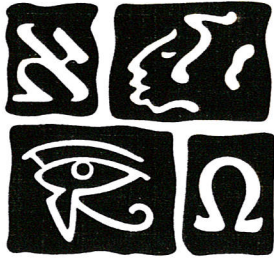




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## Transcript

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Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies

Elder L. Tom Perry  
**This Is My Gospel**  
**Preparing the Foundation**  
**for the Kingdom**

TRANSCRIPT  
FARMS ANNUAL BANQUET 1995

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## **This is My Gospel**

### **Preparing the Foundation for the Kingdom**

Elder L. Tom Perry  
FARMS Annual Banquet 1995

Noel, you think you are overwhelmed! How would you like to be an accountant and have to sit and watch this great parade of scholars go before you and think that all you can do is add and subtract figures? We're just delighted to have this opportunity of being with you tonight. And Noel, I listened very carefully when you said you beg and borrow and *steal*. I've just been released as Chairman of the Audit Committee of the Board of Education. You can expect an audit any day. I've tried to keep it quiet that I have the position on the selection committee and the Chairman of the Executive Committee. I think these two positions should be very quiet, in the woodwork. No one should recognize what you are doing, and will you kindly take that remark back and just forget that he ever said anything about that?

This is such a privilege to be with you tonight. I've studied with great interest your—I usually don't need one of those [someone adjusted the microphone]. Can you hear all right? If you can't, I can always turn up the volume. Remember, I was the one speaking in general conference when a woman hit the telephone pole outside the Tabernacle and knocked the power out. President Benson kicked me on the heel and said, "Talk a little louder. This has to go all the way to Australia!"

I have studied with great interest the information you have sent to me over the years as you have progressed in this great, great organization. Of course, I am more comfortable with a balance sheet than I am with a research paper. This is not my background. You would expect a little different talk from me tonight than you would from a researcher. In fact, I am amazed at the group that is here. I expected you all to come in with a set of brass plates or a roll of papyrus or some other thing and sit in front of me as you would do with your research. I'm glad there are some young people here, because I feel much more comfortable with you than I do with the researchers.

My interest has always been in the chemistry, the organizational events, the human relations that have happened in the history of the Lord's dealing with his people, and in seeing how God's hand is clearly an evidence in everything that he does. I've always been intrigued with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the position it placed the young prophet in. Can you imagine a new bridegroom, married for just a few days over eight months—having the complication of having a father-in-law who was not too happy with the marriage—and suddenly, given to him is this ancient record for him to take care of and safeguard? The challenge of just the physical protection of the record from the curious seekers and treasure hunters must have been a tremendous challenge in itself. He was all but driven from his home and had to go to Harmony, near his wife's home, to face his father-in-law and the challenges that were there for him. Three months after he had received the plates, he finally had settled in a home where he could work. Then comes the advent of Martin Harris.

Martin has always been of great interest to me in his relationship with the Prophet. He [Martin] was so kind in the way that he helped finance and bring about the early financing needed for the publication of the Book of Mormon. And yet you can imagine the problems Martin had. Here he arrived in February of 1828 to act as scribe just before the planting season was to start, and his wife was home taking care of the farm. You can imagine the agitation that was there. I can just appreciate what he was going through. He was continually asking to have the opportunity of bringing home something he was doing so that [his family] would have an opportunity to see the work that [he and Joseph] were performing. Then came the lost manuscript incident and the sadness of having that record taken from the Prophet for a time.

Finally, at the end of 1828, the plates were returned to the Prophet. He was promised a new scribe who would help him in the translation. During the winter of 1828 and 1829, he worked as much as he could providing for his family and using

his wife and her brother to help him with the translation. But still facing the problem of his father-in-law encouraging him to go out and find more suitable employment, the Prophet appealed to the Lord for some assistance. And then Oliver Cowdery, in a most miraculous way, showed up at the home of the Prophet. His brother Lyman had been hired to teach school in the Manchester township, close to the township where the Smith family was living. His brother was unable to fulfill that assignment and tried to encourage the trustees to hire his brother Oliver, which they did. Then, Joseph had the opportunity of Oliver boarding in the Joseph Smith Sr. home, where he [Oliver] heard this miraculous story of the plates. He could hardly wait to get to Harmony to meet the Prophet. Oliver arrived there on Sunday, April 5, 1829. The two men sat up most of the night talking about the marvelous work that was coming forth. Oliver had to transact some business the following day; the translation began in earnest on April 7.

