

We Will Prove Them Herewith

(Abraham 3:25)

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Now is the time to prepare and prove ourselves willing and able to do all things whatsoever the Lord our God shall command us.

This is taken from **Abraham 3:24-26**:

24 And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

25 And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

26 And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.

As we are now dwelling upon this earth, one can easily conclude that the Lord is now in the process of proving us to see if we will do all things whatsoever the Lord shall command us. We learn in **Moses 1:39**:

39 For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

A lot of members are familiar with this scripture teaching of the Father's work and His glory, but not many members are familiar with what our work is. We find the answer to that in **Doctrine and Covenants 11:20**:

20 Behold, this is your work, to keep my commandments, yea, with all your might, mind and strength.

This is also taught in **Eccl. 12:13-14**:

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

The Lord taught this when He walked the earth, when he said “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (**John 15:14**).

The Lord teaches the reward for becoming His friend in **Doctrine and Covenants 45:3-5**:

3 Listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him—

4 Saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified;

5 Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life.

The Savior warned of the consequences of failing to do “our work”:

Matthew 7:15-23

15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. For the day soon cometh, that men shall come before me to judgment, to be judged according to their works.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I say, Ye never knew me: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

It is important to note that when listing off the deeds that these individuals thought qualified them for the highest degree of the celestial kingdom, none of them mentioned their temporal preparedness or temporal salvation. They mentioned gifts of the spirit. Once again, it is important to note that those of the terrestrial kingdom are those who accepted of the light of Christ (fruit or gifts of the Spirit) but who did not accept the fulness of the Father, the Father’s mind, the Holy Ghost. This is crucial for members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who wish to do what is required to obtain exaltation in the celestial kingdom, and I pray that is our goal, not simply to make it to a degree of glory but to obtain exaltation. These scriptures, the “ye know me not” tie directly into the Ten Virgins in which the Master says the exact same thing to the unwise virgins, which ties directly into Joseph being sold into Egypt as a type—it is all the exact same event. Those of the tribe of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh, the watchmen) were told to prepare food for seven years for a seven-year famine was coming. We learn in Ether 13 that this story was a type of what will play out directly surrounding the redemption of Zion and the building of New Jerusalem. And the Lord comes to marry His bride, which is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, after the redemption and building of

New Jerusalem. Meaning the 10 virgins is tied directly to the redemption and building of New Jerusalem as well. Ergo wise virgins with oil represents members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with an active temple recommend, who have done all that was required for exaltation, which includes preparing for the famine.

But this is not all the proof that we have to prove this point, for the Lord Himself prefaced the parable of the Ten Virgins with this:

Matthew 24:37-39

37 But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark,

39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

And President Benson taught, “The revelation to produce and store food may be as essential to our temporal welfare today as boarding the ark was to the people in the days of Noah.” (Prepare for the Days of Tribulation). There will be those who do all that is required for exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom and who “have done all thing the Lord has commanded them” which included their temporal salvation- these are the wise virgins; there will also be members of the Church who have done all of what they perceived to be required for exaltation in the Celestial kingdom but who have neglected their temporal salvation (for whatever reason)- these are the unwise virgins. The Lord said of such that they will list off the fruits of the spirit as their accomplishments to get in, meaning at least a large portion of these individuals believe temporal preparedness and temporal salvation to be matters that were not required, or were insignificant as pertaining to their readiness. In that day these members will find themselves fulfilling the prophecy the Lord gave of them in **Doctrine and Covenants 58**:

29 But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned.

30 Who am I that made man, saith the Lord, that will hold him guiltless that obeys not my commandments?

31 Who am I, saith the Lord, that have promised and have not fulfilled?

32 I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessing.

33 Then they say in their hearts: This is not the work of the Lord, for his promises are not fulfilled. But wo unto such, for their reward lurketh beneath, and not from above.

Has this happened in the history of the Church before? Members believing that due to “their immense spiritual aptitude” that they would not be required to take care of their temporal salvation? We learn in the Old Testament Student Manual for Isaiah Chapter 52 of early Saints who made the same mistake.

