge in this life that we're likely to fall into perdition. Now I know some of us have worried about that. What I love about this vision is the power and mercy of God. He's saying most of us actually are going to find ourselves with God, and I love how he instructs us with this clear difference of what it means to be with the Father and Son, what it means to reach celestial glory, and really the opposite of that.

So, as we listen now, beginning in verse 39, let's now listen about what God defines as the gospel, the good news, the good word of God. Let's read here: "For all the rest shall be brought forth by the resurrection of the dead, through the triumph and the glory of the Lamb, who was slain, who was in the bosom of the Father before the worlds were made. And this is the gospel, the glad tidings, which the voice out of the heavens bore record unto us –" (Doctrine and Covenants 76:39-40).

So again, if you want a nice, beautiful definition and understanding from God himself of what the gospel is, this is what to pay attention to, verse 41: "That he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness; that through him all might be saved whom the Father had put into his power and made by him, who glorifies the Father, and saves all the works of his hands, except those sons of perdition who deny the Son after the Father has revealed him. Wherefore he saves all..." (Doctrine and Covenants 76:41-44). We've talked about this before, the word "all" is one hundred percent, "...except them..." those sons of perdition, "--they shall go away into everlasting punishment, which is endless punishment, which is eternal punishment, to reign with the devil and his angels in eternity, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, which is their torment –" (Doctrine and Covenants 76:44).

So, as you look at the Lord continuing to describe the state of the sons of perdition, look at verse 46: "Neither was it revealed, neither is, neither will be revealed unto man, except to them who are made partakers thereof." Wow, it sounds pretty bad where he's saying, it's never been nor is it nor will it be revealed to anyone other than those who actually end up in that condition. Look at 48: "Wherefore, the end, the width, the height, the depth, and the misery thereof, they understand not, neither any man except those who are ordained unto this condemnation." It's pretty – pretty descriptive to say I can't even give you a glimpse of what a terrible state this is. I just hope that you never have to go through it. It's kind of the idea here.

But then God wants them to record the description he does provide. He says, keep reading verse 49: "And we heard the voice, saying: Write the vision," so it's this vision right here, write this down, "...for lo, this is the end of the vision of the sufferings of the ungodly." And as Casey pointed out, this is the second-biggest emphasis given in all six visions. That's a lot of column space for that group. The Lord's basically helping us understand the significance of our agency and our ability to choose. Whether we're here, here, here, or here is really dependent on us tapping into what God has offered so freely to all of us through the gift of his Son in that gospel, the good news – these people don't want to hear the good news.

And from an instructional standpoint, I love how God points things out. Good instructors often will teach with opposites put right next to each other, because it provides enormous clarity. Or if you just had a gray scale, it's hard to know the different gradations of the shades of gray, but man, when you put black and white together, like opposites right next to each other, there is absolutely no question about where the boundary is. And it's fascinating that when God reveals

this, he didn't go, all right, Father and Son and for those of us and for those of you who want to join us, let's talk about the celestial kingdom, and he's, like, this is where I want you to be, and here's the exact opposite. And it's interesting he spends that much time, and so it's just a great, instructional moment that God provides for us right here in the scriptures.

And then watch what happens. Now we go 50 through 70 – we go from the state of being lost or totally ruined to the state of ultimate salvation, so, fascinating that God is classifying all three of these categories as saved, being saved. These are degrees of glory. It's a state of salvation to one degree or another. This is not saved. Now like we said in 88, they're going to be saved from the grave but that's about it. Yeah, and each one of these we should classify as a heaven. It's not like in – in our religion the telestial kingdom is the same thing as hell. The telestial kingdom is better than the world that we live in right now. If earth is a telestial kingdom, imagine earth with no war, famine, hunger, poverty, disease, or death. That's the telestial kingdom. That's the place where a really objectively bad person goes to. That does tend to show how merciful the plan is, and while the Savior does spend a fair amount of time down here, among the sons of perdition, the most time is spent among those that achieve celestial glory.

