

Questions and Concerns I have About the LDS Church

By Jared Eastley

May 2016

Part 1 – Prophets, Seers, and Revelators

As the current President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Thomas S. Monson is the one we sustain as being a prophet, seer, and revelator, and as the only man on earth who holds all priesthood keys. We call him: “The Prophet.” We consider him a prophet, an apostle, and a man equal with Joseph Smith Jr. in priesthood power, priesthood authority, and priesthood keys. Taking all these things into consideration, it should be a terrific testimony builder to search into the life and teachings of Thomas S. Monson in an effort to identify instances where he has manifest these same gifts, powers, and special callings. “By their fruits ye shall know them.” So it should be easy to find the fruits of prophecy, visions, and revelations in those who claim these gifts and titles. So here are some corresponding challenges and questions:

Let’s list some of the prophecies uttered by the Prophet, Thomas S. Monson.

Let’s list some of the visions seen and described by the Seer, Thomas S. Monson.

Let’s list some of the revelations received and published by the Revelator, Thomas S. Monson.

Let’s also list or reference some of the instances wherein President Monson exercised the keys of the priesthood in doing the sorts of things Jesus and Joseph Smith did, like healings, performing miracles, etc.

The Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. declared: “All the prophets [after Moses] had the Melchizedek Priesthood and were ordained by God himself.”¹ As the man equal with Joseph Smith in priesthood power and authority, let’s list or reference the occasions where President Monson translated ancient scripture, beheld angels, or stood in the presence of God. Within biblical history, all true prophets publically proclaim these types of witnesses as experiences they have personally had.

Let’s also list some occasions where President Monson testifies of the Book of Mormon or of the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith Jr.²

Another thought I’ve had is that several years ago President Hugh B. Brown gave a terrific talk entitled: ***Profile of a Prophet***, where in a discussion he had with a British judge, he established several biblical characteristics of a Prophet and described how Joseph Smith matches up with that profile in every instance and characteristic.³ So in order to be consistent, let’s do the same thing with Thomas S. Monson. Let’s list how Thomas S. Monson qualifies as a Prophet, per these same criteria:

¹ *TPJS*, p. 181

² So far, I haven’t found a single instance where President Monson testifies of the Book of Mormon or Joseph Smith as a prophet.

³ https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/hugh-b-brown_profile-prophet/

1. He will boldly claim that God had spoken to him.
2. Any man so claiming would be a dignified man with a dignified message—no table jumping, no whisperings from the dead, no clairvoyance, but an intelligent statement of truth.
3. Any man claiming to be a prophet of God would declare his message without any fear and without making any weak concessions to public opinion.
4. If he were speaking for God he could not make concessions, although what he taught would be new and contrary to the accepted teachings of the day. A prophet bears witness to what he has seen and heard and seldom tries to make a case by argument. His message and not himself is important.
5. Such a man would speak in the name of the Lord, saying, “Thus said the Lord,” as did Moses, Joshua, and others.
6. Such a man would predict future events in the name of the Lord, and they would come to pass, as did those predicted by Isaiah and Ezekiel.
7. He would have not only an important message for his time but often a message for all future time, such as Daniel, Jeremiah, and others had.
8. He would have courage and faith enough to endure persecution and to give his life, if need be, for the cause he espoused, such as Peter, James, Paul, and others did.
9. Such a man would denounce wickedness fearlessly. He would generally be rejected or persecuted by the people of his time, but later generations and descendants of his persecutors would build monuments in his honor.
10. He would be able to do superhuman things—things that no man could do without God’s help. The consequence or result of his message and work would be convincing evidence of his prophetic calling: “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20).
11. His teachings would be in strict conformity with scripture, and his words and his writings would become scripture. “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21).

Part 2 – It’s a Question of Status

Thomas S. Monson is not the only one we sustain as a prophet, seer, and revelator, holding all priesthood keys. Apparently, he attained unto these gifts and keys by ordination and as the senior apostle. These gifts and keys were handed down to him by his predecessors.⁴ So while we are at it, let’s take a close look at his predecessors and contemporaries and see how they likewise measure up. And we should also be asking ourselves if gifts and callings such as these can really be passed from one man to another, *or must they come directly from God?* These should be interesting and vital questions to honestly consider relative to all church leaders who claim these titles and gifts.

So often we refer to the members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators? I have often wondered what exactly is meant by these titles in our day. What exactly are we claiming? What do these titles mean today? Do we have any official modern definitions? Or are the definitions merely implied? If so, *are these implied definitions really honest?*

⁴ These claims are demonstrably false. There is not a shred of evidence that Joseph Smith ordained or conferred any keys upon any of the apostles in his day. See: <http://puremormonism.blogspot.com/2016/12/did-lord-choose-not-to-anoint-lords.html>

As previously stated, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” If these men are truly apostles, prophets, seers, revelators, translators, and men equal in priesthood power and priesthood authority with Joseph Smith and all the prophets of all previous dispensations (as is the claim), then they should manifest the same fruits.