“For the disciples to suppose that they can come to this land without ought to eat, or to drink, or to wear, or anything to purchase these necessaries with, is a vain thought. For them to suppose that the Lord will open the windows of heaven, and rain down angel’s food for them by the way, when their whole journey lies through a fertile country, stored with the blessings of life from His own hand for them to subsist upon, is also vain. For them to suppose that their clothes and shoes will not wear out upon the journey, when the whole of it lies through a country where there are thousands of sheep from which wool in abundance can be procured to make them garments, and cattle upon a thousand hills, to afford leather for shoes, is just as vain. ... Do not conclude from these remarks, brethren, that we doubt in the least, that the Lord will provide for His Saints in these last days; or think that we would extend our hands to steady the ark; for this is not the case. We know that the Saints have the unchangeable word of God that they shall be provided for; yet we know, if any are imprudent, or lavish, or negligent, or indolent, in taking that proper care, and making that proper use of what the Lord has made them stewards over, they are not counted wise; for a strict account of every one’s stewardship is required, not only in time, but will be in eternity. Neither do we apprehend that we shall be considered putting out our hands to steady the ark of God by giving advice to our brethren upon important points relative to their coming to Zion, when the experience of almost two years’ gathering, has taught us to revere that sacred word from heaven, ‘Let not your flight be in haste, but let all things be prepared before you.’” (History of the Church, 1:382–83.)

Brothers and Sisters, we are in the process of proving ourselves and as the Lord taught us “behold there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men...” (**D&C 121:34-35**). Saints of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints there is no greater antagonist to one’s temporal preparedness and temporal salvation than that of “the vain things of this world and the honors of men”; if we do not have our temporal salvation and temporal preparedness but we are yet found in possession of “the vain things of the world and the honors of men”, we have proven that we are the called but not the chosen, we have proven that we are the unwise virgins, we have proven that we are not the Savior’s friend. To get one’s temporal salvation and temporal preparedness one might have to give up that new TV, or that new truck, or that new dress, etc- one will almost certainly have to give up some of the vain things of this world. Likewise, one will have to forgo some of the “honors of men” as they temporally prepare and see to their temporal salvation, as economists will mock you for trying to get out of debt, as your friends will mock you as a “doomsday prepper” for storing food, etc etc etc.

These are the things that we as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints need to fully grasp and understand and accept before and after reading this talk. We need to understand and accept them, but that does not mean they have to make sense. Remember the story of Jesus walking on water- the apostles were rowing their boat into the wind (for the wind was contrary to them) and they were rowing slower than they could have walked. The logical things to do, the things that made sense, were to put the boat to shore and rest out the storm or put the boat on shore and walk, but they understood the Savior’s command and they accepted it therefore none of them left the boat and all of them kept rowing, even though it made no sense, even though there was another more “logical” way, and because of their obedience the Savior

came to them and walked on water to them. The same thing will happen with the return of Joseph Smith.

See my papers [The Parable of the Nobleman and the Olive Trees](#), [the Parable of the Ten Virgins](#), [Joseph Smith to Return](#), [The Prepared Need Not Fear](#), [Temporal Salvation: Food and Water](#) etc

I pray for the assistance of the Holy Ghost for all of us as I share the thoughts and feelings that have come to my mind and heart in preparation for this general conference.

The Importance of Tests

For more than two decades before my call to full-time Church service, I worked as a university teacher and administrator. My primary responsibility as a teacher was to help students learn how to learn for themselves.

Obviously this talk is about temporal preparedness and so this last line will probably go under a lot of people’s radars but it shouldn’t. There are three ways that you can discern between a teacher from the Lord and a teacher of men (priestcraft):

Men (Priestcraft)	The Lord
Focus on “feelings” which includes things like pleasure, gluttony etc but can also and will also include counterfeit versions of the fruit of the Spirit	“The Spirit always edifies”-meaning if you haven’t learned anything it wasn’t from God
Faith in the arm of flesh leads to complacency, apathy, “all is well in Zion”- meaning you are good the way you are, “if you are guilty the Lord will simply beat you with a few stripes and you will yet be saved in the kingdom of God!”	“Faith in the Lord always leads to action”- meaning commitment and repentance are always a part of the message
Set themselves up as a light, dependence on them and independence from the Lord and from the keys. Simply put, they attach you to themselves	They teach the student how to learn, independence from men, dependence on the Lord. Simply put, they attach you to the Lord

And a vital element of my work was creating, grading, and providing feedback about student performance on tests. As you may already know from personal experience, tests typically are not the part of the learning process that students like the most!

