

311 | Cuppa Joe | The Forgotten Father of the Reorganization
Project Zion Podcast

Josh Mangelson 0:17

Welcome to the Project Zion podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

Carla Long 0:33

Hello, and welcome to the Project Zion podcast. I'm your host, Carla long. And today I'm super duper excited about our topic. I'm not normally a history person, by any stretch of the imagination. Sorry, Mark.

Mark Scherer 0:49

I'll forgive you, Carla!

Carla Long 0:50

But thank you, Mark. But this is super cool. I really hope you're gonna enjoy it. We're going to be talking all about Jason W. Briggs. And, quite frankly, there would be no Community of Christ without Jason W. Briggs and I don't know if Mark agrees with me on that or not, but we'll find out. So, Mark, welcome! Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

Mark Scherer 1:12

Well, I'm, I'm a Independence, Missouri hometown boy born and raised. I spent I've spent all my life here, except for four years at Graceland University, called Graceland College back in back in the class of 1972. Now that dates me.

Carla Long 1:35

Go yellow jackets!

Mark Scherer 1:36

Yeah, that's right. That's right. I don't know if you can see,

Carla Long 1:41

Oh nice! Graceland University (shirt).

Mark Scherer 1:42

I just happen to have that on. So I took a degree in history from Graceland. And at a double major, I always wanted to teach because teaching goes way back in my family. So it just seemed like the thing to do. And so I landed a teaching position in Independence public schools, and I taught there for 23, almost 23 years.

Carla Long 2:14

Wow.

Mark Scherer 2:15

What is interesting about it is I had coming through my classes, people like Laura Smith, and Julie Smith, and Jeff McMurray, and Shelly Spencer, all these people that are familiar, part of our church leadership, I have all the kids in class. And so I struck out some wonderful relationships and, and then, in 1993, late 93, I got a phone call from the world church asking, because the outgoing historian Richard Howard was retiring. They were looking for someone to replace him. And so I got the nod and started in September of 94. And stayed with the in the position until May, I think it was May 2016, when I retired. So I teach. I taught for the seminary, Graceland Seminary top church history, and became an associate professor of history in the history department at Graceland. Because of that, I no longer occupy that position. But anyway, life is life has been good. It really has, I was able to publish the three volumes. And at at that point, I figured my contribution would come to an end. So you know.

Carla Long 4:02

And they're such good volumes. And it's called Journey of a People. Volume One, Two, and Three. And it is just an excellent history of Community of Christ, if you're interested in it. Volume One is from the beginnings to 1844. Volume Two is from 1844 to 1960. ish.

Mark Scherer 4:25

Yes, actually. 1946. Yeah, yeah.

Carla Long 4:31

And then the third, final volume is from 46. On or to now.

Mark Scherer 4:35

Right

Carla Long 4:36

And it's just an excellent, excellent, so if you're interested in that. You should definitely read them.

So let's jump into our main character for tonight. Jason W. Briggs. Maybe people don't even know who Briggs is. They might only think he's a building on the Graceland University Campus, right?

Mark Scherer 4:57

It's not it's not, not, that's a different Briggs.

Carla Long 5:01

It is it's not named for Jason W. Briggs,

Mark Scherer 5:03

That's a Gerald N Briggs. Which I know you I don't know that he had any relationship to Jason W Briggs. But hey, it Look at it this way, as one person said, Well, if it didn't happen that way it should have.

Carla Long 5:25

I always thought that Briggs was Jason W. Briggs after I learned who I just never looked it up. I was a math major. I didn't go to Briggs all that often to be perfectly honest.

Mark Scherer 5:36

I spent many, many, many a day in Briggs Hall. So I know

Carla Long 5:39

Oh, yeah, I bet you did. Well, let's jump into it. So who is Jason W. Briggs? And why the heck should I care about him?