Some contend that these sacred experiences are not shared publically due to the sacred nature of these experiences. I’m no genius, but even I can see that this argument belies all historical precedent. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Throughout history, up until the time of Joseph’s martyrdom, true prophets and messengers of God have always boldly, openly, and unequivocally testified of their dealings with the Lord, to include their visions, visitations, and revelations. Certainly some things are too sacred to share; and prophets of God never share all they know or all the details of their revelations, visions, or visitations; but those revelations, visions, and visitations relative to a man’s commission and ordination by God to minister as messengers or prophets of God are always publicly declared. When the Lord sends special messengers to deliver His words, His messengers always plainly state that their message is not their own, but is God’s message as given by revelation. We have the entire Standard Works of scripture to substantiate this reality.

I do not argue that in many cases church leaders are not illuminated and inspired; but there is a world of a difference between revelation and inspiration. Revelation is pure knowledge received directly from God, as the words of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Inspiration is also received from God, by the Light of Christ, but is expressed according to the understanding of him or her who is voice or author, and is subject to error, delusion, and misinterpretation, according to the misapprehensions and misunderstandings of the individual. Inspiration is subject both to the voice of the Holy Spirit and to the spirits of the Adversary. Inspiration is sometimes a mixed bag, with a mixed message, with mixed sources of inspiration, and with faulty conclusions. It is always up to each individual to discern what is of God and what is not of God.

Joseph Smith received and recorded revelations. Subsequent church leaders have often been gifted with inspiration; but this is not the same thing as revelation. Revelation is clearly received from God, from God’s own mouth, or by an angel of God, speaking the words of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost.⁵

Anybody can receive both revelation and inspiration. And I am sure that church leaders and church members do receive both revelation and inspiration. We have a wonderful history and heritage of faith, miracles, inspiration, and even revelation; but what I do not see are church leaders that receive or proclaim prophecies, visions, or revelations on an order or scale that would distinguish them as prophets, or seers, or revelators. Why not be frank, open, and honest about this? What’s the big deal?

All I am asking for here is honesty. Let’s be open and honest with each other and ourselves. What do the scriptures really say about prophets, seers, and revelators? And what do the words and biographies of our “modern day prophets” really suggest?

If a prophet is truly a prophet, he will utter prophecies which will truly come to pass. He will also openly share with the public the instances where He was called by God to be a prophet, just as Joseph Smith Jr. did.

I remember that toward the end of my mission in Sweden, we had a Mission Conference with President Thomas S. Monson in attendance. At the time he was the First Counselor in the First Presidency. In my hearing I heard President Monson prophecy that Sweden would be the next Central America, enjoying terrific success in

⁵ 2 Nephi 32:2-3

missionary work. So far, that prophecy has not come to pass, nor seems likely to. So is President Monson a true prophet or a false prophet? You decide.⁶

A person does not claim to be a concert pianist without giving a recital to prove it. Likewise, a true prophet does not claim to be a prophet without making prophecies and likewise sharing how he became a prophet. At the least, there must be some substance of prophecy to judge. So far, the only prophecy I have heard President Monson make has not worked out.

Interestingly, it was not until very recently that any church leaders have ever referred to themselves, or liked to be referred to, as prophets, seers, or revelators. This is a very recent development. They considered themselves as having the church callings as such; but not until recently have there been such unprecedented assertions that these men actually enjoy the spiritual gifts of prophecy, seership, and revelation.

The LDS church is heavily marketed as being led by prophets, seers, and revelators; but those who claim such lofty titles almost never actually claim the spirit or gifts of prophecy, visions, or revelations; instead they point to the unanimous decisions of their councils and committees and the combined “inspiration” they receive. The following recent statement by Elder Ballard is typical.

“When I have a question that I cannot answer, I turn to those who can help me. The Church is blessed with trained scholars and those who have devoted a lifetime of study, who have come to know our history and the scriptures. These thoughtful men and women provide context and background so we can better understand our sacred past and our current practices.”⁷

Contrast this with Nephi and Joseph Smith who turned to the Lord for wisdom and answers to hard questions. Why does this prophet, seer, and revelator not do the same and urge us to do so? Where is the faith we claim to follow or practice?

In March of 1904, President Joseph F. Smith stated before Congress that he had never received a revelation. When asked by the chairman: “You have received revelations, have you not?” He responded: “I have never pretended to nor do I profess to have received revelations. I never said I had a revelation except so far as God has shown to me that so-called Mormonism is God’s divine truth; that is all.”⁸

President Smith later clarified this statement by saying “that while he had never received from God a revelation on some new doctrine or commandment, to be written and preserved and handed down as a law to the Church, he had been guided from the day of his baptism to the present, by divine influence, and had been aided time and again by the spirit of God in his work in the ministry, and strongly expressed the wish that if, in his day, some new revelation should be needed by the Church, he might be worthy to receive it.”⁹

President Smith was open and honest about his limitations. He understood the difference between revelation and inspiration, or divine influence. He was humble enough to recognize that even if he held any special keys,

⁶ “And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.” (Deuteronomy 18:21 – 22)

⁷ M. Russell Ballard, To the Saints in the Utah South Area, September 13, 2015

<https://www.lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/to-the-saints-in-the-utah-south-area?lang=eng>

⁸ Michael Harold Paulos, editor, *THE MORMON CHURCH ON TRIAL*, p. 33

⁹ Ibid.

authority, or titles pertaining to the Church, that his ability to receive revelation was strictly a matter of worthiness. He hoped that he might be worthy enough to receive it.

