

TIMELINE OF THE TEACHINGS OF DENVER SNUFFER REGARDING TITHING AND TEMPLE*

In April 2014, in the sixth of his 10-part Zion talk, Denver suggested that those who wanted to pay tithing could organize into tithing groups and collect and distribute their own tithing to help the poor. This was the impetus to the creation of our individual fellowships:

“The purpose primarily of collecting the tithes, and of the yield upon it, is to bless and to benefit the lives of those who are in need. So, given the fact that you are commanded to pay tithing, and some of you refuse to do so because of the particular circumstances you see out there, and given the fact that the Lord has said “organize yourselves,” I would suggest one small thing you could begin is to collect your own tithing in a group. You manage it among yourselves. You assist the poor among you. If you disagree with what your churches are doing but recognize the obligation to pay, then take control over the funds to do what you believe God would have done to help others. As groups of common believers, pay tithing into a common fund. Then by the voice of your own group, dispose of it by common consent so that everyone in your group knows everything that comes in and everything that goes out. Then you begin to have no poor among your group. You provide for those who need housing, food, clothing, healthcare, education, and transportation.

“Moses 7:18. ‘And the Lord called his people ZION, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.’ There were no poor among them, because it’s intolerable for your sister to suffer in want if you have enough and to spare.” (Zion Talk, Grand Junction, April 2014, page 7, 14)

In September 2016, Denver suggested donating excess tithing to a temple:

“If you want to donate money to the Lord, then do it as part of a community of believers, and use the donations to relieve the needs of the poor among you. If you have no poor among you, donate to build a temple.”

During the question and answer period, Denver stated the following:

“I have been contacted by a group of women....[who] are currently organizing a mechanism. Our first obligation in donating and paying tithes is to take care of the poor. But there are fellowships I know that have accumulated money beyond their

needs, and there are a group of women that are organizing and making the means available for gathering excess for the construction of the temple. And I assume that eventually the means will be provided from among ourselves for the accomplishment of that work. I have to say that I do believe that when the command is given, that the command to build the temple is not going to give us decades to respond. I think that when the command is given we're expected to act with some dispatch to accomplish what has been requested of Him. And so, I am personally grateful that there is no command out there at present to do so, because I don't know how we would accomplish it. We're not supposed to do it in haste, but we're supposed to prepare every needful thing. And preparing every needful thing, we might be in a time when it's far more convenient to accomplish it now than it will be later under more pressing circumstances." (Doctrine of Christ Talk, Boise, Idaho, September 2016, page 9 and 15)

In March 2017, Denver defined *the poor among you* as the poor in the individual fellowship. Excess donations should go to the temple, however fellowships can, if they choose, share their excess with other fellowships. This should be a one-time sharing and we were warned about how abuses can follow such sharing:

"The relief from the donations for 'the poor among you' refers to the poor among the individual fellowship. If there are no poor among you, then excess donations **should** go to the temple, but they can be shared as your fellowship determines by common consent, and that's up to you, using your common consent. (Things to Keep us Awake at Night Talk, Saint George, March 2017, page 11)

"In the draft of the replacement for Section 20...there is a suggestion that one fellowship, if it doesn't have needs, can assist another fellowship by providing them with sharing resources. I think that should be possible. But it should be by common consent, it should be a one-time only occurrence. Because when the church at Rome began to aggregate wealth, they used wealth to gain influence and preeminence over other congregations in the Mediterranean world. The influence of wealth led to political influence and over time they obtained universal, hierarchical command, of a vertically integrated church structure. Then all that was needed to corrupt the whole institution was to corrupt the top.

"In fellowships, if they are all independent, and all equipped with the same instruction, and they all function independent of one another, it does not matter how corrupt any single fellowship may become. It will be necessary to corrupt every single one of them to kill the whole. You can't kill the whole by corruption of a

single, influential, wealthy entity. Independence and equality provide the truth a better chance to survive.

“I think you must be free as fellowships to help one another but if there is a wealthy, regularly financing fellowship, those who receive from it should be just as concerned about the potential for ‘strings’ accompanying the money as the people who are giving should be concerned about the perversity of viewing that as an opportunity to gain power and authority over others. The path of God is razor thin. It may lie in a straight course, but the way in which the Lord walks that straight line He doesn’t even cast a shadow to the left or the right. When you walk that line and begin to see the shadow, you’ve already departed from the path even though you think you’re still on it. You have to question every step of the way; every step you take, and measure every word you speak, because you and I are going to be judged on that basis.” (Q&A Session from Things to Keep us Awake at Night Talk, Saint George, September 2017, page 7-8)

In August 2018, Denver spoke at the Remembering the Covenants Conference. Rather than give the talk he prepared, he spoke extemporaneously about the last days’ temple, which contains both an invitation and a warning by way of a history lesson:

“In July of 1840 Joseph Smith gave a talk in which he was encouraging the people that believed in the revelations that had come through him to build a temple. A temple needed to be built...In January of 1841 came the revelation commanding that the temple be built. Why did Joseph, in July 1840, without a commandment from God that he knew was going to come, why did Joseph encourage the saints at that point to begin building a temple to God? Why did the commandment have to be given in January of 1841 for the temple to be built? We were told in a get-together in Boise, Idaho that God’s people are always required to build a temple.