Mark Scherer 5:47

Oh well, yeah, yeah. Okay. So just a little bit of background about Jason W. Briggs. First of all, we don't know a whole lot about his early life. But his contribution is absolutely enormous. As you've already intimated, he was born in Compton in New York, in 1821. And his family, family moved, became familiar with the church, the Joseph Smith Jr. He was baptized in 1841. And by a man by the name of William o Clark, an elder, and Rick became an was ordained an elder 19 or 1843, the very next year, and pursued the missionary responsibility as best that he could. He went in 1844, to, to Nauvoo, to meet Joseph Smith Jr. as he was anxious to meet the Prophet. And was there just a very brief time, came back to Wisconsin, just before the assassination at Carthage and then went into this kind of introspection as to what he should do. He joined with Brigham Young, just briefly for a year, then left the movement of Brigham Young in 1846. And us align himself with a man named by James Jesse Strang. And but that didn't last very long because Strang announced that he was going to institute polygamy, which was the very reason that Briggs had left Brigham Young. So out of the Strad mu, but then he came across William Smith now, William Smith was the younger brother of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and William had had launched his own movement in Palestine, Illinois, October of 1851. Briggs, went to Palestine met with William Smith, and then learn lo and behold, sure enough, William Smith was instituting polygamy as well. So forget that. And that's what really threw him into a spiritual tailspin. Because he had tried all these different movements in in all these different charismatic followers are leaders and nothing, nothing work. And so it, it caused him to do I think, what a lot of people were struggling with at the time, not just not just Jason W. Briggs, you know, how do you fulfill your commitment to the movement to that you've dedicated your life to? Well, he did essentially what Joseph Smith Jr. Did, he had his own epiphany. The irony is where Joseph Smith Jr. had his in a grove. Well, Jason W. Briggs had his out in a farm field and had a wonderful, wonderful epiphany. That said, that all is not lost. I I'm not going to try to read it here. I'll just summarize all is not lost. The he asked specifically about William Smith, and and the spirit told him that William Smith had did have the royal bloodline. The seed of Joseph was the actual expression and that was the key, but he had squandered it like he saw that he

squandered the same. And so that that eventually at the end of the really long experience, he was told that Joseph Smith, the third would be the person with the seed of Joseph, who would eventually arise to lead the movement. And for him to expect that to happen. Well, my gosh, this was on November 18, of 1851. And nice Joseph, the third is not even 20 years old yet. And about the last thing, Joseph Smith, the third is wanting to follow any father's footsteps, because he, gosh, last time he saw his father, he was I don't see this, well, he was toes up the back of a wagon. And guess that's a kind of a terrible thing to, actually actually he saw his father they had prepared his body for burial. And that's when Joseph the third saw his father last. And it was in the north room of the Mansion House. And, and oh my gosh, he was 11 years old. And there's no way in the world he was going to lead a religious movement because he feared what happened to his father What also happened to him. So then Jason W. Briggs has this epiphany about Joseph the third. And, and Joseph, the third is still very old teenager. That just didn't make a whole lot of sense. I mean, that took a lot. This took a lot of faith. And so So Jason W. Briggs, yeah,

Carla Long 11:57

Yeah. You're doing great. So yeah. So this is this is an important guy in church history, for sure. So that is November 1851. The reorganize the organization didn't officially start till April 6 1816. So that's nine years between this original prairie vision, it was called the prairie vision or something.

Mark Scherer 12:18

Yeah, that's correct.

Carla Long 12:19

And the founding of the reorganization. So what happened in those nine years? That Hey, turn Joseph Smith the third around? And I there's another guy in there. Zenas Gurley, that's gonna be coming out. Right?

Mark Scherer 12:35

Yeah. Jason W Briggs settled near Beloit, Wisconsin. And that's at least a good solid horse backs ride all day long, to a place called Yellowstone, Wisconsin was a man by the name of Zenas H Gurley Senior, well, Gurley who's going through the same struggle. And he was he was the pastor of a congregation there. Like Briggs was the pastor of the congregation of Beloit. They didn't have any contact with each other. And, and Briggs had his own type of prairie visionary experience. And it went something like, "I the Lord, say this now that the son, the successor of Joseph Smith, Jr, is Joseph Smith." And he had the same type of understanding when they when he when he left that experience, and actually it was Briggs, who sent out the word that hey, you know, it's going to be Joseph Smith, the third, and some of his missionaries needed literature and they ended up in Yellowstone. Well, here's the Zenas Gurley saying, hey, wait, timeout, timeout, I've had the same experience! And so the two got together. And in, it was June 12 and 13th of 1852. They came together in a conference and decided to launch this movement, which would be called not the Reorganization, not yet. They call this the New Organization. And the intent. intent was never never to launch a new church. And that it was never to launch it. It was