Some have suggested that President Smith was simply concealing that which was sacred from the unworthy and uninitiated, that his pearls be not trodden on by swine, as it were. “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”¹⁰ I really do not think that was the case here. I think that President Smith was being as open and honest and candid as he knew how. He was being questioned before a Congressional Hearing. If he claimed revelation, he knew he would have to produce it. He had none to produce.

When asked, “Are you prophet, seer, and revelator?” President Smith responded: “I am so sustained and upheld by my people.” When asked if the other apostles are prophets, seers, and revelators, President Smith replied: “They are sustained as such at our conferences.”¹¹

President Smith very carefully stated he and the other apostles were only sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators. He never claimed that he or any other man then living actually were prophets, seers, and revelators with those actual practicable gifts and callings from God.

Brigham Young, John Taylor, and many other modern church presidents and apostles have been very open about their having never received revelations, or visions, or seen either God or angels; and yet we still hail these men as prophets, seers, and revelators and revere and follow them as if they currently exercised these gifts. This just makes no sense. If you truly are a prophet, seer, and revelator, then you will have the spirit of prophecy, see visions, and receive revelations as Joseph Smith Jr. did, and you will speak of these experiences as appropriate. If you aren’t, you won’t; but you might try to infer or imply that these gifts are there. These aren’t passive gifts. If you possess these gifts, then they are alive and active in your life and there will assuredly be evidence of it.

Why not be honest about our current status as a church, as leaders, and as members? Why do we feel the need to always be making such bold claims about our church leaders, the spiritual gifts we think they enjoy, the priesthood or priesthood keys we think they have, or the exalted standing we think we all enjoy as members of the Kingdom of God on earth? Let’s be honest here folks!

This people and this church has been uniquely blessed with doctrine, faith, miracles, and grace from the Lord as manifest in so many ways; but we do ourselves a great disservice by claiming greater standing and status than is actually the case, which is only imagined and does not reflect reality. We heap upon ourselves great condemnation by doing so.

As a professional airline transport pilot and flight instructor, I can authoritatively assert that incorrectly determining ones position and status will often prove catastrophic in navigating ones way to a predetermined destination. Lost is lost. Broken is broken. It is high time that we as a church honestly reevaluated our current fix and status relative to the kingdom of God.

We need to read our scriptures, read the prophecies about our times, read the promises the Lord gave to the saints in Joseph Smith’s day, take a close look at the history, especially the primary historical documents, and honestly evaluate where we are at. What promises did the Lord make to the saints? Didn’t He promise them Zion, that they would become very great and very terrible? And that they would not be moved out of their place?

¹⁰ Matthew 7:6

¹¹ Michael Harold Paulos, editor, *THE MORMON CHURCH ON TRIAL*, p. 20

They were promised all this if they were faithful and righteous. But what actually happened? Let's be honest folks!

Do not fear the truth. Fear will blind you.

Part 3 – Emotion is Not Revelation

A friend of mine, Robert Smith, made the following insightful observations in a recently published book of his:

“Emotion is not revelation. Instead, emotions tend to mirror prior held beliefs. When prior held beliefs are reinforced, the believer feels good. When prior held beliefs are contradicted, the believer feels bad (this is called *cognitive dissonance*). When truth evaluation is reduced to feelings, it becomes impossible to persuade, no matter how certain and clear the facts. Instead of debating the correctness or incorrectness of doctrine, which can be established through scriptural, rational, and historical investigation, one must defend against the feelings...[of] those with status quo beliefs, whether or not those beliefs are true. The doctrine itself ceases to be the focus. Instead, the feelings of the believer become the focus... The natural man is an enemy to God; finding truth requires us to yield our emotive response—which is carnal—to the voice of the Holy Ghost.”¹²

“For most [people], unbiased evaluation of opposing views is particularly difficult. No one wants to turn away from their life's work, or the legacy of their ancestors. What would that mean for the things you sacrificed to get here? It has to be true, or all that was for nothing. The loss isn't all philosophical, either. For example, suppose you were a General Authority. Discovering truth that compromised your temple recommend status would mean not only great social stigma and familial troubles, but also a great financial loss.

“In order to maintain objectivity, one must adopt an anthropological attitude.

““The [anthropological] perspective allows one to be part of his own culture and, at the same time, be out of it. One views the activities of his own group as would an anthropologist, observing its tribal rituals, its fears, its conceits, its ethnocentrism. In this way, one is able to recognize when reality begins to drift too far away from the grasp of the tribe¹³.”