Now one important thing to understand this, this is 1832. What is written down in The Vision here is the beginning of our understanding of the celestial glory. There's going to be a lot of other things revealed later on; for instance, section 131 reveals that in the celestial kingdom there are three separate degrees and that in order to obtain the highest, a person has to enter into an order of the priesthood that Joseph Smith classifies as “the new and everlasting covenant” of marriage (Doctrine and Covenants 132:6). So, what we see in verses 50 through 70, or the vision of the celestial kingdom, is really the beginning of our understanding. Other things like the revelations that come through the ordinances of the temple and things that are taught by Joseph Smith in sections 129 and section 130, 131, and 132 are going to be given when the time is appropriate.

What it says right here and now in 1832 is the basics that a person has to know. For instance, verse 51: "These are they," the celestial people, "who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment that has been given." The ordinance of the Church offered for salvation in 1832 was baptism, and so the Savior's instructions are going to center around that.

But it also starts to expand to us exactly what Heavenly Father is going for and what he has in mind for his faithful sons and daughters that make it to celestial glory. If you jump down to verse 54: "[These] are...the church of the Firstborn. “[These] are they into whose hands the Father has given all things –” (Doctrine and Covenants 76:54-55). This is not only a revelation about the celestial kingdom, this is a revelation about Heavenly Father, that Heavenly Father isn't the sort of person that feels like he has to jealously guard all the power that he has. He's more than open to giving it away to anybody that qualifies to handle those things. He wants to give it to every

single one of his children, but he can't hand the keys to the universe over to someone that hasn't proven that they can demonstrate responsibility.

It mentions in verse 56: "These are they who are priests and kings, who have received...the fulness ...of his glory." In fact, I love the way the poetic version of The Vision describes this. These verses read like this: "They're the priests of the order of Melchizedek. Like Jesus, (from whom is this highest reward,) Receiving a fulness of glory and light; As written, They're Gods; even sons of the Lord. So all things are theirs; yea, of life, or of death; Yea, whether things now, or to come, all are theirs, And they are the Savior's, and he is the Lord's, Having overcome all, as eternity's heirs."⁵

I love the phrase "eternity's heirs". That the idea is that there's not a finite amount of love and power and glory that exists in the universe. Heavenly Father can give us everything that he has and still have the entire universe left over. And that's literally what the Savior intends for people that achieve celestial glory, that you not only become like Jesus Christ, but when you get there, you're given a semblance of the same responsibility.

Now we'll always have a close relationship, and God will always be our Father, but the point of this passage is that Heavenly Father isn't intending to dominate our lives and rule over us and direct every single aspect of what we do. He wants us to become independent. He wants us to become autonomous. He wants us to become like him and learn that "[our] work and [our glory eventually will be] to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life" of more men and women, to bring more people into the circle of exaltation, and the cycle just continues on as more and more people achieve the powers that Heavenly Father has already attained and the glory that he has right now (Moses 1:39).

So, heirs of eternity is one way to describe those that go to the celestial kingdom. Let's put it, this is the beginning of Joseph Smith's journey into the celestial kingdom. This isn't the end; there's a lot to be revealed along the way, and even what we have right now on earth might just be a semblance of what has to be taught later on for us to become what Heavenly Father is and for us to do what Heavenly Father does.

So, this brings up the question, what does it really mean when we say "saved"? What do we mean when we say, oh, a person's going to be saved, either in this life or in the eternities and what is our description of salvation? Section 76, this vision, is opening up that lens of salvation much bigger than it – than it existed in the 1830s, to the point where, Casey, how would you describe the reception of these notions that are coming out of this section? How did people respond? Because this is – this is showing that God is way more merciful than we've been taught from most pulpits up to this point.

⁵ Smith, Joseph. "History, 1838–1856, Volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843], Page 1481." *The Joseph Smith Papers Project*, www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-d-1-1-august-1842-1-july-1843/124.