it was to restore the original church without the problems without the heresies, so to speak, and that way they would be called the true church. But ever, you know, every Tom, Dick, Charles Blanch or Thompson is laying the same claim that they are the true church. So it's, it's kind of where the real true church please stand up type type thing. And about 10 people stand up. But anyway, the new organization would be, would be this small group in southern Wisconsin and Northern Illinois. And that provided the nucleus for what will eventually be called the Reorganized Church now between 1852 and 1860, oh my gosh, they have having a dozen conferences, two conferences a year. And they're sending out literature Jason W. Briggs wrote, one of the most important pieces of literature himself, encouraging those who are wondering like they are to please come and join. And it was a missionary track. And, and the numbers began to grow. And eventually, numerous people started joining in very important leaders started joining in this movement, including friends of Joseph Smith, the third and Emma Hale Smith. And that lent a lot of credibility to this new organization. And 1853, Joseph, the third had had a dream that caused him to really started thinking seriously about taking the place of ease father still hadn't still hadn't made the decision yet. But then living in Nabu, all these all these people kept sauntering through heading out to Salt Lake City, asking Joseph come with him. And he, as a matter of fact, Brigham Young sent missionaries in to Navajo to try to convince Joseph the third, because anybody who had any of the movements who had the seed of Joseph, that would be quite a coup. And, of course, Joseph, the third was so vehemently opposed to polygamy. He was never gonna end up going out to Salt Lake or going to be Rock Island, Michigan with change a string or Palestine, Illinois, he was just not going to join any movement. And what's even more important is that Joseph the third said he would have to have an epiphany of his own, before he would even consider it. Well, he did have that. Between 1853-1859 you have any epiphany, he married, I should tell you that 1956 he married a nice woman, good Methodist woman in Nauvoo. And they had several children. This was before his his decision to join with the movement. But the point being he had to have that experience. And when he did, he wrote to William Marks who had a ciliated with this new organization. Now William Marks is very important. Because William Marks and Jason W Briggs and Zenas Gurley, and William W. Blair, and Israel Rock, they all had joined in this new organization, and you're known by the friends that you keep, and women, Rosanna Marks were very close friends to Joseph and Emma Smith. And when William Marks joined this new organization, hmm, that meant that there's something to this to this organization. So between in that nine years, Joseph Smith, the third went from just I near 20 year old, two to 27 year old at that point, he became, he took the prophetic mantle, as I said,

Carla Long 19:43

Yeah, so like, if it seems like there's just some steps that were taken in those nine years, like really small steps, because Joseph Smith the third needed those small steps in order to say yes, so when did Briggs and Gurley finally approached Joseph Smith, a third?

Mark Scherer 20:00

Okay, good point! Briggs and Gurley personally did not when Joseph the third wrote, by this time the church was organized in Plano Illinois that was kind of the church capital in and that's where the Marks family, so he addressed the letter to William Marks in Plano and everybody

