

INTRODUCTION

Teachings and Commandments contains the history, revelations, letters, talks, and documents of the Restoration of Jesus Christ in this day. This volume is laid out chronologically and begins with the personal history that was written by Joseph Smith, Jr. It continues with the revelations and interactions that Joseph had with the Lord and includes Joseph's Lectures on Faith and the translation of the Book of Abraham. Following the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum, the saints floundered without a prophet, and it wasn't long before the restoration that Joseph had established found itself in apostasy. With the death of Eldred G. Smith in 2013 (Eldred being the fourth generation from Hyrum Smith to serve as Patriarch to the LDS Church), the heavens were once again opened, and the Lord *set his hand again the second time to recover his people* (Jacob 1:4; emphasis added) and to establish Zion. The revelations of Denver C. Snuffer Jr. follow the revelations of Joseph Smith in this volume.

This volume follows in natural progression behind the previous volumes, which all *talk of Christ...rejoice in Christ...preach of Christ...[and] prophesy of Christ* (2 Nephi 11:8):

- The Old Covenants teaches mankind about the first Fathers and the covenants that God established with them. It prophesies of the time when Christ would live upon the earth and the yet future time of Zion and the New Jerusalem, when the Lord would establish His people and dwell among them in glory.
- The New Testament is a record of the mortal life of Christ and recounts the covenants that He established while living at Jerusalem.
- The Book of Mormon is the covenant of the last days and teaches one how to enter into God's presence while yet in this life. It teaches one how to connect back into God's family and foretells the coming of the Kingdom of God on the earth.
- Teachings and Commandments lays the groundwork for the establishment of Zion, a necessary step for the return of Christ to this earth in the last days.

Zion is the unrealized destiny of the restoration. It is described in scripture as a people who are *of one heart and of one mind...[with] no poor among them* (Genesis 4:14). Equality is a difficult challenge under any circumstance, but it is impossible when society is tiered by hierarchy.

The saints of Joseph's day, led by Campbellite converts, clamored for a New Testament church. The Lord accommodated their demands, and like Samuel calling a king to preside over Israel when they rejected God as their King (*see* 1 Samuel 4), Joseph Smith established a hierarchy with stratified governance and layers of priesthood leaders. The First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Seventy, and High Councils were all equal in authority but had distinct responsibilities.

Although church structure was established and church offices filled before 1839, the Lord then revolutionized the governance of His church in a revelation declaring, *No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood* (T&C 139:6). God removed any right to command and control. In its place, Christ commanded His followers, even those who would lead, to do so only *by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned, by kindness and pure knowledge* (ibid.).

After Joseph and Hyrum Smith were murdered, one of the hierarchy's councils assumed complete control over the church and its property. Over time the insular, distant, and increasingly wealthy members of the church's top hierarchy strayed from the guidance, commandments, and doctrine essential for believers to become of one heart, one mind, and to have no poor among them. It became a magisterium akin to Roman Catholicism. Like the corruption of Catholicism, the Mormon hierarchy also abused authority and, with blood and horror, coerced its isolated followers until a repulsed nation sent its army to restore secular freedom.

Today, bankers, lawyers, doctors, and businessmen are paid well to control the wealthy LDS organization whose ranks include many impoverished tithe-payers. It is a model of inequality. If people begin with an unequal foundation, they are unlikely to achieve an equal result.

Our incomplete scriptural accounts only record Zion being accomplished twice: once in the time of Enoch, and again at the time of Melchizedek. There is no scripture referring to a hierarchy among the people of Enoch or Melchizedek, both of whom are simply referred to

as teachers. The Zion that is to be created is something that is so foreign to this world that there is nothing in the world which can be used to judge its progression. Even the scriptures do not give a blueprint to follow. If they contained the necessary information, Zion would have been established long ago. Zion will consist of those who are willing to receive revelations from God and obey his commandments.

God alone will establish Zion. His instructions are vital and necessary for us. Once He instructs us, the Scriptures can then be used to confirm that His direction to us now is consistent with what He prophesied, covenanted, and promised would happen. But the path to Zion is to be found only by following God's immediate commands to us. That is how He will bring it. He will lead us there. There is no magic, there is no sprinkling fairy dust that will take you to where God is. It does not and cannot happen that way. He will lead us, teach us, command us, guide us, but we have to be the ones who become what He commands. We have to be the ones who do what He bids us do. (Snuffer, D.C., Jr. September 3, 2017. Opening Remarks. *Covenant of Christ Conference*. Boise, Idaho)

The Lord explained in plainness what His purposes for the Restoration are. This explanation was given to Joseph Smith as an introduction to the first printed collection of the Lord's revelations in the Book of Commandments:

Wherefore, I, the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph and spoke unto him from Heaven, and gave him commandments, and also gave commandments to others that they should proclaim these things unto the world. And all this that it might be fulfilled which was written by the prophets: the weak things of the world should come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that man should not counsel his fellow man, neither trust in the arm of flesh, but that every man might speak in the name of God, the Lord, even the Savior of the world, that faith also might

increase in the earth, that my everlasting covenant might be established, that the fullness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world and before kings and rulers. Behold, I am God and have spoken it. (T&C 54:4)

You are invited to read and study this sacred volume of scripture, that you may one day be able to speak in the name of God, that your faith might increase, that you may join in the everlasting covenant, meet Him yourself, proclaim the fullness of His gospel, and assist in the establishment of Zion.