But periodic tests absolutely are essential to learning. An effective test helps us to compare what we need to know with what we actually know about a specific subject; it also provides a standard against which we can evaluate our learning and development.

Likewise, tests in the school of mortality are a vital element of our eternal progression. Interestingly, however, the word *test* is not found even one time in the scriptural text of the

standard works in English. Rather, words such as *prove*, *examine*, and *try* are used to describe various patterns of demonstrating appropriately our spiritual knowledge about, understanding of, and devotion to our Heavenly Father's eternal plan of happiness and our capacity to seek for the blessings of the Savior's Atonement.

He who authored the plan of salvation described the very purpose of our mortal probation using the words *prove*, *examine*, and *try* in ancient and modern scripture. "And we will *prove* them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them."

Consider this pleading by the Psalmist David:

"*Examine* me, O Lord, and *prove* me; *try* my reins and my heart.

"For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth."

And the Lord declared in 1833, "Therefore, be not afraid of your enemies, for I have decreed in my heart, saith the Lord, that I will *prove* you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death, that you may be found worthy."

Those who are familiar with my work know that I have consistently taught of the prophesied a test, a Test, a TEST, the prophecy given by Heber C. Kimball, on multiple occasions. It is true that test doesn't appear in our standard works but Elder Heber C. Kimball with the spirit of prophecy and understanding of the scriptures chose to use the words "a test" to describe what he saw coming. I have also already in this gone over what I believe a large part of that test is, the "oil" if you will. I personally don't believe this to be a coincidence and I don't believe anything that Elder Bednar brought up in this talk was a coincidence. I believe everything was very intentional.

Present-Day Proving and Trying

The year 2020 has been marked, in part, by a global pandemic that has proved, examined, and tried us in many ways. I pray that we as individuals and families are learning the valuable lessons that only challenging experiences can teach us. I also hope that all of us will more fully acknowledge the "greatness of God" and the truth that "he shall consecrate [our] afflictions for [our] gain."

Once again, I don't believe that his segue into the "present day testing" is a coincidence. I too pray that we as members will wake up and learn these valuable lessons (Isaiah 28).

Two basic principles can guide and strengthen us as we face proving and trying circumstances in our lives, whatever they may be: (1) the principle of preparation and (2) the principle of pressing forward with a steadfastness in Christ.

A lot of members constantly ask me "what do you think the test consists of?" I believe Elder Bednar's approach is a better approach, which is telling us what we need to do to pass the test. He gives two things that are crucial to passing the test- preparedness and patience. Once again, if you understand the time period we are entering the reasons for why preparation should be

obvious (famine), and the reason for the need for patience should also be clear (Revelation 14:12).

Proving and Preparation

As disciples of the Savior, we are commanded to “*prepare every needful thing*; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God.”

We also are promised that “if ye are prepared ye shall not fear.

“And that ye might escape the power of the enemy, and be gathered unto me a righteous people, without spot and blameless.”

These scriptures provide a perfect framework for organizing and preparing our lives and homes both temporally and spiritually. Our efforts to prepare for the proving experiences of mortality should follow the example of the Savior, who incrementally “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man”—a blended balance of intellectual, physical, spiritual, and social readiness.

Elder Bednar’s italicizing of “every needful thing” is the crucial bit of information that members need to understand. What mother would say that milk for her sucking baby or food for the hungry belly of her child is not needful? If then we can understand the need for these items for ourselves and our families, why can’t we understand, or refuse to understand, that our Heavenly Father requires these things at our hands? Without food and water our bodies will die, as far as our bodies are concerned these are the two most needful things.

He then also mentions intellectual, spiritual and social needs. I would argue, and I believe that I have enough scriptural evidence to prove my point, and that is physical needs supersede spiritual needs in importance. And this is why- if Africans in Africa are starving to death and have no water do we send them Book of Mormons? The answer to that is no. I believe this is exactly what the Lord was referring to when He said, “what man among you has a son that says he is hungry and you giveth him a stone?” The word of God, the doctrine of Christ etc is often related back to a stone, a rod of iron, a sure foundation etc. In most cases people will put spiritual preparedness at the top of the list and they will put temporal preparedness at the bottom of the list-we have to establish a baseline of human survival before we can be taught why we are here. This pattern was first taught with Adam, when Adam was driven out of the garden, what was the very first thing he was taught? Was it spiritual knowledge? No, it was “by the sweat of thy brow you will earn your bread.” It was only after Adam had established himself temporally and had begun to have children that angels started to show up and teach him line upon line, precept upon precept.