“The anthropological attitude helps one pause their cultural and experiential bias in evaluating new perspectives. The ability to unplug from the network of one's observations and conclusions is absolutely vital in order to logically consider alternative possibilities. Once candidate truth has passed anthropological assessment, previously accumulated observations and conclusions must be folded back in order to evaluate whether they still hold.”¹⁴

Within the LDS church, members commonly bare their testimony that the President of the church is indeed a prophet based on all the nice feelings they have had about him; but nice feelings do not comprise a testimony or a witness. In a court of law expressing a nice warm fuzzy feeling as a witness of something would be tossed out at once; stating that you saw God or heard God's voice might be taken a little more seriously.

Nice feelings may accompany a revelation or witness; but nice feelings in and of themselves do not comprise revelation or any kind of a special witness or testimony. Emotional stimulation is a most unreliable medium for discerning truth or claiming revelation or spiritual experience. There are so many types of experiences which can

¹² Robert Smith, *Teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men: Tradition in Modern Mormonism*, p.7

¹³ Postman and Weingartner, “Teaching as a Subversive Activity”, p. 17

¹⁴ Robert Smith, *Teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men: Tradition in Modern Mormonism*, pp. 17-18

be calculated to thrill you, to be somehow sensational. These might include such things as music, movies, stage productions, meeting dignitaries and celebrities, rhetoric, poetic prose, stories, and a thousand other things.

Feeling thrilled by music, stories, swelling eloquence, or poetic prose is not the Holy Ghost. These things are not manifestations of the Holy Ghost to be described as “spiritual experiences.” If these types of experiences are always to be discerned as “spiritual experiences” given as manifestations of the Holy Ghost then such discernment may turn out to be sadly deceived, misinformed, and misunderstood.

The Holy Ghost does not thrill you, it informs you.

The LDS church employs teams of professional speech writers who assist General Authorities in developing the rhythmic rhetoric and poetic prose we find carefully crafted into General Conference talks. Each talk is a masterpiece designed to thrill, to inspire, and to be received and regarded as scripture. They are really good at this! The way they have learned to insert scriptural sound bites as key words and evidence of revelation is ingenious! But carefully crafted rhetoric is not scripture; it is just inspiring rhetoric relating really nice messages laced with lots of truth. In other words, it is the philosophies of men mingled with scripture.

Likewise, the LDS church employs teams of other professionals to engineer music, lighting, and other details in order to stimulate an emotional response within the hearts and minds of all those who participate in their public events. This technology which is calculated to elicit a powerful emotional response is called Heartsell™ and is owned by Bonneville Communications, which is owned by the LDS church. This is a patented technology designed to sell ideas to people based on their emotions.

One phenomenon which I find particularly poignant is that when the Prophet or an apostle enters the room everyone stands and remains silent while the organ plays a low bass melancholy tone which reverberates through the flesh and bones of everyone, in order to supply an oh so holy and solemn emotional experience. This is an amazingly effective technique designed to create a cult of personality around the Prophet and other General Authorities.

Members of the LDS church are taught to be led by their emotions. They bare emotional testimonies. They are taught that emotional experiences are the fruits of the Spirit from which testimony is gained and through which the Holy Ghost communicates. When they are confronted with doctrine from the scriptures or historical facts which contradict LDS teachings, members are taught to defer to their emotions and emotional experiences in order to discern the truth, rather than turning to God in prayer and to the scriptures. They forget that many truths are not pleasant and do not elicit a happy or peaceful emotional response.

Throughout history most of the Lord’s prophets and messengers were rejected and slain because their messages did not elicit warm fuzzy feelings within the hearts of those called to repentance. Repentance, after all, is more a matter of receiving truth than it is an exercise in correcting behavior.

They also forget that the mission and operation of the Holy Ghost is not to engender emotion; the Holy Ghost’s main operation is to teach and testify of truth; and by the truth we are edified and sanctified. Certainly the side effects of this can be emotional, but the fundamental function of the Holy Ghost is to inform and testify. So when we experience these intense emotions, we need to ask ourselves: “What truths are being taught? Or am I simply being affected by the extra-sensual grandeur and splendor of an event? And if I am feeling negative emotions, is it simply because my prior held beliefs, persuasions, and practices are somehow being attacked or threatened?”

The Holy Ghost enlightens your mind; it enlivens your senses; it brings light into your life; and enables you to comprehend the things of the spirit. Understanding, comprehension, light and truth—these are the Holy Ghost, not emotion, thrills and goose bumps.

Gushing emotions are not the substance of truth or the Spirit of truth. They are simply the emotions. Many churches and religions supply experiences which elicit various types of thrilling emotions; but that is not proof that the source of these emotions are from God. Discernment requires intelligence and enlightenment through study and revelation, not merely positive emotion.

Albeit I am an unworthy servant, I have experienced the presence of God and angels and I can testify that the emotional response engendered by church productions and events is nothing next to experiencing the supreme holiness and glory of God. When this happens, truth and pure intelligence flows freely. Of course, most LDS people cannot make this comparison; hence they are blinded by the craftiness of men because they do not discern the true spirit of the occasion—mostly due to ignorance, lack of experience, and most of all by placing their trust in man and in their emotions rather than relying on the established word of God as established by Him in the Holy Scriptures.