Yeah, there's an interesting range of reactions to The Vision. For instance, Joseph Smith loves The Vision and he says even the most narrow-minded of men is constrained to exclaim, this came from God. On the other hand, there's other people in the Church that genuinely struggled with The Vision. Brigham Young, for instance, doesn't say that he struggled, but he remembers when The Vision was first revealed, a lot of people were upset. The way Brigham Young phrased it was they were upset because God wasn't going to send everlasting fire at infants and heathens, people that never knew the gospel or children that died before they were able to receive the ordinances.

Brigham Young's brother Joseph was even more blunt. He said, when I first read The Vision of the eternal world, I couldn't believe it, why, the Lord was going to save everybody. It's interesting that the problem they had with The Vision wasn't that it was too narrow, it was that it was too broad. They thought that it was a type of universalism which was this doctrine at the time that everybody was going to be saved. But there are hints throughout the Doctrine and Covenants that this is the case. For instance, as early as section 19 the Lord says eternal punishment isn't eternal, it's called eternal because that's my name, I'm Eternal. Endless punishment isn't endless, it's called endless because my name is Endless. And the Savior is only interested in punishment as much as it rehabilitates people.

There's a great place prepared for every single person, and it's interesting that over the course of several decades, the saints evolve from this perspective of 'why is the Lord going to save everybody' to 'why, the Lord's going to save everybody!' This is a really, really great thing, but if you're a Latter-day Saint you don't have to look at a non-Christian or any person, really, and say that God doesn't love them, because section 76 is this manifestation that God has a place prepared for the least of us, or maybe a better way to phrase would be for the worst of us. He's going to put everybody exactly where they'll be happy eventually, or as happy as they'll allow themselves to be.

Which isn't that interesting, because we put that in the context of people on this side of the veil, and in my mind, section 76 opens up this expansive doctrine of salvation for people on the other side of the veil as well. You hinted at that. Yeah. This idea that God is going to open doors to allow people their agency on that side of the veil as well. It's their choice. They can't get to the judgment bar and say, I didn't get baptized because I didn't get the chance.

Yeah, again and again The Vision repeats this idea that boy, you're given chance after chance to accept the gospel. For instance, the next vision that we move into, verses 71 to 80, is the vision of the terrestrial kingdom. And there's some terminology in here that's difficult to sometimes grapple with unless you understand this is 1832. This is before the first temple has been built; this is before ordinances and salvation for the dead have been revealed. These verses could make it sound like a lot of people aren't going to necessarily get into the celestial kingdom, but when we understand the full context, for instance, it describes terrestrial people, verse 74, as those:

"Who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it...they are honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men."

Now it sounds like if you didn't accept the gospel down here on earth, you're not going to be able to get into the celestial kingdom. We know that that's not the case, that a person can accept the gospel after this life. But in 1832 he's working with the light and knowledge and understanding that they have at that point. "They receive of his glory, but not of his fulness. They receive the presence of the Son but not the fulness of the Father. ... They are bodies terrestrial, not bodies celestial, and differ in glory as the moon differs from the sun" (Doctrine and Covenants 76:76-78).

The interesting thing is the terrestrial kingdom is a lot like what conventional Christians, orthodox Christians, would describe heaven to be like right? That's right? You're in the presence of Jesus, you've lived in this paradise condition where you don't have any struggles, you've – there's no family connection here, no marriage, that's pretty descriptive of the way many people today would describe a state of salvation.

Now, one of the things that's revealed later on about the celestial kingdom is this crucial vision that comes to Joseph Smith in 1836. This is when the Kirtland Temple's being dedicated, and he sees another vision of the celestial kingdom, and he sees not only our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, he sees Adam and Eve; he sees his father and mother who hadn't died yet, and he also sees his brother Alvin. So it's clear that this is a vision of the future, not a vision of the present celestial kingdom. When he asked the question of how did Alvin get here - his older brother who had died before the Church was organized – well, the Savior gives him this answer: "All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God;" (Doctrine and Covenants 137:2).