Going back to the example of the mother, what mother out there finding herself with the inability to feed or give water to her children for days is looking for a spiritual sermon? You find me a woman in that situation who is more interested in reading scriptures than finding bread for her starving children and I will show you a psychopath. This is the story of Solomon cutting the baby in half, any mother understands that the temporal salvation of her child comes before anything

else. The intellectual, spiritual, and social needs of the child are all moot if the child is dead. This woman understood that it would be better for this child spiritually, mentally, socially etc to grow up and experience as much life as possible in a wicked woman's home then to be dead and have your mortal probation cut short.

We learn in *The Family: A Proclamation to the World* that “parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs...” Even in this document, physical comes before spiritual. With that said, Saints of God, please in the words of Elder Oaks, “good, better, best.” Please don't deflate the things that are the most needful in importance and value. Brigham Young taught “If you are without bread, how much wisdom can you boast and of what real utility are your talents, if you cannot procure for yourselves and save against a day of scarcity those substances designed to sustain your natural lives?” Marion G. Romney taught in his talk *The Celestial Nature of Self-reliance*, “Can we see how critical self-reliance becomes when looked upon as the prerequisite to service, when we also know service is what Godhood is all about? Without self-reliance one cannot exercise these innate desires to serve. How can we give if there is nothing there? Food for the hungry cannot come from empty shelves. Money to assist the needy cannot come from an empty purse. Support and understanding cannot come from the emotionally starved. Teaching cannot come from the unlearned,...spiritual guidance cannot come from the spiritually weak.”

On an afternoon a few months ago, Susan and I inventoried our food storage and emergency supplies. At the time, COVID-19 was spreading rapidly, and a series of earthquakes had jolted our home in Utah. We have worked since the earliest days of our marriage to follow prophetic counsel about preparing for unforeseen challenges, so “examining” our state of readiness in the midst of the virus and earthquakes seemed like a good and timely thing to do. We wanted to find out our grades on these unannounced tests.

We learned a great deal. In many areas, our preparatory work was just right. In some other areas, however, improvement was necessary because we had not recognized and addressed particular needs in timely ways.

We also laughed a lot. We discovered, for example, items in a remote closet that had been in our food storage for decades. Frankly, we were afraid to open and inspect some of the containers for fear of unleashing another global pandemic! But you should be happy to know that we properly disposed of the hazardous materials and that health risk to the world was eliminated.

On a personal note, the use of an exclamation mark here after “pandemic” made me laugh out loud. Having listened to many a boomer talk in my day, I don't think I have ever heard an auditory exclamation make queue given. He said this a little too dry for an exclamation mark, in my opinion, which makes the whole joke even funnier because it accentuates Elder Bednar's dry use of humor and delivery.

Some Church members opine

Opine is a polite and intelligent way to say “in my opinion” or speculation

that emergency plans and supplies, food storage, and 72-hour kits must not be important anymore because the Brethren have not spoken recently and extensively about these and related topics in general conference. But repeated admonitions to prepare have been proclaimed by leaders of the Church for decades. The consistency of prophetic counsel over time creates a powerful concert of clarity and a warning volume far louder than solo performances can ever produce.