Part 4 – The Power of Discernment

Truth is discerned in the mind, heart, and spirit as pure intelligence, according to the Light of Christ; or better still, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Advancement in gaining spiritual discernment requires extensive study, obedience to the Spirit, and most of all many long hours of prayer on a daily basis. Advanced spirituality always requires lots and lots of prayer—a requirement that is mostly not appreciated or applied.

Part of the difficulty is that truth must always be discerned in context. Truth is never isolated. Context is always a vital component. Hence, the discernment of truth often requires rigorous scripture study and honest introspection. A sound knowledge of scripture is accordingly imperative in discerning many of the most vital saving truths. When the promptings and teachings of the spirit contradict established scripture, you can be assured that those promptings or manifestations are from a false spirit. The Spirit of the Lord will never give you apparently contradicting instructions until He knows you have passed prior tests which have merited personal knowledge of the Lord and a deeper discernment of His voice. Nephi was commanded to slay Laban; but he already KNEW the Lord that commanded him. You will know when you have arrived at that point; until then, always go with the established word of God as established by the Lord as scripture.

Within the LDS church culture of today, we consider the talks given in General Conference to be scripture. We also consider the words of “living prophets” to supersede those of dead prophets. This ever-shifting foundation of doctrine is the quicksand upon which we presume to build the kingdom of God on earth. Since the time of Joseph Smith Jr., there have been many radical changes in the fundamental doctrines of the church (i.e. plural marriage, Adam-God doctrine, blood atonement, etc.). Additionally, many of the current doctrinal positions of the church are clearly contradicted by the canonized Standard Works.¹⁵ Hence, the institutional need to maximize the priority given to this new doctrine of: Follow the Prophet.

We now have two choices: 1) Either we follow the Prophet (and the Brethren), or 2) Follow the words of Christ as canonized in Joseph’s day within the Holy Scriptures. The Brethrenite crowd will adamantly deny that this is the choice, but the truth (as ever) speaks with a voice louder than words. After taking the pains of listing and

¹⁵ Jared Eastley, THE BOOK OF MORMON—A WITNESS AND A WARNING

describing many of these contradictions, as I have previously done in another lengthy paper with hundreds of footnotes, I believe it is impossible to honestly claim otherwise.¹⁶

So often the truth is not pleasant, it is not nice, it does not give you a warm thrill or emotional affirmation. When Abinadi delivered his message to King Noah and his priests, the message he gave was not at all complimentary. Nobody was weeping for joy or feeling overcome by the Spirit, even though the luster of the Spirit upon Abinadi was visible. What mattered to them was that his message was not pleasant. It was not nice. It did not make anyone feel warm and cozy inside. Nor did it edify the sinner with an ego boost. On the contrary, the Prophet Abinadi did not have pleasant things to say. His message was combative. He was condemning the king, his priests, and their church. He was accordingly rejected, reviled, and slain; just as so many other prophetic messengers have also been likewise rejected, reviled, and slain.

Consider the fates of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and the countless unnamed but nonetheless vital prophetic messengers mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Those that rejected these prophets obviously did not feel good about what the Lord's prophets were saying. Some of those who rejected these prophets probably prayed about their messages but just didn't feel good or peaceful about what they were hearing. Well of course they didn't feel good or peaceful about it! These people were being called to repentance. These prophets were condemning their churches and church leaders. Those people who rejected the prophets were both ignorant and dishonest. They were ignorant of their biblical history and doctrine and they were dishonest about what was transpiring. They were more interested in justifying themselves than they were in taking an honest look at what was really going on.

It is instructive to note that most prophets throughout history have not hailed from within the religious establishments of their times. They were nobodies, without rank, titles, or credentials. A few that come to mind are Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Lehi, Abinadi, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and Joseph Smith Jr. Per these examples, it has never been true that the Lord must speak through the duly established church leadership. The tradition had among the LDS church that the Lord must speak through the duly established leadership is a dangerous lie. The Lord sets His own rules, not man—it doesn't matter what keys they hold!

The popular mantra of "Follow the prophet" is only a modern variation of the ever popular policy to simply follow the religious establishment to which one belongs. This is indeed a brainless and faithless exercise. It is the act of trading in one's agency on the promise that church leaders will not and cannot lead you astray. This is only a new variation of Lucifer's plan, whereby the honor would go to him and not one soul would be lost. By following the prophet, instead of Jesus Christ by faith and revelation, the honor goes to the established Prophet, and he guarantees his cult following their salvation and exaltation in the Kingdom of God—that not one soul shall be lost! Lucifer's plan was indeed brilliant, but satanic; and it still is.

I have always made it my practice to suspect the cunning orator with honey dripping from his tongue. I always hold with suspicion the political or religious leader who woos his following with praise, flattery, and promises of aggrandizement, prosperity, and salvation if they will but sustain and follow him. This is the exact opposite of what all true prophets of God ever do! True prophets always point to Jesus Christ; never to themselves.