“We have a season of peace and we have a season of prosperity, and we have an opportunity in which we might be able to accomplish something with nothing more than the same thing that Joseph Smith was talking about in July of 1840. When a command is given and sufficient time is accorded and the clock begins to run, then the tendency is to move quickly, like John Bennett. Everything is in a hurry. When you have a season of peace upon you and an opportunity to reflect upon what went wrong with the restoration at the beginning, and we have again the opportunity established by the word of the Lord that was read to and accepted by, for the first time in the restoration, a covenant to accept the obligations that were devolving upon us in the restoration, and we have an opportunity to prepare and to do

something. We delay, we hesitate, and we squander the opportunity, ultimately at our peril.

“But what would have happened if the people, in July of 1840 when no commandment had yet been given, rose up and with alacrity decided that they were going to labor for the accomplishment of the task that Joseph was telling them was coming? What would have happened had the money raised and donated for the temple not been diverted by the temple committee to their own purposes? What would have happened if the lumber sent down from the Wisconsin mission been used for the construction of the temple rather than being diverted for the homes of the leading citizens? What would have happened if instead of God requiring yanking on the reins to pull the bit in the mouth of the horse of the restoration, what would have happened if all that was needed was for the reins to be lightly put on the neck of the horse of the restoration, to guide it where it needed to go? Horses are so sensitive that when a fly lands on their skin they can twitch to remove it. The people of the restoration are nowhere near as sensitive to what God would have them do, then or now, as is a horse.

“I hope we can take it a bit more seriously and be a bit more sensitive when the Lord is encouraging us in a way, rather than requiring that he command and demand us to go in a way. Commandments are often the things that produce condemnation. Encouragement and invitation are almost always the thing that produces blessing.” (Remembering the Covenants Conference Talk, Centerville, page 2, 3, 5, 6)

In March 2019, Denver once again defined the poor among us as the poor within our own fellowship:

“No one’s getting supported by tithing money. If they are, that’s done by a local fellowship that has voluntarily determined that they have one among them in need, because the tithes are gathered and used to help the poor...If you’re a person in need among a fellowship, the tithes are appropriately used because that’s what they’re for. They’re for the poor.” (Signs Follow Faith, Centerville, March 2019, page 7)

In May 2019, in an address to Christians, Denver taught that we take care of the poor within our fellowships:

“We have an incipient group of people—very small—but people that believe that we do have an obligation to give tithes and offerings. But we collect tithes and offerings in very small groups, and once the money’s collected, then within the group, the

question is asked, What are the needs; who among us has a need? And if there is a health need, if there's a food need, if there's a housing need—the money is used to benefit those that are in need among the household of faith.” (Eighth Address to Christians, Montgomery, Alabama, May 2019, page 3)

In July 2019, Denver reminds us to expect a command to build a temple:

“We expect to have added to the prophetic voice heard among us an additional priestly set of rites in a temple founded by God. We await commands to identify the location and to begin construction. We've been told to expect that command will come.” (Authority, Keys and Kingdom, page 6)

In September 2019, Denver addressed the topic of harmonizing commandments:

“An issue was recently raised about how one harmonizes when they are contributing—contributing to a temple fund or contributing to those who may be in need. In the scriptures, we have little to guide us about conflicts, but we have lots to inform us about the issues that then leave it our responsibility to resolve the conflict.

“There was an incident that occurred **just before** the Savior went in on the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, where he was greeted with people shouting, Hosanna, Hosanna, spreading out their cloaks or palm branches for Him to ride in upon the colt/the foal. That incident is covered in these words:

“Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then says one of his disciples (Judas Iscariot, Simon's son who should betray him), Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money bag, and stole from what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone, for she has preserved this ointment until now, that she might anoint me in token of my burial. For the poor always you have with you, but me you have not always.” (John 7:9 RE)

“So, here is an incident in which something in the form of an ordinance that is necessary to prepare the Savior for His burial, about which the scriptures don't say enough, is taken care of at an extraordinary expense. It was an extravagance to perform the ordinance, and the Savior, in response to the criticism about the apparent financial waste, says, don't criticize her; this has been kept in place and prepared until now that she might anoint me in token of my burial. She and He both knew that this needed to be attended to, and it was; and it was essential and

extravagant. When the issue of “What about the poor?” comes up, the Savior I don’t think was being dismissive; I think he was rather lamenting about the condition. The poor always you have with you, but me you have not always. The time for taking care of what needed to be taken care of had a limited opportunity associated with it, and if it were not performed within that limited opportunity, then the time would come and the time would go and the event would not have occurred.