There are members who do this all the time. And I'm not talking about downplaying temporal preparedness, I'm talking about members taking singular statements said by leaders of the Church (sometimes out of context and in other cases completely unverified) and they will blow them up as super important and they will ignore the volumes that have been written and spoken on the subject. This is focusing on the micro versus the macro or taking a step back and looking at things holistically and less myopic. A perfect example of this is the seven seals of Revelation. If one were to take a step back and look at "the consistency of prophetic counsel over time" dealing with the subject, including many of the talks given at this last conference (such as President Eyring's talk, As Sisters in Zion, in which he clearly identifies the redemption of Zion and the building of New Jerusalem as a future event, not as an event that took place in the past, not that Salt Lake City somehow equals the New Jerusalem etc.) So if somebody were to take a step back and look at this information it would "create a powerful concert of clarity." However, members choose instead to focus on single quotes taken out of context in an LDS manual or a single unverified, unvetted, uncertified, apparent quote by Gordon B. Hinckley and blow them up as being all important and in the process "opine" philosophies of men. We as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are blessed beyond measure with inspired translations of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, the teachings of Joseph Smith, and subsequent prophets from Joseph Smith to today. If one studies the totality, they will find consistency of prophetic counsel that creates powerful concerts of clarity and warning. If you find "solo performances" throw them out as the false doctrines they are. Salt Lake City is not the New Jerusalem. The Seventh Seal has not been opened. The 10 Tribes will return as a body. Random Jews cannot build temples accepted of the Lord, the 144,000 is an actual number of high priests selected from the Church of the Firstborn who will be doing a missionary work before the eyes of the world. If one were to study the totality these things will create powerful clarity. If however you wish to listen to "solo performances" of modern scholars and keyless men your mind will be darkened and according to the prophet Joseph Fielding Smith, "you will not have the guidance of the Holy Ghost to be able to discern." In a world that is currently inundated with the next click or the next high or the next new thing we all should understand why many of the Saints will/have acquired "itching ears", new books with new theories (like the ten tribes are going to return in spaceships), or near death experiences etc, but we as Saints, our focus, should be on concerts of clarity which can only be obtained by diligent study on a broad basis.

Just as challenging times reveal inadequacies in temporal preparedness, so too the maladies of spiritual casualness and complacency inflict their most detrimental effects during difficult trials. We learn, for example, in the parable of the ten virgins that procrastinating preparation leads to

unsuccessful proving. Recall how the five foolish virgins failed to prepare appropriately for the examination given to them on the day of the bridegroom's coming.

“They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

“But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. ...

“And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

“Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

“And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

“But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

“And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

“Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.”

“But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, Ye know me not.”

At least on this exam, the five foolish virgins proved themselves to be hearers only and not doers of the word.

[Elder Bednar's comparison of the Parable of the Ten Virgins to temporal preparedness is spot on. This breakdown of this talk has already gotten way too lengthy and my breakdown of the Parable of the Ten Virgins was an hour itself, so to hear my thoughts on this subject head on over to that paper/video.](#)

I have a friend who was a conscientious student in law school. During the course of a semester, Sam invested time every day to review, summarize, and learn from his notes for each course in which he was enrolled. He followed the same pattern for all of his classes at the end of every week and every month. His approach enabled him to learn the law and not merely memorize details. And as final examinations approached, Sam was prepared. In fact, he found the final exam period to be one of the least stressful parts of his legal training. Effective and timely preparation precedes successful proving.

Sam's approach to his legal education highlights one of the Lord's primary patterns for growth and development. “Thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more.”

I invite each of us to “consider [our] ways” and “examine [ourselves], whether [we] be in the faith; [and] prove [our] own selves.” What have we learned during these recent months of lifestyle adjustments and restrictions? What do we need to improve in our lives spiritually, physically, socially, emotionally, and intellectually? Now is the time to prepare and prove ourselves willing and able to do all things whatsoever the Lord our God shall command us.

The same principle of “consistency over time creates a powerful concert of clarity far louder than solo performances could ever produce” is not only reflected in prophetic warnings to us, it is also reflected in our actions. What Elder Bednar here is preaching is a true principle of temporal preparedness made manifest in the Parable of the Ten Virgins in that in order to be doers of the Word and to “pass the test” it will require consistency over a period of time, last minute preparations will not cut it. There are many who correctly understand this principle and because they correctly understand this principle they rationalize away the need for them to begin because they opine that there isn’t enough time, so why start? Elder Bednar’s talk here should be read in conjunction with my breakdown of Bishop Waddell’s talk There Was Bread to gain a more complete understanding of this doctrine.

Proving and Pressing Forward

I once attended a funeral for a young missionary who was killed in an accident. The missionary’s father spoke in the service and described the heartache of an unexpected mortal separation from a beloved child. He forthrightly declared that he personally did not understand the reasons or timing for such an event. But I always will remember this good man also declaring that he knew God knew the reasons and timing for the passing of his child—and that was good enough for him. He told the congregation that he and his family, though sorrowful, would be fine; their testimonies remained firm and steadfast. He concluded his remarks with this declaration: “I want you to know that as far as the gospel of Jesus Christ is concerned, our family is all in. We are all in.”

Though the loss of a dear loved one was heart-wrenching and difficult, the members of this valiant family spiritually were prepared to prove that they could learn lessons of eternal importance through the things that they suffered.

