

Come Follow me
Elo Viz production
Week 46
Hosea and Joel

In your study of Hosea and Joel this week you will find that we are backing up a little. Close to the time of Isiah but in a different area. Isiah ministered in the lower kingdom known as Juda and Hosea preached in the upper kingdom with the 10 tribes. He lived about 786-746 B.C. Joel was closer to the time of Christ's birth. They think roughly somewhere about the time that the temple was being rebuilt in Jerusalem.

In any case, both books are fairly depressing. Hosea's ministry was to marry a harlot that was going to cheat on him and this was a parallel to Christ's relationship with His people and how they were not faithful to Him. As I read through these books I found myself asking. Where did they all go wrong? How did these people slip into such a wicked state?

Last week in Sunday school class we had a great discussion about how to have a personal relationship with our Heavenly Father and we need to hear and heed His voice. I was shocked to find so many that were relying on another person to tell them what to do instead of receiving their own personal revelation. Whether it is your spouse, the Bishop, Stake president or even the Prophet. These men are there to help point you in the right direction to a personal relationship with God. We should not rely on them to speak to us for God.

This was the same problem the children of Israel had while they were in the wilderness. God wanted all of them to come to the mountain and commun with Him. But, they said to Moses; you go... you go talk to God and tell us what he said.

One sweet sister in my ward said to me "I have to rely on other priesthood holders to help me progress because my husband is inactive. I responded to her, "not true, God will never hold you back because of someone else's decisions." She was placing her responsibility of exaltation on someone else. God wants to talk to you! And He wants to have an intimately personal relationship with you!

One brother said "I want to have that personal relationship with God, but I feel like I am deceived all the time in my mind" Which I thought was amazing that he was recognizing that. I'm sure we all struggle with deception at times and we wish the words of God were more clear to us. I can assure you that with practice and time His words can become as clear as the voice of a loving father. President Nelson said in April 2018:

"In [the] coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost. My beloved brothers and sisters, I plead with you to increase your spiritual capacity to receive revelation... Choose to do the spiritual work required to enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost and hear the voice of the Spirit more frequently and more clearly."

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2018/04/revelation-for-the-church-revelation-for-our-lives?lang=eng>

I'm not sure how much more clear he could be on this topic. But there still stands the problem of how we avoid being deceived. I found the most wonderful talk given by Lawrence Corbridge of the seventy, at BYU in 2019. I would like to share only part of it with you. But I would encourage you to listen to the whole talk as many times as you can. We can learn so much from it. You'll find the link on our website; CFMpodcast.org. He says:

“When the Lord described the signs of His coming and the end of the world, when He described our day. He said:

For in those days [this day] there shall also arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch, that, if possible, they shall deceive the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant.²

I am not sure of all that is implied by the qualification “if possible, they shall deceive the very elect,” but I think it means, at least, that everyone will be challenged in our day.

There are many who deceive, and the spectrum of deception is broad. At one end we meet those who attack the Restoration, the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the Book of Mormon.

At the far end of the spectrum we come to an entire universe of distractions. Never has there been more information, misinformation, and disinformation; more goods, gadgets, and games; and more options, places to go, and things to see and do to occupy time and attention away from what is most important. This is a day of deception.

Truth enables us to see clearly because it is the “knowledge of things as they [really] are, and as they were, and as they are to come.”⁵ Knowledge is crucial to avoid deception, to discern between truth and error, and to see clearly and chart a course through the hazards of our day.

People say, “You should be true to your beliefs.” While that is true, you cannot be better than what you know. Most of us act based on our beliefs, especially what we believe to be in our self-interest. The problem is, we are sometimes wrong.

Someone may believe in God and that pornography is wrong and yet still click on a site wrongly believing that he will be happier if he does or he can't help

but not click or it isn't hurting anyone else and it is not that bad. He is just wrong.

Someone may believe it is wrong to lie and yet lie on occasion, wrongly believing he will be better off if the truth is not known. He is just wrong.

Someone may believe and even know that Jesus is the Christ and still deny Him not once but three times because of the mistaken belief that he would be better off appeasing the crowd. Peter wasn't evil. I am not even sure he was weak. He was just wrong.

When you act badly, you may think you are bad, when in truth you are usually mistaken. You are just wrong. *The challenge is not so much closing the gap between our actions and our beliefs; rather, the challenge is closing the gap between our beliefs and the truth. That is the challenge.*

So how do we close that gap? How do we avoid deception?

Begin by answering the primary questions. There are primary questions and there are secondary questions. Answer the primary questions first. Not all questions are equal and not all truths are equal. The primary questions are the most important. Everything else is subordinate. There are only a few primary questions. I will mention four of them.