“It’s very often the case with assignments or opportunities that are presented to mankind that the opportunity is extended and the time has to be taken advantage of, but if not, then the opportunity comes, and the opportunity goes. And in this case, the principle that I would say relates to what we are concerned with and the question that was asked to me is that when we’re given an opportunity, even though it may seem extravagant, if we don’t take or avail ourselves of that opportunity, it will come, and it will go, and that will be that.

“But you have to juxtapose that issue about the propriety of sacred things (even when they involve cost) being attended to, on the one hand, with another event involving the Savior, in which He told, in response to the query, “Who’s my neighbor?” this account:

“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance, there came down a certain priest that way, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side of the way. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked upon him, and passed...on the other side of the way — for they desired in their hearts that it might not be known that they had seen him. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the next day, when he departed, he took money and gave to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him, and whatever you spend more, when I come again, I will repay you. Who now of these three do you think was neighbor unto him who fell among the thieves? [And the person who had posed the question to the Savior responded] ...He who showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go and do likewise. (Luke 8:8 RE)

“Those words, *go and do likewise*, echo down through the corridors of time into our own ears and remind us of the obligation not only to be neighborly to each other but to be neighborly to all mankind. See, when he was on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, that was not his fault. It was a well-traveled road and should have been safe. It’s two places at which sacred events had and **would** take

place. He was on familiar, even sacred, terrain, and he fell into misfortune, through no fault of his own; others came and perpetrated it. So, what I take from that (as a principle for us) is that we ought not be judging those who fall into bad circumstances, nor should we be hesitant about putting them on our own beast to be transported, paying the innkeeper, binding up the wounds, doing everything we can. Not to say, How might I conserve resources in the process of giving aid?

“Everything you do for the benefit of another, as a neighbor, is a good thing. Don’t question whether or not your contribution to help someone else is extravagant or could be better used. Your contribution is good. It’s right, and your assistance helps those in need. When you give, give with gratitude, and then take no more thought about it. And if you choose to donate to the temple, take no more thought about it. Don’t go about always doubting and second guessing. No matter how you reconcile the conflict between the principle that “supporting and providing the means for ordinance work to take place is extravagant” or “there’s a way to help and give less” —how you divide up the resources and how you contribute, you decide how you resolve the conflict. Do what you think best, and don’t question yourself after you’ve done that. Be at peace. Christ’s example covers both, and there are conflicts—deliberately. The gospel is full of dilemmas that require us to act and to choose and to resolve limited means, limited time, limited strength, limited resources, and how you apportion them. But when you make the choice and you do the apportionment, be at peace.” (The Book of Mormon Holds the Covenant Pattern, Caldwell, Idaho, September 2019, page 2-4)

In March 2020, Denver spoke to the question of whether it is right to donate to the temple when there are unmet needs:

“Whenever there are people who are God’s, the Lord instructs them to build a temple. One day soon, there will be a command to do so. When the command comes, it will need to be accomplished in an orderly way required by society.

“Some have questioned why a temple should be considered when there are so many unmet needs. The answer is that the Lord expects it, the prophecies require it, and we cannot avoid building it if we are obedient.” (The Heavens are Open, Hurricane, Utah, March 2020, page 12)

In March 2021, Denver reminded us of the corruption of all churches of our day and the ways in which they rob the poor (he specifically mentions this people can do so by our overindulgence):

“Unlike the many existing and past Restoration believers, we must fight against falling into unbelief. Nephi warned us about the churches of the Restoration: *Yea, they have **all** gone out of the way, they have become corrupted; because of pride, and because of false teachers, and false doctrine, their churches have become corrupted, and their churches are lifted up; because of pride, they are puffed up. **They rob the poor** because of their fine sanctuaries; they rob the poor because of their fine clothing, and they persecute the meek and the poor in heart because in their pride [they’re] puffed up. They wear stiff necks and high heads, yea, ...because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms, they have **all** gone astray, save it be a few who are the humble followers of Christ. Nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because [they’re] taught by the precepts of men.* (2 Nephi 12:2 RE, emphasis added)