I was asked a question by Tyler from Latter-day Teachings (YouTube channel) on one of my firesides in which this was my answer, “I want all of you to know that as far as the gospel of Jesus Christ is concerned, Ashley, myself and our family, we are all in.” I stand with the prophet Joseph Smith. I stand with the Book of Mormon. I stand with the Doctrine and Covenants. I stand with all of the prophecies of God, including the return of Joseph Smith, the famine, the redemption of Zion and the building of New Jerusalem, etc. I stand with the prophet Joseph Smith who said that some of the rising generation would see the return of Jesus Christ. I stand with Elder Talmage who said some people born in 1917 would live to see the return of the ten tribes and their scripture. I believe in Jesus Christ when he identified the generation in which the times of the gentiles were fulfilled, and I believe in President Joseph F. Smith who identified that literal fulfillment. I also believe in President Russell M. Nelson when he said, “time to prepare for the Second Coming is running out”. How much can you wretch those words? 5 years? 10 years? 20 years? At what point in time are all these men proven to be liars? Never? An entire generation is born and an entire generation dies in 20 years, that’s a fact. If a prophet of God says “time to prepare is running out” members have to make a decision, a choice, and that decision/choice is this: do I believe? Because if you believe by necessity of that you would have to know what is coming, and what is coming within the next 5 years; one cannot claim to believe what President Nelson said on the one hand and then on the other hand opine that we are

generations away from the Second Coming. Once again, myself and my family choose to believe and because of that we know what is happening now and what is shortly in our future (see my Macro Last Day Timeline for more details).

There are members who are quick to rationalize and even defend their lack of belief or obedience as not a lack of belief, in fact, according to them they are the ones that are logical and grounded, they are the real apologists for the Church because they attempt to make that which is literal and plain figurative and spiritual to defend their spiritual beliefs to a wicked and perverse generation in worldly terms purely because of their fear of man. These individuals with a lack of faith and belief in the literal plainness of the word of God and prophecy will rationalize their lack of faith away. Their first prong of attack is attacking the literalness and plainness of the word of God, they do this by making figurative and spiritual all of the prophecies. For example, President Nelson says “time to prepare is running out”- they will take this very literal and plain statement and turn it into “what President Nelson could have meant is the Second Coming of the Savior into our LIVES not the WORLD”, and then when faithful members point out that these individuals are teaching false doctrine and are in fact teaching people to not have faith, these individuals’ retort or justification is “ you are limiting God to a single interpretation thereby limiting God’s options and power.” This line of rationale and reasoning is laughable for anybody who has any sort of grasp on the standard works, it doesn’t make any sense. But it doesn’t have to make sense because it is a strawman, that’s the entire purpose of the deflection. The second prong of attack is to attack those members who faithfully interpret and believe the prophecies of God in their literal plainness- they do this by talking down to these individuals like they are fools. For example, I heard an LDS Youtuber say, “it doesn’t matter what your crazy uncle believes, the ten lost tribes aren’t hidden somewhere”, so they attack the intellect of the believers using what they perceive to be worldly knowledge and thus more “rational” interpretations.

Latter-day Saint apologists in my opinion do far more damage than good for this reason alone, they believe the way to combat the world is by changing our beliefs, modernizing them, etc (which is only obtained after turning everything figurative and spiritual and then once they do that they modernize everything) and then they attempt to fight the world using the world; they fight the worldly knowledge with worldly knowledge. The next thing they do is they attack the faithful members of the Church who have faith as being “zealots” or “overzealous” or fanatics. But as Elder Bednar correctly states:

Faithfulness is not foolishness or fanaticism. Rather, it is trusting and placing our confidence in Jesus Christ as our Savior, on His name, and in His promises.

Are we trusting in the Savior, and his servants with keys, and what they have told us in literal plainness? Or are we putting our trust in the arm of flesh? Are we trusting in keyless “scholars and intellectuals” on FairMormon and then going off and regurgitating the philosophies of men? Are we gaining our knowledge and faith from the Lord directly via the keys ie. the standard works and the Holy Ghost? Or are we going to FairMormon, copying and pasting the philosophies of men, and then reading them word for word on our monetized YouTube channels as though a. they were our own words (plagiarism), b. as though they hold some sort of authoritative weight (hint: they don’t) and c. as though it wasn’t priestcraft (hint: it is)?