That is one of the most exciting miracles that I think could occur. To think that in just eighty-five days, that translation was complete. One time I became so interested with the speed of the translation, I asked someone to do a little research to see how that compared with translation of other scriptures, to see how remarkable this work was. This researcher said that the translation of the books of Moses in the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek was given by six men from each of the twelve tribes, who labored seventy-two days. That's seventy-two men working seventy-two days, or 5,184 man-days, to translate the books of Moses. Jerome, commissioned by the Pope to translate the Bible from Hebrew to Latin, worked twenty-three years; that's 8,395 man-days to complete that translation. And of course, the King James Version, where King James wanted a version of the Bible that maybe would solve some of the problems of all the conflicts that were occurring in his land over religion. He selected fifty-four men, who worked four years; that's 78,840 man-days to complete that translation.

Now contrast that to the Book of Mormon. For all intents and purposes, it took from the 7th of April to June 30—eighty-five days—for a man acting as scribe for a prophet; I guess you could say 170 man-days. Truly a miracle. It could not have happened other than under the direction of the Lord. This book is the one great tangible evidence of the great visitations of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Now, at this time the Lord was preparing the Church to be permanent on the earth. He wanted to be certain that this time it would endure. So he was making careful preparation for the leadership that would come forth to lead the Church as the Book of Mormon moved throughout the world converting people to the gospel of our Lord and Savior. Technology had been asleep for centuries. Almost from the time of the Savior to the birth of the Prophet, there was very little advancement in technology. If you wanted to travel, you relied on men or the strength of the wind to move vessels over rivers, lakes, and seas. If you wanted to go by land, you went by beast of burden or by just plain walking. Then, when the Lord wanted the gospel brought forth, he just literally turned on the lights in the minds of men to bring forth the technology that would give us the opportunity to communicate and have an association one with another. This time it was not necessary to be eye to eye. He provided means of travel and communication for us.

I've often thought of the simplicity of the life in the early 1800s. What a great seed it was for the establishment of the gospel. A half a century later, maybe the humble, hard-working, rugged pioneers would not have been available for bringing forth the gospel in the clarity it happened.

Now, I've often looked at those first three prophets the Lord established to build his kingdom here on earth and seen how unique each of them was. God was laying the foundation well for the perpetuation of the gospel by supplying the leadership necessary to carry us forward in this great work. First, let's look at the Prophet Joseph Smith. God needed this strong, vigorous young man who would be teachable. He needed someone He could mold into a leader, someone who could bring forth the

restoration of the gospel. Out of the weak things, He had to create something that was strong and powerful. Few prophets—few men—have come from more humble beginnings than that of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He was the fifth child in a family of eleven, reared on the rocky soil of New England. It had to be a hard life. Have any of you tried to plant in New England? [To Noel Reynolds:] Did you have a garden back there? I did; it was impossible! Rocks grew much faster than corn and other things. And they [the Smiths] had to move frequently to find fertile soil in order to have a suitable livelihood—from Sharon to Tunbridge, to south Royalton in Vermont.

Then they moved, in 1811, to west Lebanon in New Hampshire to contemplate what Joseph's mother said, to finally receive the joy and satisfaction that would attend their labors. Her optimism gave way, and the terrible typhoid fever struck the upper Connecticut valley. Six thousand people died during that epidemic. With the Smith family ill—of course, Joseph had that illness, and his life was saved by that surgeon who operated for him—these many illnesses left the family destitute again. They had to move back to Norwich, Vermont. There they began to farm, with the Lord's hand. But again, He was planning that they should be in another location; three years of crop failures caused the father to look for a better place to make a living for his family. Of course, he left and went to upstate New York near Palmyra, where the great work could come forth.

Again, the Lord's hand was guiding and directing and providing the background for the gospel to be brought forth. The Lord had entrusted him [Joseph] with exceptional spiritual strength. He needed to be a pure spirit who could be taught by the ministering of angels. There was no earthly teacher to give him that which he needed in this training. He had to be truly sensitive to the Spirit, and a quick learner. Truman [Madsen], I've been reading your book. It's a tremendous book on the spiritual gifts of the Prophet Joseph Smith. My, what a great and outstanding man he was. Who could read the story of the seeking after the First Vision or the



other events that occurred there without realizing what power and strength this young man had? Who could deny that he was blessed with the gift of prophecy?

Elder John A. Widtsoe once determined that there were 1100 statements about the future in the Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>1</sup> Brother Madsen has said, "To be able to so prophecy in the name of Jehovah was both the blessing and the burden of Joseph Smith."<sup>2</sup> Then he gave this account when the Prophet was saying to the Brethren: "I have been very much edified and instructed in your testimonies tonight, but I want to say to you before the Lord, that you know no more concerning the destinies of this church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother's lap. . . . This church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world."<sup>3</sup> How literally we are seeing that come about today. We just returned from South America where we found that in the little country of Chile there is a greater concentration of members of the Church than there is in the United States. So we see the great growth that is occurring.