“We have no fine sanctuaries, and until commanded and instructed to do so, we do not anticipate building anything other than a single temple. We do not rob the poor, because our tithes are used only to aid the poor. We do not regard one above another, and we have no hierarchy in a position to lead anyone astray. Nevertheless, **we** can still be proud, rob the poor by our overindulgence, and participate in abominations and whoredoms. Some foolish people among us have done these things. They must repent, or they cannot be gathered.” (The Religion of the Fathers, Arvada Springs, Nevada, March 2021, page 7)

In September 2021, Denver said the following, which requires individual fellowships to decide how to dispense with tithes:

“Now, one other point that **has** to be made as part of this talk. Section 173 of the Teachings and Commandments says that:

*“[Tithing] was never to establish a wealthy general fund nor to invite the wrongful accumulation of wealth that has resulted from the long **abuse** of this law. The law was to be a light thing, easily borne by the faithful. Tithing was always to be taken from **surplus** (meaning unnecessary excess property) and **increase** (meaning what remains after all costs of the household have been paid). It was to be drawn out of the **abundance** in the possession of the giver so that there may be enough and to spare [“enough” in the hands of the giver so that they can provide for themselves and their household, “and to spare,” meaning 1/10 of what is leftover goes as tithe], **not** from property required for their necessities. The tithes of this people are to be used for the poor among this people, if they want to become Mine.* (T&C 173:1, emphasis added)

“Tithing money should be used to help the poor. If you have enough and to spare, and you have given 10% to be used for the poor, and you **still feel** that you have

surplus that is not needed, that's where money for a temple ought to come from. **That's** the money—not the tithing money. That's that surplus money—or the money that you have in excess of tithe, and you still want to give. **That's** to go to the temple.

“Now, I'm saying that, and I've read a number of Scriptures. And I know that there are Scriptures that have been read today that can be used to justify one position in an argument or another position in an argument. *In your temporal things you shall be equal in all things, and this not grudgingly; otherwise, the abundance of the manifestations of the spirit shall be withheld* (T&C 62:4). That's a great Scripture to use to go attack someone because they're not giving the way you think they ought to give, and you think that they have more to give. So, now I've got a Scripture, and I can use it like a club to justify my criticism of someone else.

“Okay. Let's find another Scripture we can use to do the other thing. How 'bout this one back here? *The desire of the slothful kills him, for his hands refuse to labor. He covets greedily all the day long, but the righteous gives and spares not* (Proverbs 2:353 RE). You see? You're just coveting. When you expect me to help you with anything, that's covetous. Covetousness is ugliness itself, condemned frequently in Scripture, and that ought not be.

“These Scriptures can be read as a cacophony of contradictions if that's what you want to do to argue with one another. But that's **not** the purpose of the Scriptures. The purpose is to make you **wise**. If you 'have' and you feel the impulse by the conviction of what these Scriptures say **to you** (that you can and you should give more), then make sure that tithes are used for the benefit of the poor. And **then**, your excess can go to accomplish other things.

“I know that there has been some criticism repeated to me that there is a general temple fund, and that that temple fund (which, by the way, has not been touched—not one cent)...they don't like that accumulating when there's need for the poor. When Christ was in the house of Simon the leper, who had been cured of his leprosy (which, as it turns out, was Judas' father—Judas Iscariot), a woman anointed Christ with a fragrant anointing oil that in today's money would be a \$20,000 gesture. Okay? And there was a complaint voiced that this was an extravagant waste. The anointing of our Lord, preliminary to His death and burial—and He said it was done for that purpose—in order to secure for mankind, generally, the Resurrection as He came forth out of the grave; an anointing oil that had been kept for that very purpose. It wouldn't have mattered if it had been sold. Because as Christ pointed out, the poor you have with you **always**. It's part of the condition that we find in this world. It's not gonna go away.

“If we had to make sure that there were no poor still around before we were able to do anything to raise money for a temple, we would never fulfill the coming command that He has **told** us is going to be given. And He's given us a season in which to prepare. If we don't prepare—and if the command comes and we cannot fulfill it—we may as well go back to Nauvoo and divert the shipment of lumber that comes down from the Wisconsin Timber Mission and use it to build Brigham Young's house and Heber C. Kimball's house and neglect the construction of the Nauvoo temple, **just like they did before**. But if we want to be prepared because we've been forewarned that there **will** come a command—and the expectation is that when the command comes, we're to obey it—then we need to do what we're reading in Scripture.

“The tithes of this people are to be used for the poor among this people, if they want to become Mine (T&C 173:1). If all of the tithes gathered cannot take care of all of the poor, we fulfilled our command. And we can ask for others to help, as well. But we have an obligation, also, to prepare when the command comes so that we're not caught—like the saints in Nauvoo—unable, incapable, and without the ability to afford to do what's been asked of us.” (Equality, Challis, Idaho, September 2021, pages 13-14)

** the reference to Temple in the title refers only to the teachings about the temple in relation to tithing funds.*