everybody had for years and prayed to Joseph the third would take the prophetic mantle and and so when it's interesting about Jason W Briggs he more or less, Carla, he more or less disappears from the scene. Yeah yeah he really really did. And I'll raise this point later on. But neither Briggs nor Gurley it was it was William Marks Israel Rogers. And there was a third one WW Blair. All approached Joseph the third in Nauvoo and say, hey, look, oh, man, this is this is incredible. He, they said, Okay, look, Joseph the third, we're here to invite you, based on your letter, were going to invite you to take this movement as prophet president. However, there is qualification, if you're going to run this, run this church life your old man, so to speak. Iron fist, you know, he lays a lot down said it is not going to work we want as as, as William Marks said, "We want none of you." That was the way he said it. And it was pretty pretty, it was pretty impressive. In that they did not want a church president seed or no seed, that was going to be dictatorial as they proceed. And that was okay with Joseph the third too, by the way, he had no no qualms about that at all. Because that was never his his leadership style anyway. But anyway, so he Joseph, the third mo went to place called Amboy Illinois, because they're holding conference up there. And he accepted the prophetic mantle. And that was, that was how Joseph the third became prophet president. Now, where does Jason W Briggs figure in all this? Well, in 1853, and those very early years, that very early years, they asked, I want the conferences said, okay, Jason Briggs up our prophet president and bring Briggs and no way I'm not I'm not of the seed. I said, as a compromise rather than say, No, I'll be President pro tempore that is temporary president until Joseph the third takes his place. Well, and missionaries from the new organization, were already going out spreading the word that Joseph Smith, the third was going to be present in the church. And Joseph the third had no intention whatsoever doing this. Matter of fact, it was one very impressive missionary journey of two, two important missionaries from the new organization, one William W. Blair. And the other one was, was a man named Edmund C. Briggs, who happened to be the younger brother, Jason W. Briggs. So they went across southern Iowa, and their testimony was, yes, Joseph, the third will be the church president. So come and join us, come and join us. Well, Joseph Smith, the third had no intention, and we've been talking about, but it nevertheless, nevertheless, they had full confidence full faith that he would, and other time they got back from winter quarters, which is where they were supposed to go. And then by the time they got back from winter quarters, back to Plano, Illinois, then Joseph Smith there and decided, so, you know, it's really quite, it's really quite a faith journey.

Carla Long 24:45

Oh, it totally is a faith journey. I mean, say that it was gonna happen. It was gonna happen and probably never doubting it for a second, you know?

Mark Scherer 24:54

Yeah, that's right. And people were being baptized on the assumption that Yeah, Joseph Smith, the third I don't know what would have happened at Joseph Smith said, you know, forget you guys. There's no way. Now I should tell you that. Remember that dream. I told you about 1853. An angel came to him in this dream, showing him two futures. And he said, Okay, here's one future, that you will be a very well to do lawyer in a large city. That's one or you will take your father's place. Well, that was a two choice choices. And then he woke up from this from this.

This this dream, as it were. And so and but that's 53. He still got seven more years to go before he's even close to being convinced that this is what he wants to do.

Carla Long 25:58

Yeah. So what? So what happens with Jason W. Briggs? I know he's a great missionary, or Joseph Smith the third. But yeah, let's keep talking about Jason Briggs.

Mark Scherer 26:09

Yeah, okay. So Jason W. Briggs, in the new organization was made a was was ordained an apostle, and turned out to be one of the most effective missionary voices in the early Reorganization. He was eventually president of council 12. He was kind of, he was younger than Zenas Gurley by some 20 years, but nevertheless, when Gurley died in 1871. Jason W. Briggs was the other, of course, then in Joseph Smith, the third. Jason Briggs was a very, very influential Minister for the church. He was really, really was.

Carla Long 27:02

Well, I also and this might be jumping the gun, and if it is, just let me know. But I know that Jason Briggs came out to Salt Lake City. And

Mark Scherer 27:10

Yeah, sure. Yeah.

Carla Long 27:11

I don't know if it's too fast to talk about that. But

Mark Scherer 27:15

It's perfect. Okay. So in November of 1874, the church commissioned him to go to Salt Lake City to try to share the gospel. And he did so it was there for three years. And, hey, he launched a newspaper that was very, very influential is called The Messenger. And, oh, it's so cool, because an opening and the opening issue is okay, here's my purpose. Here's the purpose of the Messenger. Here's my purpose, because there, you know, there was a rumor that, that there was a missionary from Joseph the third out circulating around in the valley. Well, um, so he's Okay, so here's my mission. I am here only for those who, if you are a captive of the brethren, and I think that was the term that he used, which is fine, I expect nothing from you. Except to be left alone. You don't have to read the newspaper. You don't have to listen to my sermons. You don't have to do anything. Just leave, leave me alone. However, if you are I thinking church member, if you are thinking church member, then The Messenger and the message is for you.