Joseph had the power of discernment. He could detect bad spirits. He knew when he was in the right place. He could receive visions using his humility and humbleness. He said at one time, talking about the three degrees of glory: "I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them."<sup>4</sup> What power there was in this great visionary the Lord selected to be the first prophet.

Now, he was raising other giants to prepare for the continuation of the leadership of the Church. Brigham Young, had his beginning that was very similar to the Prophet Joseph Smith's. He lived in harsh New England, basically in poverty. His family, again, was suitable. The Youngs moved frequently to provide a living. His parents were devout Methodists—strict, rigid, didn't allow their children the

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<sup>1</sup> John A. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith: Seeker after Truth, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1951), 277.

<sup>2</sup> Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1989), 41.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Smith, *The History of the Church, 1842–1843* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret, 1978), 5:402.

opportunity to dance or even to listen to the violin. These restrictions placed on the Young family probably led Brigham to his remarkable independence and to his careful and long search for religious satisfaction. His early years taught him thrift and industry. His mother died when he was just fourteen, but at this early age, Brigham was already an apprentice in chairmaking and housepainting. By the time he was eighteen, he was in business for himself. He was a skilled artisan, fashioning wood for door frames, stairs, rails, louvered attic windows, fireplace mantles. He was noted for the simple beauty, sturdiness, and usefulness of the articles he produced. You can see how those basic qualities were started early in the life of Brigham Young and set patterns for judgment, common sense, and self-reliance that were developed in this early leader.

The Book of Mormon came first through his house to his brother. Then his father read the book. Then his sister Fanny passed it on to him. Brigham was slow to accept, more reserved than the others. He made this observation:

Though I had beheld, all my life, that the traditions of the people was all the religion they had, I had got a mantle for myself. Says I, 'Wait a little while; what is the doctrine of the book, and of the revelations the Lord has given? Let me apply my heart to them'; and after I had done this, I considered it to be my right to know for myself, as much as any man on earth.

I examined the matter studiously for two years before I made up my mind to receive that book. I knew it was true, as well as I knew that I could see with my eyes, or feel by the touch of my fingers, or be sensible of the demonstration of any sense. Had not this been the case, I never would have embraced it to this day; it would have all been without form or comeliness to me. I wished time sufficient to prove all things for myself.<sup>5</sup>

When he joined the Church, Brigham was so loyal to the Prophet Joseph Smith. The two were different. Joseph Smith was the great master prophet, creator, inspired visionary; Brigham Young was the tough administrator and powerful leader who

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<sup>5</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, 3:91.

made the workable visions of the Prophet Joseph Smith practical in the lives of the people.

The spirit of the Holy Ghost had manifest to Brigham that Joseph was a prophet, indeed, the spokesman for God in this dispensation of time, and that the Mormon church was true, and he believed it with all his heart and soul. He had a great ability to lead the people, to unite them. Stories are told about how he used to greet the arriving Saints as they arrived in the Salt Lake valley, some of them without anything left to satisfy the needs of life. He would put them to work. He would pay them just enough to live on, but not as much as they were paying elsewhere. They were so anxious to leave and start their own positions or to hire out to others in the colony that they would soon leave his employ. They thought they were smart to think that they could get out of the employ of such a hard man. But he was the smart one. He was teaching them something about the basic things of life, and how well he taught the early pioneers! Now, we have looked at Brigham Young, this unlearned leader, and how the Lord reared a mighty man to be the second prophet of God and to establish the Saints in the firm foothold in the great Rocky Mountain area.

Now we move on to the third, John Taylor. Both Brigham Young and John Taylor had great loyalty to the Prophet Joseph Smith. They never deviated from the instructions and example of the Prophet, even after his death. Both had experienced intellectual as well as spiritual conversion and were committed to the doctrines of the Church. However, the two had widely different backgrounds. Brigham Young spent his infancy, childhood, and young adulthood in rural communities of Vermont and New York, communities comparatively unknown and undistinguished, communities that were untamed and outside of cultivated forest lands. Therefore, the first essential step of a farmer was to apply his agricultural skills of clearing the land of stumps and boulders and underbrush. Practically all a farmer's time was spent in physical demands.