We should never read these passages on the terrestrial kingdom without reading section 137 alongside of it. The idea being when he says if they received not the testimony of Jesus, that means they wouldn't have received it even if it had been given to them. If a person would have received it but didn't have the chance in this life, they'll have the chance in the next life to receive it. There's plenty of people out there like Alvin Smith who just didn't have the chance to make the covenants necessary to go to the celestial kingdom. And as time goes on, the Lord gradually reveals how a person like Alvin Smith, who lived according to the light and knowledge that he had, was still qualified to go to the celestial kingdom and not cast off forever just because of some bad timing that might have existed while he was here in mortality.

So, we have to use all scriptures to kind of balance each other, and before you take section 76 to the extreme, we also have to say what's going on in 1832 and how is the Lord just planting the seeds here later on that are going to explain that well, not only is the celestial kingdom expansive as it sounds here but as expansive as it sounds in section 137, and then add in section 138 which talks about we don't even know if there's a line between paradise and prison in the Spirit world.

And if there is a line, it's pretty porous; a person can go back and forth fairly easily based on the choices that they make.

Brigham Young liked to say about the plan of salvation that it has a place for everything and puts everything in its place. We have to do the same thing with the scriptures and make sure that when we read a passage like this, we put it in context and then read what the Savior revealed to Joseph Smith later on so that it all fits together.

Wonderful. Now let's shift gears to see into the telestial from 81 to 90 where it first introduces it and we're going to come back to it again in 98 a little bit later.

Yeah, so one of the most instructive passages here where it is describing the telestial kingdom, it starts in verse 81, that's where the vision of the telestial kingdom opens, as it says here: "the glory of the telestial, which is the glory of the lesser, even the glory of the stars that differ from the glory of the moon in the firmament". One of the interesting things is that the word "celestial" exists in the dictionary; so does the word "terrestrial", but it generally refers to the earth. If you look up the word "telestial" in the dictionary, it says a Mormon degree of heaven, like this is a word that didn't exist, at least in the proper language, until 1832 when this was given. Now where does the word "telestial" come from, then? You might notice "tele", if you put it up there, goes in front of a couple of other things. For instance, we'd all feel comfortable saying a telephone or a television. The Latin meaning of "tele" is "distant". If you said "telephone", the word "telephone" literally means "far away voice". "Television" means "a distant vision" or "distant viewing". The telestial kingdom means those that are furthest or farthest away from God.

Now one interesting thing that the Savior says here, too, go to verse 82, is that a telestial person is a person who receives not the gospel of Christ or the testimony of Jesus. The Savior discusses those like they are two different things, that to receive a testimony of Jesus or to acknowledge who Jesus is and his glory and majesty and power is different than receiving the gospel, and this is a key distinguishment between the terrestrial and the telestial kingdom. A terrestrial – a terrestrial person accepts the testimony of Jesus but not the full gospel. A telestial person rejects them both. Now it does say later on in section 76 and in Philippians that eventually "every knee [will] bow, and every tongue ... confess" that Jesus is the Christ, but there's also a difference between confessing that Jesus is the Christ or the King and having a testimony of Jesus (Doctrine and Covenants 88:104). There's a difference between acknowledging this guy has the power and he can do whatever he wants to do and saying, this is my Savior and my King. A telestial person never really acknowledges Jesus Christ as their Savior; they just acknowledge Jesus Christ as a powerful figure.

Now given that extent of rebellion and the things that it lists the telestial person doing, later on in The Vision in some of the closing verses, it is wonderful to think that a telestial person still receives some semblance of glory. Back when I was a seminary teacher we did one of those exercises where we dressed up a room in the seminary as the celestial kingdom and the terrestrial

kingdom and the telestial kingdom, and I was in charge of the telestial kingdom, right? That's what I wanted to do. So I blacked out all the windows and I got a smoke machine and I played disturbing music while they were walking in, and then I talked about how awful the telestial kingdom was, and I will fully confess on camera here, I taught false doctrine that day. I depicted the telestial kingdom like it was going to be a really unpleasant place. It's not. The reward that Heavenly Father has even for his most rebellious children, for all but the sons of perdition, is actually a pretty great reward. And it's wonderful to think of how generous God is, that a person that is this rebellious that he refuses to accept the gospel or even a simple testimony of Jesus still has a great reward appointed for them, will receive a resurrected body, and have the blessings that come along with having that type of body.