If only it were that simple! If only the only thing we had to do was identify and join the true church of God, believe and do as we are told, then be accordingly guaranteed salvation and exaltation in the kingdom of God without having to go to all the trouble of actually repenting and connecting with God.¹⁷ But that would not be

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ John 15:1-7

faith! That would only be obedience to man. That would be trusting in the arm of flesh. We are warned, most sternly, not to trust in the arm of flesh, or to trust in man.¹⁸ We are each to take responsibility in working out our own salvation with fear and trembling before God¹⁹, by developing faith in Christ, not by merely following institutional leadership.

This is why we have been given the Holy Scriptures (especially the Book of Mormon), which has been vouched for by the Lord by established revelation.²⁰ We are to put our trust in the Lord and in His established doctrine as contained in the Holy Scriptures. We are not to put our trust in the flesh, or in living men; especially not in those that claim that they will not and cannot lead us astray; and most especially not on those that claim so much (to be prophets, seers, and revelators), but can deliver so little. Such a policy is foolhardy and absurd.

Those who claim infallibility are the most dangerous of all. Joseph Smith never claimed infallibility. Neither did Brigham Young or John Taylor. When Wilford Woodruff made the statement that the Lord will never allow the President of the church to lead us astray he was completely fabricating new doctrine which contradicted all known precedents. It is anathema to all scriptural precedent. Wilford Woodruff had to figure out a way to reverse the doctrine of plural wives as a law required for exaltation; this statement was his way of doing that. He never cited a revelation or even a single scripture in making this claim; he just said it was so. I don't think he realized what a terrible mistake he was making by making this declaration.

It is imperative that we are guided by the Holy Ghost, not by the flesh, and not by man which is flesh. Learning to discern accordingly constitutes the difference between salvation and damnation.

The Lord has commanded that we do as the Spirit directs!—which requires discernment—that we not be seduced by the doctrine of devils or the commandments of men:

“But ye are commanded in all things to ask of God, who giveth liberally; and that which the Spirit testifies unto you even so I would that ye should do in all holiness of heart, walking uprightly before me, considering the end of your salvation, doing all things with prayer and thanksgiving, that ye may not be seduced by evil spirits, or doctrines of devils, or *the commandments of men*; for some are of men, and others of devils. Wherefore, beware lest ye are deceived; and that ye may not be deceived seek ye earnestly the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given.”²¹

And he further cautioned us saying, “This people draw nigh unto me with their mouths, and honor me with their lips; but their hearts are far from me. In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrine *the commandments of men*.”²²

Also Paul cautioned us: “Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; not giving heed to Jewish fables, and *the commandments of men*, turning from the truth. Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”²³

¹⁸ 2 Nephi 4:34

¹⁹ Mormon 9:27

²⁰ D&C 84:57

²¹ Doctrine and Covenants 46:7–8

²² Matthew 15:8–9

²³ Titus 1:13 - 16

Paul also cautioned: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”²⁴

And speaking of the traditions of men, the Lord also said: “For laying aside the commandments of God, ye hold onto the traditions of men... Ye reject the commandments of God, that ye may keep your own traditions.”²⁵

Whether it is the commandments of men or the traditions of men, these should never take priority over the commandments of God and the Doctrine of Christ as detailed in the established scriptures. In terms of that which we should do, the Lord has made it perfectly clear that we are to be obedient to Him, by following His Spirit. Said he: “that which the Spirit testifies unto you even so I would that ye should do in all holiness of heart...”

There is a world of a difference between the original commandment to always be obedient to the Lord by following His Spirit, versus the new age LDS doctrine of obedience to the Lord by following the prophet.

Again, practiced discernment to the voice of the Spirit is the key. This cannot be learned if our focus is instead on following man, or prophets, or church leaders.

Part 5 – Doubt Not, But Be Believing

The Lord wants us to be edified by experiences which bring us closer to Him. He wants us to feel peace, love, joy, and pleasure in the creation He has given us. We should be grateful for these experiences as they come our way. And of course we know that all things, to Him, are spiritual. But we should not conflate positive emotional experiences as witnesses from God that all is well in Zion, or that “the church is true,” or that everything going on within the institution has His stamp of approval. The Lord, in His infinite love and mercy, continues to bless us according to our faith, according to our desires, and according to the light we are willing to embrace. This is true in the LDS church and in all other churches and religions.