John Taylor, on the other hand, was born in an area that had been under cultivation for hundreds of years. It was near large commercial centers, and over the centuries, had acquired the jewels of civilization: libraries, museums, theaters, and universities. It was in this environment that John Taylor had his beginning. The environments of both Brigham Young and John Taylor were entirely different: One to tame the wilderness, the other to combat the intellectual enemies of the Church. Each was recognized, and honored the other for his special role.

John Taylor's strength was witnessed in an example that occurred in Columbus, Ohio, where a group of troublemakers learned that John Taylor was scheduled to hold a preaching service there. They decided they should tar and feather him. A few members heard of the plot and went to Brother Taylor and urged him to cancel the meeting because they lacked the strength to protect him. He expressed concern and thanked them for the warning, but he decided to go ahead with the appointment.

Now, this is John Taylor, I think, at his best. He decided, before the audience, to talk about the blessings of freedom guaranteed under the Constitution, about the valor of their forefathers, about fighting for liberty, and about the yearnings of downtrodden people throughout the world to live under the American flag. Then he said quietly, "I have been informed that you purpose to tar and feather me, for my religious opinions. Is this the boon you have inherited from your fathers? Is this . . . your liberty?" Then he offered himself. He said, "Gentleman, come on with your tar and feathers, your victim is ready; and ye shades of the venerable patriots, gaze upon the deeds of your degenerate sons! Come on, gentleman! Come on, I say, I am ready!"<sup>6</sup> Of course, the would-be tormentors would not come and remained quiet, and he taught the doctrines of Mormonism for the next three hours.

He became the champion of right. He was called to go to New York by Brigham Young to establish a newspaper that would teach the doctrines of the Church in a correct way to neutralize the ground swell of anti-Mormon feeling that had

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<sup>6</sup> B. H. Roberts, *The Life of John Taylor* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1963), 54-5.

mounted over the years. He had such confidence in the beliefs of the Church. Where did he establish his headquarters? Right in the center of the *Herald* and *Tribune* newspapers. Then he started to hurl his reason out to the people. His editorial said this:

We are Mormon inside and outside; at home or abroad, in public and private—everywhere. We are so, however, from principle. We are such, not because we believe it to be the most popular, lucrative, or honorable (as the world has it); but because we believe it to be true, more reasonable and scriptural, moral and philosophical; because we conscientiously believe it is more calculated to promote the happiness and well-being of humanity, in time and throughout all eternity, than any other system which we have met with.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, that didn't appeal too much to the other two newspapers, and they started to challenge it. Then John Taylor said this: "We have said before and say now, that we defy all the editors and writers in the United States to prove that Mormonism is less moral, scriptural, philosophical; or that there is less patriotism in Utah than in any other part of the United States. We call for proof; bring on your reasons, gentleman, if you have any; we shrink not from the investigation, and dare you to the encounter. If you don't do it, and you publish any more of your stuff, we shall brand you as poor, mean, cowardly liars; as men publishing falsehoods knowing them to be so, and shrinking from the light of truth and investigation."<sup>8</sup> Powerful.

Now, I hope you see the contrast in those three great leaders that the Lord brought forth to lead the early Church. One with a great vision, humble, sincere, with great faith to follow the teachings and ministrations of angels to bring about the great doctrines of the Church. Brigham Young, the great colonizer who lead the people in such a practical way, who taught them how to care for themselves, to build a sense of industry and self-reliance in their hearts. John Taylor, a man with a unique ability and with experience, who had the ability to speak and say things in

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<sup>7</sup> Roberts, *The Life of John Taylor*, 249.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

such a way that people could understand, a man with great culture and great refinement. The base was being established for the Church to move forward, to grow and develop. Now, you have the great opportunity of using your trained heads, your research, to continue to bring the light and the life of the gospel to hearts of people. I want to assure you that the Lord has always has his hand in this work. He's directing the leadership of the Church. You could go on to the fourth, the fifth, and on up to our present prophet and know each, in his own unique way, is lead by the Lord and a most outstanding special way for his particular time to bring forth the gospel of our Lord and Savior.

So we say to you tonight: Put on those visors over your head. Get that lamp out. Get out those scrolls. Get all you need to bring that great light and life of the gospel to the peoples of the world. You're making a marvelous contribution to what we need to know in gospel scholarship. And if you do this, the Lord will continue to provide the base for leadership for the gospel of Jesus Christ, that your works will be recognized, that you will see the fruits and accomplishment of the effort and time that you put in. God bless you with great power and strength to bring forth to the light of the world, the great gospel of our Lord and Savior. He has provided the way. That he'll continue to keep his hand in directing his church is my witness to you. In the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.