Now to make room to diagram a couple of other things here -- let me erase the board -- he now shifts into some comparative kinds of things, so notice in verse 91, "thus we saw the glory of the terrestrial which excels in all things the glory of the telestial, even in glory ... in power ... in might, and ... dominion." And then he does a comparison with the celestial kingdom in verse 92, 93, 94, and 95 down to 6. And then he brings you back to the terrestrial in 97, "the glory of the terrestrial is one, even as the glory of the moon is one."

And then he gives this interesting contrast, starting in 98, with the telestial kingdom where he's going to give us a lot more descriptions all the way down through 116 of this telestial kingdom: "the glory of the telestial is one, even as the glory of the stars is one; for as one star differs from another star in glory, even so differs one from another in glory in the telestial world." And he talks about this contrast in the New Testament that occurred in the book of Acts, where some would say, well, I'm of Paul and others say, well, I'm of Apollos, and I'm of Cephas, that would be Peter. And he's saying, "These are they who say they are some of one and some of another--some of Christ ... some of John ... some of Moses ... some of Elias ... some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch; But [they] received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenant" (Doctrine and Covenants 76:100-101). Casey's already touched on this, the idea that it's not enough to just know that Jesus is powerful, that he can do all these amazing things. It's to actually change how we act and how we live our life.

Notice this for a moment. If we draw these three circles once again with the telestial here, terrestrial here, and celestial here, we love the sun, moon, and stars analogy. What is it really that kind of distinguishes the kind of person that ends up in the telestial kingdom? There are a lot of ways you can do this, so this is just one lens through which you can look at this -- this comparison here. The types of sins that are listed in the telestial kingdom all seem to have a common thread. They seem to be sins of commission, things that we're doing wrong, where we're doing things that we shouldn't do. We're breaking, as it will, the "thou shalt nots". "Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20:15). "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). These are all things described here in -- as telestial behaviors. And yet the grand irony is, is even if you do all of those things, God is still willing to give you something as glorious and amazing as the telestial

kingdom, which far exceeds the beauties and the wonders of this earth, because you remove all of those bad things out of this earth and put people in that kind of a condition where the Holy Ghost can be present with them forever. That's powerful.

Keep in mind, telestial people in the telestial kingdom aren't lying. Telestial people in the telestial kingdom aren't stealing. They're not committing adultery. They're not doing the bad things that are described here, which is very interesting, because now it brings us back to this earth and the significance of other scriptures, like Casey was talking about, where you look across the scriptures in their context. You look in Alma 34 where he says, this is the life, “[this] is the time ... to prepare to meet God;” (Alma 34:32). This is the day where we perform our labors, let's go – let's choose to bend the knee and confess that Jesus is the Christ when it's still fully a choice that we have to make, rather than a reaction when he's coming in the Second Coming and the ground is shaking, and every knee is bowing because there is no other choice. It's powerful to realize that if I can deal with these now rather than wait for them to be dealt with later as a reaction, then the reward's going to come.

Now, as you shift up one degree of glory, the sins here are largely sins of omission. So we're not fully faithful, we're not – we're not valiant in that testimony of Jesus. These are, in essence, the “thou shalt” commandments, and we're not fully committed to the Lord, whereas the celestial kingdom is about people who are fully consecrated to the Lord. Elder Neal A. Maxwell once said in October 1995, “Once the telestial sins are left behind and henceforth avoided, the focus falls evermore on the sins of omission. These omissions signify a lack of qualifying fully for the celestial kingdom. Only greater consecration can correct these omissions, which have consequences just as real as do the sins of commission. Many of us thus have sufficient faith to avoid the major sins of commission, but not enough faith to sacrifice our distracting obsessions or to focus on our omissions.”⁶