Carla Long 28:46

Oh, that is brutal.

Mark Scherer 28:48

Yeah, yeah. That was just a way just the way he presented it to. That's right. And the very first issue in November of 1824. And he began to publish issues, all the way until February of 1877.

Carla Long 29:10

I didn't know he was here for three years. That's a long time.

Mark Scherer 29:14

Yeah, it really is. And and that is, that is how the church in Salt Lake area had its start, but it was more of marginal success, obviously, for obvious reasons. But Jason W. Briggs never lost his his zeal. He never lost his willingness to share by February of 1877. He wrote in his memoirs, that he had pounded enough pulpits that it when his resources were gone. So it was time for him to go home. And so that ended getting into His tour.

Carla Long 30:00

Well, I feel like I'm standing on the shoulders of giants being the pastor of the Salt Lake City congregation now this makes me feel pretty fantastic. I wonder what Jason w Briggs would say if he knew I was the pastor.

Mark Scherer 30:12

Oh, like getting all the high five you the whole way.

Carla Long 30:15

I love hearing that. I love that.

Mark Scherer 30:18

Well, that's basically when you know something about his train of thought his background because it because this really leads to why he left the church. Okay, are you ready for this?

Carla Long 30:31

I hope so. Let's see.

Mark Scherer 30:33

Okay. Okay, so he used The Messenger to really lay out his own viewpoint. He was critical of polygamy, needless to say, he was critical of blood atonement. He was critical of the pre existence. And he laid out all the arguments, scriptures, you know, any sermons and so on, distributed literature up and down the streets in Salt Lake City. And he had a very forward thinking. As a matter of fact, he also said, and get this, that the Bible is not literal, nor inherent.

Carla Long 31:22

Yes, I was just gonna bring that up if you hadn't, I'm looking at this stuff. This some of the stuff that Jason w Briggs wrote. And, um, a couple of things he wrote, it's like, that the Jewish history contained in the Bible was not as a whole written by inspiration that it was not written by any whose names or a guarantee of its truthfulness as a whole. It is not it was not in the main

written by actors in the events recorded or by any who were contemporaneous with, like, this is big stuff. This is mind blowing to people now, sometimes.

Mark Scherer 31:55

Yes, yes. Yes. And you see, he could say these things, when he's 800 miles away from the rest of the church. And so he was very forward thinking. And he didn't believe in the creation story, like and nor, and he knew that Joseph Smith Jr. who supposedly had written the Joseph Smith translation. This was one of his big hangups, because it was interpreted back home, as lit as the perfected King James Version by Joseph Smith, Jr. Well, Jason Briggs said no way, there's no way that there's no way that a human being can perfect anything in that regard. But certainly, certainly, the Bible. For example, he Joseph Smith, Jr. wrote that, that the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, was written by Moses. Well, that had been discounted for years for decades. And, and Jason Griggs knew that. And here's Joseph Smith writing it. There's no way I mean, it was just totally discount. Here's the second one that Adam wrote the creation story. Well, no.

Jason Riggs knew that wasn't thing that couldn't be the case. But and he didn't have pushback writing it in the in The Messenger. However, when you got back to Missouri dun, dun, dun. Okay, so, um, he asked, so, he had some conversations with church leaders, saying, hey, look, here's what I've written. Would you give me permission to write it in the Saints Herald so I can lay out my arguments, the Saints Herald. Well, the church back in the Midwest is very conservative. And for this forward thinking, even if he's an apostle, a former thing possible to come back and start spewing these liberal thoughts that just wasn't gonna fly. Now, privately, Joseph the third went long, a lot with Jason Briggs.