My prayer is that there will be more faithful members who cling to the word of God and thus qualify for the discernment of the Holy Ghost and less members “in the world” who cling to the philosophies of men and thus don’t qualify for the discernment of the Holy Ghost. There are members (and possibly some members who are reading or hearing this) who believe they don’t have to take a stand on this one way or the other.

As we “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men,” we are blessed with an eternal perspective and vision that stretches far beyond our limited mortal capacity. We will be enabled to “gather together, and stand in holy places” and “be not moved, until the day of the Lord come.”

While I was serving as the president of Brigham Young University–Idaho, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland came to the campus in December 1998 to speak in one of our weekly devotionals. Susan and I invited a group of students to meet and visit with Elder Holland before he delivered his message. As our time together was drawing to a close, I asked Elder Holland, “If you could teach these students just one thing, what would it be?”

He answered:

“We are witnessing an ever greater movement toward polarity. The middle-ground options will be removed from us as Latter-day Saints. The middle of the road will be withdrawn.

“If you are treading water in the current of a river, you will go somewhere. You simply will go wherever the current takes you. Going with the stream, following the tide, drifting in the current will not do.

“Choices have to be made. Not making a choice is a choice. Learn to choose now.”

Elder Holland’s statement about increasing polarization has been proven prophetic by the societal trends and events of the 22 years since he answered my question. Foretelling the widening divergence between the ways of the Lord and of the world, Elder Holland warned that the days of comfortably having one foot in the restored Church and one foot in the world were vanishing quickly. This servant of the Lord was encouraging the young people to choose, prepare, and become devoted disciples of the Savior. He was helping them to prepare and press forward to and through the proving, examining, and trying experiences of their lives.

The days of comfortably having one foot in the restored Church and one foot in the world are vanishing- this does not simply mean non-members vs. members or faithful members vs. lukewarm members, pertaining to the culture of Babylon. This is also the difference between the doctrine of Christ and the doctrine of Christ mingled with the philosophies of men. The days of having one foot in Latter-day Saint theology and the other foot in other Christian dogmas or worldly philosophies etc are also coming to an end. We have to choose and the act of not choosing is a choice. Only those who have made the choice to believe in the doctrine of Christ, the famine, the literal redemption of Zion and building of New Jerusalem, the literal return of the ten tribes etc will be the ones selected by Joseph Smith to take part in those events. Why would Joseph Smith select somebody who didn’t believe in Joseph Smith’s own prophecies? What makes one believe that they can actively teach against need for the redemption of Zion and the

building in New Jerusalem but yet take part in it if it does take place? It's like the age old story of The Little Red Hen, individuals believe that they can teach that there is no need to plant the grain, harvest the grain or turn it into bread but believe that if bread does appear they will be invited to eat with those who have planted the grain, harvested the grain and made the bread!

Remember what the Savior taught, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8). In this lies a fundamental understanding of a central gospel truth, "does one receive without asking?" and "does one ask if he doesn't desire it?" and "if one does not believe in something does he desire it?" Simply put, if one does not believe they will never desire and if they never desire it they will never ask the Father for it and if they never ask the Father for it they will never receive it (as dealing to the kingdom of God).

Saints of God, believe in the return of Joseph Smith. Believe in the literal redemption of Zion and the building of New Jerusalem. Believe. If you don't believe, search the scriptures and hear the voice of the Savior in them, and then ask the Father in the name of Christ if these things are not true. And if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, He will manifest it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost. Once you acquire this belief, turn it into faith, which is to act. Do all you can to make yourself worthy and ready. Once you are worthy and ready, pray unto the Father that you may be found worthy through the test, pray unto the Father that you will be selected to take part in those miracles, pray unto the Father and ask.

There will be those who will do all this and who "will be asked to tarry", but there will be no one who doesn't do this and who is selected. Period.

As always, I will close with the words of the speaker and make them my own:

Promise and Testimony

The process of proving ourselves is a fundamental part of Heavenly Father's great plan of happiness. I promise that as we both prepare and press forward with faith in the Savior, we all can receive the same grade on the ultimate examination of mortality: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

I witness that God the Eternal Father is our Father. Jesus Christ is His Only Begotten and living Son, our Savior and Redeemer. Of these truths I joyfully testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.