So for me, one of the major take home lessons from section 76's vision, this set of visions, is this idea that there is a place where the boots meet the ground on the covenant path where I need to move forward, and it's not just about trying to get somewhere. But the plan of salvation, section 76, isn't just about the location. It's not just about getting to a kingdom or getting to heaven. Salvation isn't just to get somewhere; salvation is to also become like God, to become like Christ. And that, to me, is the major message here of section 76 is he's given us his gospel, his glorious news, the good – the best news, I would say, is that there is hope, that, yeah, we have struggles both of commission and omission. But he'll forgive us if we use our agency now, today, not – not twenty years down the road, but now, to more fully consecrate our life to him, because It's only then that we become like him.

⁶ Maxwell, Neal A. ““Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father.”” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, Oct. 1995, www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1995/10/swallowed-up-in-the-will-of-the-father?lang=eng.

Can I point out one other thing, too? If we go back to verse 98 where the Savior starts to list off people that go to the telestial kingdom. Before he gets down to the really serious sins in verses 103, the liars, the sorcerers, the adulterers, and whoremongers, the first group that he lists off, and this is kind of a nice return to our Christ-centered focus on The Vision, is he says some of the people that go to the telestial kingdom are of Paul or Apollos or of Cephas or John or Moses or Elias, Esaias, Isaiah, or even Enoch. Now that is not to say that Paul, Apollos, Cephas, Moses, Elias, Esaias, Isaiah, or Enoch are bad people. They are very, very good. What he's saying is that if you center your belief and your faith on something other than Jesus Christ, you are not going to be saved, that a person that affixes themselves to a mortal individual who is not Jesus Christ won't achieve exaltation. In fact, they could be bound for telestial glory.

The poetic version of The Vision is even more direct in the way it says this. Listen to this. It says, "These are they [who] came out for Apollos and Paul; for Cephas and Jesus ... all kinds of hope;"⁷. In other words, he's seeming to suggest that there's even a way that you could affix yourself to Jesus, but maybe only the parts of Jesus's gospel that you like, that you think are good, and not the whole personage, everything that Jesus presents and everything that he asks a person to do, and you won't gain salvation. The Vision wants us to focus on Christ, the Living Christ, the full Christ, and every aspect of his teachings and not just pick and choose the teachings or disciples that we want. It's probably fair to say that if you fixate on any teacher or any gospel figure other than Jesus Christ, you're not going to go to the celestial kingdom. And so The Vision starts out with this laser focus on Christ and at the end has a very poignant warning about those that might put their faith in something other than Christ or even their own conception of Jesus Christ and how no salvation can be gained from that.

There's one little concept here in this final section of the telestial kingdom that I find beautiful. Look at verse 107: "When he," this is speaking of Jesus, the Savior, "when he shall deliver up the kingdom, and present it unto the Father, spotless, saying: I have overcome and have trodden the wine-press alone, even the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God." Brothers and sisters, this is – this is deep doctrine here, this concept, that in the beginning when God creates the world through his Son, through the power of his Only Begotten, once Adam and Eve fall from God's presence, God the Father's presence, Jesus takes on this role of the mediator, the intercessor, the advocate with the Father. Before that, it seems that the Father is doing most of the interacting with Adam and Eve and with us up in heaven. That is the first relationship we have is with God the Father, not with Jesus Christ. Then we fall, and Jesus becomes that go-between, and Heavenly Father delegates all of these things into the hands of his Son, even the very kingdom of God on the earth, it's given to Jesus to do his work, his work of salvation. It's the gospel of Jesus Christ. You'll notice we don't call it the gospel of Heavenly Father, but ironically, we know where Jesus got his gospel; we know where he got his teachings, it was

⁷ Various Authors. "History, 1838–1856, Volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843], Page 1483." *The Joseph Smith Papers*, www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-d-1-1-august-1842-1-july-1843/126.

Heavenly Father who gave them to him, but we call it the gospel of Jesus Christ because it's a delegated gospel to him to do his work. It's the Church not of Heavenly Father; it's the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It's the Book of Mormon, another testament of Jesus Christ. You'll notice that the focus is always bringing us to Jesus Christ.