For example, Joseph Smith, the third probably embraced Darwinism that did come out in November of 1859. Well, if you if you embrace Darwinism, you can't embrace the original creation story, right? I mean, they never the twain shall me. And so you know, things like that Joseph, the third was pretty sharp on. But if Joseph the third was never his style, and Joseph the third were to slam his fist on the table and said, Okay, this is exactly what the church is going to believe. By golly, you know, Kay's clothes, that was knit First of all, that's it. That's his old man style, not his style. And secondly, it would have created tremendous discord. And that was not something that Joseph Smith the third was going to allow. So the what there was, there was only really one viewpoint that Joseph Smith and Jason Briggs really had it out on, and that was polygamy. And Joseph's and Joseph Smith Junior's polygamy. Now, you remember that Jason Briggs and visited Nauvoo after July of 1843. And, you know, rumors were rampant, about about polygamy and the tippy toeing that was going on in the Mansion House was all part of the rumors and, and you know, you know the story, so that way, so, so Briggs was convinced that Joseph Smith was a polygamist. What's more, while he's out in Salt Lake City. You know, everybody knows. I mean, everybody knows that Joseph Smith. So it was it wasn't a big secret for Jason W. Briggs. until it gets back to the Midwest. And that's when he told Joseph the third, Hey, listen, you're all man. Listen, he had all kinds of wives. Well, no, Joseph, the third would never accept that. Eventually it led, when Joseph the third refused to allow Jason Briggs he was editor, Joseph the third was editor of the Saints Herald, when you refuse to print, Jason

W Briggs viewpoints, they started doing this. And by 1886. They had parted ways. So there is a direct connection between the Salt Lake of Jason W. Briggs and the Midwest of Jason W. Briggs.

Carla Long 38:08

Does that make sense? Oh, yeah, that is really interesting. So Salt Lake was the beginning of his demise. I hope that's not true for me since I live out here too!

Mark Scherer 38:23

It's all your fault, Carla.

Carla Long 38:24

Hi, guys. I hope not. You know, I was thinking about Joseph Smith the third. And I'm sure you know more about it than I do. But he did. He came out here too. And I remember Joseph Smith, the third came out to Salt Lake

Mark Scherer 38:36

Yes, many trips.

Carla Long 38:38

And I remember hearing a story and I might be wrong, but he was preaching it Fourt Union or he was preaching in a church I think is like a Fort Union area. And like, and they paraded all of Joseph Smith Junior's wives and put them in the front row so that he could see them. Like, like, he probably had so much cognitive dissonance when it came to this father and the polygamy and like it just, I mean, no one knows why he said what he said or why Emma Hale Smith said what she said on her deathbed, but it had to be just such a hard situation for both of them.

Mark Scherer 39:12

To be sure, as matter of fact, in one of his trips out there, he wanted to be his cousin, John, John Smith. Now this would have been on this would have been on Hiram side of the family. So he's a cousin. And, and John Smith and they were good. No, no, it was a cordial relationship wasn't harsh or anything like that. Matter of fact, John Smith invited Joseph the third over for supper. I mean, it's a very cordial thing to do. And so I gave him the address and Joseph Smith, knocked on the door. And what woman opened the door and invited Joseph Smith in and into the living room, and John Smith came out from bathroom. And they gave a big handshakes and salon says, Oh, you they said, Joseph, this is this is my wife. Okay. And so and so they they're talking around a little bit, a little bit more and they they go over into another room and a second woman comes out. Okay. So John Smith said, Joseph, this IS my wife. Okay, so this is my wife, and this IS my wife. And so they're sitting down for supper and the third wife came out with food. And john smith said, Joseph, this is my WIFE. He gave the voice inflection. So and that was really the very first encounter Joseph Smith the third had with polygamy. That was his very first encounter. Yeah,

Carla Long 41:15

I'm sure it obviously it struck a chord because he wrote about it, I'm sure and that's how we know the story.

Mark Scherer 41:21

That story is in his memoirs.

Carla Long 41:24

Oh, just, it's just mind blowing. Utah is mind blowing in a lot of ways when it comes to polygamy. I've run into a lot of polygamists out here and I just never ceases to amaze me and it never ceases to amaze me.