The children of Israel in Moses day chose apostasy rather than Zion; but the Lord continued to care for them, provide for them, and bless them with many miracles nonetheless. Likewise, the church in the days of Joseph Smith also chose apostasy; they did not do as they were asked to do in order to receive again the fullness of the priesthood or the establishment of Zion. The blessings promised in D&C 97 were never received; but the curses listed in D&C 97 and 124 were poured out according to the warnings given. We need to believe the scriptures and pay attention to our history instead of insisting that we are Zion, or that this is the true and living church, or that we haven’t lost anything with the passing of Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

I think it is wonderful how much we as members of the LDS church do read the scriptures and teach from the scriptures. There is so much in light, love, and truth which shines forth even from within the church; but there is also a great deal which is not believed, is not received, and is rejected by the leaders and members of the church. We say we believe the scriptures, but in so many instances this is just not true. We say a lot of the right things, but we do not do according to what it written in so many instances, as I have detailed in my other written works. We also deny the truth relative to our own history. We are so anxious to aggrandize our history, our pioneer ancestors, and our church, whilst ignoring so many of the facts. I solemnly warn that we will not be held blameless for persisting in this deep denial and dishonesty.

²⁴ Colossians 2:8

²⁵ Mark 7:8 - 9

I testify that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Eternal Father; that He is our Savior, Redeemer, and King. I also testify that Joseph Smith Jr. is the Prophet of the Restoration and that he translated the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God. The Book of Mormon constitutes the word of God as established by the Lord in revelation. Many people assert that because these things are true, therefore the church which Joseph Smith established must also somehow be true. This argument only holds water if the church actually continues to be what Joseph Smith established and if the church operates according to the instructions given within the Book of Mormon and the revelations which Joseph published. However, the LDS church today is radically different from what Joseph established or outlined in over a hundred different ways. This is a big problem.

Continuing to live in denial of these things will only hurt us. Rather, we need to honestly and truthfully evaluate our status and make appropriate corrections. If we do not, the Lord will nonetheless fulfill all His covenants, promises, and prophecies; but He will not be able to utilize the organization which we call The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints; instead He will have to move forward using different ways and means than what have previously been established according to His infinite wisdom and foreknowledge.

There is only one way to establish Zion. That way is by strictly following the doctrine of Christ as established in the scriptures, without adding to and subtracting from what He has taught or commanded. Jesus Christ is the only way. He is the true vine which we MUST be connected to.

So many of the teachings and traditions we have all become accustomed to within the LDS church are in error. In order for us to move forward we are going to need to unlearn a great deal and start all over with only that which Joseph Smith established and taught before the restoration can again move forward. This isn't really that hard to do; but before this can be done we must be honest enough to ask the right questions and permit the Lord to give us truthful answers. He will not force His truths on us; we must honestly ask the right questions and be willing to receive the truth even if it is inconvenient, does not flatter us, or give us goose bumps. That is the first step.

In conclusion, here are several questions which I still have, which I have yet to find satisfactory answers to. I think these questions are important. So if you have any well informed or inspired answers, please do let me know.

1. I can't find where in the Book of Mormon it says that the fullness of the gospel will be restored in the last days, which will result in a great latter day church led by apostles, prophets, seers, and revelators; who will spread the gospel across the globe with tens of thousands of missionaries, which will result in the great latter day Zion. I'm looking and looking but I just can't find it! Where in the Book of Mormon does it talk about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints?

All I can find are chapters and chapters talking about the Gentiles (us) rejecting the fullness of the gospel and then mostly being cursed and destroyed; mixed with many warning to the Gentiles to repent; with many descriptions of the things we are doing which are wrong (i.e. 2 Nephi 28, Mormon 8:27-41, D&C 45:28-41).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Days Saints is a very big deal. To have a church led by Apostles, Prophets, Seers, Revelators, and High Priests holding the fullness of the priesthood, doing all the great works the church is doing or claiming to be doing—this is all a very big deal! Within all the prophecies about the Last Days within the Standard Works, where does it talk about this very amazing LDS church? You would think that such a grand thing would be mentioned and emphasized with great enthusiasm; but it's not!

2. I can't find in the Book of Mormon where it talks about the great latter day temple work which is being done, where all these dead people are being redeemed and saved because of our temple work.