It's fascinating to me that of all the things, these big things that got delegated into the hands of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, there are a couple of things that Heavenly Father didn't delegate. I love the fact that he says they will still talk to me primarily, directly, through prayer. He didn't delegate prayer to Jesus. He retained that connection with his children. And I love the fact, brothers and sisters, that Jesus promises here in section 76 verse 107, that the day will come when he's done his work – he's – the King of Kings will have done his work, he will have prepared the kingdom and he doesn't retain it for himself. What is he going to do? He's going to present it spotless to the Father. He's going to give it to the Father.

Near the end of The Vision, they wrap everything up by talking about the Savior delivering up the kingdom, this is verse 107, "...and present it to the Father, spotless, saying: I have overcome and have trodden the wine-press alone, even the wine-press of the fierceness ... of Almighty God." Now one question that always comes up once we've put these degrees of glory up here is where does it end? Is there progression between kingdoms? It could be really, really easy to set one Church leader against another Church leader, and that's not always wise. The honest truth is, I don't know if there is a consensus among Church leaders as to what happens here, and that might be because it's not that important for us right now to know the answer to that question. What's important for us to know is that God loves us and that he cares about us and that he's got a place prepared for each of us where, just like Tyler taught, we'll be comfortable and happy. In fact, I really like this statement from Lorenzo Snow and I just want to read it right now.

He said, "The [plan] and scheme that he [Jesus Christ] is now carrying out is for universal salvation--not ... for the salvation of the Latter-day Saints, but for the salvation of every man and woman on the face of the earth: for those in the spirit world, and for those who may hereafter come upon the face of the earth. [It's] for the salvation of every son and daughter of Adam. They are the offspring of the Almighty; He loves them ... and His plans are for the salvation of the whole, and He will bring all up into that position in which they will be [as happy and as comfortable] as they are willing to be."

So rather than putting the burden on God, to answer that question, let's keep the focus on ourselves and where we would be comfortable and happy. How much we're willing to accept from God and how much we're willing to allow him to give to us is the real question. We know that he's merciful and we know that he is kind, but we also know that he's just and that he is fair, that he believes in law and operates within laws and has given us those laws and commandments and a plan of salvation so that we have a map and understanding of where we're going to. Too much worry about what happens in the eternal worlds sometimes draws us away from what we

need to be doing right now, to stay affixed on Christ, the gospel of Jesus Christ and the message of salvation that section 76 presents.

So to me, it's fascinating that when you “come unto Christ”, he isn't the end goal (Moroni 10:32). That's not the end, you haven't arrived. My job is to have faith in him and trust him and come unto him. His job is to cleanse me, forgive me, purify me, shape me, sanctify me, purge me of all these things and struggles that I have so that one day, dressed in the robes of his righteousness, he can then present me as part of his overall kingdom, spotless to the Father, as we then come full circle back to the God who originally gave us life.

One of my favorite quotes on this subject comes from President Benson when he said, “Nothing is going to startle us more when we pass through the veil to the other side than to realize how well we know our Father and how familiar his face is to us”⁸. It's Jesus reestablishing and reconnecting us, which is what “at-one-ment” is all about, is to take fallen women and men and to help them come to be at one with our Heavenly Parents yet again before we left their presence.

So as we conclude this glorious vision, section 76, our hope and our prayer is that each one of us have a clearer view, a better vision of who God is, who we are, who the people around us are, who the devil is, and what our capacity is to move forward, trusting in Jesus Christ to help us to become who we were intended to become, who we were born to become. And to finish, I just want to repeat something we've said before. The God of the universe who holds “worlds without number” in his hand holds you in his heart because you're his precious daughter or his precious son (Moses 1:33). Know that you're loved. And I leave that with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

⁸ Benson, Ezra T. “Jesus Christ-Gifts and Expectations.” *BYU Speeches*, BYU, 15 Mar. 2021, speeches.byu.edu/talks/ezra-taft-benson/jesus-christ-gifts-expectations/.

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