1. Is there a God who is our Father?
2. Is Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Savior of the world?
3. Was Joseph Smith a prophet?
4. Is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints the kingdom of God on the earth?

By contrast, the secondary questions are unending. They include questions about Church history, polygamy, people of African descent and the priesthood, women and the priesthood, and on and on.

If you answer the primary questions, the secondary questions get answered too, or they pale in significance and you can deal with things you understand and things you don't and things you agree with and things you don't without jumping ship altogether.

How can we know the answers? There are different methods of learning, including the scientific, analytical, academic, and divine methods. The divine method of learning incorporates elements of the other three but ultimately trumps everything else by tapping into the powers of heaven. All four methods are necessary to know the truth. They all begin the same way: with a question. Questions are important. Ultimately the things of God are made known by the Spirit of God, which is usually a still, small voice.

Of all the problems you encounter in this life, there is one that towers above them all and is the least understood. The worst of all human conditions in this life is not poverty, sickness, loneliness, abuse, or war—as awful as those conditions are. The worst of all human conditions is the most common: it is to die. It is to die spiritually. It is to be separated from the presence of God, and in this life, His presence is His Spirit or power. That is the worst.

Conversely, the best of all human conditions in this life is not wealth, fame, prestige, good health, the honors of men, security, or even—dare I say it—good grades. As wonderful as some of those things are, the best of all human conditions is to be endowed with heavenly power; it is to be born again, to have the gift and companionship of the Holy Ghost, which is the source of knowledge, revelation, strength, clarity, love, joy, peace, hope, confidence, faith, and almost every other good thing. Jesus said, “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, . . . shall teach you all things.”¹⁷ It is the power by which we “may know the truth of all things.”¹⁸ “It will show . . . [us] all things . . . [we] should do.”¹⁹ It is the fountain of “living water” that springs up unto eternal life.²⁰

Finally, believe. Believe “with God all things are possible.”²⁶ We may all be taken back from time to time by the extraordinary—such as walking on water, multiplying bread and fish, raising the dead, translating gold plates with special lenses or a stone and hat, and the visitation of angels. Some people are hard-pressed to believe extraordinary things. While it is understandable that we may be challenged by the extraordinary, we shouldn’t be, because ordinary things are actually far more phenomenal.

The most phenomenal occurrences of all time and eternity—the most amazing wonders, the most astounding, awesome developments—are the most common and widely recognized. They include: I am; you are; we are; and all that we perceive exists as well, from subatomic particles to the

farthest reaches of the cosmos and everything in between, including all of the wonders of life. Is there anything greater than those ordinary realities? No. Nothing else even comes close. You can't begin to imagine, much less describe, anything greater than what already is.

In light of what is, nothing else should surprise us. It should be easy to believe that with God all things are possible.

The healing of the withered hand is not nearly as amazing as the existence of the hand in the first place. If it exists, it follows that it can certainly be fixed when it is broken. The greater event is not in its healing but in its creation.

More phenomenal than resurrection is birth. The greater wonder is not that life, having once existed, could come again but that it ever exists at all.

More amazing than raising the dead is that we live at all. A silent heart that beats again is not nearly as amazing as the heart that beats within your breast right now.

That one could see on a stone or through a special lens the modern translation of ancient text written on plates of gold is far less amazing than the human eye. The wonder is not what the human eye may see, rather, that it sees anything at all.

How can you believe in extraordinary things such as angels and gold plates and your divine potential? Easy, just look around and believe.

I don't know if pigs will ever sprout wings and fly, but if they do, flying pigs will never be nearly as amazing as the ordinary pig in the first place.

I heard someone say recently, "It is okay to have doubts."

I wonder about that. The Lord said, "Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not."²⁷ I have a lot of questions; I don't have any doubts."

In conclusion I joint my testimony to that of Elder Corbridge:

"There is a God in heaven who is our Eternal Father. I know this by my experience—all of my experience. I know this by the evidence, and the

evidence is overwhelming. I know it by study, and, most surely, I know it by the spirit and power of the Holy Ghost.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world. I know this by my experience—all of it. I know this by the evidence, and the evidence is overwhelming. I know it by study, and, most surely, I know it by the spirit and power of the Holy Ghost.

Joseph Smith was a prophet of God who laid the foundation for the restoration of the kingdom of God. I know this by my experience—all of my experience. I know this by the evidence, and the evidence is overwhelming. I know it by study, and, most surely, I know it by the spirit and power of the Holy Ghost.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God on the earth. I know this by my experience—all of it. I know this by the evidence, and the evidence is overwhelming. I know it by study, and, most surely, I know it by the Spirit and power of the Holy Ghost.

And with that I know everything I need to know to stand forever.

May we stand on the rock of revelation. If we do, we will stand forever and never go away. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

<https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/lawrence-e-corbridge/stand-for-ever/>