3. I can't find anywhere in the scriptures where it talks about how we all need to get to the temple to be sealed together as families, in order to receive salvation and exaltation. Where is that in the doctrine of Christ?
4. I can't find anywhere in the scriptures where it says we need to follow the prophet; or about how the prophets and apostles will not and cannot lead us astray. The scriptures tell us that we should "receive the prophets" and receive the testimonies of the prophets, and we should follow the commandments of God as declared by the prophets. But we should not follow the prophets directly, just because they are prophets.
5. I can't find anywhere in the scriptures where it says we must pay tithing to the church in order to receive ordinances from the church or to be accounted members in good standing within the church. I might be wrong, but I don't think we are supposed to charge money for ordinances, even if it is called tithing.
6. I can't find anywhere in the scriptures where it says that general authorities and apostles should be paid for their service in the church; not to mention the six figure stipends General Authorities receive today.
7. I can't find it anywhere in the scriptures where it says that tithing money should be used to pay General Authority or church employee salaries, or to fund extensive building projects, or be used as investment capital, instead of being used to care for the poor or finance basic church expenses.
8. I can't find it anywhere in the scriptures where it says that priests, teachers, and church leaders should be made popular, or should be esteemed as more holy, righteous, or inspired than the average church members.
9. I can't find it anywhere in the scriptures where it says that most people will be saved in the Celestial Kingdom because of our temple work for the dead; or that chances are, you will be exalted, etc...
10. I can't find it anywhere in the scriptures where it says that church leaders are authorized to disregard, reinterpret, edit, or delete scriptures at their whims; like when the Lectures on Faith were deleted from the D&C in 1921 by a small committee after the General Assembly of the church had unanimously approved it as scripture and as the doctrine of the church back in 1835.
11. I can't find it anywhere in the scriptures where it says that church leaders are authorized to change the ordinances; like what has been done with baptism, the sacrament, and the temple rites and ordinances; not to mention the major changes that took place back in 1990.
12. I also can't find anywhere in the scriptures where it talks about priesthood keys being required to perform ordinances, or to preside in a church, or to tell church members what to think, say, or do. Or that priesthood keys can or should be used to control, dominate, compel, or intimidate people into conformity with church rule.
13. I can't find it anywhere in the scriptures where it says that church leaders should demand that they be sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators, and as the only ones holding all priesthood keys, in order for church members to receive ordinances or to be considered in good standing in the church.
14. And maybe I'm just going blind, but I still can't find it anywhere in the scriptures where it says that any church, or church leader, or group of church leaders, is in any way immune from the possibility of apostasy, or making very serious mistakes, or of leading the people astray. I just can't find any such guarantee.
15. I also can't find it anywhere in the Book of Mormon where it says the Gentiles being warned do not include members of any church, even the church that claims to be the true church. On the contrary, those who

belong to "the holy church of God"²⁶ are rebuked for having polluted the holy church of God. Isn't the "holy church of God" supposed to be the LDS church?

16. And finally, I just can't find it anywhere in the scriptures where it says that all we need to do to be saved is to identify the true church, get all the ordinances it offers, then just do and think as you are told until you die, remaining in good standing in the church, in order to receive salvation or exaltation. Easy! Why didn't anyone think of that in the Grand Counsel in Heaven? Just believe and do as you are told and you'll be saved! Brilliant!

If we really believe in the Book of Mormon as scripture, then these questions should be of vital importance. But the LDS people don't really believe in the Book of Mormon as scripture; they more accurately consider it to be an inspiring daily devotional reader. At best they consider the Book of Mormon to be lesser scripture, inferior to the words of the "living prophets" and even the Church Handbook of Instructions. They brashly disregard the abundant discontinuities between the tenants of the institution and the messages of the Book of Mormon. They deny that where discontinuity exists, an error, somehow, somewhere, must also have occurred. For me and for many others, this is unacceptable.

When I read 2 Nephi 28 and Mormon 8, it is as plain as day that the Gentiles being discussed include the members and leaders of the LDS church. I challenge anyone who reads these words to carefully read these two chapters and pray fervently as to whether these warnings are directed at the LDS church today.

"And now I, Nephi, cannot say more; the Spirit stoppeth mine utterance, and I am left to mourn because of the unbelief, and the wickedness, and the ignorance, and the stiffneckedness of men; for they will not search knowledge, nor understand great knowledge, when it is given unto them in plainness, even as plain as word can be. And now, my beloved brethren, I perceive that ye ponder still in your hearts; and it grieveth me that I must speak concerning this thing. For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray. But behold, I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint..." (2 Nephi 32:7 - 9)

One last comment:

When people in the LDS mainstream claim that I am not listening to their arguments, or that I do not understand their perspective, they are not taking into account that I was of their persuasion for many years. I was an ardent LDS apologist. I read and studied their books; I poured over their General Conference talks, I researched and cross-referenced their doctrine; I know their arguments and can make their arguments better than most of those who actively do so. I am intimately familiar with their positions, explanations, theology and ideology. To say that I do not understand the LDS view is something akin to saying that the Apostle Paul did not understand Judaism. That is ridiculous. It is absurd.

One common explanation as to why the church leaders do not teach or discuss things like sanctification, calling and election, or the Second Comforter, is that we are not ready for these teachings. This, too, is ridiculous and absurd. I cannot imagine a people more desirous or in need of the rich doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The people hunger and thirst for additional revelation, visions, and visitations. They yearn for those who are sustained as prophets and apostles to prophesy and to speak openly and candidly about real world issues. They ache for the deep doctrine to be taught that they too might receive the revelations, visions, and visitations that

²⁶ Mormon 8:38

they believe the general authorities enjoy. They tie themselves in knots trying to explain and justify the lack of these things. It's enough to break your heart knowing how their hearts would be broken if they really knew the chilling reality of what is really going on behind the closed curtains within the deep counsels of the church.

Church members hunger and thirst and yearn for the deep and rich doctrines of the gospel. They want to know how they can receive the fullness of the gospel, the fulfillment of their deepest righteous desires, and the joy and happiness advertised as part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But they are not getting it from the LDS church pulpits. I very much doubt they ever will.

The truth of God is in the scriptures. The truth of God is only revealed by revelation. You shouldn't be too sure of anything you believe unless it agrees with the scriptures or has been revealed by revelation.