Mark Scherer 41:40

Well, I must admit, growing during my 20 years as church historian, so my closest friends, I say this sincerely. So my closest friends were LDS Mormons. As matter of fact, my counterpart with the LDS church was a man by the name of Snow. And he and I really struck it off, as matter of fact, when he would come to Independence, you would stay here with me. And there were times I would go out there to Salt Lake and I would stay with him. And that only one problem. Only one problem that we had. He always beat me in golf. Not gonna. That's so frustrating. No, just kidding. We were golfing buddies. So if we had, we had a grand time.

Carla Long 42:40

I love hearing that. That's awesome. I really were you ever in the archives over here?

Mark Scherer 42:46

Oh, yes, get lots of time. Matter of fact, he was the the director of the church history museum and the archives in the library and so on. And one of my, one of my cherished moments, was in Ogden. He invited me to come out. And I gave a lecture there at the, the archives. And then he took me who's to go to Provo, and I gave a lecture there. Then they were going to dedicate the Ogden temple. Well, you know, in the opening days, they, you know, people can walk through it. So we got a VIP tour. And we and we were coming out. We're coming down the sidewalk, and Marlin Jensen. Now, you probably don't know who Marlin Jensen was, but he was elder Snow's predecessor. And he and I had a close relationship together. Oh my gosh, this is, this is unbelievable. So, so we got together and had a nice chat. And elder Jensen's wife took a photograph. And I have that framed it. And I put a brass plaque on it. And I made a copy for elder Snow and one for elder Jensen. And I have it it's just a it's just one of my I lost one of my cherished cherished possessions.

Carla Long 44:20

It's it's pretty amazing to go through one of their temples I've been through a couple myself it I mean, even that experience, right there is weighty and then to have that happen is really, really cool, Mark. Thanks for sharing that story. Oh, I feel like we could talk all night. So else on Jason W Briggs that we should talk about I know he also talked about inspiration and prophecy and being a prophet. And I don't know how much you know about this. I only know because I have

part of his quote in front of me right now. But his view of a prophet and prophecy is very similar to what we would probably say today, exactly. You want to talk about that?

Mark Scherer 45:03

Oh, yeah, yeah, absolutely. It became one of the one of the problems that that he posed to the church in the Midwest, because he, he believed that there is a veil of humanity that separates the divine from the human. And even in Revelation, even in Revelation, there is something lost when the the message transmits through that veil, so that you're thinking that you're getting the literal inherent Word of God. When reality is no, Revelation is experience. It's not literally should not be literally taken. Well, if if three fourths of the church comes from the Nauvoo period, or the Kirtland period, and they've gone through Joseph Smith, Jr. You know, Thus saith the LORD speaking under the influence, and so on, for an apostle, to communicate, no, that's not the way that's not the way revelation takes place. It's an experience that you have to grow with and understand. You can understand why then. It created problems. Problems for the church. Yeah, it really did.

Carla Long 46:38

Well, for sure. I mean, with I don't know how I should say this, but without, like, kind of the modern thinking that we have now. And also stating clearly that there we are non literalistic when it comes to the Bible. Like that's a pretty huge statement for any church to make. And nowadays, even, I mean, that I feel like that idea of prophecy kind of comes with that territory. You know, there's no way it couldn't come with that territory, I don't think.

Mark Scherer 47:09

Right. So So it's, it's, uh, you know, it, he was, he was so far ahead. He was lightyears ahead of the church at the time. And now, he left the church in 1886. Okay. Well, in 1893 there was a lawsuit. Remember the Temple Lot case of you, okay, over who owns the actual plot of land?

Carla Long 47:45

Right. Okay. All right. So yeah, for our listeners, if you don't know, you know, like where our Community Christ Temple is on the corner of river and walnut, we own catty corner from each other. We own community, Christ owns the auditorium and we own our Temple, which is a big spiral building, if you've ever seen pictures of it, listeners, and then on the other two caddy corners, the LDS Church owns the, what's it called the visitor center Visitor Center. And then there's a lot that is just like, basically a big thing of green grass with the Hedrickites or the church of Christ.

Mark Scherer 48:18

Granville Hedrick. Yes, yes. And so, Joseph, the third brought suit, to lay claim to that little plot of land right across from beautifully centered between The Stone Church and the auditorium. Right, right. And just as an aside, the architects laid it out so that the center of the Auditorium goes exactly with the center of the Stone Church. And, and secondly, the little Hedrickites church is not much more than a house and you know, you've seen it is not worse than the clapboard house. So the Stone Church had to be a beautiful and beautiful stone edifice that

would that would dwarf obviously, but anyway, going back to the back to the lawsuit, a lot of the church leaders at the time were deposed for this lawsuit. He was a district court lawsuit, including Jason W. Briggs. And he was grilled pretty hard because of his, member of the council of 12 he was one of the founding fathers of the movement and so on. You would expect for him to know a lot so he was grilled pretty hard. Well, when he was asked about his membership in the church, he had been Did that he had left the church? Well, the lawyers that raised their eyebrows. Why? Why, sir? Did you leave the church? Well, he could have said about polygamy, about the refusal to accept polygamy or to acknowledge the Joseph, or he could have talked about this idea of revelation, you know, he had, or he could have, he could have talked about the literal inerrancy issue disagreements, and yet, he never mentioned anything like that. He said, the reason he left was because he was not allowed to lay his arguments out in the Saints Herald. And that was his justification. So that was pretty interesting. It was pretty interesting, really. But that was Jason there's so many mysteries about Jason W. Briggs. Just, um, I don't know if you want to get into this, but he's a very mysterious person. Were you aware of some of the things about him? For example, just a mention a couple of couple of things. Okay, so he's one of the he Gurley are the two founders. Right. Okay. He's president Council. Council. 12. Right. Right. Okay. President Pro temper of the church, right. Okay. The most effective missionary voice of the church, right? He's got all these credentials. But he was not invited to go to Nauvoo to meet with Joseph the third. Strange, isn't it? It gets even more strange. When it came time to ordain Joseph the third. who's standing there to place their hands on Joseph the third's head. Well, Zenas Gurley, WW Blair, William Marks, the apostle Samuel Powers. So the question is kind of where, do you remember Where's Waldo? So it's kind of a "Where's Jason?" type of thing. Um, there are other occasions where you would expect Jason W Briggs to be there. But he simply not. And I have yet, you know, I never did. I never did figure out why. He was not at the founding of the Reorganization, the very church that that he launched, helped to launch. It just doesn't, doesn't. As a historian, those kinds of things. I don't know. They gnaw on me, I guess.

Carla Long 52:57

Well, yeah. I mean, like a non historian like myself would never even think to ask that question. Or maybe I would, if I knew as much as you do, but I'd probably never will. But it's so that it's really interesting to wonder. I mean, you know, sometimes I wonder if that maybe he, maybe he was he had a little bit of a grating personality. Like if he was that. forthcoming when it came to, you know, what he wrote in The Messenger, maybe he was hard to be around.

Mark Scherer 53:29

Yeah, yeah. Well, he was one of the great writer. He wrote that. He wrote that, that appeal in 1862, which was one of the pivotal pieces of literature of its time. So actually, it's not like he disappeared. Maybe he just wasn't there. I know. I don't know why I wish there was so logical reason. Maybe there's some kind of document in somebody's attic. I don't know, that will answer that question someday.

Carla Long 54:10

You never never know. Well, Mark, thank you so much. This has been so interesting. And I've just really enjoyed it. I'm shocked by how much I've enjoyed it. No offense historians. But thank you so much for telling us about this incredibly important figure in our history. This is very, very exciting.

Mark Scherer 54:30

Yeah, well, my best to all the viewers and I look forward, you know, answering email questions or something, you know, feel you've got my email address, Carla, if people have questions for me then go for it. I wish you all the very best and congratulations on the Project Zion. I've logged in on numerous of them. So

Carla Long 54:56

I'm so glad you like it. We have a lot of fun doing it. So thank you for your support. And thank you again for being on the interview with me.

Mark Scherer 55:02

Okay, very good. Good luck to y'all

Carla Long 55:04

Bye Mark! Thanks a lot.

Mark Scherer 55:06

Thank you.

Josh Mangelson 55:16

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